

HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING AWARDS COUNCIL, IRELAND

Comhairle na nDámhachtainí Ardoideachais agus Oiliúna, Éire

General Programme Validation Manual 2010

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General Programme Validation Manual

Contents

GENERAL PROGRAMME VALIDATION MANUAL	1
1 INTRODUCTION	3
2 INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS	3
3 THE GENERAL PROGRAMME VALIDATION PROCESS	4
4 INTERPRETATIONS	8
5 REFERENCES	11
APPENDIX 1 PROPOSED PROGRAMME SCHEDULE	13
1 INTRODUCTION	13
2 MAIN CONTENT OF APPROVED PROGRAMME SCHEDULES	13
3 SPECIAL REGULATIONS	19
4 REFERENCES	19
5 PROPOSED PROGRAMME SCHEDULE TEMPLATE FOR A STAGE	21
APPENDIX 2 DIFFERENTIAL VALIDATION	23
1 INTRODUCTION	23
2 QUALITY ASSURANCE	23
3 DIFFERENCES FROM THE ORIGINAL PROGRAMME	24
4 SELF-ASSESSMENT	24
APPENDIX 3 GENERAL PROGRAMME VALIDATION TEMPLATE	25
1 INTRODUCTION	25
2 PROVIDER PROFILE	25
3 CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION	26
4 OUTLINE OF THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME	27
5 PROGRAMME PROPOSAL	28
6 MODULE DESCRIPTORS	31
7 PROGRAMME TEACHING STAFF	33
8 RELEVANT FACILITIES AND SERVICES	33
ANNEX 1.CURRICULA VITAE OF LECTURERS/TUTORS	34
ANNEX 2. SAMPLE EXAMINATIONS & C. A.	34
ANNEX 3 STATUTORY DECLARATION	34
ANNEX 4 LIST OF CURRENTLY PROVIDED PROGRAMMES	34
ANNEX 5 TEMPLATE FOR ASSESSOR’S PRELIMINARY REPORT	34

1 Introduction

This document applies to the validation of all programmes based on prescribed courses of study. It assumes familiarity with HETAC's *Core Validation Policy and Criteria*. It supplements this with information about how HETAC conducts validation. It also describes how an application for validation should be presented.

Validation by HETAC is an external quality assurance procedure which is consistent with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG). It is equivalent to the *ex ante* programme accreditation process used in some other European countries.

2 Information for applicants

The validation process begins when a provider makes an application to HETAC. If the application is successful the process ends when HETAC issues an *Order of Council*¹ an *Approved Programme Schedule* and a *Certificate of Programme Validation* (see **Appendix 1**).

Providers should consult the following documents when preparing for validation:

- **Core Validation Policy and Criteria** is the basis for all of HETAC's validation processes. It sets down the core processes and general criteria which are used by all validation processes. All applications for validation will need to be prepared with reference to it.
- **Assessment and Standards** is about the assessment of learners. It is intended to be suitable for all types of programmes and providers. It is produced for the attention of and use by those involved in the development of programmes (among others). It explains certain key concepts that are critical to validation. Among these are *minimum intended programme learning outcomes* and *programme and module assessment strategies*.
- **Awards Standards** is a series of publications which describe the standard to be acquired by learners in particular fields of learning (i) before a higher education and training award may be made by HETAC or by a recognised institution to which authority to make awards has been delegated by HETAC, or (ii) who request from HETAC recognition of an award made by a body other than HETAC or a recognised institution to which authority to make awards has been delegated. This implies that they describe the learning required to pass. Some awards standards are broad: e.g. engineering, business, and others are narrower: e.g. computing, art and design, architecture, nursing, social care, etc)
- **Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ENQA)** sets out minimum standards for providers' internal quality assurance procedures as well as the external quality assurance procedures of agencies such as HETAC. Part 1 of this document is addressed to providers.

¹ Certain terms have a precise technical meaning in the context of this document and may have important nuances which differ from conventional meanings. These terms are set in blue italics typeface where they first appear and, except where a specific cross-reference is provided, are defined in Section 4, Interpretations.

- **Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards** provides special validation criteria and quality assurance guidelines for programmes with a collaborative and/or transnational dimension.
- **Policies, actions and procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners (NQAI)** sets out specific policies, actions and procedures on: credit, transfer and progression routes, entry arrangements, and information provision. Under each of these headings, the respective roles of key stakeholders – the NQAI, HETAC and FETAC and providers – are specified. A summary of procedures that apply to providers in relation to each of the policy areas is provided in Addendum 3 of that document.
- **Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training (NQAI 2005)** sets out the principles and operational guidelines for the recognition of prior learning in further and higher education and training established by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland following consultation with stakeholders.
- **Principles and operational guidelines for the implementation of a national approach to credit in Irish higher education and training (NQAI 2006)** sets out the national approach to credit in higher education and training. It is intended to complement the National Framework of Qualifications. The Framework is an outcomes-based awards system, and that the national approach to credit is compatible with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation system (ECTS).
- **ECTS User's Guide** (*European Communities 2009*)
- **Accumulation of Credit through Certification of Subjects Policy** (This *scheme* is subject to more recent policies e.g. Assessment and Standards and policy on awards.)
- **Research Degree Programme Policy and Criteria** provides detailed information for prospective providers of research degree programmes including professional doctorate programmes.
- **Fee Schedule for HETAC Services** sets out the fees for validation and other HETAC services.

See the **Section 5** for information about where to obtain these documents. They are all available online.

3 The General Programme Validation Process

The process is governed by HETAC's *Core Validation Policy and Criteria*. This section provides additional detail.

The new programme development process is the responsibility of the provider. The provider should not assume that deficiencies in this development process can be compensated for by validation. Development must be thought through and be completed prior to applying for validation. However, the validation process will often lead to the enhancement of the programme.

3.1 Preparing, describing and presenting the new programme

The information about the programme should be prepared with the validation process in mind. It should provide sufficient information to enable the *expert panel* to judge whether or not the programme will enable the target learners to achieve the *minimum intended programme learning outcomes*.

An application for validation must supply a detailed description of the programme, its context, its educational objectives and its target learners and their characteristics. The *General Programme Validation Template (Appendix 3)* should be used for this purpose. The description should be accompanied by a *Proposed Programme Schedule (Appendix 1)*. The *programme assessment strategy* and *module assessment strategies* (see HETAC's *Assessment and Standards* document) must also be provided.

Applicants should refer to HETAC's *Policy and Draft Guidelines on Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental Awards 2008*. In particular, any minor awards associated with the programme should be identified clearly. See the **Appendix 1—Section 2.1.3** for the meanings of these *classes of award-types*.

The proposed programme's *target learners* should be identified. This is necessary so that the expert panel can satisfy itself that the proposed programme can meet their learning needs. The prerequisite learning (knowledge, skill and competence) should be specified along with any other assumptions concerning the target learners (e.g. adult learners, part-time learners, international students, learners who are preparing for entry into a particular profession).

The minimum intended programme learning outcomes must be clear, unambiguous and consistent with the relevant Awards Standards. The expert panel must satisfy itself that these are consistent with the relevant Awards Standards.

The provider must also provide a *critical self-assessment* of the proposed programme against the applicable validation criteria. The basic criteria for validation are set out in **section 3** of HETAC's *Core Validation Policy and Criteria*. The policy and criteria are supplemented by more specialised policy and criteria in the following documents:

- *Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards*
- *Research Degree Programme Validation Policy and Criteria*

The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act requires that where a programme of higher education and training is organised or procured, in whole or in part, by a provider ("the first mentioned provider") and is provided, in whole or in part, by another provider ("the second mentioned provider"), the first mentioned provider shall consult with the second mentioned provider before making an application for validation. HETAC will regard such an arrangement as collaborative provision and the programme concerned as a collaborative programme in the sense of HETAC's *Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards*. This policy calls for the establishment of a *consortium agreement* and additional *quality assurance procedures* for the collaborative provision.

If the proposed programme is *transnational*, in the sense of HETAC's *Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards*, HETAC should be consulted at an early stage in planning.

In summary the following shall be provided:

- *Proposed Programme Schedule* (see **Appendix 1**)
- Programme Information supplied using the *General Programme Validation Template* (see **Appendix 3**) this includes:
 - Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes
 - Profile of the Proposed Programme's Target Learners
 - Programme Assessment Strategy
 - Module Assessment Strategies
- *(Critical) Self-assessment* Report
- Consortium Agreement(s) (when applicable)
- Any additional/specific quality assurance procedures required for the programme

3.1.1 Submission of an application

Six printed copies of the application together with an electronic version should be sent to the Director of Academic Affairs at HETAC. Applications must be accompanied by the appropriate fee. The current schedule of fees is available on the HETAC website.

3.2 Processing of applications

Applications will be processed in accordance with the seven-step process set out in HETAC's *Core Validation Policy and Criteria*.

The first step includes a desk check. HETAC will check that the application includes all of the elements required in **section 3.1** (see **section 4.4** *Core Validation Policy and Criteria* for complete information about the seven steps in the process).

3.2.1 Timeline

Complete applications are normally processed in the order of arrival at HETAC. The targeted timescale for completion of the validation process is **twenty weeks** from the date of acknowledgement of the submission document.

Timescales can, however, vary significantly depending, for example, on the dates scheduled for meetings of HETAC's Academic Committee.

Providers should apply in sufficient time for the validation process to be completed before the planned commencement date of the programme.

Providers should also bear in mind that a programme may not be advertised as leading to a HETAC award until an *Order of Council* and *Certificate of Approval* have been received.

3.2.2 Communication protocols

Formal communications regarding key stages of the external assessment process will be between the HETAC representative as nominated by its Director of Academic Affairs (hereafter the *validation manager*) and the provider's registrar (or

equivalent) or his or her nominee. Routine or incidental communications may involve others.

3.2.3 Formation of the expert panel

Expert panels are formed by HETAC under the direction of the validation manager. The expert panel is constituted on a case-by-case basis in accordance with HETAC's *Core Validation Policy and Criteria* and *Participating in an evaluation panel as an expert assessor: Guidelines*.

Before an expert panel is formally approved the provider is invited to comment on the constitution of the expert panel and should at this stage declare any information that might give rise to a conflict of interest (actual or potential, real or apparent).

The expert panel must be approved by HETAC's Director of Academic Affairs before members are appointed formally.

3.2.4 The Expert Panel Chairperson

One expert panel member is appointed by HETAC as the chairperson to the expert panel. The chairperson is responsible for representing the expert panel, for chairing meetings of the expert panel and for chairing sessions at the site-visit.

The chairperson will represent the expert panel following the site visit. He or she, for example, will be consulted by HETAC when any modifications to the draft expert panel report are required (see **section 4.4** of HETAC's *Core Validation Policy and Criteria*).

3.2.5 The Expert Panel Secretary

A member of the HETAC executive will normally serve as secretary to the expert panel, alternatively an expert panel member will be appointed by HETAC as the secretary to the expert panel. The secretary is responsible for the compilation of the *draft expert panel report* (see **section 4.4** of HETAC's *Core Validation Policy and Criteria*) in consultation with the chairperson.

3.2.6 Induction of the Expert Panel and Information Provided to the Expert Panel Following Appointment

HETAC will arrange for the expert panel to be briefed on the validation policy and criteria and the broader context for validation.

The information provided (in due course) to each expert panel member (in printed and electronic forms): includes the relevant documents from the lists in **section 2** and **section 3.1** along with:

- Agenda for the site visit
- Details about the membership of the expert panel
- Template for an expert panel member to communicate his/her initial impressions

- Travel and Subsistence Claim Form/Information

3.2.7 Expert Panel Member's Initial Impressions

Panel members are required to consider the application in the context of HETAC's validation policy and criteria and to submit brief *confidential* written initial impressions to the validation manager prior to the site visit. A template for this report is provided in **Annex 5**. These submissions are considered to be transients of the deliberative process and will be destroyed when the panel report is finalised.

3.2.8 Site Visit

The site visit (i.e. visit to and meeting with the provider and see **section 4.4** of HETAC's *Core Validation Policy and Criteria*) includes the following steps:

- Previous evening – briefing and preliminary meeting
- Visit provider – following agreed agenda
- Conclusion of meeting – brief feedback to provider

3.2.9 Draft Expert Panel Report

The expert panel secretary prepares a report in consultation with the members of the expert panel. Normally the report should be with HETAC within three weeks of the site visit (see **section 4.4** of HETAC's *Core Validation Policy and Criteria*).

4 Interpretations

Access	The process by which learners may commence a programme of education and training having received recognition for knowledge, skill or competence required. (See the NQAI document Policies, actions and procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners.)
Approved Programme Schedule	Programme schedule for the validated programme at the point of validation or as legitimately amended following validation. See HETAC's <i>Core Validation Policy and Criteria</i> 2010 (HETAC Reference E.1.8).
Awarding body	An awarding body is a body that makes awards namely: HETAC or a recognised institution with delegated authority to make awards.
Award	An award which is conferred, granted or given by an awarding body and which records that a learner has acquired a standard of knowledge, skill or competence.
Awards Standards	Together with the award type descriptors of the NFQ, the awards standards describe the learning, in terms of knowledge, skill and/or competence, that is to be acquired by learners before particular higher education and training awards may be made. The awards standards describe the learning required to pass. See HETAC's Assessment and Standards 2009 for more details.
Award title	See Appendix 1—Section 2.1.1 .
Award-type descriptor	An award-type descriptor is a description of a class of named awards sharing common features and level. Award-type descriptors are determined by the National Framework of Qualifications.
Capstone	Capstone modules and stages are designed to provide an opportunity for learners to integrate learning attained in other modules and stages. They are always necessary. An example of a

	capstone module is the process by which a learner produces a dissertation under supervision. (Assessment and Standards 2010)
Certificate of Programme Validation	A certificate issued to a registered provider by HETAC which confirms that specified programme(s) are validated and which sets out the intakes approved and conditions of validation.
Conversion programme	This is a loosely defined term. It normally signifies a programme designed to enable a graduate to acquire a qualification in a new field building on learning in another field at the same NFQ level.
Critical self-assessment	A self assessment against the validation criteria which outlines the proposals strengths, assumptions and weaknesses (e.g. risks, vulnerabilities). A self-assessment which only reveals strengths is not a critical one.
Delegated Authority	HETAC may delegate authority to a recognised institution of the Council (i.e. an institution specified under section 24 of the Qualifications [Education and Training] Act 1999) to make awards.
ECTS	See ECTS Users' Guide (2009) 'ECTS credits are attached to the workload of a fulltime year of formal learning (academic year) and the associated learning outcomes. In most cases, student workload ranges from 1,500 to 1,800 hours for an academic year, whereby one credit corresponds to 25 to 30 hours of work.'
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. Published by ENQA in 2005 and available at http://www.enqa.eu
Expert Panel	See HETAC's <i>Core Validation Policy and Criteria 2010</i> (HETAC Reference E.1.8) and also <i>Participating in an evaluation panel as an expert assessor: Guidelines 2009</i> (HETAC Reference H.4.3)
General Programme Validation Template	See Appendix 3 .
Institutional Review Policy	See 'Policy on Institutional Review of Providers of Higher Education and Training', December 2007 (HETAC Reference H.1.1)
Major Award	See Appendix 1 Section 2.1.3 .
Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcome	The interpretation here is from Assessment and Standards 2009. The minimum achievement (in terms of knowledge, skill and Programme Learning competence) that the learner is certified to have attained if he/she successfully completes a particular programme (i.e. passes all the required assessments). The minimum intended programme learning outcomes define the minimum learning outcomes for a particular programme at the programme level. These must always be specified by the provider. If the programme allows substantial choice, there may need to be variant forms of the minimum intended programme outcomes — e.g. a programme might allow a person to choose from a number of specialisations. A learner who completes a validated programme is eligible for the relevant award if he or she has demonstrated, through assessment (including by recognition of prior learning), attainment of the relevant minimum intended programme learning outcomes. In addition to minimum intended programme learning outcomes, the programme provider may aspire to describing other 'intended programme learning outcomes' beyond the minimum. In this

document, 'intended learning outcomes' refers to all or any of the intended outcomes, including the minimum ones. 'Minimum intended learning outcomes' refers exclusively to the minimum ones. The minimum intended programme learning outcomes identify the principal educational goal of the programme — effective assessment helps learners to attain that goal. Minimum intended programme learning outcomes are developed and maintained by providers. Programmes are designed to enable learners to achieve minimum intended programme learning outcomes. Minimum intended learning outcomes are specified for each of a programme's constituent modules.

The number of learning outcomes in a statement of intended learning outcomes is variable (depending, for example, on the semantics and the level of explicitness used). This is not a proxy for credit.

Teachers and learners may strive for additional learning outcomes that are beyond the minimum. In addition to 'minimum intended programme learning outcomes', providers may describe other levels of intended programme learning outcomes beyond the minimum.

See also intended learning outcomes in Assessment and Standards 2009.

**Minor Award
Module**

See **Appendix 1 Section 2.1.3.**

A programme of education and training of small volume. It is designed to be capable of being integrated with other modules into larger programmes. A module can be shared by different programmes. See HETAC's Assessment and Standards 2009 (p.53) for a more elaborate definition.

**Module Assessment
Strategy
Learning Environment**

See HETAC's Assessment and Standards 2009 (p14).

Learning environments are diverse. Teachers and other learners are part of a learner's learning environment. Learning environments have both physical and social structures. Learners interact with the learning environment; the environment responds to the learner, and the learner to the environment. (Assessment and Standards 2009.)

Order of Council

This is a declaration on behalf of the Council that a programme is validated.

Prerequisite Learning

Knowledge, skill and competence to be attained prior to enrolment on a programme or module.

Programme

A "programme of education and training" means any process by which learners may acquire knowledge, skill or competence and includes courses of study or instruction, apprenticeships, training and employment.'

**Programme Assessment
Strategy**

See HETAC's Assessment and Standards 2009 (pp. 13-14).

**Proposed Programme
Schedule**

See **Appendix 1.**

Provider

A 'provider of a programme of education and training' is a person who, or body which, provides, organises or procures a programme of education and training.

Quality Assurance Procedures	<p>Providers of programmes of higher education and training are required to establish, having regard to existing procedures, if any, procedures for quality assurance for the purpose of further improving and maintaining the quality of education and training which is provided, organised or procured by that provider as part of the programme concerned and shall agree those procedures with the Council.</p> <p>HETAC agrees institutional procedures at registration.</p> <p>Programme-specific procedures are normally agreed at validation.</p>
Recognition of Prior Learning	<p>See 'Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training (NQAI June 2005' and HETAC's Assessment and Standards 2009 (pp. 29-30).</p>
Registered HETAC Provider	<p>See HETAC's Policy on Registration of Providers 2008 (HETAC Reference D.1.2).</p>
Special-purpose Award Stage	<p>See Appendix 1 Section 2.1.3.</p> <p>Programmes are normally divided into stages and modules.</p> <p>Stages and modules are sub-programmes within programmes. Conceptually, a stage is a rung on a progression ladder. It may comprise a set of modules at a similar level. Typically, the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) level of the intended learning outcomes of constituent modules increases as a learner progresses through successive stages of a programme.</p> <p>Even where modules are not taken in parallel, the stage concept is important for grouping modules with the same level (NFQ) of learning and requiring a similar level of maturity in the relevant discipline. Full-time learners study all the modules in a stage in parallel, while part-time learners may study as little as one module at a time.</p> <p>Staged programmes are frequently organised in semesters. A semester is a period of time equal to half an academic year. Often, it corresponds to a 30-credit stage that extends to at least half an academic year. (Assessment & Standards 2009)</p>
Supplemental Award Target learners	<p>See Appendix 1 Section 2.1.3.</p> <p>Target learners are persons with specified prerequisite learning and other legitimate prescribed characteristics (e.g. a programme might be designed for students who wish to study through a particular language).</p>
Validation	<p>“Validation” means the process by which an awarding body shall satisfy itself that a learner may attain knowledge, skill or competence for the purpose of an award made by the awarding body.’</p>
Validation Manager	<p>See Section 3.2.2</p>

5 References

- European Communities *ECTS User's Guide* 2009
HETAC *Assessment and Standards* 2009 (HETAC Reference C.1.1)
HETAC *Core Validation Policy and Criteria* 2010 (HETAC Reference E.1.8)

General Programme Validation Manual 2010

HETAC *Effective Practice Guideline for External Examining* 2009 (HETAC Reference C.2.4)
HETAC *Customer Charter* 2004 (HETAC Reference K.4.1)
HETAC *Participating in an evaluation panel as an expert assessor: Guidelines* 2009 (HETAC reference H.4.3)
HETAC *Policy on Institutional Review of Providers of Higher Education and Training* 2007 (HETAC Reference H.1.1)
HETAC *Policy on Registration of Providers* 2008 (HETAC Reference D.1.2)
HETAC *Policy and Draft Guidelines on Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental Awards* 2008 (HETAC Reference A.1.1)
HETAC *Provider Monitoring Policy and Procedures* 2010 (HETAC Reference F.1.2)
NQAI *Policies, actions and procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners* 2003
HETAC *Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards* 2008 (HETAC Reference E.1.3)
HETAC *Research Degree Programme Policy and Criteria* 2010 (HETAC Reference E.1.7)
IHEQN *Provision of Education to International Students: Code of Practice and Guidelines for Irish Higher Education Institutions* 2009 (HETAC Reference E.2.3)
NQAI *Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of a National Approach to Credit in Irish Higher Education and Training* NQAI 2006
NQAI *Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training* 2005
HETAC *Table of HETAC Named Awards* 2007

Appendix 1 Proposed Programme Schedule

1 Introduction

This document is a guideline on preparing a HETAC *proposed programme schedule* (see **Section 5** for a template). A programme schedule is a summary of the information about the programme which HETAC records on its database. The proposed programme schedule following any modifications required for validation becomes the *approved programme schedule*.

The format of approved programme schedules is tightly specified and providers must strictly adhere to the guideline.

Following a decision to validate a new programme (and following approval of a programmatic review of an existing programme) the following are issued to the registered provider:

- Approved Programme Schedule
- Order of Council
- Certificate of Programme Validation

The provider, upon receipt of these documents, is required to check that they are accurate in all respects. If there are any discrepancies or inconsistencies in the approved programme schedule or *Order of Council*, the provider should notify HETAC immediately in writing.

Adherence to an *approved programme schedule* is part of the contract between HETAC (as an awarding body) and the provider. The *Reference Assessment Protocols in Assessment and Standards 2009* make references to the application of the approved programme schedule.

2 Main Content of Approved Programme Schedules

2.1 Programme-level Information

Programmes are normally divided into *stages* and *modules*. *Stages* and modules are sub-programmes within programmes (see **section 4.2** *Assessment and Standards 2009*).

The programme's *minimum intended programme learning outcomes* together with its *minimum prerequisite learning requirements* and its total *credit* (ECTS²) influence the determination of the:

- Programme Title
- Award Title (including Award Type)
- Award Class (Major, Minor, Special purpose or Supplemental)
- NFQ Level of the Award (and any exit or embedded awards)

All of the above are addressed in the *Approved Programme Schedule* along with other key information about the programme. It is important to appreciate that the programme schedule is but a summary. The detail underpinning the proposed programme schedule must be elaborated in any application for validation.

² Note that ECTS stands for the European Credit Transfer System. It is described in detail by the *ECTS User's Guide* (see references). Credit is related to learner effort not of any particular learner but rather in an average sense. The best way to understand this is to consider that the average workload of a fulltime student in European higher education is considered to be 60 Credits in per academic year.

Note: The *Principles and operational guidelines for the implementation of a national approach to credit in Irish higher education and training* (NQAI 2006) requires that there be at least 60 credits (ECTS) of new learning at the NFQ level of a major award before that award can be made.

Note: *Sectoral Convention 5* (Assessment and Standards 2009) on the Post-award Achievement required for an additional major award at the same level.

2.1.1 Award Title

Award titles must be consistent with the *Table of HETAC Named Awards* which is available on the HETAC website. In practical terms the specification of a named award consists of three parts as illustrated in the following table.

Named Award Specification	Title restrictions	Standards Determination
root e.g. <i>Honours Bachelor</i>	Title regulated by the NFQ	general standard regulated by the NFQ
cluster e.g. <i>of Arts</i>	Title regulated by HETAC	Standard Regulated by HETAC by Field and fine-tuned at validation
specialisation e.g. <i>in Fine Art</i>	Specialisation title may be regulated by HETAC but normally only loosely	

For historical reasons the relevant information is expressed on parchments in two parts the 'Award Title' and the 'Programme Title', for example:

	Root	Cluster	Specialisation
Award Title	Honours Bachelor	of Science	
Programme Title	Honours Bachelor	of Science	in Nursing in General Nursing ³
HETAC named award	<i>Honours Bachelor</i>	<i>of Science</i>	
Named Award	<i>Honours Bachelor</i>	<i>of Science</i>	<i>in Nursing in General Nursing</i>

2.1.2 Programme Title

The **programme title** consists of the award title plus a **specialisation**. An example is: *Higher Certificate in Arts* (award title) *in Community Development* (specialisation). The programme title is a 'named award' in terms of the NFQ.

When choosing proposed programme title, or changing the title of an existing programme, it is important to ensure that it accurately and concisely reflects the programme and its intended learning outcomes. Programme titles should be formal and complete. Abbreviations should be avoided. The programme title may appear on the parchment received by the learner at graduation.

Once a programme has been approved, it is important that all communications concerning the programme use the Award Title and Programme Title exactly as they appears on the Order of Council issued to the provider by HETAC.

2.1.3 Classes of Award-types (Award Class)

There are four classes of award types available (award class), namely, Major, Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental. See pp. 30-31 of *Policies and Criteria for the Establishment of the National Framework of Qualifications [NQAI]*. The following

³ Note that there are 'Awards Standards' for both Science and for Nursing but nursing programmes normally use only the latter.

material is from that document which should be consulted for a more complete distinction of the classes of award-types.

Award-types which fulfil a broader range of purposes are labelled major award-types. Other, more limited or specialised needs are met by minor, supplemental and special-purpose award-types.

Major awards: Major award-types are the principal class of awards made at each level. At most levels, such award-types capture a typical range of achievements at the level. They include outcomes from many of the sub-strands of knowledge, skill and competence appropriate to the level. An example of this at level 8 is the honours bachelor's degree. All major awards are listed on the *Table of HETAC Named Awards*.

Minor awards: Minor award-types provide recognition for learners who achieve a range of learning outcomes, without achieving the specific combination of learning outcomes required for a major award. The range of learning outcomes will have relevance in their own right. The minor award will also be a means of identifying the knowledge, skill or competence previously acquired by the learner. All Minor Awards must be linked to a specified approved major award.

Special-purpose awards: Special-purpose award-types are made for specific, relatively narrow, purposes. They may comprise learning outcomes that also form part of major awards. However, where there is a need for separate certification of a set of outcomes, there should be a separate award. For example, there is a statutory obligation for construction workers to have certification of their competence in health and safety (Safe Pass). Special-purpose awards need not be linked to a major award

Supplemental awards: Supplemental award-types are for learning which is additional to a previous award. Programmes leading to such awards may be described as refresher, updating or continuing education and training. In some cases there may be regulatory requirements for such awards in order for learners to retain a licence to practice granted in respect of the initial award. Such supplemental awards are not at a higher level than the initial award.

2.1.4 Award NFQ Level

The NFQ level of major awards is related to the Award Title via the 'root' which defines the award-type (e.g. Honours Bachelor Degree). This is also the case for other award classes but in those cases the NFQ level is integrated into the award title for example: a *Level 7 Diploma*.

The NFQ Levels for major award types are indicated in the *Table of HETAC Named Awards*. For example, Level 6 for a Higher Certificate, Level 9 for a Master's Degree.

2.1.5 Main Modes of Delivery

For the purpose of the Approved Programme Schedule, two modes of delivery can be recorded. These are: full-time (FT) and part-time (PT). Both enable the *Accumulation of Credits and Certification of Subjects (ACCS)*.

Therefore, the Approved Programme Schedule applies to ACCS candidates (i.e. learners who study at their own pace e.g. those who take modules for continuing professional development purposes). This applies whether the mode of delivery is full-time or part-time.

2.2 Stage information

Programmes are organised in *stages* (see *Assessment and Standards 2009*).

Typically a stage is an academic year (60 credits). In smaller programmes a stage may be a *semester* (30 credits) or some other appropriate division. However, it is quite common for a small programme to consist of just one stage.

All programmes must include an *award stage*. This is the final stage of a programme. Successful completion of the award stage entitles a learner to the award assuming he or she has achieved the prerequisite learning and met any other requirements.

Stages other than the award stage should be labelled on the proposed programme schedule by numbers in the sequence 1,2,3, etc., the final stage being labelled as the 'Award Stage'. The semester should be indicated if appropriate: Semester 1 or Semester 2. Many programmes are not divided into semesters.

2.2.1 Stage Credit

The total credit for each stage should be displayed clearly in the programme schedule.

2.2.2 Calculation of the Award Classification

In accordance with *Assessment and Standards 2009*, the approved programme schedule is the basis along with the *module assessment strategies* and *programme assessment strategy* for calculating award classifications and recording other assessment results; granting exemption(s) for modules and implementing pass by compensation for programme stages.

Award classifications (see *Assessment and Standards 2009*) are based on the credit-weighted mean of the contributing modules. The programme assessment strategy should detail the approach to assessment (see **section 2** p 13 of *Assessment and Standards 2009*).

Normally the contributing modules are those at the award stage. In this case at least one of those may be a capstone module (e.g. a final year project). A portion of results from earlier stages may also be used to contribute to the award classification. If this is the case it should be explained by the programme assessment strategy and noted as a Special Regulations on the Approved Programme Schedule (See **Section 3 below**).

The following table demonstrates the calculation of a credit-weighted mean.

Module	ECTS Credit	Module Result (%)	Calculation of contribution to overall grade	Contribution to programme result (%)
Maths	5	60%	$5/60 * 60$	5
English	15	55%	$15/60 * 55$	13.75
French	10	85%	$10/60 * 85$	14.17
German	10	40%	$10/60 * 40$	6.67
Economics	20	77%	$20/60 * 77$	25.67
	60		Credit-weighted mean result (%):	65.26

2.3 Module Information

Only modules included in the Approved Programme Schedule may be considered for *single subject certification* (ACCS).

All modules in a programme should have a unique and meaningful *module title*. The following should be borne in mind when choosing module titles:

- The module title will appear on all official documentation (and in the HETAC database) exactly as it appears on the Approved Programme Schedule.
- Module titles (individually and collectively) are most effective when they are clear, concise, coherent and consistent.
- The title should accurately reflect the module content. Abbreviations (e.g. acronyms) militate against clarity.
- Module titles should be as future-proofed as possible.
- Normally, the module title should not exceed 70 characters (including spaces).
- In each stage the mandatory modules should appear first followed by elective modules.
- Where a module spreads over two semesters or stages the module title should be differentiated. If, for example 'Chemistry' spreads over two semesters the module titles 'Chemistry 1' and 'Chemistry 2' should be used.
- In the case of ACCS learners the module titles will appear on single subject certificates along with the corresponding number of credits.
- The information in the Approved Programme Schedule must correspond exactly with the *broadsheet of results* (see *Assessment and Standards* 2009) which must be submitted to HETAC before any awards will be made.

2.3.1 Semesters Number and Module Reference/Number

In the case of semesterised programmes, the approved programme schedule should also indicate the semester number (1 or 2).

The proposed programme schedule does not require a module reference number but nevertheless modules should be appropriately labelled.

2.3.2 Module Status

The status of each subject should be indicated in accordance with the following HETAC guidelines:

- Mandatory (M): each learner must present and pass in all mandatory modules.
- Elective (E): in addition to the above a candidate must present and pass in the number of Elective Examination Modules to achieve the quota of credits for the stage.

Programmes may include capstone modules (see *Assessment and Standards*). All learners should be required to take some capstone modules to enable them to achieve the minimum intended programme learning outcomes (see Section 4 *Assessment and Standards* 2009). Such requirements should be identified under Special Regulations (**section 5**) where necessary.

2.3.3 Hours of Learning Effort

The ECTS User's Guide 2009 should be used to inform the calculation of learning effort.

The learner effort (measured in hours) required to complete a module should be estimated in terms of the total contact hours and the total independent effort hours. The following table explains the difference between contact hours and independent effort.

Contact hours	Independent effort
Lecture (up to 50 minutes per 1 hour timetabled lecture)	Placement
Tutorial	Assignments
Practical	Self-directed independent Work
Seminars	

2.3.4 Allocation of Marks within Modules

The grade for each module must be expressed either as a percentage or an alpha grade.

The *grade* (percentage mark or alphabetic grade) for a particular module will normally be made up of contributions from more than one of the following elements:

- Continuous Assessment (CA)
- Project Work (Proj.)
- Practical (Prac.)
- Final Examination (Final)

The four percentage values listed above indicate the *weighting* to be given in the overall grade/mark to the various assessment elements. These weightings are applied to the percentage point values achieved for each of the elements in the percentage grading system or the grade point values if the alphabetic grading system is used. In this way an overall percentage-point or grade point result may be obtained for the module.

The weightings reported must be taken from the module assessment strategy.

2.3.5 Number of Credits for the Module

Each module is allocated a certain number of credits (whole numbers only). Credits, in general, should be assigned in multiples of 5. The total number of credits for each stage of a programme which equates with one academic year's full time learning should equal 60. The total number of credits for a semester should normally equal 30.

Credits are allocated to each module. The 'quantum' for each module is defined as the amount of total effort a student must devote to achieving the intended learning outcomes of that module. This effort might include attendance at lectures, practical work, participating in tutorials, completing projects, independent study including time spent researching etc. Under ECTS convention, each credit represents 25-30 hours of student effort derived from the notion that 60 credits represents the workload of an average full-time student during one academic year. It is worth noting that in this context, workload refers to the notional time/effort within which the average learner may expect to complete the required learning outcomes for a

given module. Credit is not directly related to time put in by a student, for example, the learning effort for work placement may only be a fraction of the hours spent working.

2.3.6 Other information

Other information that should be recorded for each module includes:

- The NFQ-Level of the module's *minimum intended learning outcomes* this is not mandatory and must be confirmed at validation.
- Prerequisites for the module (this does not appear on the programme schedule) can be expressed as knowledge, skill and competence, or where appropriate by listing other modules that must be passed prior to starting a module). HETAC programme schedules assume that a learner successfully completed all prior stages before being entitled to start a new stage (the prior stages are the prerequisites). Any deviation from this should be recorded under Special Regulations (**section 3**).

3 Special Regulations

Special regulations provide for the inclusion of special rules which pertain to the programme. They are included on an approved programme schedule in exceptional circumstances. They require the same level of approval as all other entries on the approved programme schedule. These rules are exceptional as they may add to or derogate from the default requirements of the *Reference Assessment Protocols* in HETAC's *Assessment and Standards 2009*. The general style and terminology of special regulations should be consistent with HETAC's *Assessment and Standards 2009*. An example of a special regulation is the exclusion of a particular module from pass-by-compensation.

The text of a special regulation must be concise (not exceeding a maximum of 280 characters).

The special regulations should indicate the modules which contribute to the award classification if these come from a stage other than the Award Stage. This material must be taken from the [Programme Assessment Strategy](#).

Note: Sectoral Convention 3 (*Assessment and Standards 2009*) on Determination of Award Classification states: *Calculation of the award classification shall be based on the credit-weighted mean value of the allowable grades (i.e. those that contribute to the classification) for modules of a specific programme which has been validated by HETAC for the purpose of making the award.*

4 References

- European Communities *ECTS User's Guide* 2009
HETAC *Assessment and Standards 2009* (HETAC Reference C.1.1)
HETAC *Core Validation Policy and Criteria* 2010 (HETAC Reference E.1.8)
HETAC *Effective Practice Guideline for External Examining* 2009 (HETAC Reference C.2.4)
HETAC *Customer Charter* 2004 (HETAC Reference K.4.1)
HETAC *Participating in an evaluation panel as an expert assessor: Guidelines* 2009 (HETAC reference H.4.3)
HETAC's *Policy and Draft Guidelines on Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental Awards* 2008. (HETAC Reference A.1.1)
HETAC *Policy on Institutional Review of Providers of Higher Education and Training* 2007 (HETAC Reference H.1.1)
HETAC *Policy on Registration of Providers* 2008 (HETAC Reference D.1.2)
HETAC *Provider Monitoring Policy and Procedures* 2010 (HETAC Reference F.1.2)
NQAI *Policies, actions and procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners* 2003

General Programme Validation Manual 2010

HETAC Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards 2008
(HETAC Reference E.1.3)

HETAC Research Degree Programme Policy and Criteria 2010 (HETAC Reference E.1.7)

IHEQN Provision of Education to International Students: Code of Practice and Guidelines for Irish Higher Education Institutions 2009 (HETAC Reference E.2.3)

NQAI Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of a National Approach to Credit in Irish Higher Education and Training NQAI 2006

NQAI Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training 2005

HETAC Table of HETAC Named Awards 2007

5 Proposed Programme Schedule Template for a Stage

Note that minor and embedded awards each require separate schedules.

Name of Provider:												
Programme Title (i.e. Named Award):		e.g. Higher Certificate in Arts in Fine Arts										
Award Title⁶ (HETAC Named Award):		e.g. Higher Certificate in Arts										
Stage Exit Award Title³												
Modes of Delivery (FT/PT):												
Award Class ⁴	Award NFQ level	Award EQF Level	Stage (1,2,3,4,..., or Award Stage):		Stage NFQ Level ²	Stage EQF Level ²	Stage Credit (ECTS)	Date Effective	ISCED Subject code			
Module Title (Up to 70 characters including spaces)		Semester no where applicable. (Semester 1 or Semester2)	Module		ECTS Credit Number ⁵	Total Student Effort Module (hours)			Allocation Of Marks (from the module assessment strategy)			
			Status	NFQ Level ¹ where specified		Total Hours	Contact Hours	Hours of Independent Work	C.A. %	Proj. %	Prac. %	Final. %
Example 1		1	M	L	5	150	30	60	10	0	20	70
		1	M									
		1	E									
Special Regulations (Up to 280 characters)												

Please see the accompanying notes (next page) on the use of the *Proposed Programme Schedule Template for a Stage*.

Further notes on completing the Proposed Programme Schedule Template for a Stage

- 1 *This level may only be defined if the intended module learning outcomes have been independently assessed (at validation) as being at a particular NFQ framework level.*
- 2 *This level may only be defined if the intended stage learning outcomes have been specified explicitly and independently assessed (at validation) as being at a particular NFQ framework level.*
- 3 *A stage exit award may only be established if the intended programme learning outcomes have been specified explicitly for the programme leading to that award and that programme has been validated using the relevant awards standards.*
- 4 *Award class should be either Major or Minor or Special-purpose or Supplemental.*
- 5 *Student learning effort is represented by ECTS credit (See ECTS Users' Guide 2009). Applicants should study the guide carefully before assigning ECTS credit.*
- 6 *For the purpose of the schedule only the root and cluster parts of the award title are used (see **Appendix 1 Section 2.1.1**).*

Appendix 2 Differential Validation

1 Introduction

All programmes must be validated in their entirety. Any significant change to a programme results in a new programme that must be validated *de novo*. In some cases, however, the change may be such as to allow the findings of the original validation process to be reused. An example of this is where a programme designed to be provided at one location is modified to enable it to be provided at another. The modifications might, in this case, be the changed teaching staff and the changed facilities and resources and perhaps the changed quality assurance environment. If such a programme's curriculum and assessment remain unchanged they need not be re-examined in detail. The validation of the modified programme could focus on what has changed: the difference. This type of validation is called *differential validation*.

Differential validation as described above assumes that the programme was originally validated under HETAC's *Core Validation Policy and Criteria 2010*. Differential validation of programmes validated under earlier policies should also address the modifications required by the new validation policy (e.g. *minimum intended programme learning outcomes*, *programme assessment strategy*, etc.).

Differential validation must be approached with the same high level of rigor as any other type of validation. Applications for differential must systematically analyse the changes and their effect on the original programme. If there is any doubt about the applicability of the original validation then a fresh validation process should be undertaken.

Therefore, an application for differential validation of a programme must address in full the detail of the differences being proposed (with reference to the validated programme) and their rationale. Otherwise, the application should be presented in the normal way (see **section 3.1** of the *General Programme Validation Manual* and note the summary at the end of this section).

The following HETAC policies govern validation:

- *Core Validation Policy and Criteria*
- *Research Degree Programme Policy*
- *Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards Applies.*

Differential validation frequently arises in the context of *Collaborative Programmes*, *Transnational Programme*. HETAC's *Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards Applies* provides detailed guidance on the issues.

2 Quality Assurance

If the modified programme involves collaborative or transnational provision or the programme is to be provided at a new location this may have implications for the institutional quality assurance procedures of the provider or partner providers. The application for validation should include evidence of the agreement by HETAC of the institutional quality assurance procedures for transnational and/or collaborative provision or provision at the new location. Alternatively these procedures may be submitted for agreement with the validation application.

3 Differences from the Original Programme

The application for differential validation should describe all of the differences between the proposed programme and the programme upon which it is based (the original programme).

All sections of the *General Programme Validation Template* which are modified should be addressed by the application for differential validation. A copy of the application for validation for the original programme should be provided for reference.

4 Self-assessment

The implications of providing the modified programme in this new context should be explored in a self-assessment against the validation criteria.

Appendix 3 General Programme Validation Template

*This template is a guide for summarising **part** of the information required by HETAC for validation (see **section 3.2** of HETAC's General Programme Validation Manual). Explanatory text is italicised and may be deleted when using the template.*

The confidence of students and other stakeholders in higher education is more likely to be established and maintained through effective quality assurance activities which ensure that programmes are well-designed, regularly monitored and periodically reviewed, thereby securing their continuing relevance and currency.

*The validation criteria are outlined as follows (see **section 3** of HETAC's Core Validation Policy and Criteria for an elaboration of these):*

- *Standards: The **minimum intended programme learning outcomes** must be consistent with the relevant **awards standards** and the National Framework of Qualifications NFQ **award-type descriptors**.*
- *Access standard: The **prerequisite learning** for participation in the programme and any other assumed characteristics of the programme's **target learners** must be explicit.*
- *Learning: The programme must enable its **target learners** to attain the **minimum intended programme learning outcomes** reliably and efficiently (in terms of learner effort)*

The concept of minimum intended programme learning outcomes and its relation to teaching, learning and assessment are explained in HETAC's Assessment and Standards 2009.

Any application for validation must include a **critical self-assessment with evidence addressing the above criteria. This must be separately provided.**

1 Introduction

This section should provide a paragraph briefly outlining the proposed new programme.

2 Provider Profile

This section assumes that the programme is being provided by a single Registered HETAC Provider. If being provided collaboratively by a consortium the details of all partner providers should be provided (see HETAC's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards.) While much the following information will have already been provided to HETAC for registration it needs to be repeated here for the benefit of the expert panel during the validation process.

Registered HETAC Provider	
Name	
Address	

Contact for Validation (Normally the Registrar or Equivalent).	
Name:	
Title:	
Address:	
E-mail:	
Phone:	
Mobile:	

Programme Leader	
Name:	
Title:	
Address:	

E-mail:	
Phone:	
Mobile:	

Provider Type:	
-----------------------	--

The provider type should be selected from the following

(a) Non-profit Education and/ or Training

- *College*
- *Institute of Technology*
- *University*
- *If Other please specify*

(b) State Organisation:

- *Government Organisation*
- *Semi-State Body*
- *If Other please specify*

(c) Private Commercial Enterprise:

- *Please specify*

3 Contextual Information

This section should present under the following headings:

3.1 Brief description of the provider's organisation and management

3.2 Outline of the provider's mission and strategy

3.3 Brief outline of the programmes currently provided

*This section should discuss current provision and the relevant data should be provided below in **Annex 4.***

4 Outline of the Proposed Programme

The proposed programme schedule provides summary information about the programme (it may be inserted here or provided as an annex). This remainder of this section elaborates.

Programme Title	
Commencement Date	

Base Locations for provision	
Address	

Modes of Delivery

Modes of delivery include full-time, part-time, distance learning, e-learning, outreach centre. List (in the box provided) all modes of delivery which apply.

Work placements for which credit is allocated

If the programme involves work placements for which credit is allocated this should be briefly noted here. If it does not then insert 'not applicable' in the box provided. Report the amount of time to be spent on placement. This should not be confused with credit allowed which should also be reported.

Access Arrangements

Summarise the minimum qualifications required of a typical target learner for access to the programme. More detailed information about prerequisite learning and recognition of prior learning should be addressed later.

Transfer Arrangements		
	Programme Name	Provider
Stage 1		
Stage 2		
Stage 3		
Stage 4		

Indicate at least two higher education and training programmes that graduates of the proposed programme will be entitled to transfer to upon completion of each stage.

Progression Arrangements	
Programme Name	Provider

Indicate at least two higher education and training programmes to which graduates of the proposed programme will be entitled to progress.

Proposed Enrolment	
---------------------------	--

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Minimum					
Maximum					

The minimum and maximum numbers here may become conditions of validation.

5 Programme Proposal

5.1 Educational Objectives and their Assessment

5.1.1 Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes

This section should set out the minimum intended programme learning outcomes (MIPOs) in terms of knowledge, skill and competence (see Assessment and Standards 2009). Note that the MIPOs are for the programme as a whole. It is not sufficient to list the minimum intended module learning outcomes for the constituent modules.

5.1.2 Applicable Awards Standards

This section should list the applicable (HETAC) Awards Standards used when designing the programme. The MIPOs should be consistent with the applicable Awards Standards (see HETAC's website).

5.1.3 Transferable Skills

The minimum intended learning outcomes should include transferable skills (examples include: critical thinking, problem solving, written and other communication skills, time-management, team-working, and leadership.).

5.1.4 Other Educational Objectives of the Programme

This section should set out intended learning outcomes additional to the MIPOs. It should also for example include objectives such as meeting the educational requirements for entry into a specified profession including regulated professions.

5.2 Rationale for the Programme

5.2.1 Consistency of the Programme with the Provider's Mission and Strategy

In principle Registered HETAC Providers may apply for validation of programmes involving courses of prescribed learning at NFQ levels 6-9 in any discipline. Research programmes (Level 9 and Level 10) are covered by HETAC's Research Degree Programme Policy and Criteria 2010. In practice provider's capacity will limit the NFQ levels and discipline-areas in which new programmes can be provided. New programmes must be compatible with the provider's mission and strategy.

5.2.2 Comparison with similar programmes offered by other providers

See Criterion 3(a). This topic should be addressed in full in the critical self assessment. In this section it is sufficient to list the programmes used for comparison.

5.2.3 Employment Potential for the Programme's Graduates

This section should identify potential employment opportunities for graduates. Quantitative as well as qualitative information should be provided where feasible. The reports of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (www.skillsireland.ie) should be consulted.

5.2.4 Profile of the Proposed Programme's Target Learners

5.2.5 Learner Demand for the Programme

Projected demand for the programme from learners.

5.2.6 Consultation with Employers about the Programme

Prospective employers should be consulted when planning the new programme and during its development.

5.2.7 Any Other Research Findings Concerning the New Programme

5.2.8 Business Plan for the New Programme

Programmes should only be submitted for validation if they are financially viable otherwise quality may be jeopardised.

5.2.9 Protection for Learners

Detail the arrangements for the protection for learners in the event that the programme can no longer be provided at some future stage, as required by Section 43 of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999.

5.3 Access

5.3.1 Access Criteria

Provide details of the minimum prerequisite learning (knowledge, skill and competence) required to access the programme.

Similar details should also be provided about prerequisite learning for access (or transfer) to higher stages of the programme.

State the minimum English language competence required for participation in the programme.

Indicate the kinds of qualifications which would demonstrate the achievement of the access requirements above.

If the programme is designed for learners who have completed the leaving certificate (or equivalent) indicate the minimum access requirements in terms of leaving certificate performance (or equivalent) including any subject requirements.

5.3.2 Access Processes Including Recognition of Prior Learning

Details should also be provided about the processes in place for the assessment of learners entering the programme on the basis of being mature learners, or through recognition of prior learning or assessment of prior experiential learning (see NQAI Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training 2005).

Provide details of the process in place to determine whether or not foreign qualifications meet the access requirements.

Details of the processes for the transfer of learners into the programme at other than the commencement stage should also be provided.

5.4 Programme Organisation

This section should make reference to the proposed programme schedule the content of which does not need to be repeated here. The organisation of the programme should be addressed under the following headings.

5.4.1 Stage Descriptors

*Programmes are normally organised in stages. This section should set out the objectives for each stage with reference to the proposed programme schedule (**Appendix 1**).*

5.4.2 Teaching and Learning Strategies

Outline the intended teaching and learning strategies at stage level and programme level. Note that more detailed module teaching and learning strategies will need to be provided in the module descriptors.

These should address the opportunities for learning in the context of the minimum intended programme learning outcomes and the programme's prerequisite learning.

5.4.3 Learning Environment

See HETAC's Core Validation Policy and Criteria.

5.4.4 Work-placement

If the programme involves work-placement provide details here. If the work-placement is integrated into one or more modules cite the modules here and provide the details in the relevant module descriptors.

5.4.5 Major Dissertations or Projects

Honours bachelor's degree and master's degree programmes will always include a major (capstone) dissertation or project at the award stage and possibly at other stages. Other programmes may also include such elements. This section should cite the relevant modules.

5.4.6 Programme Assessment Strategy

*The programme assessment strategy should be presented here (see **section 2.2.5 p13** of HETAC's Assessment and Standards 2009). The programme assessment strategy should make particular reference to the role of the capstone modules. Stage assessment strategies should be integrated into the programme assessment strategy.*

5.4.7 Collaborative Provision

If the programme involves collaborative provision see HETAC's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards for special requirements. The partner providers should be identified and consulted and involved in the application for validation. They should also be consulted be involved in the application for validation. The relevant consortium agreement must be established and should also be provided with the application. It should be made clear which partner provider is responsible for what. Collaborative provision should also be addressed under the section on quality assurance.

5.4.8 Transnational Provision

If the programme involves transnational provision see HETAC's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards for special requirements. Transnational provision should also be addressed under the section on quality assurance.

5.5 Internal Quality Assurance Procedures and Findings

5.5.1 Quality Assurance Procedures for the Proposed Programme

This section should address the quality assurance procedures which are particular to the proposed programme. Programmes can only be submitted by providers that have quality assurance procedures agreed with HETAC. The quality assurance manual should be made available in electronic form and the relevant parts cited in this section. According to ESG the quality assurance of programmes and awards are expected to include:

- *development and publication of explicit intended learning outcomes;*
- *careful attention to curriculum and programme design and content;*
- *specific needs of different modes of delivery (e.g. full time, part-time, distance learning, e-learning) and types of higher education (e.g. academic, vocational, professional);*
- *availability of appropriate learning resources;*
- *formal programme approval procedures by a body other than that teaching the programme;*
- *monitoring of the progress and achievements of students;*

- regular periodic reviews of programmes (including external panel members);
- regular feedback from employers, labour market representatives and other relevant organisations;
- participation of students in quality assurance activities.

5.5.2 Internal Pre-validation Approval Process

This section should describe in full the steps in the institutional approval process which has led to the submission of this application for validation and the findings of that process.

*Following the development of a programme the provider should conduct a self-assessment of the programme against the HETAC validation criteria (see **Section 3** of HETAC's Core Validation Policy and Criteria). The self-assessment should be reported separately as already noted.*

Following this it should conduct a formal internal pre-validation approval process to determine whether or not the programme is worthy of submission for validation. Normally this process should involve the review of the programme by an expert panel engaged by the provider. A report on this process should be produced and this should be inserted here. The quality of this report will help demonstrate the effectiveness of the provider's internal quality assurance procedures and its capacity to conduct programmatic reviews.

5.5.3 Arrangements for External Examining

The programme's arrangements for external examining should be detailed in this section with reference to the institutional quality assurance procedures (see HETAC's Effective Practice Guideline for External Examining).

This section should cite induction material which will be provided to the programme's external examiners. Copies of this material should be available for inspection at the site visit.

6 Module Descriptors

The following sections should be completed for every module in the programme.

6.1 Module Information

The following table should contain information extracted from the propose programme schedule.

Stage		
Semester (Semester1/Semester2 if applicable)		
Module Title		
Module Number/Reference		
Module Status (Mandatory/Elective)		
Module ECTS credit		
Module NFQ level (only if applicable)		
Pre-requisite Module Titles		
Co-requisite Module Titles		
Is this a capstone module? (Yes or No)		
List of Module Teaching Personnel		
Contact Hours	Non-contact Hours	Total Effort

							(Hours)
Lecture	Practical	Tutorial	Seminar	Assignment	Placement	Independent work	
Allocation of Marks (Within the Module)							
	Continuous Assessment	Project	Practical	Final Examination	Total is always 100%		
Percentage contribution					100%		

6.1.1 Intended Module Learning Outcomes

The intended module learning outcomes (knowledge, skill and competence) should be stated here. They should be clear, concise, consistent and coherent.

6.2 Module Objectives

Why is this module included in the programme and how does it relate the minimum intended programme learning outcomes?

6.3 Module Curriculum

A module is a process by which learners acquire knowledge skill and competence. This process should be described in detail here.

A teaching plan listing lectures, tutorials, practical work and continuous assessment tasks should be included giving sufficient detail to enable the expert panel to satisfy itself that the curriculum is appropriate to the intended module learning outcomes.

6.4 Reading lists and other learning materials

A list of core textbooks, lecture notes, e-learning resources and other teaching and learning materials should be included. Copies of these should be available for examination by the expert panel at the site visit.

Any supplementary learning materials should be listed.

6.5 Module Learning Environment

See HETAC's Core Validation Policy and Criteria.

6.6 Module Teaching and Learning Strategy

Full details should be provided on the intended teaching and learning strategies. These should address the opportunities for learning in the context of the minimum intended programme learning outcomes and the module's prerequisite learning.

This section should be cross-referenced with the following one on the module assessment strategy particularly regarding the role of assessment in the promotion of learning.

In the case of capstone modules this section should explain how learning acquired in other modules is integrated.

If the module involves the use of e-learning tools or laboratory facilities or such like this should be noted and the availability of such facilities should be confirmed below under Facilities and Resources.

6.7 Module Assessment Strategy

*The module assessment strategy should be provided (see **section 2.2.5 p14** of HETAC's Assessment and Standards 2009).*

6.7.1 Sample Assessment with Rubrics

Representative samples of final examination paper questions and continuous assessment tasks should be provided in Annex 2 for each module.

*These should be accompanied by criterion referenced grading schemes (see *Assessment and Standards 2009*) illustrating how learner's responses to assessment tasks will be graded.*

7 Programme Teaching Staff

7.1 Membership of the Programme Board

7.2 Profile of Teaching Staff

This section should describe the teaching staff profile. Annex 1 should include curriculum vitae for each staff member.

7.3 Additional Expertise which will be Made Available to the Programme

8 Relevant Facilities and Services

This section should list and describe the relevant facilities and resources available to the programme's learners.

- *Academic*
 - *Library Holdings*
 - *Information and Communication Resources*
 - *E-learning Resources*
 - *Study Facilities*
 - *Laboratories, Workshops and Studios*
 - *Lecture Theatres*
 - *Facilities for Learners with Special Education and Training Needs*
 - *Facilities for Disabled Learners*
 - *etc.*
- *Other*
 - *Common Room*
 - *Health and Welfare Facilities*
 - *Facilities for International Students*
 - *etc.*

Annex 1. Curricula Vitae of Lecturers/Tutors

The following headings should be used:

- Name
- Qualifications (with date and awarding body)
- Employment history
- Teaching experience history
- Current teaching load
- Specialisation
- Publications
- Professional memberships
- Affiliations

Annex 2. Sample Examinations & C. A.

Representative samples of final examination paper questions and continuous assessment tasks should be provided in Annex 2 for each module.

These should be accompanied by criterion referenced grading schemes (see Assessment and Standards 2009) illustrating how learner's responses to assessment tasks will be graded.

Annex 3 Statutory Declaration

A template for this is available on HETAC's website.

Annex 4 List of Currently Provided Programmes

List of the Registered HETAC Provider's Currently Provided Programmes (Further and Higher Education and Training)					
Reference Code	NFQ Level	Programme Title	Last Programmatic Review Date	Validation Date	Awarding Body

Annex 5 Template for Assessor's Initial Impressions

The validation criteria are set out in detail in Section 3.2 of HETAC's Core Validation Policy and Criteria (2010). The initial impressions should briefly identify, based on the submission material, some of the proposals strengths and weaknesses. They should also identify specific topics for exploration during the site visit. One page of text should suffice.