

**PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES FOR THE DESIGN AND EXTERNAL
VALIDATION OF NEW PROGRAMMES**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Purpose	30
2. Scope.....	30
3. Background	30
4. Proposals on New Programmes	31
5. Stages in the Development of the Proposal for Institutional Approval and External Validation.....	32
Appendix II: Guidelines on Programme Design	34
Appendix III: The Management Committee’s Guide to Assessing New Programmes	39
Appendix IV: Evaluation Report	42

The procedures outlined below will guide NCGE staff in the development of new/existing part-time and fulltime programmes.

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of these procedures is to ensure that a proposed programme is:

- Consistent with the remit and strategic plan of NCGE.
- In line with national policy and priorities.
- Appropriate to the needs of guidance counsellors.
- Consistent with NCGE's resource planning.
- Cognisant of the National Qualifications Framework.
- Compliant with the requirements of the external validating body.

2. SCOPE

This document refers to all full-time and part-time accredited programmes offered by NCGE where NCGE has responsibility for curriculum development and the assessment of learners.

3. BACKGROUND

The main elements for approving programmes are already in place through the:

Qualifications (Education and Training) Act

- Under the Act, one of the objectives of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) is to establish a standard framework of qualifications in the State.
- The NQAI is required to “*determine the procedures to be implemented by providers of programmes for access, transfer and progression.....*”. There is a requirement placed on the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) to ensure that the procedures implemented by providers are compliant with the Act in this regard.
- The Qualifications Act also requires HETAC “*to ensure that providers of programmes ...establish procedures for the assessment of learners which are fair and consistent and for the purposes of complying with standards...*”

NCGE

The process of design, approval and external validation involves:

- A proposer (NCGE staff member with responsibility for managing a guidance sector).
- Programme Committee (group established by the proposer, {with the expertise to develop the programme}, after the preliminary proposal has been approved by the NCGE Management Committee).
- Director of NCGE.
- Management Committee of NCGE (the Department of Education and Science is represented on the Management Committee).
- Staff to deliver the programme.
- An approved validating body.

4. PROPOSALS ON NEW PROGRAMMES

There are three types of programme proposals: proposals for new programmes, proposals for changing existing programmes and proposals for discontinuing programmes.

Proposals must be considered within the framework of overall NCGE policy.

NCGE requires that an outline of a proposed programme is submitted by a proposer to the Director for approval. On approval, the Director circulates an outline to the Management Committee prior to the development of a full submission.

The Management Committee will examine the preliminary proposal in terms of NCGE's Strategic Plan and resources. The Management Committee will respond to the proposal through a report which will be sent by the Director to the proposer (NCGE staff member with responsibility for managing a guidance sector).

The proposal for approval must conform to the requirements of the validating body on new programmes.

The preliminary proposal should include the following:

- National policy and priorities.

- NCGE remit and strategic plan.
- Rationale.
- Demand from the guidance community (needs analysis).
- Outline of other providers offering similar programmes.
- Aims and learning outcomes - general information.
- Programme design - modules, learning outcomes, outline of indicative content, learning and teaching methodologies and assessment methodologies.
- Programme schedule – Modules that will be assessed, elective modules, contact hours, credit rating and level, marks per module.
- Resources - accommodation implications, staffing implications, development of programme, IT resources, finance.

The preliminary proposal will not include detailed information on syllabi, readings etc.

The Management Committee may grant the preliminary proposal approval or refer it back for development. If the Management Committee approves the programme it will advise on the membership of a Programme Committee to advise on the development of the programme. Membership of this Committee should include NCGE, guidance counsellors with expertise in the area proposed and academics with expertise in learning and teaching methodologies. The Programme Committee will prepare a full submission document taking into account any recommendations from the Management Committee.

5. STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROPOSAL FOR INSTITUTIONAL APPROVAL AND EXTERNAL VALIDATION

The arrangements and personnel for the research and preparation of the submission for Programme approval will be advised by the Management Committee.

An NCGE staff member will normally assume a co-ordinating and editing role.

In Appendix II, programme design guidelines for developing the programme content for NCGE approval and HETAC validation are outlined. The requirements of the validating body will be identified and met.

Once a draft submission for NCGE approval has been completed, it will be sent to the Director who will circulate it to members of the Management Committee and place it on the agenda for the next meeting.

The Management Committee will review the draft submission and examine it against NCGE guidelines and the validating body's guidelines and procedures (Appendix III). The Management Committee will then either recommend the draft proposal is sent to the validating body for approval or recommend that the draft submission be revised (Appendix IV). In the case that the draft submission is to be revised the Programme Committee will make the changes as recommended and resubmit the draft submission to the Management Committee for approval.

The Director will submit to the validating body the submission as approved by the Management Committee.

The Director will be informed of the decision of the validating body and provided with copies of the approval document and of any comments or conditions attached.

If the validating body seeks a re-submission, the re-submission will be put before the Management Committee as previously outlined.

The Director will maintain a file on each proposal for programme approval.

