

AIQR - PARTS 2-6 **2015-2016**

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Organisation	Dundalk Institute of Technology
Reporting Year	2015 - 2016
Full Name	Patricia Moriarty
E-mail	patricia.moriarty@dkit.ie
Which Part do you wish to complete?	PART 2: Institution-led QA - Annual
PART 2 - Section 1: Institution-led QA - Annual	Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Developments
A piece in relation to the evolution of quality assurance and enhancement systems to support strategic objectives in the reporting period.	<p>Changes to governance in relation to Quality Assurance during this period included:</p> <p>Graduate Studies Research Board:</p> <p>The Terms of Reference for the Graduate Studies Research Board were amended to extend the membership, facilitating the inclusion of more members from academic schools. This change was approved by Academic Council in March 2016.</p> <p>https://www.dkit.ie/system/files/dkit_academic_regulations_for_research_awards_v8_0.r</p>

Significant specific changes (if any) to QA within the institution.

Quality assurance and enhancement developments during the academic period 2015/16 are listed below:

Regulations for the Conduct of Examinations / Conduct of Examinations Guidelines (In-Class Assessments).

These regulations and guidelines were amended to prescribe more clearly the acceptable use and/or required storage of electronic devices during examinations.

Exit Awards Policy:

This policy and procedures were scheduled for revision during 2015/16 and the revised policy and procedures (including a new application form) were approved by Academic Council in December 2015. The policy and procedures are available at:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/exit-awards-policy>

DkIT Open Access Policy:

This policy was proposed by the Academic Council Research Sub-Committee. It facilitates open access to DkIT peer-reviewed research publications and is managed by the DkIT Library. It can be viewed at:

<https://www.dkit.ie/dkit-library/collections/st%C3%B3r-staff-publications>

Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis (DCU Awards): These regulations were amended on two occasions during the academic year to:

1, Clarify the roles of members of the research supervisory teams, specifically the role of the Independent Panel Member and the Supervisor Advisor.

2. Include Music, Composition and Performance regulations which were compiled by the Graduate Research Studies Board.

The regulations can be viewed at:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/academic-regulations-postgraduate-students-registered-dcu-awards>

Policy on Collaborative Provision, Transnational Provision and Joint Awards:

This policy was revised by the Registrar's Office and reviewed by an external panel of peers. The revised policy ensures compliance with the 'Sectoral Guidelines for Institutes Applying for Delegated Authority to make Joint Awards' published by QQI.

The policy can be viewed at:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/collaborative-provision-transnational-provision-joint-awards>

Student Placement Policies and Procedures:

A working group was established by Academic Council in early 2015/16 to review the student placement procedures. The first of these policy documents (Student Placement Terms and Conditions) was approved by Academic Council on 6th May 2016.

<https://www.dkit.ie/placement-office/policy-documentation-publications/dkit-work-placement-terms-conditions>

Academic Integrity:

The Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures was reviewed in response to feedback from Academic Departments, resulting in an amendment to the plagiarism penalty grid which was approved by Academic Council in May 2016:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/academic-integrity-policy-procedures>

Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes and Awards:

This policy and procedure was divided into two policies, separating the approval and monitoring functions to ensure alignment with revised European Standards and Guidelines. The policies were re-named 'Policy for Design and Approval of Programmes' and 'Monitoring of Programmes Policy'. The policies can be viewed at:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/monitoring-programmes-policy>

and

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/policy-design-approval-programmes>

Marks and Standards:

An amendment to DkIT Marks and Standards (Appendix II) was made to facilitate the introduction of a formal procedure for students to apply for a deferral of final examinations due to extenuating circumstances. The procedure can be viewed at:

<https://www.dkit.ie/examinations-office/repeat-deferred-modules/application-form-deferral-final-exams>

DkIT Marks and Standards is available at the following link:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/marks-standards>

Policy, Guidelines and Procedures for the granting of reasonable accommodations in examinations to learners with disabilities. These can be viewed at:

<https://www.dkit.ie/staff-portal/disability-office>

Examinations and Assessment Policy and Procedure:

This was amended and can be viewed at: <https://www.dkit.ie/examinations-office/documents-policies/examinations-policy>

The schedule of QA governance meetings for the period should be inserted here.

There were **five** scheduled meetings of Academic Council during 2015/16 and one special meeting. **Twenty seven** sub-committee meetings took place. Executive Board meetings were normally held on fortnightly basis. DkIT Governing Body held **eleven** meetings during the academic year 2015/16, on a monthly basis with the exception of August 2016.

As previously reported, there were changes to governance structures with the establishment of both the Institute Management & Planning Committee (IMPC) and an Academic Heads Forum (AHF) in 2014/15. The IMPC, composed of faculty heads and heads of function is concerned with the operationalisation and embedding of policy throughout the Institute. The AHF comprises of heads of faculty, departments and schools and has been very effective in bringing practical issues relating to policy implementation to the fore. There were 3 meetings of the **Institute Management and Planning Committee (IMPC)** and 5 meetings of the **Academic Heads Forum (AHF)**.

The topics reviewed at IMPC were student exam deferrals, mature student entry process, operation of Academic Integrity panels, use of Moodle VLE, use of Akari software for programme development, procedures for student placements and the Institute Academic Calendar.

The main issues discussed by AHF were student registration issues (e.g. deferrals), academic integrity policy and procedures, continuous assessment / examination policies, school liaison, IT service matters and the upcoming programmatic review.

**PART 2 - Section 2:
Institution-led QA - Annual**

Reviews in the Reporting Period

Area/Unit and links to relevant publications

The following programme validations took place during 2015/16. Panel reports and School responses can be viewed at;
<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/quality-assurance-enhancement/approval-programmes/20152016>

Programme details can be viewed at: <https://dkit.ie/home-page/study-dkit/courses-dkit>

Full Validation by DkIT:

Major Awards;

- Master of Science in Computing in Medical Device Software;
- Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Applied Early Childhood Studies;
- Bachelor of Arts in Digital Marketing, Communication and Public Relations;
- Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Global Marketing;
- Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Public Relations;
- Higher Certificate in Property and Facilities Management (part-time);
- Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Construction Project Management;
- Bachelor of Business Studies (Honours) in Digital and International Business;

Links to published internal reviews

Second Set of Records

<p>Area/Unit and links to relevant publications</p>	<p>Differential Validation by DkIT;</p> <p>Major Awards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Studies (outreach Cork Chamber of Commerce); • Higher Diploma in Science in Computing (revised); • Bachelor of Business Studies (Honours) (part-time); <p>Special Purpose Awards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma in Composing for Games; • Certificate in Cultural Landscapes: The Boyne Valley*; • Certificate in Building Energy Management; • Certificate in Lean Sigma (outreach Manor Farm); • Certificate in Employment Law; • Certificate in Understanding and Responding to Domestic Abuse**; <p>*Delivered to 21 students and 5 staff visiting from Molloy College, USA. **In collaboration with a number of external agencies (health and social care services, Gardaí, Women's Aid, Drogheda Women's Refuge, Probation Services) and launched in January 2016 by Minister Aodhan O'Riordan.</p> <p>Minor and Supplemental Awards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate / Diploma in Food and Agri-Business; • Certificate / Diploma in Food Supply Chain Operations; • Certificate in Psychosocial Interventions; • Certificates in Computing (9 programmes of 10-30 ECTS credits);
<p>Links to published internal reviews</p>	<p>Third Set of Records</p>
<p>Area/Unit and links to relevant publications</p>	<p>Validation of Single Modules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil Science; • Applied Building Structures; • Building Technology; • Business Research Project; • International Tourism Management; • Strength and Conditioning;
<p>Links to published internal reviews</p>	<p>Fourth Set of Records</p>

Area/Unit and links to relevant publications

All DkIT academic programmes were reviewed by the relevant Programme Boards and reported in the Annual Programme Board Reports for 2015/16 which were submitted to the Registrar's Office in December 2016 and January 2017. A review of the APB reports was presented to the Academic Quality Subcommittee of Academic Council in February 2017.

A total of 64 Annual Programme Board reports were submitted to the Registrar's Office, covering a total of 95 academic programmes. Twenty of the reports were submitted on a new template which was developed by the Academic Quality Sub-Committee and is being piloted for 2015/16 reports. The new template brings the reporting of programme level information more into line with the requirements of the Annual Institutional Quality Report to QQI and ensures that programme Boards take cognisance of all relevant information sources when deliberating.

The draft template and an example of a completed 2015/16 report can be viewed at; <https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/monitoring-programmes-policy>.

A number of sources of evidence and information were utilised by Programme Boards in their discussions, including the following:

- Minutes of programme board meetings
- External Examiner reports
- Student progression data provided by the Registrar's Office
- Student intake data
- Conferring data
- Results of QA3 student feedback survey
- Results of Irish Survey of Student Engagement
- Feedback from class representatives
- School/Faculty board minutes

Reports indicate that programme boards are working well and in accordance with the Institute Monitoring of Programmes policy (<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/monitoring-programmes-policy>). Programme boards discussed a range of issues such as:

- Programme entry requirements, content, learning outcomes, delivery modes and teaching/learning/assessment strategies;
- Administrative issues, including timetabling and student attendance;
- Communications with external stakeholders;
- Academic placements;
- Learner academic supports;
- Student recruitment, performance and retention;
- Staff training and professional development.

Links to published internal reviews

Fifth Set of Records

Area/Unit and links to relevant publications

A detailed analysis of research performance to date in the School of Health and Science was completed which involved the following research centres undergoing the Institute's external research centre designation process:

- Smooth Muscle Research Centre;
- Centre for Freshwater and Environmental Studies;
- Netwell/CASALA;

Each review was coordinated through the Research Office and involved a detailed analysis of each centres' past performance and strategic plans for the coming three years. The three centres were awarded full designation for 3 years with each external panel highly complementary of each centre's performance, linkage to the academic environment and strategic ambitions.

Links to published internal reviews

Sixth Set of Records

Area/Unit and links to relevant publications	<p>The Centre for Learning and Teaching (CELT) carried out a review of the impact of the Student Learning and Development Centre (SLDC) with a view to planning ahead for possible future resource challenges and to enable the centre to prioritise resources where they will have most impact for both staff and students. The impact evaluation developed by the UK Student Services body AMOSSHE was used and the review was overseen by the Academic Council Learning and Teaching Subcommittee.</p> <p>THE SLDC was established in 2010 to offer support to students in basic IT skills, study skills and academic writing (Maths support is provided separately by the Maths Learning Centre in the School of Informatics and Creative Arts). Both one-to-one tutorials and whole class tutorials are provided. SLDC also has responsibility for co-ordinating the induction programme for new students and for training student ambassadors. Resources and support for staff addressing student academic writing have been developed in collaboration with AIT (as part of a SIDF project). Since 2014, the unit has offered specific English for Academic Purposes to students whose second language is English.</p> <p>The impact review included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gathering data on the use of the service, • a survey of students who had used the services in the past year, • a survey of lecturers to measure their awareness and use of the services • consultations with other student support services. <p>The number of student visits to the Centre has increased from 785 in 2011/12 to 1067 in 2015/16. According to the evidence collected in the review, the service is achieving its objectives and meeting the needs of a wide range of students, including relatively high use by mature and international students. The induction programme is very successful and having a positive impact on the early student experience. Students who used the service reported a positive impact in both skills development and confidence/understanding of their own learning. Details are available at; https://www.dkit.ie/centre-learning-teaching/slhc-impact-review</p>
Links to published internal reviews	<p>Seventh Set of Records</p>
Area/Unit and links to relevant publications	<p>A consortium agreement was signed with Cavan Monaghan Education and Training Board in April 2016 in relation to the collaborative delivery of the Bachelor of Business (Honours). Years 1 and 2 are delivered at Monaghan Institute and learners attend DkIT for the third and final year of the programme.</p>
Links to published internal reviews	<p>Eighth Set of Records</p>
Area/Unit and links to relevant publications	<p>A collaborative provision agreement for the outreach delivery of the BA in Early Childhood Studies was signed between DkIT and Cork College of Commerce in June 2016.</p> <p>https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/collaborative-provision-transnational-provision-joint-awards</p>
Links to published internal reviews	<p>Ninth Set of Records</p>
Area/Unit and links to relevant publications	<p>The BA (Honours) in Accounting and Finance was accredited by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants in November 2015. The maximum number of ACCA exemptions was achieved in conjunction with validation until 2020; http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en.html</p>
Links to published internal reviews	<p>Tenth Set of Records</p>

Area/Unit and links to relevant publications	<p>The Bachelor of Science in Veterinary Nursing was re- accredited for 5 years by the Veterinary Council of Ireland in November 2015. Details available at; http://www.vci.ie/Documents/Veterinary%20Nursing%20Qualifications.pdf</p> <p>The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland carried out a site visit and accreditation of Nursing and Midwifery programmes in December 2015.Details are available at; http://www.nmbi.ie/Education</p>
Number of internal approval/evaluations and reviews completed in respect of Validation/Programme Approval	27
Number of internal approval/evaluations and reviews completed in respect of Research Accreditation/Validation.	0
Number of internal approval/evaluations and reviews completed in respect of Programme Review.	0
Number of internal approval/evaluations and reviews completed in respect of Research Review.	1
Number of internal approval/evaluations and reviews completed in respect of Service Unit Review.	1
Number of internal approval/evaluations and reviews completed in respect of Review of arrangements with a partner organisation.	1
Section	Professional Body Recognition
Number of internal approval/evaluations and reviews completed.	3
Composition of Panels: % Internal	20
Composition of Panels: % National	94
Composition of Panels: % UK	6
Composition of Panels: % EU	0
Composition of Panels: % Student	0

Composition of Panels: % Other	0
Chair Profile: % Internal	0
Chair Profile: % Similar institution	100
Chair Profile: % Different institution	0
Chair Profile: % International	0
PART 2 - Section 3: Update on Institutional QA Overview	Other Implementation Factors

This institution can use this section to set out the ways in which data is used to support quality assurance and the management of the student learning experience.

Student Feedback:

Dundalk Institute of Technology is committed to the enhancement of the student experience and the Institute's quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms place a significant emphasis on the voice of the student in line with European Standards and Guidelines (2015). The Institute recognises that students have a major contribution to make through review and feedback on their experience in college and also as an input to curriculum design.

The following student feedback mechanisms were employed during 2015/16:

- Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) Survey
- QA Forms (QA3)

The data collected by these surveys, and subsequent analysis, enables the Institute to monitor and continuously enhance the student experience along both academic and non-academic dimensions. The feedback is considered by programme boards in each Department and continuous improvement plans are then formulated. These action plans form a constituent part of annual programme board reports. The programme board reports are subsequently considered by the Academic Quality sub-committee of Academic Council.

An analysis of data from the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) 2015/16 was carried out and presented to Academic Council in December 2016. The response rate was disappointing at only 13.2% (down from 21.7% in 2014/15 and lower than the sector average of 24%). Efforts are under way to improve the response rate for the 2016/17 survey which will be launched on 13th February 2017. Most of the feedback received was very positive, with respondents expressing satisfaction with their DkIT experience, particularly in relation to the standard of academic delivery and supportiveness of staff. Individual free text comments were sent to the relevant Schools for discussion by programme boards.

Some summary results are as follows:

- 73% of students described their experience as *excellent* or *good*.
- There was positive feedback about lecturers being friendly and supportive and the practical focus of the programmes.
- Some negative feedback was received about learning facilities and student group work.

Other data analysis carried out by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) included:

- Student Survey on First Year Induction, November 2015
- Student ambassador training feedback, October 2015

Student progression data for 2015/16 was computed and will be presented to Academic Council later in the current academic year. The overall progression rate was 78%, similar to 2014/15 (79%) and slightly down on 2013/14 (81%). Some specific areas of concern were highlighted. It was agreed that the enhancement theme of 'Student Retention' would continue during 2016/17 in preparation for the next Institutional and Programmatic Reviews.

Students continue to engage with membership of programme boards and other activities, such as learning and teaching projects. An example of students acting as partners is evident in the *Technology Enhanced Assessment Methods (TEAM) in Science and Health Practical Settings* project, a 2 year Irish multi-institution enhancement project led by DkIT and funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. This project is examining the impact of technology on assessment in practical settings in Science and Health disciplines across four Irish Institutes of Technology (DkIT, Athlone IT, IT Carlow and IT Sligo). Students from each partner institute have been recruited to the project team and have been central in discussions on project format, survey/pilot design, project promotion in addition to attending a national workshop held in Athlone IT in June 2016. Here, 17 students attended along with 47 staff to collectively identify best practice and challenges in assessing the practical environment. As some students progressed to graduation, new students have been recruited across the partners to the project further maintaining the key partnering role played by our students. Their contribution is making a significant contribution to the success of the TEAM project.

The institution may choose to highlight in this section information relating to factors that have impacted on quality

The institution may choose to highlight in this section information relating to factors that have impacted on quality and quality assurance in the reporting period. These may be factors relating to national developments or initiatives, such as clusters/alliances/mergers, other external factors or intra-institutional factors.

DCU/DkIT Strategic Alliance:

Work continued in the areas of research strategy, policy and procedures during 2015/16, strengthening the strategic alliance with Dublin City University and the establishment of the DCU/DkIT Graduate School.

As reported in the 2014/15 AIQR, In December 2014 the Institute's Research Strategy 2014-2016 was presented to and approved by Academic Council, having been developed over the previous 12 months by the Academic Council Research Subcommittee. The strategy can be found at the following link:

<https://www.dkit.ie/research/research-themes/research-strategy-2014-2016>

During 2015/16, a working group which was established to monitor and report annually on progress against the KPIs in the Research Strategy analysed progress on the KPIs. A new strategy is currently under development.

The following progress on KPIs was achieved in the 2014-2016 strategy:

Target:	Achieved:
2500m ² dedicated research space	2590m ² space now available
In excess of 65 postgraduate research students	Approx. 60 postgraduate research students
In excess of 55 postgraduate research supervisors	55 trained research supervisors
More and 30% of staff with level 10 qualification	More than 30% of staff with level 10 qualification
Secure in excess of 10M euros in research funding	Approximately 14-15M euros in research awards
In excess of 300 peer reviewed research publications with greater than 2300 citations	450 peer reviewed outputs with 2920 citations

The following initiatives were launched by the Research and Graduate Studies Office during 2015/16:

<https://www.dkit.ie/research>

1. Applications were invited for the Inaugural Presidents Awards for Research Excellence for Established and Early Career Researchers in November 2015. The prizes were awarded by the President in May 2016.
2. In May 2016 the total of staff awarded the research supervisory training certificate increased to 55. This training programme was implemented several years ago through the Research Office with the institute being the first to roll out the structured supervisory training programme across the sector.
3. Research Skills Workshops provided for research students and staff included:
 1. Training as a Tutor and Graduate Teaching Assistant
 2. Surviving the Viva.
 3. Training for Research Degree Examiners and Viva Chairs.
 4. Supervisor training programme (completed by 23 staff members in 2015/16)
4. The Postgraduate Research Scholarship Programme was launched in February 2016. This is a mechanism through which potential postgraduate research students can apply for financial support to undertake a Masters or PhD research programme which is not externally funded.
5. The first call of the PhD Transfer Support Programme was announced in February 2016. This call was open to postgraduate researchers who were transferring to the PhD register and whose funding did not extend to the full duration of a PhD.
6. The DkIT Research Centre Policy was revised to introduce School Research Committees, i.e. bimonthly meetings between the Head of School, Head of Research and Research Centre Directors.
7. The Summer Undergraduate Research Programme was launched in April 2016. This initiative provides financial support for supervised undergraduate research projects which are carried out during the summer months.

Any other implementation issues of interest can be noted here.

MEND Cluster:

Dundalk Institute of Technology, Dublin City University, Athlone Institute of Technology and Maynooth University (DkIT, DCU, AIT, and MU) form the Dublin-Leinster Pillar II cluster as envisaged by the Higher Education Authority and the Department of Education and Skills. The partner institutions are strongly committed to the concept and practice of regional clustering, and the collaborative relationships that underpin the cluster pre-date the formal establishment of clusters by the HEA. These include the formation of bilateral relationships between DCU and DkIT and MU and AIT. It should be noted that these bilateral partnerships are as, or more important in achieving the overall aims of coherence and co-operation as 'whole-of-cluster' activities. The cluster has as its ultimate goal is to *"develop a regional approach to access, transfer and progression."* Initiatives funded under the SIDF project are targeted towards this goal, which will work through enhanced collaboration both among cluster partners and between the cluster and Further Education partners and designated communication pathways to learners.

