



Quality Assurance
& Enhancement
Manual

Institute of
Physical
Therapy
And Applied
Science
2011

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Executive Summary

This Manual sets out the Quality Assurance & Enhancement policies and procedures through which the Institute of Physical Therapy and Applied Science (IPTAS) ensures that its programme(s) and other activities continue to attain the highest possible standards. It aims to affirm that the quality of the educational provision and the standards of awards are consistently maintained and to foster curriculum, subject and staff development, together with research and related activity, to underpin the delivery of the curriculum.

In line with *Standards and Guidelines for quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* IPTAS considers the following functions as key to ensuring and enhancing the quality of its education and training programme:

- Policy and Procedures for quality assurance
- Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards
- Assessment of learners
- Quality assurance of teaching staff
- Learning resources and student support
- Information Systems
- Public Information

In addition, IPTAS regards the following as central to the delivery and development of the programme

- Teaching & Learning
- Research
- Curriculum Development

This manual provides an overview of the College, its mission, vision and values and its philosophy regarding quality assurance and enhancement. Organisation management structure is outlined with terms of reference for all boards, committees and teams. Policies and procedures for quality assurance in each of the “seven elements” of the European Framework are outlined. Finally, in line with the National Framework of Qualifications there is an outline of policies and procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression and a detailed account of how Recognition of Prior Learning can be sought.

This is a working document, and is revised and updated annually.

Introduction to IPTAS Quality Assurance and Enhancement

The prime consideration is the achievement of mutual confidence by the learners, staff, other stakeholders and the public in the quality of the Institute's learning and teaching provision. This Manual sets out the procedures through which the Institute ensures that its programme and other activities continue to attain the highest possible standards.

The fundamental educational quality assurance policies and practices of the Institute of Physical Therapy and Applied Science encompass the following broad elements:

- Clear criteria with regard to the admissions requirements, transfer from other programmes and the process for seeking and granting exemptions;
- Curriculum that is well organised, clearly focused and based on up-to-date scholarship with explicit and achievable learning outcomes, which are appropriate to the level of the qualification.
- Teaching staff sufficient in number and with appropriate qualifications to deliver the curricula, with an effective policy of recruitment, induction and professional development;
- Means of systematically taking into account student and external (e.g. external examiners', employers', professional and regulatory bodies') views on the curriculum, its delivery and outcomes, aimed at achieving student and employer satisfaction;
- A clear framework in which the Institute measures, evaluates and ensures success in meeting its overall aims, objectives and intended learning outcomes in the programmes being delivered.

This Manual sets out the procedures through which the Institute ensures that its programme and other activities continue to attain the highest possible standards.

Principles underpinning quality assurance in the Institute are as follows:

- Exploring means for further enhancing the student experience;
- Accepting responsibility for the quality and standards of its educational provision;
- Ensuring learner involvement, participation and regular formal feedback in our programme development, delivery and monitoring processes;
- Subjecting the programme of study and quality assurance mechanisms to internal and external (national and international) peer evaluation and review, involving consultation with learners and other stakeholders;
- Engaging in self-evaluation, identifying our programme's strengths and weaknesses
- Publishing the results of our quality assurance processes
- Committing explicitly to the development of a culture, that recognizes the importance of quality and quality assurance in our work.

IPTAS is committed to the aims of the Bologna process and in particular the commitment to enable learners and staff move with ease within the European Higher Education Area and have fair recognition of their qualifications.

The principles listed above are consistent with the legislative arrangements that govern quality assurance in the Irish Higher Education sector and conform to the principles set out in the Berlin Communiqué. The Institute's procedures also conform to the principles of good practice set by Higher Education and Training Awards Council -Awards Range and Criteria.

This Manual is a working document and is reviewed and updated annually in light of experience in implementing its procedures and feedback received from staff, students and other stakeholders.

The aim is that this Manual is the primary source of all up-to-date information on quality assurance policies and procedures operated by IPTAS.

Users of this Manual who require further clarification or information, should in the first instance consult the Programme Administrator. Information is also available on the IOS intranet.

Delivery of Academic Quality in the Institute

Each tutor/practitioner in the Institute of Physical Therapy and Applied Science is responsible for delivering academic quality in all her/his activities, including teaching, consultancy and research. The management and academic structures of the Institute are designed to guide, underpin and help each individual in his/her work.

It is the belief of IPTAS that quality assurance and enhancement provides a framework for ensuring that required standards are achieved and is therefore committed to providing the necessary resources. Each key function within the organisation has a quality policy statement. These reflect IPTAS' mission and values. IPTAS regards quality as the extent to which it consistently meets the standards defined in relation to its goals and mission. It is the congruence between the stated standards and its performance in achieving them.

IPTAS quality assurance and enhancement rests on three pillars: Self-evaluation, External review, Information to and from stakeholders.

Teamwork for Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement

Academic quality assurance and quality enhancement derive from a general spirit of service to our students and identification with the mission and aims of the Institute. It can only be achieved by a common team approach by all members to all activities in the Institute.

Within the constraints of resources, for which the Institute's management is responsible, the Programme Boards, consisting of all tutors, contributes to development of the programme.

With regard to academic quality assurance and enhancement, the role of the Institute's management is one of general academic and management leadership, supervision of the work of the various boards, and resource allocation in the context of the Institute's mission.

Institute management is committed to assuring the quality of programme provision, and encouraging the development of academic excellence amongst the staff, through a range of staff development initiatives. It clearly acknowledges that without adequate resources to deliver the desired quality, the Programme would not be offered.

IPTAS believes that the two key factors involved in supporting improvement are:

- The existence of a collaborative culture, and
- Commitment to critical self-examination among all staff but particularly among the teaching faculty

College History

Established in 1989, The Institute of Physical Therapy & Applied Science (IPTAS) is the founder of the physical therapy profession in Ireland. Its innovative and pioneering work in developing a third-level physical therapy course has been formally recognised and the school is an accepted centre of excellence in the teaching of manual skills and bodywork techniques.

Work began in 1990 when IPTAS welcomed its first intake of students. Of the 16 students registered, 14 graduated and within a few months a handful had established The Irish Association of Physical Therapists. Three years later The Priory Clinic was opened, providing a home for IPTAS's student clinic. Here students gained experience in managing clients with musculoskeletal problems under supervision.

By 1995 IPTAS extended its course from two years to a three year Diploma in Physical Therapy. Four years later the college expanded further to include a satellite course in Cork where students could complete the first year of their diploma course. In 2001 that satellite course moved to Limerick, where it currently thrives. In 2006 The Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) approved IPTAS Quality Assurance Policies and Procedure. This paved the way for the college to apply for validation and in 2008 the IPTAS course was validated as a Level 7 B.Sc. degree in Applied Health Science by HETAC.

One year later – in 2009 – HETAC approved the Institute's request to also deliver Year 2 from Limerick. Clinical placements were expanded in Limerick also, ensuring that students based in the South and West of the country could now complete their clinical placements for the duration of their course. In 2010 the B.Sc. in Applied Health Science was successfully re-validated for a further five year period.

Today IPTAS offers a three-year Physical Therapy education and training programme, designed specifically for mature students. Upon successful completion of the programme, graduates are awarded certification as a Physical Therapist and a B.Sc. in Applied Health Science, Level 7 on the National Framework of Qualifications. Previous graduates are also offered an opportunity to upgrade to a B.Sc. in Applied Health Science.

Mission & Vision

The Institute of Physical Therapy is a third level provider of higher education and professional training providing specialist education in the discipline of physical therapy and applied health science to meet identified needs of students and practitioners, nationally and internationally.

Our mission is to produce competent, caring practitioners and to support further development of the physical therapy profession. IPTAS also aims to engage in health promotion to improve the musculoskeletal health of the wider community. IPTAS is committed to providing access and opportunity to students from a wide range of backgrounds.

Our core value as physical therapists is that of patient - centeredness, providing care that is respectful and responsive to individual patient preferences, needs and values. Likewise we are committed to ensuring that the learning environment is student-centered and supporting the development of self-directed autonomous practitioners.

As physical therapy becomes more widely recognised across Ireland, clients will choose to attend a physical therapist because they understand the value it can add to their quality of life. Clients will seek out IPTAS graduates for their ability to listen attentively to their story; because they understand what is important from their client's point of view; and because they work collaboratively with the client to identify the cause of the problem, using research evidence to propose workable options.

Physical therapy clients have a desire to maintain health and wellbeing and want to understand how their bodies respond to stresses and strains. They are committed to finding manageable

solutions to potential debilitating muscle and joint problems even when change to life style and work practice is necessary.

The college has identified seven key objectives, which are as follows:

1. To nurture an environment that promotes high quality client care and learner professional development
2. To improve and enhance the education it offers
3. To produce competent, caring practitioners who meet the needs of their clients and who possess the know-how and skill to establish and manage a successful practice.
4. To provide opportunity to learners from a wide range of backgrounds to acquire a recognised professional qualification
5. To advance the development of the physical therapy profession in Ireland
6. To establish and maintain public confidence in the quality of the education and training provided by IPTAS and the standard of the awards made.
7. To engage in health promotion to improve the musculoskeletal health of the (wider) community

Values and Ethos

IPTAS believes that there is a need to focus on the value of 'person centeredness', whereby an environment of respect and empowerment is facilitated for the learner. The primary aim of our programme is to prepare the learner for his /her role as carer where the welfare of the patient/client is always a priority. All knowledge, skills and attitudes therefore, are developed to ensure the provision of optimum care. Every effort is made to assist the learner in developing as an individual, retaining common-sense and applying health science principles to practice. To ensure tutors act as suitable role models, IPTAS' staff development programme provides the necessary framework whereby those values of person-centeredness, physical therapy capabilities and independent lifelong learning are nurtured.

Based on the concept that learners are responsible for their own learning, IPTAS believes its role is to facilitate this process. Support therefore focuses on facilitating the learner to attain as high a level of confidence, motivation, competence and autonomy as possible. It believes that providing increased challenge and support to learners enables such change and growth to occur.

IPTAS has over the years developed a strong belief in the combined approach of integrating competency-based education and training with reflective practice. The former ensures that clinical tasks are clearly specified and accompanied by measurable criteria, while the latter encourages the constant evaluation of ones experiences to create new meaning.

Learning in IPTAS' context means the ability to use knowledge and skill in the real world. Existing knowledge is a means not an end. Examinations and assessments evaluate learner competence in using existing knowledge and skill in working out clinical problems and deciding what to do. Teaching and learning activities therefore, should facilitate the learner in struggling to elucidate and explain clinical problems in order to help him/her access usable science in the future.

Chapter 2 – Teaching & Learning and Research Policy and Strategy

Teaching & Learning

Policy and Strategy

As our mission is to produce competent, caring practitioners, the provision of high quality learning experience for our learners is a priority. It is our intention to facilitate learners in achieving as high a level of competence, confidence, motivation and autonomy as possible so that they can provide optimum care to their clients and pursue a career path that is personally satisfying and rewarding. Our core value as physical therapists is that of client - centeredness, providing care that is respectful and responsive to individual client preferences, needs and values. In order to nurture an environment that promotes high quality client care and learner professional development, we as a college are committed to ensuring that our learning environment is learner-centred and focused on the development of self-directed autonomous practitioners.

The following outlines the overarching objectives and the action we will take to achieve those objectives

1. To nurture an environment that promotes high quality client care and learner professional development
2. To improve and enhance the education we offer
3. To produce competent, caring practitioners who meet the needs of their clients and who possess the know-how and skill to establish and manage a successful practice.
4. To provide opportunity for continuing professional development that is flexible and accessible.
5. To enhance the college's reputation for excellence in Teaching & Learning by supporting staff professionalism.

Strategic Aims

Objective 1 – To nurture an environment that promotes high quality client care and learner professional development

We plan to achieve this by:

- Providing support for the notion of a community of learners where there is sharing of responsibility for learning and positive assumptions about learner's potential;
- Course structure that ensures that the overall programme learning outcomes (goals) are met;
- Curriculum that places emphasis on learner's self-management and development, which includes: self-directed and life-long learning ability; ability to be reflective; ability to work collaboratively; and an ability to work ethically and with integrity;
- Staff recruitment and induction procedure that ensures that the college's beliefs and values about education are upheld;
- Staff development, which is appropriate, effective and continuous and is responsive to changing staff and programme needs;

- Teaching & Learning strategies that focus on: applying knowledge and skill to a client's problem; promoting a deep approach to learning; integrating science and practice; providing ample opportunity to learners so that they know how well they are progressing and how they can improve; use of mastery learning to support the development of clinical skills; support for learner's personal, professional and intellectual development; and engaging a person-centred approach;
- Assessments that promote and support effective learning;
- Learning resources that are both adequate and appropriate;
- Clinical training programme that supports continuous professional development;
- A QA system that ensures that all key functions are effective and fit for purpose

Objective 2 - Improve and enhance the education we offer

- Educational leadership that is up-to-date with developments in higher education and best practice generally;
- Support and encouragement for continuous development of staff;
- Programme development and approval under the National Framework of Qualifications

Objective 3 - Produce competent, caring practitioners who meet the needs of their clients and who possess the know-how and skill to establish and manage a successful practice.

- Staff who possess the academic and professional qualifications and experience to support learner progression;
- Student Clinic that is dynamic and continues to develop in response to feedback from stakeholders and best practice in clinical education;
- Support for clinical staff to stay up to date with developments both educational and professional

Objective 4 - Provide opportunity for graduates continuing professional development that is flexible and accessible.

- Offer Single Subject certification, Minor Awards, and Special Purpose Award to graduates;
- Develop capacity to offer CPD through blended learning, enhancing virtual learning environment and online library.

Objective 5 - Enhance the college's reputation for excellence in Teaching & Learning by supporting staff professionalism.

- A staff development programme that prepares tutors for undertaking post-graduate studies in Teaching and Learning;
- Collaborative partnerships in the area of Teaching & Learning and in manual therapy;
- Providing opportunity for staff to engage in scholarly activities and in sharing knowledge with the wider manual therapy community

Research

Policy and Strategy

IPTAS believes that in order to facilitate development of the physical therapy programme there needs to be a strong research component and the adoption of a more evidence-based approach to practice. The college therefore is committed to supporting the development of a research culture throughout the organisation.

One aspect of this research culture is ensuring that our environment encourages a spirit of enquiry where questioning prevails and where tutors and learners are committed to an evidence-based approach to their work. This includes creating new knowledge as well as transmitting and critiquing existing knowledge. While the college does not expect that all teachers will be engaged in research, a culture of enquiry and engaged scholarship must permeate the work of the college. Teaching & research must be closely linked.

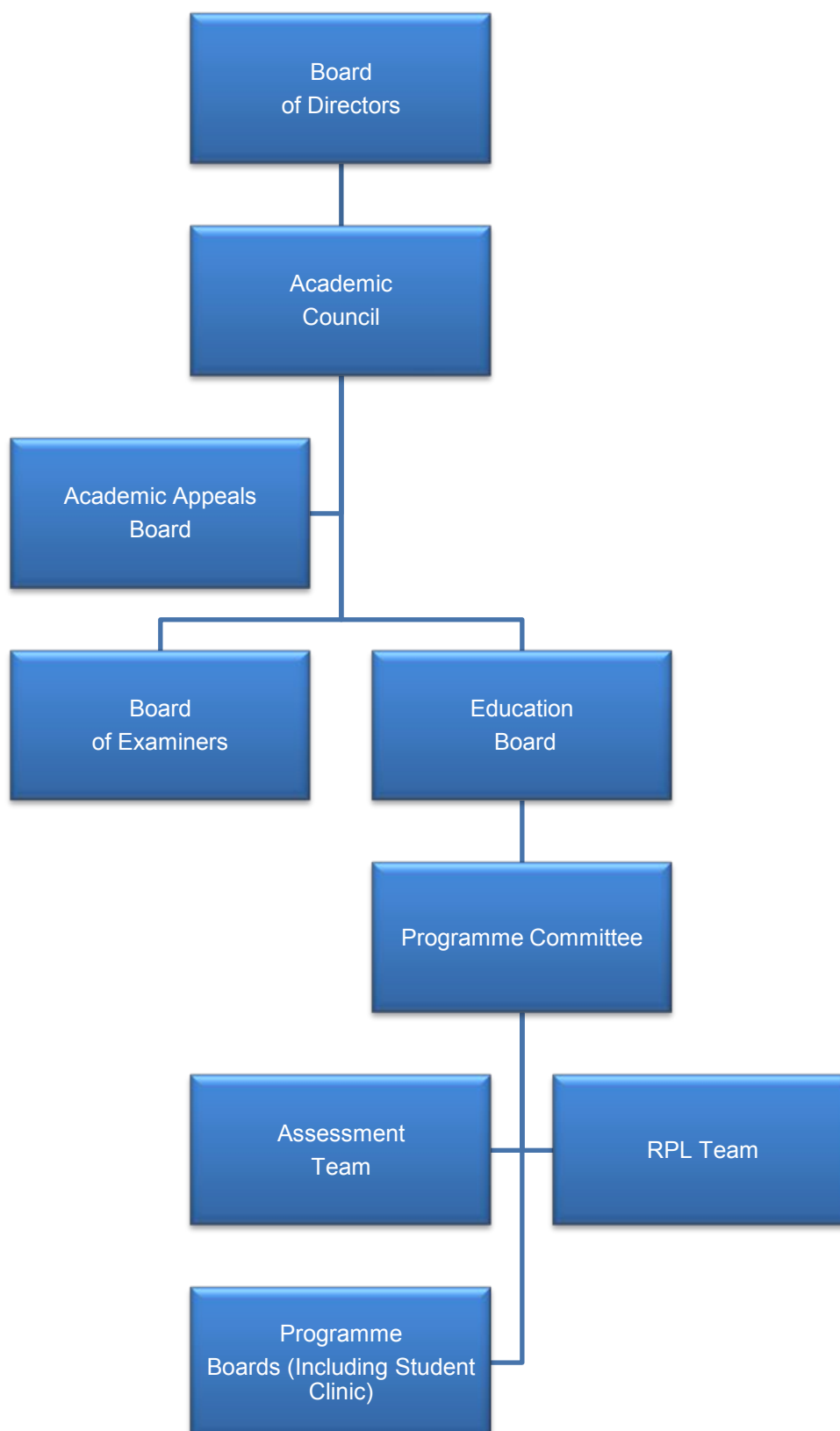
Strategies

Our strategies for achieving the above include:

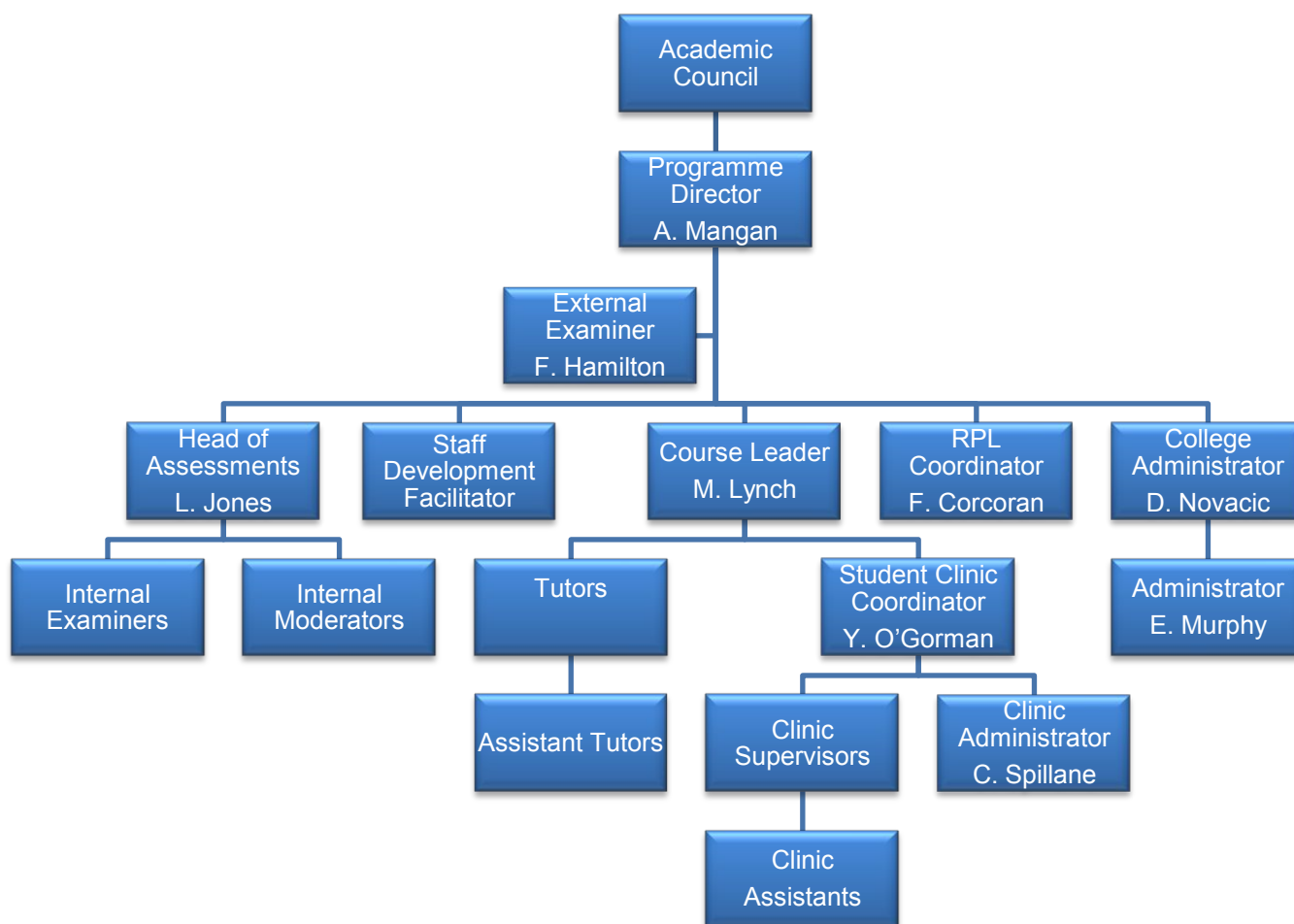
- Integrate research into each stage of the programme
- Continue to develop the online library
- Continue to provide librarian support to staff and learners in developing their research skills
- Develop the Virtual Learning Environment to include Moodle, thus providing a more effective mode of communication between teaching teams
- Continue to support tutors in the integration of evidence-based practice into their teaching , particularly those tutors in the Diagnosis & Practice modules and those facilitating Problem-Based-Learning
- Continue to encourage tutor's to pursue higher degrees
- Provide opportunity for staff to engage in research activity and present to the wider manual therapy community.

Chapter 3 – Organisation & Management

Organisation Chart 1 – Boards, Committees and Teams



Organisation Chart 2 – Academic Management Structure



Board of Directors

Governing Body

The Board of Directors constitutes the governing body of IPTAS, and is responsible for the overall management of the College. The Board of Directors establishes and monitors the College's strategy and policy and its compliance with law.

The Board of Directors are responsible as follows:

- Setting vision and goals for the College
- Operational management
- Financial management
- Budget allocations
- Administration of the programme and related activities
- Quality assurance
- Ensuring the College's academic standards
- Reviewing and assessing course proposals and their viability and their alignment with the strategic aims of the College

Membership

- John O’Sullivan (College Director)
- Anne Mangan (Programme Director)

Meetings

The Board of Directors generally meet twice per year. Further meetings may be held as deemed necessary by the Board.

Academic Council

Function

The Institute’s Academic Council is appointed by the Board of Directors to act as academic watchdog and to ensure that its policies, strategies and procedures are being implemented effectively.

Academic Council has the following responsibilities:

- To oversee the effective functioning of IPTAS Academic Quality Assurance & Enhancement System
- To approve key policies and procedures
- To make recommendations to the Board of Directors for the establishment of appropriate structures to implement the course of study
- To contribute to the programme development
- To approve the work of the Education Board and Examination Board
- To set up Academic Appeals Boards where necessary
- To propose the appointment of External Examiners
- To approve new programme development
- To establish, with the approval of the Board of Directors, such and so many committees, consisting either wholly or partly of persons who are not members of the Institute.

The Academic Council includes; Programme Director, Course Leader, Head of Assessments, two elected tutors, two elected learners, a representative of the Irish Association of Physical Therapists (IAPT), two external members with expertise in Higher Education and Quality Assurance, and two client representatives.

The IPTAS Administrator acts as secretary to the council.

Note: HETAC states in their Assessments & Standards 2009 that Academic Council should ensure that it has the evidence necessary for it to decide whether or not learner’s results (grades and award classifications) correspond with actual learner performance (learning outcomes). This addresses the validity and reliability of the assessment instruments and is one of the main quality assurance functions of Academic Council. Its approach should be systematic and rigorous.

In the event that systematic differences are discovered by this process, the Academic Council should require that the relevant assessment procedures be reviewed for future cohorts of learners.

Terms of Reference

Definitions

A simple majority should mean the majority of the members present and voting at a valid meeting of the Council. A special majority should mean two-thirds of the members present at a valid meeting of the Council.

Adoption, amendment and suspension

These terms of reference, having been approved by a special majority, should remain in force except as provided below.

Terms of reference may be altered or amended by special majority provided due notice in writing to do so has been delivered to each member of the Council at least one week before the meeting at which it is proposed to alter or amend the terms of reference.

Terms of reference may be suspended or modified in effect, for any part of any meeting of the Council, provided the members present so determine by simple majority.

Quorum

The quorum required to constitute a valid meeting of the Council should be at least half of the membership of the Council plus one.

Meetings

Meetings should be held normally at least twice a year. Further meetings may be held as deemed necessary by the Council. In fixing times and dates of its meetings, the Council should endeavour in so far as is reasonably possible to facilitate its members.

Unless otherwise decided by a simple majority of the Council, meetings will be scheduled to last not more than two hours, but may be extended with the agreement of the meeting. The Chairperson should endeavour to complete the business within the stipulated time, while giving due regard to each item on the agenda.