APPENDIX II: GUIDELINES FOR PROGRAMME DESIGN

The procedures and guidelines for the design and approval of new programmes must be rigorous and effective in order to develop quality assured new programmes. Effective procedures and guidelines will ensure that internal approval and validation processes are consistent and to a certain standard.

The following points will need to be addressed in the design of new programmes:

- Compatibility with the mission of NCGE and its Strategic Plan;
- Consistent with national policy and priorities;
- The 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 the main stakeholders;
- Guidance counsellors' demand for the programme;
- The level of the programme;
- Mode of delivery of the programme (full-time, part-time / distance learning etc.) and the time required to complete the programme;
- The development of the curriculum – appropriate learning outcomes, learning and teaching methodologies, content and assessment techniques;
- Resources required and available to run the programme;
- An award title and level in keeping with the intended learning outcomes;
- Details showing how learners will demonstrate the achievement of these learning outcomes together with how these learning outcomes will be assessed;
- A balance between the breadth and depth of curricula and the academic and practical requirements of the programme;
- The personal development of the learner must be central to the programme and balanced with the intended academic outcomes of the programme;
- The appropriateness of the total contact hours and the breakdown of these hours into workshops, practicals, etc.;
- The workload of the learner in terms of meeting assessment requirements, reading, researching, studying etc.;
- How the programme fits into NCGE's Quality Assurance process.

The HETAC document *Guidelines and Criteria for Institutional Quality Assurance* will be implemented regarding design and approval of new programmes:

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;*

- *Satisfactory provision for learner access, transfer and progression in the context of the National Qualifications Framework.*

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.*
- *HETAC 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 HETAC document *Validation of New Programme Submission Document* will be employed as a template for all programmes that are being developed for the purposes of accreditation from HETAC. The Management Committee will be responsible for seeing that documents, submitted to HETAC for validation, adhere to the requirements of this document.

For programmes being developed for validation by HETAC it is important that the document *HETAC Awards Range and Criteria* is referred to.

The Programme Committee must be familiar with curriculum development methodologies. The design process should begin with specifying programme aims.

Aims

Programme aims are normally general and reflect the purpose of the programme. The formulation of aims is fundamental to the development of the learning outcomes.

Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes for each programme and module should be reflected in the programme content. Learning outcomes should be written in terms of what the

learner will be able to do on completion of the programme. Learning outcomes should be measurable. In writing learning outcomes the following language should be used – describe, define, measure, outline etc.

The number of learning outcomes will depend on the number of programme aims.

Assessment

Learning outcomes should drive assessment procedures. Assessment should be designed to assess the learning outcomes. Assessment criteria should be developed that take into consideration, learning outcomes, programme and module content, together with the level of the programme. It is essential that the assessment element of new programmes is in keeping with Section L of the HETAC *Quality Assurance Handbook* on Procedures and Guidelines for the Assessment of Learners.

**APPENDIX III: THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE'S GUIDE TO
ASSESSING NEW PROGRAMMES**

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aims

Assessing a programme is concerned with the total design and implementation of the programme. Reference is made to the aims and learning outcomes, content, assessment methods, facilities and resources required.

Objectives

- Evaluate the aims and general learning outcomes of the programme in the context of their relevance to meeting the need being served and the remit of NCGE.
- Evaluate the learning experience to be provided in terms of learning outcomes, syllabus content, learning and teaching methodologies, curriculum, and assessment.
- Evaluate the facilities being provided.
- Evaluate the staff proposed to deliver the programme.

SUBJECT MATTER

The draft submission for a new programme must contain detailed information on the proposed programme as follows:

1. Aims and General Learning Outcomes

This section will outline a general statement of intent relating to the purpose and goals of the programme.

2. Learning Experience and Assessment

a) Syllabus

This will consist of a description of the programme content.

b) Learning and Teaching Methodologies

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

c) *Assessment Methodologies and Instruments*

This will provide 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, assessment, continuous assessment, etc.

3. Curriculum and Time/Staff Allocation

A table giving details of the contact-hours to be devoted to each module, in terms of the breakdown of this into workshops, reading etc. Staff member(s) delivering each module should be listed. In addition learning supports should be outlined.

4. Physical Facilities

This should provide as much detail as necessary to enable an evaluation of the facilities to be undertaken.

5. Curricula Vitae

The curricula vitae of the staff involved in delivering the programme should be provided.

6. Draft Course Schedule

A draft course schedule to include information on modules being assessed, contact hours, credit ratings and marks for each module in accordance with HETAC requirements.

APPENDIX IV: EVALUATION REPORT

**MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE'S REPORT TO THE PROGRAMME
COMMITTEE**

Date of Evaluation:

Programme Evaluated:

FINDINGS OF ASSESSORS

Aims and General Learning Outcomes:

Learning Experience and Assessment:

- (a) Learning Outcomes

- (b) Syllabus

- (c) Teaching/Learning Methodologies

- (d) Assessment Methodologies and Instruments

Curriculum and Time/Staff Allocation:

Facilities:

Curricula Vitae:

Draft Course Schedule:

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Assessors recommend: