

St. Nicholas Montessori College Ireland
Higher Education and Training Awards Council



Quality Assurance Handbook

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Section A

1 Introduction

Purpose and Rationale of Quality Assurance Procedures

1.1 Quality Assurance: Three Strand Approach

St. Nicholas Montessori College has a commitment to quality assurance. Its procedures embrace key elements in a three-strand approach:

Self-evaluation External review Information to and from stakeholders
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1.2 Key Questions

The procedures emanating from this approach attempt to ensure that the following questions are answered:

- What is the quality ethos of St. Nicholas Montessori College?
- What procedures incorporate this ethos throughout the institution?
- How is this ethos evidenced in the programmes/courses it provides?
- How does St. Nicholas Montessori College systematically monitor its progress towards achieving a range of quality goals?
- How does it set out to further enhance as well as maintain the quality of educational provision?
- How are the findings of the quality assurance procedures used to improve the quality of education that meets the needs of learners?
- How does St. Nicholas Montessori College monitor the effectiveness of the services provided to the learner?
- How is corrective action taken to remedy deficiencies identified in the quality assurance procedures?
- How is relevant information on institutional and programme/course quality given to the stakeholders?

1.3 An Evaluative Process

Quality assurance is understood in St. Nicholas Montessori College to be an evaluative process, ongoing and renewing. The procedures outlined in this document are intended to signpost the means by which the review process can be identified and appraised within a dynamic and changing system.

1.4 Guideline Criteria Signposts for Quality Assurance Procedures

The evaluative process takes the following procedural pathway. Each stage or level provides reflective material for the next stage. The process creates opportunities for retracing steps or creating an evaluative loop by which outcomes are continually tested against the institution's mission, values and goals.

A Purpose of Quality Assurance
B Mission Statement
C Values and Ethos
D Quality Policies
E Strategic Management Aims

F Governance and Management
F Academic Council and Committee Structure

G Programme/Course Design and Professional Development
H Assessment of Learners
I Programme/Course Monitoring

J Evaluating the Effectiveness of Services
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L Continuous Improvement Process

1.5 General Principles of Quality Assurance Assessment

A primary concern of St. Nicholas Montessori College is that the approach to quality assurance should be simple, valid, flexible and relatively easy to implement. It is a means to an end. It is important that educators see themselves as change agents and that they themselves take possession and ownership of the process and procedures of quality assurance and regard it as an intrinsic and material part of their work.

At its most simplest, Quality Assurance may be reduced to four basic positions:

- What are we trying to do?
- How are we trying to do it?
- How do we know it works?
- How do we change in order to improve?

Section B

2 Mission Statement

St. Nicholas Montessori College, Ireland is a higher education institution providing Montessori teacher education through full-time, part-time, outreach and in-service programmes.

It is committed to providing access and opportunity to students of all ages and backgrounds. It aims to provide a positive, inclusive atmosphere and environment based on the mutual co-operation of all involved in its activities. It contends that the principles of respect and empowerment that apply to children's education must also be applied to adult learners and teachers. Consistent with these values, a working Montessori primary school is an integral part of the organisation.

St. Nicholas Montessori College desires to promote Montessori education and develop Montessori educators of the highest quality, who will serve and support the child within all sectors of the Irish education system.

Section C

3 Quality Values and Ethos

3.1 Quality Values

St. Nicholas Montessori College derives its quality values, in the first instance, from the statement of objectives in the *Memorandum and Articles of Association* of the St. Nicholas Montessori Society of Ireland Ltd. established in 1978. These are outlined and summarised as follows:

- To encourage and promote the education of children in every way, and in particular, according to the philosophy and methods of Maria Montessori.
- To experiment with and develop modern educational methods of all kinds and to facilitate the use of the Montessori Method and modern systems of education deriving out of such developments and experiments.
- To train and encourage teachers in modern methods of education
- To facilitate, support and actively co-operate with other teacher education centres and colleges in promoting modern methods of education
- To be engaged in the education of children from the earliest age in accordance with modern methods of education and in particular in accordance with the Montessori Method of education.

3.2 Core Value Principles

The central elements of these aims may be distilled into these terms:

Quality education is the central aim and the Montessori Method is a valued means to working towards this end.

Adaptation, creativity, openness and experimentation reflect an understanding that quality education is an evolving and dynamic process.

Collaboration, co-operation and a sharing of knowledge, insights and activities characterise this approach to teacher education.

Quality early childhood education is an essential foundation for continued optimum development and the exercise of human potential.

3.3 Central Ethos

St. Nicholas Montessori College upholds the precept that the principles that apply to quality education of children must be also applied appropriately to adults.

This central ethos of respect permeating all procedures and practices is aimed at creating an enduring positive affective and attitudinal approach to education motivated by a generous understanding of Montessorian philosophy.

Section D

4 Quality Policies

4.1 Prepared Environment

Maria Montessori advocated the creation of a Prepared Environment – a deliberate organisation of both the material surroundings of the learning space and a conscious appreciation of the importance of a constructive, enabling learning climate on the part of the educator.

Quality assurance endeavours to examine and continually review the processes by which the Prepared Environment for learning is effective in the different dimensions of College life.

The methods by which the quality of the learning environment is reviewed, by students and educators, will include:

- Supervised evaluation
- Self-evaluation
- Tutorial interviews
- Course evaluation meetings
- Peer-Appraisal
- Moderation
- External assessment
- Course evaluation questionnaires
- Graduate questionnaires

4.2 Empowerment, Freedom and Responsibility

It is fundamental to the health of a learning institution, and ultimately to the health of society at large, that individuals and groups of persons exercise their rights and responsibility to search for the truth and to speak their understanding of the truth as it is discovered.

St. Nicholas Montessori College endeavours to create a collegial community where the Director, course leaders and members of the teaching faculty (whether full-time or part-time members), administration staff, and the student body bear mutual responsibility to exercise professional competence and to extend to one another the trust and respect which fosters a climate and an environment for the exercise of academic freedom.