Progress in relation to the MEND (Mid Midlands, East and North Dublin) Cluster during 2014/15 was as follows:

The HEA undertook to assess all regional clusters in respect of their initial activity against the Authority's stated goals and reported accordingly to the institution presidents in November 2015. The report noted that considerable progress was made during 2014. They identified funding to support a specific project to be developed by the cluster going forward. The project has 4 specific strands:
Higher Education and Further Education and Training Network:

1. A network of Higher Education and Further Education training providers has been established (FET2HE Regional Network) within the Leinster Pillar II Cluster, the aim of which is to collaborate on access, transfer and progression pathways (ATP) across the region.
2. Portal Phase II: During 2015 the MEND Cluster worked with a project team at the All-Island Research Observatory in NUI Maynooth and developed a pilot portal that was designed to improve knowledge on access routes from Further Education to Higher Education in the cluster area. The existing portal is operational and can be viewed at: <http://pathyways.maynoothuniversity.ie/> During the second phase the portal information will be updated and its development on a national scale will be scoped out.
3. Academic Planning: The cluster partners are working together to develop a medium term academic plan for the cluster, intended to ensure provision of programmes across the cluster is coherent and meets the needs of students in its catchment area.
4. A new aspect of the MEND project involves the mapping of small and medium enterprise across the region and developing systematic engagement with SMEs.

DkIT Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar chaired the Cluster Executive to December 2016 and took responsibility for Strand 2: FE to HE portal. DkIT has membership on all of the project teams. The project deliverables have been achieved at the time of writing this report and will be outlined in the 2016/17 AIQR.

A commentary about the effectiveness of QA policies and procedures in the reporting period may be inserted here.

External Examiners:

External Examiners are approved by Academic Council with a term of office of three years, which may be extended by one year in exceptional circumstances. External Examiners report to the Registrar. Copies of External Examiners reports are then circulated to the relevant programme boards for their consideration, action and feedback.

Feedback was generally very positive, with External Examiners commenting on programmes/modules being of a high standard, faculty open and engaged, exam papers well designed and the assessment process carefully managed. A number of External Examiners commented on the good balance between theory and practice on programmes and several External Examiners specifically acknowledged the high standard of final year projects that they had reviewed. A number of External Examiners commented on the good balance between theoretical and practical assessment within modules. A small number of External Examiners requested more detailed or aligned marking schemes and these requests have been highlighted by the Registrar to the relevant Head of Department for follow up.

Similarly, a small number of External Examiners advised a review of procedures regarding the provision of materials to them from School offices and this again has been referred to the relevant Head of School. Some quotations follow:

“I found this department to be well managed and run in accordance with the highest national standards.”

“The imaginative range of assessments, approach to marking and flexibility evidenced...is to be commended.”

External Examiner training, delivered collaboratively by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) and the Registrar’s Office continued during 2015/16.

An evaluation of the impact of QA policies and procedures through their implementation in the reporting period should be inserted here.

Annual Programme Board Reports:

An analysis of annual programme board reports for 2015/16 was carried out by the Registrar's Office and was presented to Academic Quality Sub-Committee in February 2017. The following is a summary of this analysis.

Positive outcomes:

1. Students were largely very satisfied with programme content, the quality of their learning experience and the approachability and support of academic staff.
2. External Examiners expressed broad satisfaction about the high standard of programmes, openness and engagement of staff and careful management of assessment processes.
3. Staff, students and External Examiners all commented positively on the good balance between theory and practice on programmes.
4. Programme teams displayed a very positive attitude and a high level of proactivity regarding the provision of academic support to students. Many areas have specific academic support initiatives in place.
5. Most programme teams expressed satisfaction with student recruitment and retention rates.
6. Work placements are valued very highly by both staff and students.
7. There is considerable evidence of the increasing use of technology enhanced learning, teaching and assessment methods by academic staff across the Institute.
8. Significant levels of external engagement are taking place across the Institute.

Areas for concern and/or follow-up:

1. The quantity and frequency of assessment is a source of concern from students across the Institute. In particular, group-work is referenced as an issue for concern by both faculty and students, although the value of group assessments is acknowledged as important preparation for future work-based team working. This feedback has provided an opportunity for DkIT to review its guidelines on group assessment.
2. Students expressed dissatisfaction with timetables, requesting more condensed schedules that facilitate bus timetables and part-time work although Programme Boards have explained the importance of self-directed learning time between classes to facilitate assimilation of theoretical information. Further communication is required on this issue.
3. The quality of IT infrastructure and Wi-Fi provision are subjects of considerable feedback from both staff and students as the Institute works to ensure complete Wi-Fi coverage across campus. The current plans will require additional investment over coming years and this has been agreed at Executive level.
4. Significant feedback from both staff and students was conveyed in relation to institute facilities, in particular the urgent need to upgrade accommodation and equipment and the desire for more space or specialist space for programme delivery. Executive Board are actively seeking capital funding to refurbish the older campus buildings housing the School of Engineering and the School of Business & Humanities. Current accommodation dates from 1970s and despite regular maintenance, is in need of a more comprehensive updating.
5. A number of programme teams expressed concerns about the standard of student academic writing which has been referred to Centre for Excellence in Learning & Teaching (CELT) to action additional supports in this area.
6. Student recruitment and/or retention continue to be a source of concern in a small number of areas. The Registrar is currently working on a Student Retention Policy for the Institute which will support areas with retention concerns.
7. Concerns were expressed by faculty about support for faculty professional development activities, both in relation to funding and teaching remission. It is acknowledged that generous supports have been available to date but that budgetary constraints have impacted somewhat in the slightly reduced budget for continuing professional development.