A special meeting on a limited agenda may be held by decision of the Council or of a Director. A special meeting should also be convened either by the secretary or chairperson on the written requisition of not less than two thirds of the members of the Council which states the purpose of the meeting. The business of the special meeting should be confined to the stated purpose.

Procedure at meetings

The chairperson should open the meeting at the appointed time or as soon thereafter as a quorum is present.

The chairperson of the Council should be a Director of the Institute or a person appointed by the Directors for the time being, and should chair all meetings when present.

The secretary to the Council will be nominated by agreement with the chair.

In the absence of the chairperson, the secretary should open or continue the meeting. In that event, the next business of the meeting should be the election of a chairperson for the meeting or part of the meeting from among the assembled members of the Council.

The secretary should call for the nomination of a member to chair the meeting. Should more than one valid nomination be made, the matter should be put to a vote and the member receiving the greatest number of votes should chair the meeting during the absence of the Directors.

The chairperson should conduct the business of the meeting according to the agenda adopted at the commencement of the meeting. A meeting may be adjourned to a specified date by a simple majority vote.

Agenda

An agenda for each meeting should be set by the Chairperson. The agenda and notice for ordinary meetings should be delivered to each member of the Council at least one week before the date of the meeting accompanied by relevant documentation. The agenda for a special meeting should be notified to members between two and five working days before the date of the meeting.

An item should be included on the proposed agenda at the direction of the Council or at the request of a Director, any committee of the Council or any member of the Council.

The agenda for ordinary meetings of the Council should include the following sequence:

- Apologies received
- Minutes of previous meeting
- Matters arising
- Individual agenda items
- Any other business

The Council should decide at the end of each meeting the action to be taken in relation to agenda items not reached during the course of the meeting.

Minutes

Minutes should be kept in respect of each meeting of the Council.

The draft minutes of Council meetings should be delivered to each member of the Council within ten days of the meeting.

The minutes should record all resolutions of the Council and, if the resolution was reached by way of vote, the result of the vote. A member's dissent should be recorded on request. The minutes should also, as far as is practicable, in respect of each agenda item, include a synopsis of the debate. Contributions to the debate should not normally be attributed but any member's contribution should be attributed if requested at the time of the discussion. Where applicable, resolutions of the Council should indicate what further action the Council envisages, by whom it considers that this action should be taken and what form of report back the Council desires. This should be reflected in the minutes.

Where a resolution of the Council calls for a decision or action by a person or body, the resolution should be specifically communicated to that person or body by the secretary in addition to circulation of minutes.

The adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting should be an agenda item. The draft minutes as circulated should be taken as read and may be discussed by the meeting only in the event of a challenge to their accuracy.

When the minutes, with or without amendment, have been adopted, members may raise questions on matters arising there from.

Attendance

Attendance at Council meetings will be reflected in the minutes.

The chairperson will read any apologies received for non-attendance.

Motions

Motions should as far as possible be put in writing and circulated with the agenda. All motions should require a proposer and seconder. The proposer may speak first and conclude with the motion. The seconder may formally second the motion and reserve the right to speak later. Each

member other than the proposer should have the right to speak once; further interventions should be at the discretion of the chairperson. The proposer should have the right of reply at the end of the debate.

Proposals to amend any motion should require a proposer and a seconder. An amendment may not negate the main motion. All amendments should be determined in the order in which they were proposed prior to the conclusion of the debate. The original motion, together with any amendments which have been carried, should become the substantive motion. The substantive motion should be put to the meeting and, if carried, should be the resolution of the meeting.

The debate may be closed by any of the following procedural motions, viz:

- That the question be now put
- That the motion be adjourned to the next meeting
- That the meeting proceed to the next business.

Such a procedural motion, once proposed and seconded, should be put to the meeting without discussion and should be determined by a simple majority.

Decisions of the Council will normally be reached by consensus after the exact proposal has been read back to the meeting by the secretary and formally put by the chairman. Voting should be on a straight vote system by a show of hands at the request of a member. Questions will be determined by simple majority except where a special majority is required by these standing orders. The chairperson should have an additional casting vote in the event of a tie. Voting for elections should be according to procedures determined by the Council for the purpose.

Interpretation of Terms of Reference

The ruling of the chairperson on any interpretation of terms of reference, or on any points of order or explanation, should be final unless a challenge by a member to any ruling is supported by a special majority.

Any other business

Before closing a meeting, the chairperson should inquire if there is any other business to be considered by the meeting.

Committees of the Council

The Council may establish such committees or ad hoc groups to consider specific issues as it may from time to time consider appropriate.

The composition and terms of reference of each committee should be determined by the Council. It should be open to the Council, by resolution passed by simple majority, to terminate committees or to alter their composition, membership and terms of reference.

Acts of committees appointed by the Council should be subject to ratification by the Council. Committees should report to the Council as determined by Council.

The Council should appoint one of the members of each committee to be chairperson. Each committee should elect one of its members to be secretary to the committee.

Each committee may determine its own rules of procedure which should be based substantially on the standing orders of the Council. The quorum required to constitute a valid meeting of a committee should be four members.

Each committee should be responsible for keeping the minutes of every meeting it holds. Copies of the ratified minutes should be lodged with the Administrator and be available for inspection. Only ratified minutes should be submitted to the Council.

Secretariat

The Administrator as secretary to the Academic Council should be responsible for:

- Processing and filing the records of the Council proceedings including minutes and associated documentation of the Council and of its committees and minutes of course boards lodged with the Council.
- Correspondence addressed to the Council
- Communicating resolutions of the Council to the appropriate persons or bodies

Academic Appeals Board

The Academic Appeals Board is a subcommittee of the Academic Council. The Board is composed of not more than four persons: one of whom is a member of the Board of Directors; two of whom are Academic Council members and one of whom is a member of the relevant Examination Board. The Board will be appointed on an ad-hoc basis. The chairperson of the Appeals Board is appointed by the members of the board at their first meeting.

The function of the Academic Appeals Board is to adjudicate on an appeal against the provisional examination results of the Examination Board. Grounds for appeal include evidence that the review procedure was not properly implemented.

In each case due information, in writing, must be supplied by the applicant to explain the basis for the appeal.

Compassionate consideration will apply only to the examination situation and not normally to factors affecting study leading to the examination.

Academic Appeals lodged with The Institute will be referred promptly to the Administrator who has responsibility for presenting them to the Academic Appeals Board .

In the event that an appeal has not been heard prior to the commencement of the academic year the appellant will be entitled to apply for temporary registration on the following year of the relevant programme pending the outcome of the appeals process. If the appeal is not upheld the temporary registration will terminate.

An appellant will have the right to present his case, and/or be represented, to the Academic Appeals Board.

The Academic Appeals Board will meet as necessary and will hear the appeals presented to it for that occasion and make determination thereon. All necessary information will be processed through the Administrator and presented in writing to the Academic Appeals Board.

While the Academic Appeals Board may at its discretion consult other parties, the only parties to an appeal are the Institute and the appellant concerned. The Academic Appeals Board will consider all proffered evidence (oral and written) relevant to the Appeal.

No change can be made retrospectively in Examination Regulations for the particular examination involved in the appeal.

The decisions of the Academic Appeals Board in respect of appeals will normally be formulated by consensus. Where the Board is divided, the outcome will be decided by a majority decision. In the event of an equality of votes the Chairperson of the Board will exercise the casting vote.

The decision of the Academic Appeals Board will be final. The Board will notify in writing the Academic Council, Programme Director and the Administrator and the appellant of its decision as soon as possible. In the event that an appeal is successful the Academic Appeals Board will make a recommendation which will be binding on the Institute.

Education Board

The Board of Directors appoints the Education Board to take responsibility for overall programme delivery and monitoring. Membership of the Board includes: the Programme Committee, two elected tutors and learner representatives from both campuses. The Programme Committee consist of Programme Director, Course Leader, Programme Administrator, Head of Assessments, RPL Coordinator, Staff Development facilitator and Clinical Coordinator.

Members of the Board have collective responsibility for the quality of the programme which includes:

- Implementation of the policies and strategies in the area of Teaching and Learning
- Assessments
- Research
- Recognition of Prior Learning
- Staff Development; Learner Support;
- Programme Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review

Day to day management of these activities is the responsibility of the Programme Committee.

Functions

Education Board has the following responsibilities:

- Ensuring that the programme is delivered as approved by HETAC
- Implementing policies in relation to: Teaching & Learning; Assessments; Research; Recognition of Prior Learning; Staff Development; Learner Support; and Programme Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review and monitoring effectiveness of policies and procedures
- Updating curriculum and including rationale for change in end-of-year report to Academic Council
- Development of new programmes
- Carrying out such other functions as are considered appropriate subject to the approval of Academic Council and Board of Directors
- Carrying out a five yearly programme review
- Carrying out a self evaluation as to the effectiveness of the Board in carrying out its responsibilities
- Agreeing new policies and procedures and changes to revised policies and procedures where these are not regarded as key. Otherwise deliberates on policies and procedures that require Academic Council approval.