In addition to the methods of review already listed, the effectiveness of the level of empowerment, freedom and responsibility will be assessed by means of:

- Student representation on sub-committees
- Course committee meetings
- Student focus groups

Section E

5 Strategic Management Aims

5.1 Management Aims

To secure its mission, St. Nicholas Montessori College aims to:

- Offer choice and flexibility of study mode for students in accordance with HETAC policies;
- Offer a range of flexible teaching styles appropriate to the learning needs of students;
- Sustain a responsive, supportive, resourced prepared learning environment;
- Develop appropriate evaluation and assessment methods and approaches that affirm growth, potential, empowerment and responsible decision making;
- Ensure that student and staff selection policies and strategies accord with the mission and that the collegial community understands and supports the mission;
- Develop an information environment that supports appropriate access to knowledge with speed and accuracy of communication which facilitates enquiry and learning;
- Establish processes and procedures that are easily understood, reliable, sensitive to assessment and open to audit and that reflect individual and corporate appreciation of responsibilities and accountabilities;
- Establish educational, behavioural and environmental standards that accord with those at the best of its peer institutions;

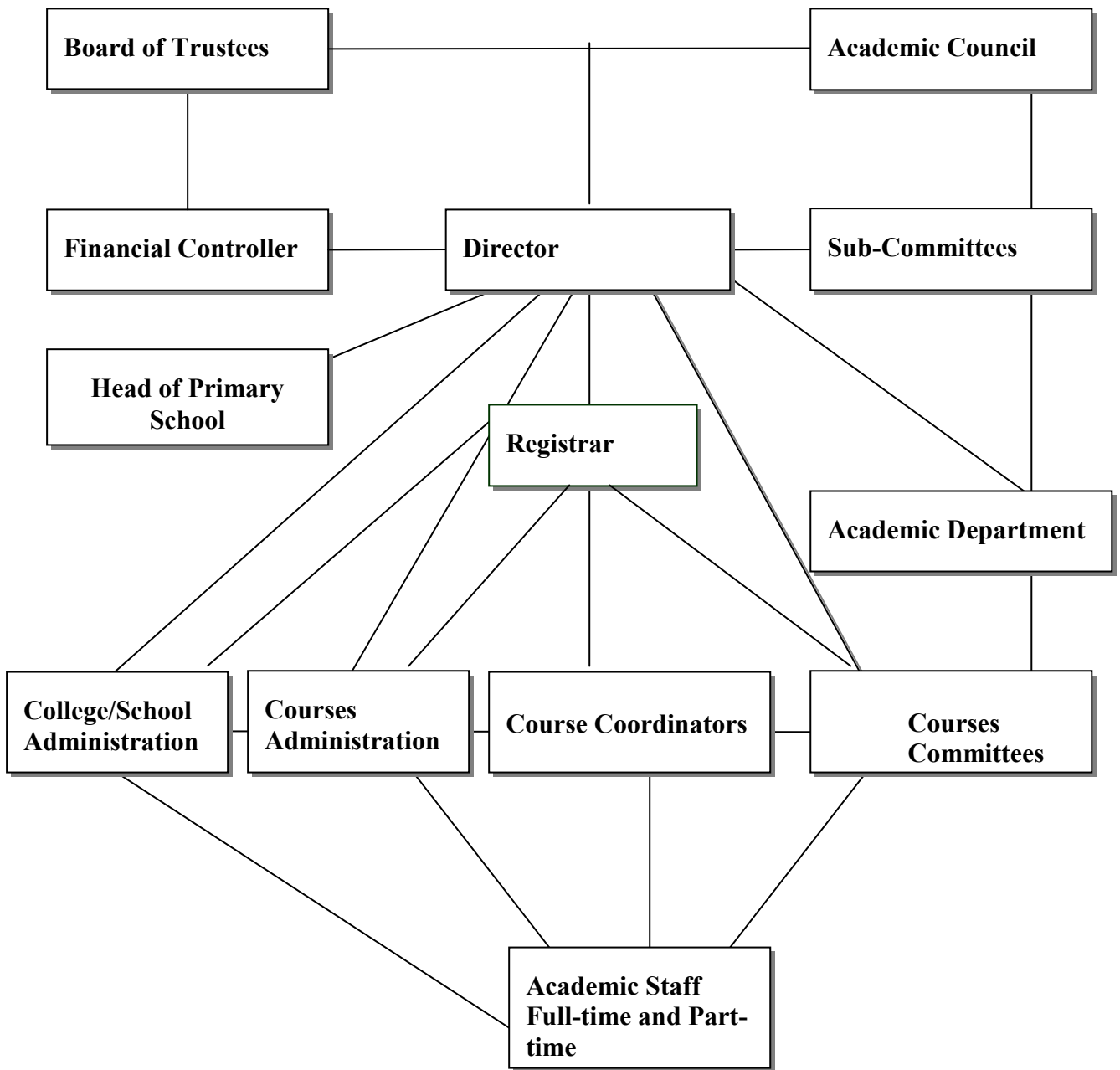
5.2 Summary of Management Aims

- To maintain a positive, flexible, prepared learning environment which promotes successful and empowering outcomes for the student.
- To operate policies and strategies and procedures consistent with the mission statement
- To establish and maintain evaluation methods and procedures that are supportive, positive, open, realistic, reasonable and helpful.
- To be proactive in collaborative activity with other educational institutions and to uphold quality aspirations consistent with the best elsewhere.
- To support, promote and enhance the career needs of students and graduates in line with quality educational entitlements of all children.