This section should highlight an analysis of the key themes arising within the implementation of QA policies and procedures, primarily through a thematic analysis of key recommendations, commendations and conditions for the reporting period.

There was generally significant satisfaction with the implementation and effectiveness of quality assurance policies and procedures in most areas. Some areas for further work were identified.

The principal thematic areas that arose through the implementation of Quality Assurance procedures during 2015/16 were as follows:

1. Technology-Enhanced Learning.

There was significant development and validation of part-time and blended learning programmes during 2015/16 (21 new programmes) and this will continue. This highlighted the need for guidelines and training for academic staff on the design and delivery of part-time and blended learning programmes, in tandem with an increased capacity of knowledge and skills in the area of Technology Enhanced Learning. Guidelines on the design of part-time were developed during 2015/16 and approved by Academic Council in early 2016/17.

During 2015/16 the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching underwent significant capacity building in the area of technology-enhanced learning, shaped by the 'What Works and Why Project' funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning'.

Six staff development sessions were delivered in semester 2, including a symposium dedicated to sharing good practice ('TEL Tales'). <http://eprints.dkit.ie/525/>

Eleven DkIT staff members were awarded funding to implement small-scale innovations (see <https://whatworksandwhy.ie/what-works-for-teachers/>)

Support was provided to TEL Teaching Groups (TEL and Academic Writing Group and Digital Citizenship Group). The work of both of these groups was presented to EdTech 2016.

Eighteen DkIT staff contributed to 9 presentations at the 2016 EdTEch Conference. One of the DkIT staff members was awarded the Jennifer Burke Award for her work on telecollaboration (<https://www.dkit.ie/news/dkit-lecturer-wins-presigious-jennifer-burke-award>).

1. Student Group Work:

A significant body of work was carried out in relation to student group-work management and assessment. The Academic Council Learning and Teaching Subcommittee developed a set of guidelines for staff and students in relation to group-work:

https://www.dkit.ie/system/files/groupwork_framework_guidelines_2016.pdf

Training of academic staff in relation to these guidelines is being rolled out by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT). The Student Learning & Development Centre is providing additional tutorial support for students. The Registrar's Office and CELT are working jointly in the dissemination of information about the group-work guidelines to students through their programme board representatives.

2. Student Retention

Student retention has been identified as an enhancement theme in preparation for the 2018 Institutional Review. The Vice President for Academic Affairs has raised the issue at Executive Board level which will result in additional resources being assigned in order to develop an Institute Policy on Student Retention. The need for additional management information in the form of a Data Analyst has also been supported.

A description of improvements or enhancements, impacting on quality or quality assurance, that took place in the reporting period, identifying the reasons for the improvements (for example an evaluation of effectiveness and impact from the previous period or objectives set out in strategic compacts).

Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching:

Staff Training and Scholarship:

At DkIT, the development of excellence in learning and teaching is led by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELTY). Academic supports are provided to students through the Student Learning and Development Centre (SLDC) which is managed by CELTY. An essential element in enhancing learning and teaching has been the establishment of a professional development pathway through the Institute's Master of Arts in Learning and Teaching. Since 2010, 108 staff members have participated in this programme and since 2015, colleagues from the second level and further education sector have accessed the programme. The impact of the programme has been recognised nationally. In December 2015 three members of the core teaching team were awarded 'Teaching Experts', selected for a special commendation for 'Facilitating Systemic Cultural Change'. See: <http://www.teachingandlearning.ie/priority-themes/learning-impact-awards/teaching-expert-awards-2015/teaching-expert-team-awardees-2015/>

Activities of the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching during 2015/16 included the following:

Another cohort of DkIT academic staff completed the MA in Learning and Teaching in 2015/16. There were 9 MA and 9 Certificate graduates and 29 additional faculty members and external colleagues progressed on the programme. There was a new intake of 11 DkIT faculty members and 9 external colleagues. A broad range of non-accredited CPD training was also offered during the year. This level of participation, completion and the continued institutional support for the programme demonstrates the commitment to learning and teaching at the levels of both lecturers and senior management. Its effectiveness as a driver of cultural change within the institution cannot be underestimated. A significant element of the CPD centred around enhancing feedback to students (linked to the Y1 Feedback Project) and technology enhanced learning (linked to the What Works and Why project). Training was also offered for Programme Directors and Stage Convenors. A total of 229 staff members attended the following sessions:

Masterclasses:

- Researching your practice the action research way (Dr. Pip Ferguson, DCU)
- Inclusive Teaching (AHEAD)
- Using Technology to enhance feedback (Y1 Feedback Project) (Lisa O'Regan and Morag Munro, NUIM)
- Learning Analytics (Dr. Mark Glynn DCU)
- Support first-in-family learners (Dr. Sarah O'Shea University of Wollongong)
- 21st Century Learning and Assessment (Dr. Leo Casey, NCI)

Sharing Practice:

- 'TEL Tales: Sharing Experiences of TEL Initiatives at DkIT' <http://eprints.dkit.ie/525/>
- School of Informatics and Creative Arts – Sharing Learning and Teaching Practice

Specific training/briefings:

- CPD for part-time lecturers (delivered by blended learning at evenings / weekends):
 - Student Centred Learning
 - Classroom Technique
 - Assessment and Feedback
 - Academic Administration
- External Examiner briefings
- Programme Director and Stage Convenor training

Technology Enhanced learning:

- Using lecture capture
 - Using Epson interactive tools for the whiteboard
 - Using screencasts to enhance feedback to students
 - Assessment and feedback using Moodle quizzes
 - Assessment and feedback using Turnitin assignments in Moodle
 - Using Socrative for formative assessment and classroom interaction
 - Screencasting for learning, assessment and feedback
 - Skype's the Limit: Telecollaboration for creating a transformative learning environment for students of modern languages.

Other:

- Principles of good feedback: Best practice in providing feedback to students.
 - Writing to Learning: Embedding writing activities in your teaching.
 - Giving students feedback on their academic writing.
 - Motivation and emotion: understanding the psychology of feedback.

CELTY continued to promote good practice in assessment through the following initiatives:

- Delivery of a new 15-credit module on the MA in Learning and Teaching called Assessment and Feedback. A total of 28 learners completed the module.
- Assessment of group work was identified as a particular area for action in 2014/15. This was extensively researched through a literature review, consultation with student focus groups and academic staff and feedback from programme directors and stage convenors. The result was a framework for assessing group work which was presented to Academic Council in December 2016. <https://www.dkit.ie/centre-learning-teaching/information-staff/documents-policies>

An analysis of quality enhancement activities that were initiated by the institution. This could also include reference to any national or international quality assurance developments in which the institution is engaged. The institution is encouraged to highlight areas that may be of interest to other institutions and would benefit from wider dissemination.

National Forum for Learning and Teaching:

DkIT has two National Forum Associates who actively engage with the forum on an ongoing basis. Two other academic staff members have been partially seconded to the National Forum's Professional Development Expert Group for 2016/17.

In partnership with MEND Cluster partners, DkIT was successful in obtaining funding under the National Forum for Learning and Teaching Enhancement Funds in both 2014 and 2015. DkIT is a partner in 3 projects, each of which involves collaboration with at least two MEND partners, which commenced in 2014/15 and continued during 2015/16. The project details are as follows:

1. Supporting Transition: Enhancing Feedback in First Year Using Digital Technologies. Involving NUIM (Lead), DkIT, AIT and DCU. See <http://y1feedback.ie/>

2. Student Success Toolbox for Flexible Learners: Supporting Transitions from thinking about study to the first weeks. This project involves DCU (Lead), DkIT, NUIM and IT Sligo. <http://studentsuccess.ie/>

3. Assessment for Learning Resources for First year Undergraduate Mathematics Modules. This project involves NUIM (Lead), DkIT, AIT and DCU.

<http://www.teachingandlearning.ie/assessment-for-learning-resources-for-first-year-undergraduate-mathematics-modules/>

Two additional projects commenced in 2015/16:

Technology Enhanced Assessment Methods (TEAM) in Science and Health Practical Settings. This is led by DkIT with partners AIT, IT Carlow and IT Sligo. See <http://www.teachingandlearning.ie/technology-enhanced-assessment-methods-team-science-health-practical-settings/>

Technology Enhanced Learning: What Works and Why. This project is led by DCU with partners DkIT and AIT. See <https://whatworksandwhy.ie>

Entrepreneurship and External Engagement:

The Institute plays a key role in the economic, social and cultural development of the region. DkIT is part of a wider business and local community and with the Regional Development Centre and Lifelong Learning Centre both providing support to the business and general community.

Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) has been identified as a leading exemplar for embedding entrepreneurship in higher education by global economic advisory forum, The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). A case study released by the OECD describes a strong culture of enterprise and innovation that permeates DkIT and examines its strategic approach to enterprise education as a best practice for developing entrepreneurial behaviours and traits amongst its students and staff. The Institute, through the activities of the four academic schools and the Regional Development Centre, has adopted a bottom up and peer to peer approach to developing Campus Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial students using Student Enterprise Interns to encourage students to explore starting a business as a career option.

<http://www.rdc.ie/campus-entrepreneurship>

In February 2016, the Regional Development Centre was successfully awarded continuation of its I.S. EN ISO 9001:2008 accreditation for a further 3 years. The assessment was based on a review of the organisation's documented system and samples of records, activities and personnel. No areas of weakness were identified during the course of the audit. Particular areas of strength noted were:

1. The strong level of management commitment to effective implementation of the quality management system.
2. The strong ethos of customer focus and continual improvement within the Centre
3. The maturity and effectiveness of the Quality Management System in place.
4. The high level of customer satisfaction.

Industry Day:

Co-ordinated through a cross campus working group, DkIT held its inaugural Industry Open day on Wednesday April 15th 2015. The second of these Industry Open Days was held on 9th November 2016, sponsored by Osborne Recruitment. This provided an opportunity for local industry and businesses to work more closely with the institute as well as meet students and graduates to explore employment and placement opportunities. A number of careers workshops and presentations took place (e.g. IBEC, ACCA). Over 60 companies across a range of sectors attended the day and exhibited at the Industry Fair and approximately 2000 students attended the event, a very significant increase on the previous year.

PART 5**Objectives for the Coming Year**

A piece in relation to strategic objectives in the coming period and plans for quality assurance and enhancement.

Assessment:

The Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) will continue to promote good practice in assessment. Specifically a framework for assessment of student group work was launched in early 2017 and associated staff development provision and support for students will continue. Work will also continue on the TEAM project which is exploring the potential offered by digital technologies in the assessment of practical skills in science and health disciplines. The institute is committed to building on the capacity developed in the course of participation in National Forum funded enhancement project to inform planning for programmatic review and the Assessment & Learning policy. CELT is actively exploring ways to ensure that these enhancements are sustainable and have wide impact.

