

Procedures for Design and Approval of New Programmes, Subjects and Modules

1. The purpose of these procedures and guidelines is to ensure the proposed programme
 - (a) is consistent with the College's Strategic Plan and contributes to achieving the College's aims and objectives
 - (b) offers the highest level of educational experience to learners
 - (c) is consistent with the College's resource planning
 - (d) is undertaken in the context of the National Qualifications Framework and implements the procedures of the NQAI in relation to access, transfer and progression
 - (e) complies with all requirements of the relevant approved external validating body.

2. The document (both this section and all others) refers to both full-time and part-time accredited courses offered by the College where the College is responsible for curriculum development and the assessment of learners.

3. The main elements for approving new courses are already in place. These are:
 - (a) **Specific legislation** (above all the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999)
 - (b) **Validating body requirements:** HETAC has set down the process by which it adjudicates on applications for course approval, the format and content of the submissions required and the conditions which might attach to its approval of courses. Requirements include presenting each syllabus of a proposed course via a standard template.
 - (c) **Funding body requirements:** The Department of Education and Science sets the requirements for any course funding approval. Currently funding approval will not be given by the Department without a certificate of approval from HETAC or from another approved validating body.
 - (d) **CAO requirements:** Particulars of all *ab initio* courses must be given to the CAO by March for inclusion in the Handbook for the academic year beginning one year from the following September (e.g. by March 2006 for the 2007/2008 academic year).

4. The process of design, institutional approval and external validation involves:
 - A proposer, developer or group
 - Director of Studies and his/her Design Team
 - Academic Director
 - Panel of Assessors
 - Academic Council of the College
 - An approved validating body (whether HETAC or other approved validating body)
 - Department of Education and Science
 - CAO

Part 1

Introduction

1. Aims, Objectives and Planning

1.1 Planning is essential to effective management and efficient development of all educational services, especially at times when external change is rapid and resources are limited. DBL recognises that it is important to plan strategically and this implies planning at all levels. Our planning is realistic and consistent with government regulations.

1.2 The College will make sure that, in order to introduce a new programme successfully, sufficient time, physical space, equipment, materials, appropriate personnel, financing and other institutional support to deliver the new programme is given.

1.3 The College will give sufficient opportunities and time to allow all participants to express their views concerning the effectiveness of a new programme. The Academic Council will arrange a wide circulation of this information and a long margin of time for this to happen.

2. Aims and objectives of this curriculum and assessment policy

Our curriculum should

- Allow our students to be guided in their learning.
- Show progress over time.
- Put value on the learning process.
- Link assessment to instruction.
- Allow the students to be familiar with assessment procedures.
- Seek to motivate students.
- Provide evidence of competence to potential employers.

3. Planning

3.1 It is the responsibility of the Academic Director and the Directors of Studies to constantly review and develop curriculum and assessment procedures, in conjunction with the Internal Verifier (Registrar) and the Assessment Manager (College Principal).

3.2 The current programmes were chosen as a response to students' needs. In addition, the College manages its planning according to the regulation that non-EU students must be on a course leading to a recognised certificate or diploma in order to be permitted to work.

3.3 On registering in DBL College, our students are asked to submit the necessary documentation (application form, covering letter, CV, letters of reference (where necessary), transcripts). They are asked to do an interview, which may also involve a written and oral placement test. This establishes the prior learning experience of the student and allows the student to be placed in a suitable programme and class.

3.4 The teacher constantly monitors the progress of the students both orally and through written work. This is recorded in the appropriate student progress documents. In certain cases, when the student is ready the teacher will fill out a transfer form and the student will be moved up to the next level. This procedure is made clear to students when they enrol in the College. It is also important to note that the student can request a transfer if he /she feels that the class is too easy or difficult.

3.5 In general we have chosen a standardised curriculum to offer our students flexibility: as their circumstances change it is relatively easy for them to change their class time and yet continue with the same programme.

3.6 There is a systematic approach to programme design:

- Step 1 – Need Identification
- Step 2 – Programme Design
- Step 3 – Programme Approval
- Step 4 – Programme Delivery
- Step 5 – Review of Programmes

3.7 Other matters associated with the above procedures are:

- a. Student records
- b. Learning Facilities and Resources
- c. Health and Safety Policy and Procedures

3.8 The College maintains the following as central resources for programme design, approval, monitoring and review purposes:

- a. Up-to-date staff curricula vitae and student records.
- b. Information on IT and resource centre bases, as well as facilities.
- c. Appropriate regulations.
- d. College strategy for teaching and learning.
- e. Staff development.
- f. Student development at both the individual and general levels.
- g. The best methods and policies regarding quality assessment and assurance.

Part 2

Introduction to Systematic Approach to Programme Design

1. The College offers programmes of study according to an identification of need. This is achieved through surveys, consultation with partner organisations (awarding bodies, current students, other educational providers, embassies and industry, etc.), the data received from agents abroad and through consultation with potential students. The management of the College collates this material and acts upon it at the earliest opportunity and with great emphasis on maintaining quality.

2. The central principle of the College is to offer high-class, applied education in a way that is ethical and also cost-effective. As such, the structure, delivery and assessment procedures of each programme are carefully planned by the Director of Studies usually working with another teaching member of staff (thus creating a Design Team), all the time carrying out this task within the quality control mechanisms of the College. It might also be the case that this design is done according to the syllabus and assessment policy of an outside body. The guidelines for this are:

- a. Proposal for programme based on expected market demand.
- b. The community need (if any).
- c. Is the proposal consistent with the role and planned direction of development of the College?
- d. Does the College have adequate academic expertise and, if not, how does it get this?
- e. Are resources clearly identified or, if these are not available, is there a sufficient budget to purchase them?
- f. Assessment of the
 - i. duration,
 - ii. content,
 - iii. availability of appropriate teaching staff and
 - iv. financial margins of the proposed programme.
- g. Draft planning with bibliography and assessment methodologies.
- h. Acceptance of draft by management.

3. A programme is approved through revision, ratification and validation conducted by the Academic Director and a Panel of Assessors. This is then presented to the Academic Council for its revision, recommendations and, as the case may be, approval. Approval must be completed at least one term (four months) prior to the commencement of the proposed programme as this will give time for the completion of the following:

- a. course content,
- b. materials selection,
- c. confirmation of tutors,
- d. design of calendar,
- e. purchase of any required equipment,
- f. communication with Awarding Body,
- g. marketing of programme, and
- h. other related activities.

4. They will reconsider the elements listed in Part 1 immediately above and clarify these guidelines against those of HETAC or other outside bodies. Final validation is based on the following:

- a. Admission requirements.
- b. Aims and objectives.
- c. Curriculum.
- d. Content.
- e. Teaching and learning activities.
- f. Assessment methods and regulations.
- g. Adequacy of:
 - (i) Employer and student demand.
 - (ii) Staff and resource support.
 - (iii) Quality and experience of academic staff.
 - (iv) Role in the growth and prestige of the College.
 - (v) Policies and regulations, both internal and external.

This process of rigorous evaluation can have three results:

1. The programme is validated (possibly with recommendations).
2. The programme is validated subject to conditions.
3. The programme is not validated.

5. Part 3 below describes this process of designing and assessing a new programme in greater detail.

Part 3

A. Proposal for New Programme

1. Proposals on new programmes can emanate from many sources; however, the most frequent source and channel for individual proposals on course development is likely to be academic staff, through structured meetings at course level, and the relevant Director of Studies with the Academic Director.

2. New proposals may also be introduced directly through the Academic Council.

3. The College requires that proposers of new programmes submit an outline of the programme for approval prior to the development of a full submission. This outline approval arrangement indicates whether the investment in design and assessment is worthwhile and facilitates time management during the process.

4. The outline proposal should be submitted to the Academic Director for consideration by the Academic Council. Should there be interest in continuing the process, the Academic Council can direct that a Design Team is formed.

5. The Design Team will be made up of the relevant Director of Studies, a specialist in the appropriate field and, if possible, a learner representative. The Academic Director will act as chairperson at their meetings but will not be a regular member of the design team. The College Principal (in his/her capacity as Assessment Manager) and the Registrar (as Internal Verifier) will be involved in this process, above all in the review process.

6. The Academic Council will examine the outline proposal in terms of the College's strategic development and resource planning. The Design Team will compile a report which will be forwarded together with the outline proposal to the Academic Council.

7. The proposal for outline approval must conform with the requirements of the validating body on new course evaluation. The outline should include the following:

- a. Demand from industry
- b. Demand from prospective students
- c. College and School Strategy
- d. Aims and learning outcomes: general details
- e. Course design: subjects, learning outcomes, teaching methodologies and assessment methodologies
- f. Course schedule: examination subjects, component subjects, contact hours, credit rating and level, marks per subject

- g. Resources: accommodation, staffing, purchases and other implications
- h. Similar programmes at other institutions

8. It is not necessary at this stage for the outline proposal to include detailed syllabi, readings lists, equipment lists, etc.

9. The Academic Council may grant the proposal outline approval and refer it for consideration to a Panel of Assessors, or reject the proposal outright.

10. A proposed programme, having gained outline approval from the Academic Council, can then be developed into a full submission document taking into consideration any Academic Council recommendations.

11. A proposed programme that is granted outline approval will be identified with a specific school and provision will be made for full and efficient follow-up (structured meetings of the academic staff involved, resource allocation, etc.).

b. The Internal and External Development of the Proposal

1. The arrangements and the personnel (for the necessary research and for the preparation of the submission for course approval) will be determined through a consultation process involving the Academic Director, the relevant Director of Studies and the Design Team.

2. Programme design guidelines for developing the programme content for institutional approval and HETAC validation are found in the website www.hetac.ie; see also Part 4 below and appendix 5. By these means, the requirements of both the validating body and of the College will be identified and met.

3. Once a draft submission for institutional approval has been completed, it will be sent to the Academic Council.

4. A programme proposal referred by the Design Team will be examined against the College's guidelines, along with the procedures and guidelines of the approved validating body (see Appendix 5).

5. When the Academic Council is satisfied that the proposal document adheres to both the College's standards and the appropriate validating body's standards, it will convene a Panel of Assessors to examine the programme further.

6. The composition of this Panel is the following: Academic Director (chairperson) and two specialists in the area (see also Appendix 5). The Panel of Assessors will examine the proposal in terms of HETAC requirements (found in Part 4 below and www.hetac.ie), or other appropriate validating body, and also the national qualifications framework. In the case of short course programme proposals, more simple procedures may be adopted for the required planning and assessment.

7. The report of the Panel of Assessors will be brought to the notice of the Academic Council. Where the Panel recommend a re-submission, the College's procedures commencing at Part 3, A, 7 above will apply.

8. The Academic Director will oversee revision of and input of the Panel of Assessors and present its report to the Academic Council. Where the Academic Director and the Panel of Assessors Council recommends the programme, the revised submission and Panel of Assessors' report are put on the agenda of the Academic Council for approval. Once the submission is approved by the Academic Council, it is forwarded for consideration by the relevant validating body.

9. Where the Academic Council recommends the programme, the revised submission will include the amended document, the report of the Panel of Assessors, and any College responses.

10. The Academic Council will be informed of the decision of the validating body, and will be given copies of the approval document and of any comments or conditions attached.

11. If the validating body seeks a re-submission, the re-submission will be put before the Academic Council as at Part 3, A, 7 above.

12. On approval by the validating body, the Academic Director will prepare for signature by the Principal an application to the College for any funding or other formal approval.

13. The Academic Director will maintain a file on each proposal for course approval. Following the approval by the validating body and funding approval by the School, the Academic Director, in conjunction with the appropriate Director of Studies, will prepare a submission for final Academic Council approval to implement the course. This submission will certify that all necessary approvals have been received and will identify resource requirements and how it is proposed to meet them within available resources. This submission will be placed on the agenda of the Governing Body for approval.

14. The Academic Council will very closely monitor that the conditions of course approval have been adhered to up to completion of the new programme by the first cohort of learners. Thereafter, this monitoring will be less frequent but remain regular (as set out in Sections 5 and 8 below).

c. Programmes and Funding

1. Before mid-July in each year, the Academic Director, in conjunction with the Directors of Studies, will prepare draft programmes and budgets as required by the 1999 Act and HETAC. The programme proposals may include

- (i) continuation of existing courses,
- (ii) introduction of new courses,
- (iii) significant amendments to existing courses or
- (iv) discontinuation of existing courses.

2. The drafts will be considered and either approved or amended by the Academic Council by the last Monday of July.

3. Programmes and budget as approved by the Academic Council will be forwarded to the Awarding body, if this is necessary, by 15 August.

d. Publicity

Preparation of the College prospectus, website and other media is a matter for College management. Management will ensure that the publicity it operates

- a. does not include a course which has not been properly and fully approved
- b. gives an accurate description of each course on offer
- c. does not contain entry conditions not determined by the Academic Council or contrary to validating body directions
- d. fully explains the entry level, duration, timetable, location, expenses, principal modules, mandatory purchases, assessment methods, examination fees and instructor level involved in each programme
- e. fully explains the level of academic and professional recognition of the award.

Part 4

PROGRAMME CONTENT - HETAC

a. Proposed Programme Content

1. The procedures and guidelines for the design and institutional approval of new programmes must be rigorous and effective in order to develop coherent new programmes of study.

The following points should be addressed in the design of new programmes:

- compatibility with the College's Strategic Plan and mission;
- impact on the programmes currently offered by the College;
- the intended aims and learning outcomes of the programme;
- whether the programme is consistent with the requirements of the approved validating body;

- the support for the programme from industry, commerce, government agencies and associated professional bodies;
- demand by employers for graduates;
- the opportunities that graduation offers learners;
- the demand for the programme from a sufficient cohort of appropriately qualified learners;
- the level of the programme, the degree to which the programme challenges the learner, and where the programme sits within the national qualifications framework;
- mode of delivery of the programme (full-time, part-time, etc.) and the time to completion of the programme;
- the development of the curriculum – through appropriate learning outcomes, teaching methodologies and assessment techniques – imposing increasing demands on the learner as they progress through the programme;
- resources necessary and available to run the programmes – accommodation available and required, lecturing staff available and required, technical and administrative staff available and required, equipment available and required, library and information technology resources available and required, and staff development required for each year of the proposed programme;
- an award title and at a level in keeping with the intended learning outcomes;
- sufficient emphasis in promoting the intended learning outcomes; details showing how learners will demonstrate the achievement of these learning outcomes together with the means of assessing these outcomes;
- an appropriate balance in regard to the breadth and depth of individual curricula, and the academic and practical requirements of the programme;
 - the appropriateness of the total contact hours and the breakdown of these hours into lectures, practical, tutorials etc.;
- the workload of the learner in terms of assessment requirements, reading, researching, studying etc.;
- how the programme fits into the College's quality assurance process;
- the personal development of the learner must be central to the programme and balanced carefully with the intended academic outcomes of the programme.

2. The HETAC document *Guidelines and Criteria for Institutional Quality Assurance* includes the following section regarding design and approval of new programmes, subjects and modules:

"Procedures for the design and approval of new programmes, subjects and modules, should include clear and comprehensive provision for the presentation and structured consideration of evidence that the following issues have been satisfactorily addressed:

- Philosophy and aims of the programme;
- Relevance of the programme to the mission and strategic plan of the provider;
- Learning outcomes for each subject and module;
- How the programme meets its stated objectives, particularly as regards intended learning outcomes;
- Mode of delivery;
- Pedagogy relevant to the programme;
- Relationship to other programmes offered by the provider;
- Industrial or other links, including possible work placement
- Programme management arrangements;
- Relevance of the programme to the European and international labour markets;
- Human resources implications of providing the programme;
- Information system resources needed for the programme;
- Impact of the programme on the physical resources and support facilities of the provider;
- Financial implications of offering the programme;
- Environmental scan of similar or related programmes offered by other providers;
- Learner demand for programme;
- Consultation on the programme with relevant stakeholders and peers;
- Fair, consistent and standards-compliant assessment of learners on the programme;
- Provision, where required by law, for the protection of learners in the event of the provider ceasing to provide the programme (as set out in Appendix 13);
- Satisfactory provision for learner access, transfer and progression in the context of the National Qualifications Framework."

3. A number of HETAC documents are critical to the design, institutional approval and HETAC validation of programmes. These documents include:

- *Validation of New Programme Submission Document*

- *Higher Education and Training Awards Council Awards Range and Criteria*
- *HETAC Policies on Articulation Transfer and Progression*
- *HETAC Policy Document Prior Experiential Learning*
- *Course Schedule Guidelines*
- *Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures in Higher Education and Training*

The Academic Director will ensure that each School receives the most recent HETAC documents as they are released and that members of the Academic Council have access to these documents also. The Academic Director will ensure that these documents are appropriately retained and made available to course design teams and other collaborators in course design. These documents are accessible via the HETAC website: www.hetac.ie.

4. The HETAC document *Validation of New Programme Submission Document* will be employed as a template for all programmes that are being developed. The Academic Director and the Academic Council will be responsible for seeing that documents, submitted to HETAC for validation, rigorously adhere to the requirements of this document.

In order to develop programmes for validation by HETAC, it is essential to consult the document *HETAC Awards Range and Criteria* and in particular the section "General Guidelines and Criteria for Programme Design."

5. The programme design team must also familiarise themselves with curriculum development methodologies. The design process should begin with specifying course aims.

(i) Aims

- a. The course aims are normally general in nature and reflect the overall purpose of the course. The aims indicate the flavour and direction of the course.
- b. The formulation of the course aims is fundamental to the development of the more specific subject aims.
- c. It is important that the themes reflected in the course aims are carried forward into the subject/module aims.
- d. Subject aims are often written in language such as:

Give an understanding ...
Give an appreciation ...
Develop skills in ...
Develop confidence in ...

It can be difficult to confirm that the course and subject aims have been met because of the nature of aims. Aims are not sufficient to convey to the tutors or the learners what the intended learning is. For this reason learning outcomes must also be included.

(ii) Learning Outcomes

- a. The learning outcomes for each subject/module should reflect the cognitive content and skills content in the learning.
- b. Learning outcomes should be written in terms of what the learner will be able to do on completion of the subject/module.
- c. When writing learning outcomes it is important to take account not only of what a successful learner will be able to do but also that this behaviour should be measurable where possible.
- d. In the examples below the second set of learning outcomes are more amenable to assessment.

On completion of this subject/module the learner will be able to:
Understand the workings of ...

On completion of this subject/module the learner will be able to:
Give examples of ...
Define in their own words ...
Distinguish between ...

The number of learning outcomes will be a function of the course aims; however, a reasonable number would be between 3 and 6.

(iii) Assessment

- a. Learning outcomes should drive the assessment procedures; assessment should be designed to assess the learning outcomes in as realistic and applied a way as possible.
- b. Assessment criteria should be developed that take into consideration the learning outcomes, course and subject content, together with the level of the programme.
- c. It is important that the assessment element of new programmes is in keeping with Section 5 of the *Quality Assurance Handbook*, in the subsection "Procedures and Guidelines for the Assessment of Learners", as outlined below.

b. Assessors' Guide for New Course Evaluation

1. Aims and Objectives of New Course Evaluation

1.1 Aims

The Evaluation of a New Course is concerned with the total design and proposed implementation of the course with particular reference to its aims and learning outcomes, subject content, facilities required and staff deployment (taking into account both the requirements of the College and those of the Awarding Body). See also Appendix 5, "New Course Evaluation Report".

1.2 Objectives

- context of
- a. Evaluate the aims and general learning outcomes of the course in the context of their relevance to meeting the need being served.
 - b. Evaluate the learning experience to be provided in terms of learning outcomes, syllabus content, teaching methods, and curriculum.
 - c. Evaluate the physical facilities being provided.
 - d. Evaluate the assessment instruments being proposed.
 - e. Evaluate the curricula vitae of academic staff to be deployed in teaching the course.

2.

2.1 Subject Matter of New Course Evaluation

The submission for a New Course Evaluation should contain detailed information on the proposed educational programme.

2.2 Aims and General Learning Outcomes

This section should consist of a general statement of intent relating to the goal of the programme of learning, with particular reference to career/employment related applications.

2.3 Learning Experience and Assessment

(a) Learning Outcomes

The decisions on the goals of a programme of learning in the form of a statement of detailed outcomes can be a most important step, as the

definition of the outcomes can be used to guide the construction of the whole programme.

(b) Syllabus

This should consist of a description of the content of the programme of learning.

(c) Teaching/Learning Methodologies

A description of the methods and materials to be used in the programme of learning.

(d) Assessment Methodologies and Instruments

This should consist of a description of the techniques to be used to measure the degree to which the learning outcomes have been realised e.g., assignments, objective tests, final examinations, open book examinations, oral/aural examinations, continuous assessment, case studies, individual or group presentations, etc.

2.4 Curriculum and Time/Staff Allocation

A table giving details of the contact-hours to be devoted to each subject in terms of the breakdown of this between practical activities, workshops, studio, tutorials, lectures, computer lab, etc. should be given. The staff member(s) to deal with each subject should be listed.

2.5 Physical Facilities

This should give as much detail as is deemed appropriate to enable an evaluation to take place of laboratory/studio/workshop/other accommodation facilities to be available to students participating in this course. This does not imply a list of individual items of equipment.

2.6 Curricula Vitae

The curricula vitae of the staff to teach on the course should be provided.

2.7 Draft Course Schedule

A draft course schedule to include listings of examination subjects, component subjects, contact hours, credit ratings, and marks per subject in accordance with HETAC requirements.