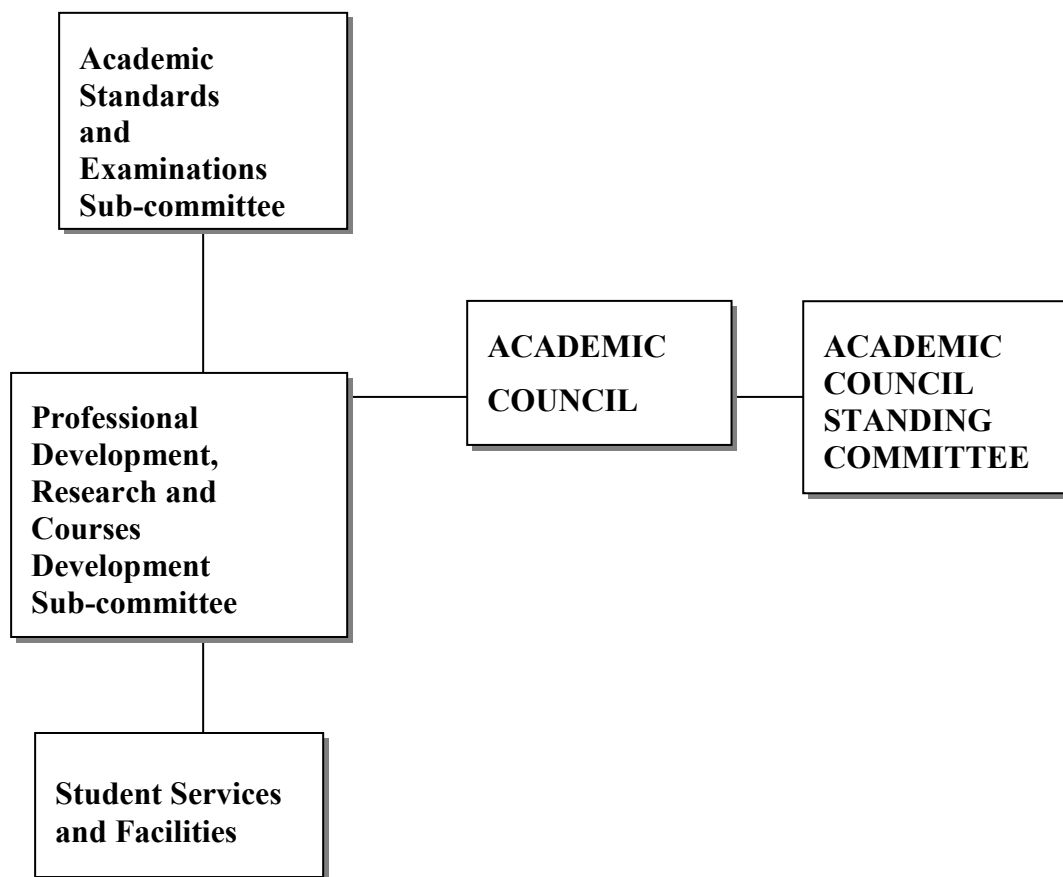
Section F

6 Governance and Management Accountability

St Nicholas Montessori College Governance and Management Structure



Section F
**St Nicholas Montessori College Ireland
Academic Council**



Section F

7 Academic Council and its Committee Structure

7.1 Academic Council

The Academic Council is St. Nicholas Montessori College's over-arching academic body responsible for overseeing all strategic academic provision. To assist in meeting effectively its obligations and responsibilities to the College community – staff, students and stakeholders – the Academic Council operates and functions principally by means of a small number of sub-committees.

7.2 Membership of Standing Committee of Academic Council

The Standing Committee of the Academic Council is composed of:

- Chairperson of Board of Trustees
- Director of College, Chair
- Full-time permanent members of the academic staff of the College (2 elected)
- Part-time academic staff of the College (2 elected)
- Head of Academic Department
- Student representatives (1 elected)
- Member of the Business Community
- Educational consultant

7.3 Responsibilities of Academic Council

- to assist the board of Trustees in the planning, co-ordination, development and overseeing of the educational work of the College;
- to design and implement courses of study consistent with the functions of the College and in accordance with the annually approved budget;
- to make recommendations to the Board of Trustees for the establishment of appropriate structures to implement these courses of study;
- to make recommendations to the Board of Trustees on programmes of research and development;
- to be responsible for making and implementing the academic policy of the College;
- to review and approve arrangements for the College's examinations;
- to make recommendations to the Board of Trustees for the award of scholarships, prizes or other awards;

7.4 Academic Council Sub-committees

- Academic Standards and Examinations
- Professional Development and Research and Courses Development
- Student Services and Facilities

7.4.1 Academic Standards and Examinations Sub-Committee

The function of this sub-committee is :

- to review and make recommendations relating to the maintenance of the highest academic standards in student assignments/projects etc.
- to review and make recommendations on teaching/lecturing methodology appropriate to the requirements and needs of various student levels and groupings
- to review the standard of academic writing and general literacy level and make appropriate recommendations;
- to review academic procedures taking cognisance of the procedures and policies in other colleges;
- to ensure that correct procedures are followed and that the proper standards are maintained for the conduct of the College's examinations both written and practical;
- to review the regulations for conduct of examinations and assessments in accordance with HETAC *Marks and Standards*
- to review documentation on students for discussion at the Board of Examiners with a view to making recommendations where appropriate.

7.4.2 Membership of Academic Standards and Examinations Sub-committee

Membership of the Academic Standards and Examinations Sub-committee will consist of: Director/Assistant Director; Registrar, Head of Academic Department (Chair), two members of full-time academic staff; one member of part-time academic staff; one elected student representative.

7.4.3 Professional Development, Research and Courses Development Sub-Committee

The function of this sub-committee is:

- to address and review all aspects of continuous professional development of staff of the College and where possible to make suitable linkages with School staff development arrangements
- to consider and make recommendations relating to staff welfare with a view to maintaining optimal morale and communication levels
- to make recommendations for induction for new staff
- to make linkages with relevant associations and institutions at home and abroad and to facilitate the dissemination of reports on conferences and seminars attended by staff
- to recommend and make proposals for annual in-service development for all College staff
- to explore the possibilities for involvement in national and international research projects consistent with the College's development aims;
- to support and develop professional writing and publication.
- to review the current curriculum of the College and to make recommendations regarding areas of improvement or any additional modules or courses with particular reference to the needs of the wider community and the jobs market;
- to propose and outline any new courses according to approved course design procedures;

- to monitor and make recommendations regarding the maintenance of Montessori ethos on all courses;
- to encourage and promote research among the College community

7.4.4 Membership of Professional Development, Research and Courses Development Sub-committee

Membership of the Professional Development, Research and Courses Development Sub-committee will consist of: Director/Assistant Director, Senior member of full-time Academic staff (Chair); Courses Administrator, two other members of full-time academic staff; one member of part-time academic staff, one elected student representative.

7.4.5 Student Services and Facilities Sub-Committee

The function of this sub-committee is:

- to review student and staff facilities in the College and to make recommendations for the improvement of existing facilities or the introduction of new and appropriate facilities;
- to review and make recommendations relating to the physical environment of the College with reference to the improvement of the quality of participation of staff and students in the life of the College
- to review aspects of access and inclusion for students with disabilities or other special learning needs
- to review, in association with the College's Health and Safety Officer, aspects of health and safety relating to the physical environment and facilities of the College.
- to create a supportive linkage between the Librarian and College
- to review library stock and to propose suitable acquisitions relative to student and staff requirements
- to explore and recommend audio/visual and IT resources and other means of accessing information
- to review and make recommendations on student services including administration relating to student services
- to review and make recommendations regarding the material published in the annual student handbook
- to facilitate the evaluation of feedback from students on student services
- to encourage and support student functions
- to propose arrangements for appropriate career guidance

7.4.6 Membership of Student Services and Facilities Sub-Committee

Membership of the Student Services and Facilities Sub-Committee Sub-committee will consist of: Director/Assistant Director, (Chair) Registrar, Librarian, two members of full-time academic staff; one member of part-time academic staff; two elected student representatives.

Section G

8 Programme/Course Design & Professional Development

8.1 Principles of Programme Design

The following principles derived from Chickering and Gamson (1987) indicate the approach to programme design and delivery in St. Nicholas Montessori College.

- Contact between students and faculty; staff interest in students helps students get through difficult times.
- Fostering co-operation among students;
- Active learning;
- Prompt feedback; students must find out at an early stage if their learning is correctly applied and be given opportunity to correct mistakes promptly.
- Time on task; students need time to reflect on their learning.
- High expectation; expecting students to do well can be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

- Respect diverse talents and ways of learning; encourage diversity. (Chickering, A. and Gamson, Z. (1987) 'Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education' *Wingspread Journal*, 9.)

8.2 Courses Outline Headings

The following headings are used to outline existing course modules or for the proposal and consideration of new courses or modules by the Academic Council :

- Title of Course
- Level
- Duration and Timing
- Mode of Delivery
- Aims and Summary
- Syllabus and Expected Learning Outcomes
- Required Resources, Materials and Equipment
- Special Features
- Assessment Mode
- Assessment Details and Criteria
- Course Mark
- Pass Requirement
- Supplemental Assessment Mode
- Method of Supplemental Assessment
- Pass Requirement for Supplemental Assessment
- Required Reading
- Recommended Reading
- Course Coordinator/Course Leader
- Course Team

8.3 Continuing Professional Development

St. Nicholas Montessori College supports and promotes staff Professional Development consistent with the principles of respect and empowerment articulated in its Mission Statement and in its Strategic Management Aims.

A Report commissioned by the Department of Education and Science (Sugrue C, Morgan, M. Devine, D. and Raftery D. (2001) *Policy and Practice of Professional Development: A Critical Analysis.*) identified four types of Staff Development:

- (i) In-Service
- (ii) Lifelong Learning
- (iii) Continuing Professional Development
- (iv) Teacher Learning

- (i) *In-Service* may suggest connotations of professional learning that may be occasional, episodic and received as something passive.
- (ii) *Lifelong Learning* recognises that continuing to learn is a necessity that should be part of the fabric of what it means to be professional.
- (iii) *Continuing Professional Development* (CDP) suggests a comprehensive approach to learning, embodying personal, professional and social dimensions of development.
- (iv) *Teacher Learning* implies an all-embracing attitude to ongoing learning which is part of the professional attitude to the process and practice of education.

St. Nicholas Montessori College endeavours to promote Continuing Professional Development in the context of lifelong teacher learning.

8.4 Valuing Collaboration in Professional Development

The approach to Continuing Professional Development in St. Nicholas Montessori College adopts values identified by McNiff and Collins (1994) *A New Approach to In-Career Development for Teachers in Ireland.*

- Engaging staff in the planning and delivery of CPD;
- Recognising the personal experiences and responsibilities of staff in any development;
- Developing reflective practice
- Developing staff collaboration and peer support
- Supporting and fostering a research base in professional development.

8.5 Identifying Professional Development Needs

The White Paper (1995) *Charting Our Education Future* suggested that any policy on continuing Professional Development should ensure “that the systematically identified needs of participants will be the primary influence in determining the aims and contents of programmes”. Members of staff are surveyed annually and taken into account in the planning of ongoing Professional Development.

8.5.1 Promoting Study and Academic Advancement

St. Nicholas Montessori College maintains a policy of encouraging all staff members to take up further study and to obtain higher academic awards. The Board of Trustees

have instituted a scale of financial incentives in the way of extra salary allowances for academic progression. In recognition of the commitments of staff members in their professional and personal lives, study is particularly encouraged by means of flexible modular modes promoted by the Open University and by the In-Service Division of the University of Dublin, Trinity College. Several members of staff have obtained awards or are in the process of studying for awards under these schemes.

8.5.2 Membership of Professional Bodies

A means of initiating study is through becoming familiar with the studies and research of others. This is both initiated and consolidated through membership of academic associations and professional bodies. In the first instance, staff members are encouraged to take up membership of the St. Nicholas Montessori Teachers' Association and to participate in its annual conference. A recent welcome extension of the work of this national body has been the development of Montessori Europe. St. Nicholas Montessori College was a founding member of this body.

The College was also instrumental in establishing the Irish Mathematics Teachers Association, and staff members continue to be engaged in the development of this organisation composed of representatives from all the major teacher education colleges. The College is an affiliate member of The Reading Association of Ireland and the Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education, and staff members have presented papers at its annual conferences. The College is a member of the Standing Committee of Teacher Education North and South (SCOTENS).

8.5.3 European Partnership Projects

Members of the staff of the college have benefited from European funded in-service programmes in a number of European centres in a variety of areas. As well as providing a source of professional development, these opportunities have provided an incentive to take part in Erasmus, Comenius and Leonardo exchange and research projects.

8.5.4 In-Service Provision and Adjunct Affiliations

The College takes part in annual in-service Summer Course provision for primary teachers approved by the Department of Education and Science. Members of staff develop and deliver these courses. Staff members have contributed to lecture courses in Trinity College and Dublin City University by arrangement with the College.

Chapter H

9 Assessment of Learners

9.1 HETAC Marks and Standards

Regulations and Procedures for Examinations in St. Nicholas Montessori College are in conformity with the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) *Marks and Standards* policy and procedures document, with reference to the most recently published revisions.

Examination regulations and procedures are reviewed annually by the Examinations Sub-Committee of the Academic Council of St. Nicholas Montessori College as part of the College's ongoing Quality Assurance Procedures.

9.2 Responsibility for Examinations

The Director/Registrar of the College shall have overall responsibility for the conduct of examinations in the College and shall, in particular, ensure:-

- the proper conduct of examinations, including invigilation;
- the maximum security in all matters pertaining to examination;
- that all examination entries are notified to the Council (HETAC), if applicable, by the required date;
- that examination question papers and appropriate marking schemes are prepared by Intern Examiners;
- that appropriate accommodation arrangements are made for each candidate for examination;
- that examination answer scripts are examined by the Intern and Extern Examiners and the results for each candidate are made available for meetings of the Board of Examiners;
- that accurate records in regard to continuous assessment are maintained and made available to Extern Examiners;
- proper arrangements for holding meetings of Boards of Examiners;
- that candidates are provided with the information relevant to them with regard to the conduct and regulation of examinations.

9.3 Intern Examiners

Academic faculty staff of the College who exercise an examination function shall be appointed by the Director of the College and together with the Director/Registrar be deemed to be Intern Examiners.

9.4 Duties of Intern Examiners

- to consult with the appropriate Extern Examiner in the drafting of examination papers by providing the Extern Examiner in good time examination papers, typewritten draft question papers, together with appropriate marking schemes;
- to take account of all suggestions, criticisms, deletions, additions and amendments proposed by the Extern Examiner;
- to submit examination papers and marking schemes, as approved by the Extern Examiner, to the Director of the College, or to the person nominated by the Director for that purpose;
- prior to the meeting of the Board of examiners, to consult with the Extern examiner and to agree the grades/marks proposed to be awarded to each candidate;
- attend meetings of the Boards of Examiners.

9.5 Extern Examiners

Extern Examiners are appointed by St. Nicholas Montessori College to ensure adequacy of standards at examinations moderated by the Academic Council. The appointment of Extern Examiners is in accordance with HETAC regulations.

9.6 Duties of Extern Examiners

In particular, Extern Examiners should ensure that the appropriate standards with regard to grades of Pass, Merit and Distinction are applied. Extern Examiners also monitor the comparability of standards between other teacher education institutions and ensure that appropriate standards in the College examinations are maintained consistent with HETAC regulations.

It is the duty of the Extern Examiner to see the drafts of all examination question papers and marking schemes before the question papers are printed. The Extern Examiner shall have the right to make suggestions, criticisms, deletions, additions and amendments as deemed appropriate.

Extern Examiners must see a representative sample of examination material e.g. resource files, essay papers, and answer scripts presented by the candidates (at least 5%) including borderline cases. The sample, which should be drawn on a basis agreed between the Intern and Extern examiners, should include sufficient material to enable the Extern examiner to form a judgment as to the appropriateness of the marking at all grades of classification.

9.7 Extern Examiner's Report.

Each Extern Examiner is required to submit to the Director of the College, in accordance with the regulations in *Marks and Standards*, a full report on the examinations and materials examined and, in case of Teaching Practice/Internship, the teaching practice site and the students visited.

9.8 Meeting of Board of Examiners

After each examination, the Intern and Extern Examiners shall meet together as a Board of Examiners. The Director of the College shall be the Chair of the Board.

All discussions by a Board of Examiners shall be made by majority decision of the Examiners properly present, by voting if necessary. In the event of an equality of votes, the Chair of the Board of Examiners shall exercise a casting vote. The proceedings and deliberations of the Board of Examiners are strictly confidential; under no circumstances should any person attending a meeting of the Board of Examiners disclose to any other person a decision of the Board or any document, information or opinion considered, conveyed or expressed at the meeting.

At the meeting of the Board of Examiners the Broadsheet of Results shall be endorsed, which shall record the total marks or grades awarded to each candidate in each Examination Subject. The overall result shall be indicated according to HETAC regulations.

9.9 Minimum Pass Mark

The minimum mark required for a pass in any Examination Subject shall be 40% of the maximum marks available for that Examination Subject.

9.10 Continuous Assessment Marks

In the case of a candidate who has failed in a significant proportion of continuous assessment tests, or who has been awarded such low marks for continuous assessment that a pass in the Examination as a whole is unlikely, the Director of the College shall advise the candidate of this situation in good time to enable the candidate to take appropriate action before the final examination.

In the case of a candidate repeating an examination, marks awarded on the basis of continuous assessment, shall, normally, be carried forward from the original examination to the repeat examination and shall be aggregated with the marks scored in the latter to determine marks to be awarded in respect of the repeat examination. However, in the case of a candidate repeating an examination following a repeat attendance, only the marks awarded as a result of the repeat assessment and examination shall be considered.

9.11 Award

To be awarded a Diploma or a Degree, a candidate must pass all elements of the examination.

9.12 Eligibility for Written Examination

A candidate is eligible to sit an examination if she or he has

- registered for the course and examination concerned
- satisfactorily attended lectures (80% average attendance record is required)
- met all continuous assessment requirements according to HETAC regulations.
- registered for a re-sit of examination

9.13 Procedures for the Conduct of Written Examinations

Procedures for the Conduct of Written and Practical examinations will be published in the Student Handbook and outlined to students

9.13.1 Seating Arrangements in the Examination Room

Adult-sized tables and chairs must be used and placed at an appropriate distance apart (approx 1 metre). Each candidate's place will be indicated by an examination number. Examination numbers must be entered on the front of each answer book only when the examination commences.

9.13.2 Examination Materials

Essential items:	A blue or black ball-point pen, pencil and ruler
Optional items:	Coloured pencils, fibre-tipped pens, eraser.
Prohibited items:	Dictionaries (unless exemption has been arranged) Liquid eraser; calculators; watch alarms; mobile telephones; laptop or palm-top computers; headset apparatus or earphones etc. Food or drink of any kind. Smoking is prohibited in the examination room.
Bags and Briefcases	Handbags, briefcases, files, folders, books pr other personal belongings must be left in the cloakroom or at the front of the examination hall.
Disciplinary action:	If a candidate takes unauthorised material into the examination room she or he may be suspect of misconduct and may be liable to disciplinary action.

9.13.3 Admission to the Examination Room

In order to gain admission to the examination room a candidate must present the examination card bearing the examination number and signature. The candidate must sign the Examination Register. When seated, the examination card must be placed on the candidate's table/desk.

9.13.4 Late Arrival

Candidates should present themselves at the examination venue at least 15 minutes prior to the commencement of the examination. If a candidate arrives late but within 30 minutes of the start of the examination he or she will be admitted to the examination room without question. A candidate arriving more than 30 minutes late may be admitted to the examination room at the discretion of the Senior Invigilator. Extra time will not be permitted.

9.13.5 Misconduct during an Examination

Candidates will be asked to leave the examination room by the Senior Invigilator if it is found that the candidate is

- in possession of unauthorised materials
- helping or receiving help from another candidate
- consulting any materials outside the examination room during periods of absence while the examination is in progress.

A written report will be made by the Senior Invigilator to the Director of the College and the candidate concerned may be liable to further disciplinary penalties.

In the event of a refusal by the candidate(s) to leave the examination Hall when

requested to so do by the Senior Invigilator, the candidate will be informed that “*INVALID*” will be written on his/her examination script booklet.

9.13.6 Leaving the Examination Room

A candidate may not leave the examination room during the first hour or during the last 15 minutes of the examination.

9.13.7 Temporary Absence

A candidate may be allowed by the Invigilator to leave the examination room, under supervision, for a short period for a necessary visit to the lavatory. Materials of any kind may not be removed from the examination room.

9.13.8 Illness During an Examination

If a candidate is taken ill during an examination, the invigilator must be informed immediately. Should a candidate finish the examination early and wish to leave the room, all answer scripts, rough notes, examination stationery and the question paper must be handed to the invigilator. The candidate may then leave the room quietly and will not be readmitted.

9.13.9 Special Educational Needs or Disabilities

A request for provision for a candidate for whom English is the second language, or for a candidate who has other special needs must be made to the Director well in advance of the examination. A doctor’s certificate or other proof of eligibility for special arrangements may be required in the case of illness, special needs or disability.

9.13.10 Conclusion of Examination

Examination booklets including all rough notes must be left on the candidate’s table when leaving the room.

9.13.11 Role and Duties of the Invigilator at a Written Examination

The invigilator will supervise and conduct the written examination in accordance with the directions of the Examination Board.

The invigilator needs to be fully aware of, and understand the regulations governing the conduct of written examinations. A second or assistant invigilator is required to supervise the area outside the Examination Room, or to assist in the event of an emergency.

The duties of the Invigilator are :

- to check the examination room is properly laid out, adequately ventilated and supplied with drinking water;

- to check that the number of examination papers matches the number of candidates on the list;
- to ensure that there is an adequate supply of examination booklets
- to supervise the signing of the Examination Register;
- to ensure that all candidates have signed the Examination Register;
- to ensure that the examination commences and finishes on time according to that shown on the examination hall wall clock;
- to read the rules governing the conduct of the examination aloud to the candidates prior to the commencement of the examination;
- to place the examination papers face downwards on each candidate's table;
- to advise candidates to write on one side of the paper only and to begin each answer on a new page having written clearly the number of the question in the margin;
- to ensure that all areas of the examination hall are visible at all times; it is recommended that the Invigilator should walk around the examination hall at regular intervals;
- to refer to the rules on misconduct in the event of it being necessary;
- to write a full report on any incident;
- to ensure that silence is maintained in the room; a candidate may attract the Invigilator's attention by raising his/her hand; academic help may not be given;
- to announce the remaining time at fifteen minutes before the conclusion of the examination;
- to announce the conclusion of the examination, instruct candidates to leave their scripts on their tables as they leave the examination hall;
- to collect all examination scripts and to secure them in a safe designated place.

9.14 Procedures for the Conduct of Practical Examinations

Practical Examination which evaluates the competence and understanding of a student in selecting, arranging and correctly using equipment and materials is an essential component in the assessment of a Montessori student teacher.

9.14.1 Examiners for Practical Examinations

The Director of the College shall have responsibility for appointing examiners for the Practical Examinations and shall ensure:

- the proper conduct of examinations including invigilation
- the maximum security in all matters pertaining to examination
- that the Practical Examinations are conducted in a fair and professional manner
- that appropriate accommodation arrangements are made for the conduct of the Practical Examinations and that the appropriate materials are available and are in perfect condition
- that the Extern Examiner is informed of the date and time of the Practical Examination
- that all marks are collated and entered on the appropriate forms at the completion of the Examination.

9.14.2 Duties of Intern Examiners for Practical Examinations

Intern Examiners shall be appointed by the Director of the College. The duties of the Intern Examiners shall be:

- to conduct the Practical Examinations fairly and professionally
- to assist in setting up the Examination Room so that students will have free movement and floor space, when necessary, and have ready access to the required materials
- to assist in repositioning/replacing materials and furniture on completion of each examination
- to keep an accurate record of the candidate's performance
- to attend the Examiners' meeting with the Director at the completion of the Practical Examinations.

9.14.3 Duties of Extern Examiners for Practical Examinations

Extern Examiners should be present at and observe at least 5% of all Practical Examinations and make a written report for the Examiners' Meeting.

9.14.4 Practical Examination Minimum Pass Mark

The minimum pass mark for Practical Examinations is 40% of the maximum marks available.

9.14.5 Student Eligibility for Practical Examinations

A candidate is eligible to take part in a Practical Examination if she or he has

- registered for the relevant course
- satisfactorily attended lectures (80% attendance required)
- met all course requirements, including satisfactory completion of prescribed coursework and project work within prescribed or agreed deadlines
- registered, if necessary, for a re-sit of an examination
- gained, if necessary, a deferment of examination period.

9.14.6 Arrangements for Practical Examinations

Adult-sized tables and chairs must be placed at an appropriate distance apart. Examination numbers only must be entered on the front of the Practical Examination Form.

9.14.7 Admission to Examination Room

In order to gain admission to the examination room, a candidate must present to the Superintendent/Invigilator of the practical Examination the card bearing the candidate's examination number and signature. The candidate must sign the examination Register. The Invigilator will assign each candidate to a Practical Examiner.

9.14.8 Misconduct during an Examination

Candidates will be expelled from the Examination Room by the Senior Invigilator, and other penalties may be imposed later if the candidate is found to be:

- in possession of unauthorised materials;
- helping or receiving help from another candidate;
- causing a disruption or disturbance to others;
- smoking or eating/drinking in the examination room.

In the even of non-compliance with the Invigilator's directions, the candidate will be informed that INVALID will be written on his/her Practical Examination form.

9.14.9 Duties of the Invigilator of the Practical Examination

The invigilator will supervise the conduct of the practical Examination in accordance with the directions of the Examination Board.

The Invigilator needs to be aware of, and understand the regulations governing the conduct of the Practical examinations. A second, assistant invigilator is necessary to supervise the area outside the Examination Room or to assist in an emergency.

The Invigilator will:

- check that the examination room is properly laid out as a Montessori Classroom;
- supervise the signing of the Examination Register;
- read aloud the rules governing the conduct of the examination prior to the commencement of the examination;
- ensure that silence is maintained in the room; practical or academic help may not be given;
- collect all completed Practical Examination Forms and secure them in a safe designated place.

9.15 General Criteria for the marking of Essays and Examination Answers

9.15.1. Content (20 marks)

Is the information required in the question/essay title recognised, understood and prominently developed throughout the answer/essay ?

1 - 9 marks	poor recognition and inadequate and/or irrelevant information.
10 - 14 marks	satisfactory recognition, relevant and balanced information.
15 – 20 marks	excellent recognition, consistently relevant information, balanced and purposeful development.

9.15.2 Quality of Analysis (20 marks)

Do the analysis, and treatment of alternative views, show critical reflection and insight in addressing the question/theme?

1 - 9 marks	superficial discussion, illogical arguments, points not adequately evaluated.
10 - 14 marks	satisfactory level of reflection, arguments valid, main points justified and evaluated, counter-claims identified.
15 – 20 marks	discussion detailed, main points evaluated, counter-claims evaluated.

9.15.3 Structure, Presentation, Conventions and Logical Coherence (20 marks)

Is the answer/essay clearly written, referenced (if required) and coherent ?

1 - 9 marks	poor in structure and logical coherence; poor presentation; inadequate use of academic conventions; too many errors.
10 - 14 marks	satisfactorily structured, adequately clear and logically coherent on main points; adequate use of relevant academic conventions.
15 – 20 marks	excellently structured with concise introduction, coherent development and effective conclusion; academic conventions fully

9.15.4 Personal Response (20 marks)

Is the answer/essay supported by personal examples and/or arguments ?

1 - 9 marks	none or very few arguments/personal experiences supporting main points;
10 - 14 marks	satisfactory examples/arguments supporting main points
15 – 20 marks	excellent and appropriate use of examples and arguments from writer's own experience and study showing a high degree of reflection.

Section I

10 Programme/Course Monitoring

10.1 Evaluating Quality of Learning Environment

The methods by which the quality of the learning environment is reviewed, by students and educators, shall include:

- Supervised Evaluation
- Self-evaluation
- Tutorial interviews
- Course evaluation meetings
- Peer-Appraisal
- Moderation
- External assessment
- Student Course Evaluation questionnaires
- Graduate questionnaires

10.1.1 Supervised Evaluation

Lecturers are encouraged to provide experiential opportunities for their students which permits an evaluation, through supervised observation, of the effectiveness of the learning environment and the mode of teaching.

The *Staff Handbook* Section 2.2 notes “..the students will learn more by carefully supervised practice than by watching a demonstration. Supervision should always be active, one-to-one, or small groups. Continuous and accurate feedback will greatly enhance the learning process for students.”

10.1.2 Self-Evaluation

Staff and students are encouraged to engage in a process of reflective self-evaluation. Students are invited to self-evaluate their participation in the learning experiences offered to them. In evaluating lectures and tutorials, students are also asked to reflect on their own involvement; in teaching practice, the student is asked to evaluate in a formal way their reflections on the lessons/sessions taught.

Staff are involved in self-evaluation through the process of Peer Appraisal and through staff questionnaires.

10.1.3 Tutorial Interviews

Each student is assigned a tutor from the academic staff. Tutors will have responsibility for a group of students. Tutors shall hold group/and or individual evaluation sessions at least once a term. These sessions are private, open-ended and provide an informal, though scheduled, opportunity for the student to raise any matters of concern or to give appraisal/feedback on their College experiences. The tutor keeps a record of any issues of concern raised.

10.1.4 Course Evaluation Meetings

At least twice in each academic year, the Course Committee, consisting of the Course Leader or Co-ordinator and Course lecturers/tutors, will meet to review the course. The documentation that shall be used to evaluate the course at these meetings may include:

- Student Attendance Records
- Course Document including Syllabus and Learning Outcomes
- Teaching Practice Assessors' Reports
- Lecturers' Logs
- Student Course Evaluation Reports

10.1.5 Lecturer Peer-Appraisal

Each lecturer/tutor is required to engage in a session of formal Peer-Appraisal at least once during the course of the academic year. The process is regarded as supportive, reflective and respectful.

10.1.6 Moderation of Continuous Assessment

The marking of each assignment is subject to moderation. Every tutor submits approximately 5% of marked assignments to the College for moderation. Samples from each course are moderated, and a general comment from the moderator is circulated on a standard form.

10.1.7 Lecturer's Log

Each lecturer completes a log entry at the end of each session that records the learning outcomes, the teaching methodology, and a brief self-appraisal of the session.

10.1.8 External Assessment

Extern Examiners are appointed by St. Nicholas Montessori College and are responsible for making an annual review of the quality of each Course.

10.1.9 Student Course Evaluation Questionnaires

Students shall be given the opportunity to evaluate by questionnaire each Course at an interim point (end of first term or approximately one-third of the way through the course).

10.1.10 Graduate Questionnaire

Each year the annual cohort of graduates at National Diploma and Degree level are sent a questionnaire to elicit information regarding their evaluation of their courses and programmes.

Section J

11 Evaluating Effectiveness of Services

11.1 Procedures for Regular Evaluation of Programmes and Services

St. Nicholas Montessori College is committed to an annual evaluation of its services. This evaluation takes place at the annual conference of all academic staff including staff from outreach centres. A substantial and detailed Programmatic Review will take place every five years.

The Evaluation has three main components:

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-evaluation• External review• Information to and from stakeholders |
|--|

11.2 Subject matter for Evaluation of Programmes and Services

A Self-Evaluation Report shall be provided with information under the following headings:

- Student throughput
- Review of Course Design
- Assessment
- Employment and Further Studies of Graduates
- National and International Linkages
- Review of Practical Studies and related Facilities
- Review of Teaching Practice/Internship
- Deployment and Development of Academic Staff
- Links with Employers and wider Community
- Research
- Course Delivery Methodologies
- Adult and Continuing Education/ACCS Programmes
- Academic Regulations
- Development Plan
- Programme Documents

11.2.1 Student Throughput

Enrolment and examination statistics for the previous two years must be provided for each year of the course. These statistics must deal, in particular, with student withdrawals, retention and examination performance in appropriate detail. In addition,

any special initiatives in relation to admissions e.g. broadening access, mature students, facilitating gender equality etc. should be dealt with in this report.

11.2.2 Review of Course Design

A brief description of the development of the Course should be provided, highlighting any changes implemented or proposed, should be provided. In addition, the HETAC Approved Course schedule in operation at the time of the previous review together with course schedules being proposed as part of the current Evaluation of Programmes and Services, shall be presented and examined.

11.2.3 Assessment

The procedures in place for the assessment of learners shall be documented. The assessment of learners shall be examined in terms of whether they (i) are fair and consistent and comply with standards determined by HETAC, (ii) are in keeping with the National Framework of Qualifications, (iii) are effective in measuring the students' attainment of the intended learning outcomes, (iv) contribute to the total learning experience, (v) encourage creativity and originality in demonstrating achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

11.2.4 Employment and Further Studies of Graduates

Employment gained and further studies undertaken by awardees shall be reported and compared with the information from the previous review.

11.2.5 National and International Linkages

An outline of the involvement of students from international or European exchange programmes in the Course will be provided. The involvement of visiting lecturing staff and its impact on the Course will be reviewed. The structures involved in facilitating these arrangements shall be detailed.

11.2.6 Review of Facilities for Practical Sessions

This report shall include an evaluation of the practical and demonstration dimensions of the Course. It will review the availability and condition of equipment and materials and the facilities provided for workshop and demonstration classes. The report shall detail any facilities that have been phased out or discontinued or other facilities that have been installed in terms of physical space and equipment/materials since the previous review.

11.2.7 Review of Teaching Practice/Internship

The arrangements and procedures for practice/internship in schools shall be reviewed in terms of availability, preparation, planning, supervision/assessment and accommodation. The documentation and requirements for lesson planning shall also be reviewed, and the means of assessment of students re-evaluated.

11.2.8 Deployment and Development of Academic Staff

Details shall be provided of staff appointments since the previous review and of the projections for the deployment of staff for the forthcoming period. Curricula vitae of staff appointed since the previous review shall be provided. Details of in-service training and development undertaken by staff, or further academic studies, publications or awards shall also be included.

11.2.9 Links with Employers and the Wider Community

This section of the report shall monitor the developments in relation to the world of work and the career options open to awardees. The developments in the wider community shall also be monitored in so far as they have relevance to the requirements of the college to maintain a high degree of relevance in its programmes and courses. It will be necessary to elicit from educational interests associated with the College – primary schools, secondary schools, career guidance teachers, the Department of Education and Science, the Irish Montessori Education Board, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation etc. – how well the College's programmes meet current demands and requirements. Programmes and courses shall also be examined against the relevant offerings of other higher education colleges and course providers.

11.2.10 Research

Research conducted by staff since the previous review shall be detailed and plans for the forthcoming period shall be outlined. Research considerations shall include European Commission cooperative projects in which the College is engaged and staff contributions to national or international professional associations.

11.2.11 Course Delivery Methodologies and Teaching Effectiveness

Information in relation to teaching, such as plans to consider new types of educational technology, teaching strategies and methodologies shall be detailed and reviewed. The basis for this review will be the *Student Course Evaluation Questionnaires* (I 11); *Academic Staff Course Evaluation Questionnaires* (I 7) and the *Peer Appraisal process* (I 8).

This section of the Report will also take into account the reflective evaluation by staff of the performance indicators relating to *Continuous Improvement* (L2).