Part-time and Blended Learning Programmes:

The Centre for Learning and Teaching will build on existing strengths and developments with emphasis on technology-enhanced learning and part-time provision, in line with the Institute's strategic priority to increase the provision of flexible and part-time programmes. Guidance for academic staff on the design and development of part-time programmes are being developed during 2016/17.

External Examiners:

Training for external examiners will continue and improve, incorporating feedback and inputs from academic departments.

Student Retention:

In line with the Institute's strategic priorities (Goal 1 Learning and Teaching), the Institute will continue with the Quality Enhancement theme of Student Retention for the academic year 2016/17.

Programme validations planned for 2015/16 are:

- Certificate in Management and Quality Initiatives in ID Services
- Certificate in Community Nursing
- Higher Certificate in Science in Computing and Business
- Higher Certificate in Front Office Management
- Higher Certificate in Property and Facilities Management (Full-time)
- BSc in Engineering Technology and Management
- BSc (Hons) in Agri-Food Production
- BSc (Hons) in Veterinary Nursing (1 year add-on)
- BEng (Hons) in Engineering (Common entry to BEng (Hons) Mechanical/Manufacturing, Civil, Electrical/Electronic)
- Higher Diploma in Science in 3D Computer Animation
- Higher Diploma in Science in Computing (Part-time provision)
- Master of Arts in Tourism

The School of Business and Humanities is involved in a collaborative apprenticeship application for a level 9 Masters award in Accounting.

Policies due for development or review in 2016/17:

- Institute Policy on Public Information (new).
- Programmatic Review Handbook.
- Intellectual Property Policy.
- Social Networking Policy (to incorporate the Institute Digital Citizenship Initiative)
- Assessment and Learning Policy

Other:

1. Marks and Standards:

Ongoing work on the revision of Marks and Standards will continue

New Developments:

Discussions about the upcoming **Programmatic Reviews** have commenced, including structures, principles and policies, guidelines and operational templates for same. These will be incorporated into a Programmatic Review Handbook for approval by Academic Council before the reviews commence. It is likely that the reviews will consist of two stages, the SER (Self Evaluation Report) phase followed by a review of programmes and other academic activities. Two academic schools (School of Health and Science and School of Business and Humanities) are due to complete the programmatic review process by September 2018. One of the issues raised in annual programme board reports for 2014/15 and 2015/16 was the difficulties posed by the transition from old to revised programmes post review. This will be considered as a component of the planning process for the next round of reviews.

Review Plans: Area/Unit and Number

The School of Engineering will undergo the following professional accreditation events in 2016/17:

- The Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland accreditation of the Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Building Surveying.
- The Chartered Association of Building Engineers Accreditation of the Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Building Surveying.

Any further information with respect to plans for the coming period.

With the changes to the teaching allocation within academic contracts on foot of the TUI agreement, the class contact hours within DkIT will be compared with the sector norms in order to benchmark best practice. It has been some time since a review of this type has been conducted and it is expected to be an informative exercise.

PART 6

Preparation for Periodic Review

A description of the impacts of institutional review within the institution.

Institutional Review is due in 2018 and is currently being planned for.

A short evaluative and reflective summary of the overall impact of quality assurance in the reporting period or, over a more extensive period, in the review cycle.

Quality Assurance remained a central and prioritised activity at DkIT during the academic year 2015/16. The ownership of QA continued to be relevant to all staff members within the Institute and there is a keen willingness to embrace continuous improvement and enhancement within the organisation.

Developmental themes of importance to the institution which will be relevant to periodic review.

Student Retention

This continued as the Institute Quality Enhancement theme for 2015/16.

CELT initiatives to support student retention:

- The student induction process has been reviewed and a dedicated induction for advanced entry students was introduced and a leaflet developed for friends and family on supporting students.
- Training for stage convenors and programme directors was carried out, including a session on supporting successful transitions delivered by Nuala Harding from AIT.
- The Student Learning and Development Centre offered pre-induction academic writing tutorials and basic IT tutorials to mature students.
- Support on academic writing is being provided to part-time students.
- Training on Learning and Teaching is now offered as part of the new staff induction programme.
- Specific programmes on Learning and Teaching have been provided to groups of staff delivering on part-time programmes.

Initiatives by Registrar's Office to support student retention:

- Student progression data provided on a programme and stage basis to each academic department, for discussion by programme boards.
- Institute Retention Report for 2014/15 presented to Academic Council in November 2015.
- Presentation on student retention by Registrar and Head of Learning and Teaching to Academic Council in June 16.
- A new initiative to support student retention was developed by the VP for Academic Affairs and Registrar during 2015/16 and approved by the DkIT Executive Board in early 2016/17. This initiative will roll out during 2016/17 and result in the development of a DkIT Student Retention Policy, which will include definitions, metrics and targets. There are several beneficial outputs to the initiative which will enhance DkIT as in Institute. They include:
- Greater emphasis on the student experience
- Greater awareness among faculty members of best practice in student retention
- Enhanced profile within the sector on student retention metrics
- Increased student numbers for funding purposes
- Provision of vital information for annual programme review and 5-yearly Programmatic Review purposes

Submission

Final Submission