Terms of Reference

The Education Boards may establish sub-committees and working parties with some members external to its membership, including outside the Institute, subject to the approval of Academic Council or Board of Directors. The Chairperson is responsible for reporting the decisions and views of the Education Board to Academic Council and for transmitting the relevant decisions and views of Academic Council to the Education Board.

Meetings

The Education Boards will meet at least three times per academic year and at such other times as required. Meetings are chaired by the Programme Director or nominee.

Board of Examiners

Introduction

IPTAS Board of Examiners is a deliberative committee, which makes summative assessment (and related) decisions based on the recommendations of examiners. The board is accountable to Academic Council, which is responsible for overseeing appeals of decisions made by the Board of Examiners. Apart from appeals and complaints processes, the Board of Examiners has the final decision concerning assessment results.

The Board of Examiners is established to consider all assessment findings (including the findings of repeat/supplementary assessment) and to determine assessment results for each of the learners presented. These include:

- Eligibility to progress from one stage to the next
- Eligibility for higher education and training awards
- Classification of those awards, where applicable

Membership

Membership of the board consists of Programme Director, Head of Assessments, Course Leader, Programme Administrator, External Examiner and a sufficient number of Internal Examiners to competently deliberate on the assessment findings presented. All members are expected to attend the meeting. In exceptional circumstances the Programme Director is empowered to excuse a board member or to nominate a replacement where such a board member is unable to attend. In the case of an examiner whose presence is via conference call or video link, this only count for the purpose of establishing a quorum where the examiner is able to hear and participate in the board's full discussion.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Chairperson is the Programme Director or his/her nominee. The role of Chairperson is to ensure that meetings are carried out in a fair and impartial way, allowing each member to contribute to the discussions with the view to the board arriving at a consensus on an issue. The chairperson plays a key role in directing the business of the board through the setting of the agenda. The chairperson is also responsible for the proper proceedings of the meeting and informs the board of any infringement of examination regulations by a candidate. The Chairperson is responsible for agreeing the dates of meetings. These dates are agreed in consultation with the External Examiner and communicated to Internal Examiners and HETAC (where appropriate).

The Secretary is the College Administrator or his/her nominee. The role of the Secretary is to ensure that all learner assessment marks have been accurately recorded in the database and that module totals have been accurately recorded in the broadsheet. During the meeting the Secretary calls the results and recommendations of candidates.

The role of the Head of Assessments is to inform the board of the validity and reliability of the programmes' assessment instruments. Responsibility also includes recording minutes of meetings and submitting a draft of the minutes to the Chairperson within three working days. Head of assessments also reports any trends or anomalies.

The role of the External Examiner is to witness the proceedings and participate in discussions.

The role of the Internal Examiners is to witness the proceedings, to actively engage in decision-making relating to progression and award classification. Internal Examiners confirm their agreement with the decisions made by signing the broadsheets.

A HETAC representative may be present at a Board of Examiner's meeting. While he/she does not participate nor should he/she be asked to participate in the deliberations concerning assessment

results, he/she may assist in the interpretation of HETAC standards, policy, criteria and procedures.

Preparation for Board of Examiners' Meetings

College Administrator and Head of Assessments are jointly responsible for ensuring that all preparatory work is completed in good time for the meeting. This includes ensuring that all elements of a learner's module marks have been included in the final mark and that marks are correct.

The following documents will be available at the Board of examiners' meeting:

- The programme assessment strategy and approved programme schedule
- The draft broadsheet of results
- Examination regulations
- Minutes of Interim Examination Board meetings are made available to the Board of Examiners where appropriate.
- Any other information to be considered by the board of examiners

Prior to attending the Board of Examiners' meeting the External Examiner will have reviewed an appropriate sample of marked scripts, assignment/practical marking schemes together with the minutes of the interim exam board meetings, which include findings of the internal moderator. He/she will also have attended a set of final year practical assessments.

Decision Making

Decisions of the Board of Examiners will normally be reached by consensus. Voting is based on a straight vote system by a show of hands at the request of the chairperson. Where a board is divided, the decision will be by majority decision of the examiners present. In the event of an equality of votes the Chairperson of the Examination Board should exercise the casting vote.

Where a vote is taken, only those examiners involved in the particular year of the programme should be eligible to vote. In the event of a disagreement between the Board of Examiners and an individual examiner, the Board of Examiners may replace an examiner's recommendation with its own. This should not be done lightly and the disagreement must be formally recorded in the minutes of the meeting. In the event of an irresolvable disagreement between the Board of Examiners and the External Examiner, the Board of Examiners' decision will be final. The disagreement should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting, in the External Examiner's report, and in an attachment to the broadsheet of results.

Matters to Be Deliberated by the Board of Examiners

The board of examiners should satisfy itself that learners have been appropriately graded and classified. This information should be recorded on a broadsheet of results and signed by the members of the board.

Where systematic errors are discovered, any necessary adjustments to marks/grades should be applied to all learners affected. The decision to make such adjustments and the supporting rationale should be recorded in the minutes so that the Academic Council is informed and for the purpose of follow-up. Boards of Examiners should be vigilant against any tendency towards grade inflation and should base their decision on the valid and reliable assessment of explicit learning outcomes. This may require closer perusal of cases near the classification boundaries, *i.e.* within +/- 1 percentage point of the percentage point average threshold, or +/- 0.05 of the grade point average threshold.

When considering borderline cases, it is important to consider the learner's performance as a whole against the minimum intended learning outcomes. In the absence of bias, it is to be expected that as many borderline grades will be reduced as will be increased. It is important to stress that

the preceding sentence does not imply that results should be adjusted to fit this expectation – only assessment against learning outcomes criteria should be used to determine results.

Board of Examiners should only grant eligibility for progression, or recommend that an award be made, when it is satisfied, based on consideration of the necessary evidence that the required learning outcomes have been attained. In the event that a Board of Examiners is not satisfied that it has the necessary evidence in a particular case, it may report the case as withheld (i.e. the result is undetermined). Such cases may be reconsidered at the next meeting of the Board of Examiners. Where the determination is conditional, it may be reconsidered by a special process recommended by the Board of Examiners, provided this practice is permitted by the Academic Council.

Minutes of Board of Examiner's Meetings

The minutes of Board of Examiner's meetings should be recorded in accordance with IPTAS's guidelines for recording formal meetings of deliberative committees (see Academic Council Terms of Reference).

Confidentiality

The proceedings and deliberations of meetings of Boards of Examiners are strictly confidential.

Excepting legitimate reporting requirements, no person who has attended or observed a meeting of a Board of Examiners may disclose to any other person a decision of the board or any document, information or opinion considered, conveyed or expressed at the meeting.

Broadsheets of results

A broadsheet of results is returned for each 60-credit stage of the programme. Repeat and supplemental assessment results are returned on a separate broadsheet of results.

After the Board of Examiner's meeting

Following a Board of Examiners' meeting, the Secretary sends the original, signed, broadsheet of results to HETAC, notifying it of results and recommendations for awards to be made.

IPTAS sends results to learners within a week of the Board of Examiner's meeting. IPTAS could decide to withhold the results of learners who have not demonstrated fulfilment of the requirements, as notified to all learners at the start of the programme.

Granting of Awards

When HETAC accepts the recommendations of a legitimately constituted Board of Examiners, it will grant appropriate awards. Acceptance of recommendations is automatic; assuming that the provider has followed agreed processes. Specifically, the recommendations should be consistent with the requirements of IPTAS's validated programme and HETAC's requests concerning award titles and award classifications.

Programme Committee

Introduction

The Board of Directors appoints the Programme Committee as a sub-committee of the Education Board, to take responsibility for the day to day management of the programme, its delivery and quality assurance. Programme Committee report to Education Board.

The Programme Committee has the following functions:

- Ensuring that the programme is delivered as approved by HETAC

- Implementing policies in relation to: Teaching & Learning; Assessments; Research; Recognition of Prior Learning; Staff Development; Learner Resources & Learner Support; Programme Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review and monitoring effectiveness of policies and procedures
- Assisting management in carrying out a 5 yearly Institutional Review
- Developing new programmes
- Producing an end of year report for Academic Council on the implementation and quality assurance evaluation of each of the above areas with recommendations for improvement
- Updating curriculum and including rationale for change in end-of-year report to Academic Council
- Carrying out such other functions as are considered appropriate subject to the approval of Board of Directors
- Carrying out a 5 yearly Programme Review
- Devising new policies and procedures for deliberation by the Education Board or Academic Council

Annual programme monitoring is a key function of the Programme Committee. This includes data collection, data analysis, actions taken and monitoring of the outcome. An agenda is agreed at the beginning of the year and data collection coordinated to fit with the agenda.

All monitoring data and action plans as a result of the data are submitted by the Programme Committee to the Education Board for deliberation and amendment. This information is forwarded to the Academic Council through interim and end-of year reports. Sub-committees such as the Assessment Team and RPL Team exist within the Programme Committee.

Meetings

The Chairperson and Secretary are elected annually and meetings are conducted monthly.

The Agenda is established at the beginning of the year to facilitate annual programme monitoring, which involves the continuous appraisal of the programme.

Membership

Membership of the Programme Committee includes:

- Programme Director
- Course Leader
- Head of Assessments
- College Administrator
- Recognition of Prior learning (RPL) Coordinator
- Student Clinic Coordinator
- Staff Development facilitator
- Head of Assessments

Each person has responsibility for specific QA areas, for example the Programme Director is responsible for Approval, Annual monitoring and Periodic Review.

Programme Boards and Teams

Programme Boards

Programme Boards exist for each stage of the programme and membership comprises of all tutors who deliver modules in that stage. A representative from each Programme Board has a place on the Education Board. The primary functions of the Boards are to implement the following policies: Teaching & Learning, Research, Programme Assessment; and Learner Support. Key activities include: coordinating teaching, learning and assessment; engaging in quality assurance and enhancement, particularly in relation to assessments; supporting 'at-risk' learners; providing support and encouragement to one another in relation to continuing professional development; and justifying proposed changes to the programme. Programme Boards can have additional functions also such as increasing learner progression rates.

Full Programme Boards (Dublin & Limerick) meet four times a year, while regional Boards meet monthly. Meetings are chaired by the Course Leader or his/her nominee. Twice a year the Programme Board meets as Interim Examination Boards. Terms of reference for these boards are outlined below.

Programme Teams

Programme Teams exist to perform special functions such as managing Student Clinic. The Student Clinic team, led by the Clinical Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that clients receive optimal care; that the clinical education and experience of learners is optimised; that the continuous assessment of learners is conducted in a fair and consistent manner and that 'at risk' learners are identified and the necessary support provided. The team consists of Course Leader, Clinical Coordination, Clinical Supervisors and Clinical Assistants. It meets twice a year and reports directly to both the Education Board and the Examination Board.

Interim Examination Board

Interim Examination Boards are a Quality Assurance mechanism, established for each year of the programme. Boards meet twice yearly, Jan and June and are part of the Programme Boards. Membership normally includes the Programme Director, Head of Assessments, Programme Administrator, Course Leader and all relevant Internal Examiners and Internal Moderators. Where possible the External Examiner should attend at least one meeting per year. The Interim Examination Board is answerable to Academic Council.

The function of the board is to:

- Agree provisional results for each learner and identify 'at risk' learners
- Agree provisional marks for modules
- Analyse each assessment in terms of its validity, reliability and manageability.
- Use statistical evidence to:
 - Compare results between Dublin and Limerick cohort
 - Compare results where relevant between examiners
 - Identify problems in individual examinations
- Where problems exist, determine the possible cause and make recommendations.
- Confirm the decisions made by the extenuating circumstances team
- Confirm RPL decisions
- Identify where the 'at risk' strategy is working well and where it is not.

Terms of Reference

The Chairperson is the Programme Director or his nominee and is responsible for ensuring that Interim Examination Board meetings are included in the calendar of events and communicated to members at the beginning of the academic year. Responsibility for the timely notification of the agenda also rests with the chairperson as is the proper regulation of the proceedings of the meeting. The Chairperson is also responsible for informing the board of any reported instance of infringement of examination regulations by a candidate.

The Secretary to the Board is the Head of Assessments who is responsible for recording important items noted and agreed actions and producing draft minutes within three days of the meeting. This is confirmed by the Chairperson and forwarded to the External Examiner and members.

The Administrator and Head of Assessments are responsible for ensuring that assessment data such as marks, Internal Moderation reports and statistics are completed in good time. Reports on Academic Appeals and Extenuating Circumstances are provided by the Programme Administrator.

The role of the External Examiner is as objective observer, drawing attention to areas where good practice are evident and also to where issues may be overlooked. Members may seek the External Examiner's opinion and advice on some issues.

Internal Examiners are responsible for presenting their assessment data, including statistics and commenting on: the extent to which the assessment adequately assessed the learning outcomes; the extent to which learners achieved the learning outcomes; areas that learners did well in; areas that learners did not do well in; and level of reliability, validity and manageability. Internal Examiners also comment on the internal moderator's report.

Interim Examination Boards do NOT have the final decision concerning learners overall module or stage results as this is the responsibility of the Board of Examiners. However, individual assessors attending the Interim Examination Board DO have the authority to award marks for those elements of a module for which they are responsible. The board can influence, but not compel Examiners to review their assessment findings.

Where there is a grade distribution that is persistently and significantly inconsistent with others, the matter is thoroughly analysed. Systematic anomalies discovered in this way or through routine analysis or learner complaints are reported at the Board of Examiners' meeting and notified to the academic council.

The decisions of the Examination Board are normally formulated by consensus. Where an Examination Board is divided, the decision should be by majority decision of the examiners present. In the event of an equality of votes the Chairperson of the Examination Board should exercise the casting vote. Where a vote is taken, only those examiners involved in the particular year of the programme should be eligible to vote.

A summary of interim exam board meetings is presented to Academic Council twice a year and includes: statistics for each assessment; and any trends or anomalies.

The examination results, as determined by the Interim Examination Board, including recommendations, if any, in respect of each candidate, is recorded as an appendix to the minutes of the meeting.

The proceedings and deliberations of Examination Boards are strictly confidential; under no circumstances should any person attending a meeting of the board disclose to any other party a decision of the board or any document, information or opinion considered, conveyed or expressed at the meeting. *All documentation must be returned to the Chairperson before the conclusion of the meeting.*

The College Administrator informs all candidates of their provisional results as soon as possible after the Interim Examination Board meeting

Chapter 4 – QA Policies & Procedures

Section 1 - Quality Assurance

1.1 Policy on Quality Assurance

IPTAS policy and associated procedures aim to assure the quality and standards of the programme and awards. IPTAS is committed to development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality and quality assurance.

The college's Quality Assurance system has evolved gradually over many years and continues to develop. Each key function within the college has a quality statement, which reflects IPTAS mission and values.

Key elements of the QA system include: the QA&E Manual containing IPTAS policies and procedures; programme boards, committees and individuals charged with QA functions, an external and internal examining system; QA audit; and student involvement in quality assurance.

The aims of the IPTAS quality assurance policy is to affirm that the quality of educational provision and the standards of award are consistently maintained and to foster curriculum, subject and staff development, together with research and related activity, to underpin the delivery of the curriculum.

Quality Assurance Manual

It is our policy that the Quality Assurance manual is the definitive source of all IPTAS quality policies and procedures. The Manual is available to the public and is updated annually. For the purpose of easy access key procedures will be available to students and staff of the college through IOS (IPTAS online service) with links to appropriate forms and templates.

Policies and procedures are evaluated for their effectiveness on a rolling basis. There is a system in place for managing new policies and procedures.

Boards, Committees and Individuals charged with quality assurance functions

Ultimate responsibility for quality assurance rests with the Board of Directors. It is the policy of IPTAS therefore that all boards, committees and individuals within the college are clear about their role in quality assurance. It is College policy also that support is provided to ensure optimum functioning of our quality assurance system.

Quality Assurance Audit

It is our policy that QA audit is both effective and efficient and is integrated into the activities of the college. Measurement of effectiveness is the extent to which we can stand over all of our policies and procedures as being fit for purpose. Measurement of efficiency is the extent to which it is aligned with overall strategic objectives and is wholly integrated.

Learner involvement in quality assurance

IPTAS values the insight that learners have as 'service users' and acknowledge that without this insight we as a college would have a narrow view of how we are doing. For this reason, the college ensures that there are learner representatives from each stage of the programme (both campuses) on the Education Board where policies and procedures are formulated and reviewed. It is the policy of the college also that learners have representation on Academic Council charged with overall academic quality assurance.

External Examining

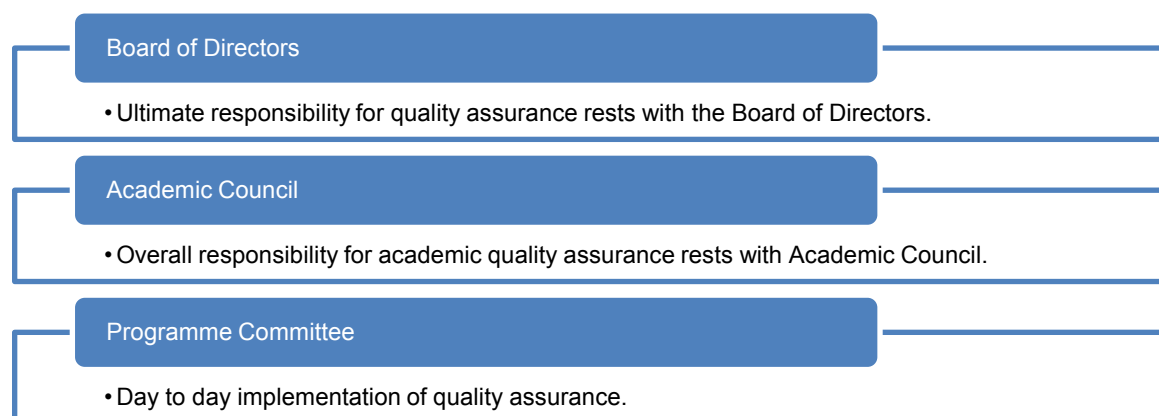
IPTAS is committed to the concept of external examining as a quality assurance mechanism, providing an independent element to learner assessment. For this reason it is our policy to ensure that systems are in place to support the external examining system in order to gain maximum benefit.

Internal Moderation

Internal moderation includes the system of scrutiny that occurs before and after assessments has been conducted. It involves all individuals and boards charged with responsibility for assessments. It is the policy of IPTAS that this system continues to be nurtured as it not only continuously improves our assessment process but it also contributes to staff and curriculum development.

1.2 Boards, Committees and Individuals charged with QA Functions

IPTAS policy is to manage QA functions through a clearly structured system comprising of appropriate boards, committees and individuals.



Board of Directors: Ultimate responsibility for quality assurance rests with the Board of Directors. The Board has specific responsibility for *Policy and Procedures for Quality Assurance, Quality Assurance of Teaching Staff, Quality Assurance of Information Systems and Quality Assurance of Public Information.*

Academic Council: overall responsibility for academic quality assurance rests with Academic Council. This includes Approval, monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes and Awards, Assessment of Learners, Learning Resources and Learner Support and Information Systems. In addition, Academic Council is responsible for overseeing the implementation of IPTAS policies on Teaching and Learning, Research and Access, Transfer and Progression. The role of the Council is to: oversee the work of the Board of Examiners, Education Board and Programme Boards; approve key policies and procedures; make recommendation to HETAC for nomination of External Examiners; make recommendations to the Board of Directors for the establishment of appropriate structures to implement the programme of study; and set up an Academic Appeals Board where necessary.

Programme Committee: Day to day implementation of quality assurance rests with the Programme Committee, which acts on behalf of the Education Board. The role of the Programme Committee is to: identify where policies and procedures are required and devise drafts for deliberation by the Education Board and Academic Council; ensure that policies and procedures, once approved are published and disseminated to staff and learners; implement the policies and procedures; evaluate the effectiveness of the policies and procedures; generate reports on progress; and produce an annual QA monitoring report for Academic Council. The Programme

Committee, under the direction of the Programme Director undertakes the 5-yearly Institutional Review.

Education Board: The Education Board includes members of the Programme Committee and both tutor and learner representatives. The Board deliberates on draft policies and procedures and on QA reports generated by the Programme Committee, prior to submission to Academic Council for approval.

Programme Boards: When it comes to quality assurance in the classroom and Student Clinic, Programme Boards are responsible for implementing Teaching & Learning, Assessment and Research Policies and Strategies. A primary QA function of the Programme Boards is to ensure consistency of standards in teaching & learning and assessing between the two campuses.

Tutors: Responsibility for quality assurance within the classrooms rests with individual tutors. This includes establishing and maintaining an environment that is conducive to learning, supporting learners in achieving the learning outcomes, and assessing learners.

Programme Director: Overall responsibility for the effective and efficient functioning of the Education Board (including Programme Committee) and Academic Council rests with the Programme Director. Programme Director has specific responsibility for QA of Teaching Staff and New programme Approval, Monitoring and Programmatic Review.

College administrator: Member of the Programme Committee and is responsible for the implementation and evaluation of QA of Assessments together with Head of Assessments and Programme Director. Also responsible for QA of Information Systems

Course Leader: Member of the Programme Committee and is responsible for the effective and efficient functioning of the Programme Boards and the implementation of the Teaching & Learning strategy, Research strategy and Learner support.

Head of Assessments: Member of the Programme Committee and is responsible for the implementing the QA policies and procedures relating to Assessments in collaboration with Administrator and Programme Director.

RPL Coordinator: Member of the Programme Committee and is responsible for QA in relation to the implementation and evaluation of the National Framework of Qualifications, and Access, Transfer and Progression

Staff Development Coordinator: Member of the Programme Committee and is responsible for QA in relation to staff development.

1.3 External Examining

External examining is a specific learner assessment quality assurance mechanism established to enhance public and professional confidence in our academic qualifications. It provides an independent element to learner assessment and in particular with regard to fairness and consistency in marking and in the classification of our award.

External examining also provides a formal comparison and benchmarking for our awards amongst similar Higher Education providers. Our external examining policy is integrated with our programme monitoring policy, facilitating recommendations to be systematically addressed.

The main functions of the External Examiner are to:

- Review the appropriateness of the intended programme learning outcomes
- Probe the actual attainment of learners (actual programme learning outcomes) using information agreed with and supplied by IPTAS

- Compare and contrast both the minimum intended programme learning outcomes and the actual attainment of learners with the relevant award standards, with the NFQ, and with academic standards from other programmes in the same discipline in other higher education institutions in Ireland and beyond.
- Determine whether or not the applied procedures for assessment are valid, reliable, fair and consistent.
- Review the appropriateness of the programme assessment strategy and the assessment procedures and flowing from this, subsidiary module assessment strategies
- Review key assessment tasks prior to their assignment in light of the programme assessment strategy and module assessment strategy and learners pre-requisite (prior) learning. Where key tasks include important continuous assessment tasks, it might not be feasible to review them prior to assignment, but they should still be reviewed by the External Examiner.
- Confirm that policies and procedures are being implemented as stated in the QA Manual
- Report findings and recommendations to IPTAS and HETAC

Competencies required of External Examiners

An External Examiner should be a person of academic or professional distinction and whose association with the programme could be considered to enhance the standing of the programme.

External Examiners may be drawn from academic institutions where they hold senior positions and have responsibility for the quality assurance and enhancement of programmes. They should normally be professionally qualified in a similar discipline to that which they will act as External Examiner.

External Examiners should normally have an academic qualification at a level higher than that of the programme to which he/she has been nominated and have extensive clinical experience. External Examiners should have demonstrated a commitment to educational development and be up-to-date in the scholarship of Teaching & Learning.

It is not necessary that a subject expert be appointed to cover every aspect of the programme. The emphasis is on ensuring that the programme as a whole is adequately moderated and benchmarked against comparable programmes. Normally however, External Examiners would be chosen for their familiarity with the breadth of subjects covered on the programme.

Where necessary the required competencies may be met by more than one External Examiner, working collaboratively. Consideration should be given to gender balance and academic and professional experience when deciding on the composition of the team.

Nomination of External Examiners

The Programme Director is responsible for proposing nomination for the post of External Examiner. This must occur early in the academic year prior to the commencement of the post to allow sufficient time to establish relationships. Nominations are ratified by Academic Council who must satisfy themselves that the person nominated satisfies the criteria for appointment. Ultimate responsibility for approval of the External Examiner rests with HETAC.

The term of office is normally for a period of three years, which may be extended by a further year. The timeframe aims to be sufficiently long to enable the External Examiner to assess trends and sufficiently short to provide diversity and maintain the required level of independence.

Formal appointment

A letter of Appointment summarises the expectations of both parties and refers to the guidelines contained within this document and Effective Practice Guidelines for External Examining published by HETAC. The letter of appointment also includes a clause stating that the appointment is terminated if either party fails to comply with the agreement.

Support for External Examiners

Orientation for External Examiners is based on agreeing the information required to enable the External Examiner carry out his/her function effectively, and agreeing a schedule of outputs and meetings, including meetings with learners where appropriate.

As a primary role is to verify that standards are achieved, reliability and validity of the assessment procedures are particularly important. The External Examiner should be familiar with the programme assessment strategy, validation report or most recent programmatic review report and how the programme has been modified to address any recommendations and conditions in these reports.

Following induction, the External Examiner should have a basic understanding of the following and know where to access further information when necessary: mission and its context (the Irish higher education system); policy on external examining, including reporting requirements; overall structure of the programme; programme assessment strategy, grading scheme and how awards are classified; the relevant professional infrastructure (regulation, associations etc) in Ireland (and beyond where appropriate) and the educational requirements for entry into the profession, and how the programme prepares learners for entry into the relevant profession. Induction should also introduce the new External Examiner to the minimum intended programme learning outcomes, how they relate to the award standard, and how the award standard relates to the NFQ (and if External Examiner is from outside Ireland, how the National Framework of Qualifications relates to the other Higher Education Qualification Frameworks with which he/she may be familiar).