The reflective evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching methodologies employed in all programmes of study is central in importance to making the process of Quality Assurance purposeful and authentic. A Strengths/Needs approach will be applied in summarising the outcomes of the review, with a clear identification of proposed changes and the action and persons responsible for effecting the action recorded. Documentation for this process will be linked to the review of performance indicators in *Continuous Improvement* (L2).

11.2.12 Academic Regulations

The purpose of this section is to set out the form of regulations made by the Board of Trustees on the advice of the Academic Council.

11.2.13 Development Plan

An action plan for the development for the succeeding year or for a five-year period if required by the Board of Trustees or HETAC, shall be drawn up and presented.

11.2.14 Programme Documents

Revised aims and general learning outcomes, revised course schedules, revised syllabi, and a revised assessment plan shall be presented in the prescribed format for each course or programme that has been examined for review.

11.3 External Evaluation

11.3.1 External Panel

The composition of the External Panel is composed of the Extern Examiners appointed by St. Nicholas Montessori College in line with HETAC policy and procedures. Additional specialists may be added to the panel at the discretion of the Academic Council. The Academic Council, through the Registrar, will facilitate the External Panel's consideration of the Self-Evaluation Report prior to the annual meeting of the College academic staff. The External Panel will examine the Self-Evaluation Report in terms of the College's procedures, HETAC requirements and also the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland framework.

11.3.2 Criteria for External Review

The criteria for the review of the External panel will be the Subject Matter for Evaluation of Programmes and Services listed under 11.2. These headings can also be used as a template for the External Panel's Review Report.

11.3.3 Report of External Panel

The External Panel may present a short report to the Registrar and the Director. The Secretary of the External Panel will compile an agreed report for the External Panel and will forward it to the Registrar and the Director.

11.3.4 Report to the Academic Council

The Registrar will bring the Report of the External Panel to the notice of the Academic Council.

11.4 Information to and from Stakeholders

11.4.1 Student Evaluation Reports

All students will have an opportunity to evaluate the quality of their learning experiences in the College. Students can evaluate the entire programme using the Student Evaluation Questionnaire (Appendix I 9). The Course Leader/Coordinator will be responsible for the administration of the questionnaires in the latter part of a subject/module and ensure that the returns are summarised for consideration by the relevant Course committee and subsequently submitted to the Registrar. The questionnaire is designed to elicit students' views on the entire course, course information, assessment, premises and equipment, library, IT services and other support services.

11.4.2 Report to the Academic Council

The Registrar will submit the summary report of the Course Leader/Coordinator in relation to the Student Evaluation Questionnaire to the notice of the Academic Council.

11.4.3 Report to Board of Trustees

The Registrar will submit the Report of the Student Evaluation and the Report of the External Panel to the Board of Trustees.

11.4.4 Report to the Student's Union

The Board of Governors through the Academic Council shall authorise a report to the Student body as represented by the elected Student Union detailing its response to the Student Evaluation Report and the Report of the External Panel.

The Report given to the student body through its Student Union representatives shall contain details of measures planned and changes made as a result of the Student Evaluation Report and the Report of the External Panel.

Section K

12 Reviewing Performance against Quality Values, Ethos and Management Aims

12.1 Quality Values

- Quality education is the central aim, and the Montessori Method is a valued means to working towards this end.
- Adaptation, creativity, openness and experimentation reflect an understanding that quality education is an evolving and dynamic process.
- Collaboration, co-operation and a sharing of knowledge, insights and activities characterise this approach to teacher education.
- Quality early childhood education is an essential foundation for continued optimum development and the exercise of human potential.

12.2 Quality Ethos

The principles that apply to quality education of children must be also applied appropriately to adults.

A central ethos of respect permeates all procedures and practices and is aimed at creating an enduring positive affective and attitudinal approach to education, motivated by a generous understanding of Montessorian philosophy.

12.3 Quality Management Aims

- Choice and flexibility of study modes;
- Flexible teaching styles appropriate to the learning needs of students;
- Responsive, supportive, resourced prepared learning environment;
- Evaluation and assessment methods that affirm growth, potential, empowerment and responsible decision making;
- Student and staff selection policies and strategies accord with the mission;
- Collegial community understands and supports the mission;
- An information environment that supports appropriate access to knowledge, speed and accuracy of communication and that facilitates enquiry and learning;

- Processes and procedures that are easily understood, reliable, sensitive to assessment and open to audit, and that reflect individual and corporate appreciation of responsibilities and accountabilities;
- Educational, behavioural and environmental standards that accord with those at the best of its peer institutions.

Section L

13 Continuous Improvement Process

13.1 Context of Continuous Improvement Process

- A culture of continuous review, evaluation and appraisal is encouraged in St. Nicholas Montessori College. Its purpose is to promote a striving towards continually higher standards in the work of the College. St. Nicholas Montessori College is a learning community. It recognises that meaningful progress towards continued quality is a collaborative process involving all stakeholders.
- Continuous Improvement strives to be in accord with the Mission Statement of the College which “contends that the principles of respect and empowerment which apply to children’s education must also be applied to adult learners and teachers”.
- Student teachers are encouraged to adopt reflective practice as professionals and to become agents for change in their work as educators through the example of lecturers, tutors and instructors who practice this process in the context of their own work.
- Worthwhile change and improvement comes about through personal insight, choice and responsibility. It cannot be imposed by supervising or monitoring procedures, however subtle or sophisticated.

13.2 Pathway for Annual Course Evaluation and Evaluation of Services

The Annual Course Evaluation and Evaluation of Services is conducted in two strands: by the academic staff of the College, and by the student body. It also contains both internal and external appraisal. The elements of this parallel review are outlined in the chart L1 and the process is described in detail in Section J.

13.3 Continuous Improvement Performance Indicators

A review of the effectiveness of courses, methodologies and teaching/learning approaches by academic staff, as well as support services, resource provision and management leadership, will also be based on a consideration of performance indicators under the following broad headings:

- (i) How well do Learners Achieve?
- (ii) How Effective are Training and Learning?

- (iii) How are Achievement and Learning affected by Resources?
- (iv) How effective are the Assessment and Monitoring of Learners' Progress?
- (v) How well do the Programmes and Courses meet the needs and interests of Learners?
- (vi) How well are Learners Guided and Supported?
- (vii) How effective are Leadership and Management in raising achievement and supporting all Learners?

This approach is intended to encourage reflection, questioning and realistic and achievable target setting.

13.3 Action Plans for Continuous Improvement

Each section of the Reflective Review based on Performance Indicators will require a summary comprised of the Strengths and Needs identified in respect of the subject of that heading. A clear statement of the action to be taken will be noted along with the persons responsible for that action and an agreed timeframe.

A summary of the action to be taken under each general heading of the review, together with the names of those responsible for initiating them and an agreed time-frame for action, will be ratified by the College director and presented to the Board of Trustees for approval.