ICHAS	
Section 2 (a) – Terms of Reference for Decision Making Structures	
Subject:	Terms of Reference for Academic Council
Date Approved by Board of Directors	July 2019

Policy Version	1/2019	Date due for Revision	July 2020

PURPOSE (including Scope of Functioning/Key Responsibilities and Accountabilities)

Academic Council serves to protect, maintain, and develop the academic standards of the programmes and the activities of the College. Academic Council is, therefore, responsible for the implementation of the academic governance framework and accountable for the establishment, maintenance and development of quality assurance policies and procedures for all educational programmes within the College.

MEMBERSHIP

Academic Council comprises academic, administrative and support staff within the College as well as student representatives for both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. In addition, the presence of an Independent External Chair serves to provide an expert external perspective.

The Membership is as follows;

- Independent External Chair
- Vice President (Academic Affairs)
- Registrar
- Quality Assurance & Enhancement Officer
- Director of Undergraduate Studies
- Director of Postgraduate Studies
- Programme Directors
- Student Representatives x 2 (Elected by peers)
- Lecturer Representatives x 2 (Elected by peers)

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All areas of programme development, review and re-validation fall under the remit of Academic Council with specific leadership responsibilities being delegated to the Vice President (Academic Affairs), the Registrar, the Directors of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies, Programme Directors and the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Officer. These governance structures and in particular the presence and contribution of the Independent external Chair of Academic Council are designed to ensure that

academic decision-making is independent of any undue commercial considerations or influence of the College owners.

Therefore, the overarching role of Academic Council is to contribute to the quality of all programmes of study and the institution itself. It mainly does this by

> 1) Monitoring and managing the existing range of provision within the College;
> 2) Implementation of continuous improvement activities;
> 3) Receiving and adjudicating on proposals for programme design and development and subsequently by formally assessing and approving (where appropriate) all validation, programme review, revalidation, and institutional review processes and documentation, thus contributing to the ongoing and future operations and strategic development of the College.

Academic Council:
1. Makes recommendations relating to Scope of Provision, Capacity and other matters which might impact on the standing and reputation of the College, with particular reference to Academic excellence and Quality Assurance & Enhancement.
2. Receives, reviews and recommends for approval or rejection proposals for the development of programmes or academic activities from the Vice President (Academic Affairs).
3. Puts in place arrangements to oversee the design, development, and implementation of programmes of study within appropriate budgetary parameters as agreed with the Board of Management and approved by Governing Authority (including recommending structures, personnel, expertise etc).
4. Monitors programme provision with particular emphasis on policies and procedures relating to access transfer and progression.
5. Makes academic regulations for the College and ensure consistency and compliance with QA arrangements agreed with QQI or other such awarding/accrediting bodies.
6. Establishes and oversees such subcommittees as are necessary to manage examinations and assessment processes, ensure appropriate Academic Standards, and ensure access to fair redress where appropriate.
7. Acts on, rejects or amends and approves recommendations in relation to results or other matters impacting on academic performance from Examinations Boards and to formally ratify them as appropriate.

The acts of all sub-committees established by Academic Council shall be accountable to Academic Council and inter alia subject to confirmation by the Academic Council, unless the Academic Council with the approval of Governing Authority dispenses with the necessity for such confirmation.

Role of the Chair of the Academic Council
The Chair of Academic Council provides an independent and expert external perspective to Academic Council. The Chair works closely with the Vice President (Academic Affairs) and members of Academic Council to provide academic leadership to Council.

The chair has to:

- Chair the meetings of Academic Council with due regard to the principles of fair and equitable treatment of members.
- Encourage members to develop and utilise academic autonomy
- Have due regard to the proper use of available resources
- Report to Governing Authority on matters impacting on Academic Quality and Enhancement.
- Support and advise the President on matters relating to Academic Excellence and resource issues.

Role of the Vice President (Academic Affairs)

The Vice President (Academic Affairs) has overall responsibility for academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement, and in that function, is supported by members of the Board of Management and the Independent external Chair of Academic Council. The Vice President (Academic Affairs) may convene, as necessary, other groups to address issues concerned with quality assurance and enhancement.

Role & Expectations of Members of Academic Council

Members of Academic Council are expected to;
- Contribute to Academic planning and development activities.
- Participate in Academic programme development approval processes as well as programme monitoring and review.
- Provide stakeholder and expert advice on the coherence of academic policies with the College's strategic plan.
- Participate in and or engage in the management of sub-committees of Academic council and review of same as appropriate.

Operating Procedures

The Chair of the Committee convenes meetings with adequate notice.
- At the commencement of the meeting, the Chair should outline the procedures of the meeting.
- Meetings will be held in a timely and efficient manner.
- Minutes will be recorded and be available to any internal Committee or if necessary, to the Academic Awarding Body.

Appointment to Academic Council

Ex-officio members of Academic Council as well as elected members will receive a formal letter of appointment which is issued to each new member of Academic Council from the Chair. The letter of appointment should address the following:
- Role of the Academic Council and expectations of members.
- The terms of reference of Academic Council including the duration of appointment and renewal provisions.
- The time commitment involved
- Conflict of interest rules
- Termination arrangements, and
- Rules on confidentiality.

On the appointment of new members, the Chairperson of Academic Council arranges with the Vice President (Academic Affairs) that new members receives an induction and sufficient advice and support to enable them to fulfil their roles.

- Ex Officio members are appointed by Governing authority for a duration to be decided by Governing Authority.
- Faculty and support staff are nominated by peers and appointed by Governing Authority for a period of three years and may be re-appointed.
- Student Representatives are nominated by peers and appointed by Governing Authority and normally hold office for one year and may be reappointed.

Meetings of Academic Council

Frequency of meetings: Academic council meets a minimum of three times each year and at such other times as may be deemed necessary by the Independent External Chair in consultation with the Vice President (Academic Affairs).

Quorum: Meetings of Academic Council requires 50% of its membership in attendance plus one additional member.

Powers of Decision Making: Decisions of Academic Council are made, where possible, by consensus. Where consensus is not possible matters are put to a vote and the decision is by simple majority. In the case of a tied vote, the Chair has an extra or casting vote. Decision making will relate to its core function which is to protect, maintain, and develop the academic standards of the programmes and the activities of the College.

Reporting Relationships: Academic Council works collaboratively with the Board of Management and the President, but it reports directly to Governing Authority on Academic matters.