Reporting Process

External Examiner's Report should be forwarded to the Programme Director no later than Sept 15th

The report should address the following:

- The evidence considered – including meetings and interviews with learners and academic staff and others
- The appropriateness of IPTAS's intended programme learning outcomes in light of the External Examiner's experience, and having regard to the relevant award standards and the NFQ
- The External Examiner's perception of the actual attainment of learners
- The External Examiner's observation of trends, areas of concern and examples of good practice
- The quality of the assessment instrument (strategy, examination papers, dissertation guidelines etc) and grading schemes etc
- The fairness, consistency and fitness for purpose (valid, reliable, authentic, robust) of assessment procedures
- The reliability of IPTAS's benchmarking of its assessment procedures
- Appropriate national and international comparisons
- Any substantial concerns (even if they have been communicated verbally) so that these may be addressed and followed up by our QA procedures
- Evidence concerning the extent to which assessment arrangements have changed in response to the feedback provided by previous external examiners' reports
- Progress on recommendations in recent External Examiner and other relevant reports on the programme

Note: Monitoring, analysing and reporting on grade distributions and trends can provide useful insights. The report also requires data on classification distribution and trends and also completion rate. This information is furnished to the External Examiner immediately after the autumn meeting of the Board of Examiners.

Follow up of External Examiner recommendations

On receipt of the External Examiner's Report, the Programme Committee devise proposed strategies for Education Board meeting in mid October. These are discussed at Academic Council meeting together with the External Examiner's report. Program Director, as chair of the Programme Committee is responsible for formally responding to the External Examiner, outlining the strategies to be undertaken. End-of-year report addresses the extent to which recommendations have been achieved and is received by the External Examiner before September 1st.

Oversight of Internal Moderation Process

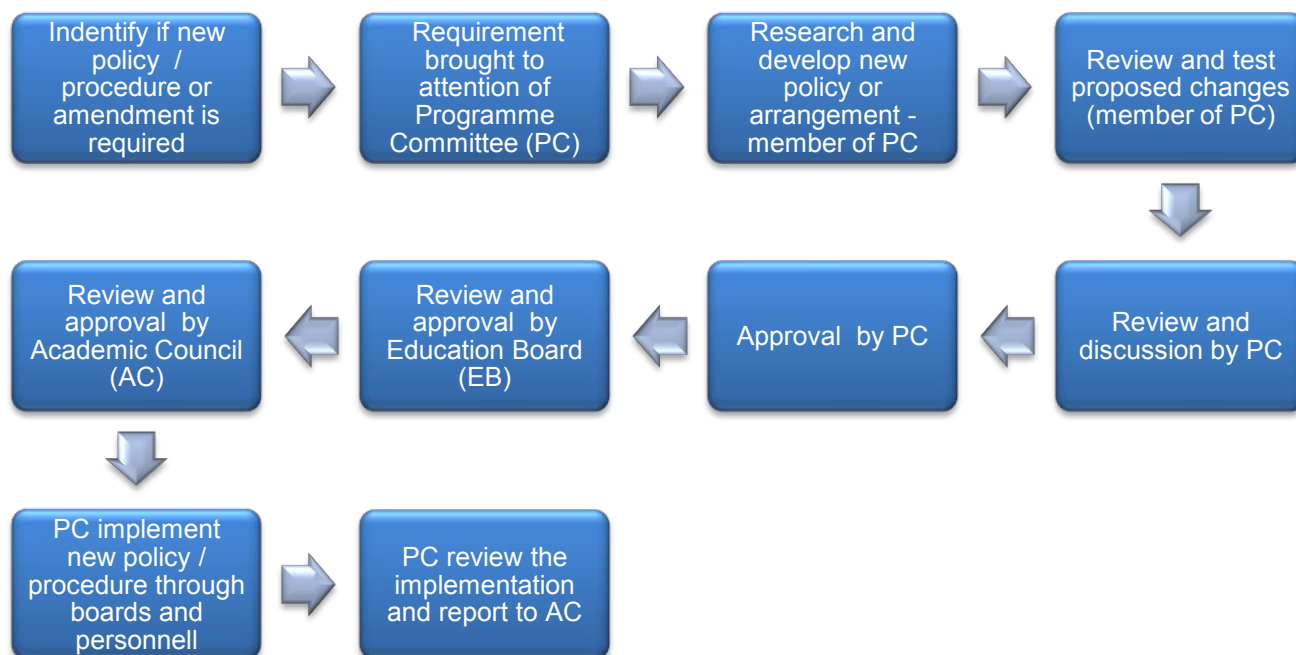
Each year the External Examiner and Programme Director agree the range and volume of samples to be viewed by both the External Examiner and Internal Moderator.

Visit to the Institution

External Examiners are required to visit the institution at least TWICE in each academic year. One visit will, normally, take place at the time of determination of final results in the summer. The time and purpose of the other visit will be determined before the academic year commences and may for example include a visit to the Student Clinic or final Viva's. Attendance at a Programme Board meeting is desirable as it helps the External Examiner gain insight into the level of scrutiny by the board. Normally minutes of Programme Board meetings aimed at scrutiny of the examination results and statistics are forwarded to the External Examiner within a week of the meeting. In addition the External Examiner also receives marks awarded to each candidate and sample assessments.

1.4 Reviewing, Amending and Approving of QA Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

Procedure Flow Chart



1.5 Health and Safety

It is the policy of IPTAS to conduct its business so as to ensure the safety, health and welfare of its employees/learners and to protect its customers, contractors, and others affected by its activities.

We are committed to take all necessary actions to discharge its responsibilities under the safety, health and welfare at work act 2005, and general applications 2007. Safety is an essential part of the work activities of our College and management is committed to meeting its responsibilities in this matter.

The management and staff each have responsibilities in effecting the observance of the company's safety policy in the execution of their duties. All employee/learners must take reasonable care for the safety and health of themselves and for all others who may be affected by their work actions or omissions at work.

The allocation of duties for safety matters and particular arrangements to implement the policy are set out in the company Health and Safety Statement.

The policy will be kept up to date particularly as the business changes in nature and size. To ensure this the policy will be reviewed annually and as required.

This statement is available from College Administrator.

Section 2 - Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes and Awards

2.1 Annual Monitoring of Programme

Introduction

Programme monitoring involves the continuous appraisal of the programme by the Education Board and the production of monitoring reports for the Academic Council. The process of programme monitoring is the responsibility of the Programme Committee, a sub-committee of the Education Board. The Programme Committee has overall responsibility for data collection, data review, actions taken and monitoring of the outcome.

All monitoring data and action plans as a result of the data are submitted by the Programme Committee to the Education Board for deliberation and amendment accordingly. This information is forwarded to the Academic Council through minutes of meetings and interim and end-of-year reports.

A comprehensive system of reporting ensures that the programme and its related activities are monitored and evaluated.

The maintenance of quality operates at two levels:

- Programme level - Annual Monitoring and 5-yearly Programme Review
- Individual tutor level

Programme Level

This includes:

- Monitoring implementation of the following policies and strategies: Teaching & Learning; Research; Programme Assessment; Learning Resources and Student Support; Staff Development; Programme Approval, Monitoring, and Programme Review; Information Systems; and Access, Transfer and Progression.
- External examiners report and action plan
- Monitoring implementation of recommendations from Institutional Review or Programmatic Review
- Learner feedback on Modules, Quality of Teaching & Learning, Assessments, Learning Resources and Learning Support.
- Student Clinic Coordinator's report
- Graduate survey
- Assessment statistics.
- Internal Examiners' reports
- Module Leaders' reports / rationale for proposed changes to the programme
- First year experience
- End of programme questionnaire
- Pass rate and progression rate

- QA of Teaching Staff
- Faculty and Academic support Staff Survey
- Report on extenuating circumstances, complaints, disciplinary procedures and plagiarism

Monitoring Implementation of policies and strategies

The Programme Committee considers the strategy proposed by individual members and once agreed submits to the Education Board for their deliberation. The final version is considered by the Academic Council at the October meeting. Responsibility for managing this area rests with the Programme Director.

External Examiners Report

The External Examiner is required to submit a report to HETAC and IPTAS by mid September. The Programme Committee considers the report and develops a response to the report and an action plan as required. This is completed by October 1st and submitted to the Education Board for review. The revised version is submitted to the Academic Council for approval at the October meeting. Responsibility for this area rests with Head of Assessments.

Monitoring recommendations from Institutional Review and/or Programmatic Review

An Implementation plan is presented to the Programme Committee by the Programme Director. This is agreed by Board of Directors and Academic Council. Status reports are presented to Education Board, Academic Council and Board of Directors in February and again as part of the end of year report in October. Overall responsibility rests with the Programme Director.

Learner Feedback on Modules, Assessments, Quality of Teaching & Learning, Support Services and Resources

Learners are asked to complete a questionnaire to obtain feedback on teaching & learning, resources and support services during November of each year. A second learner questionnaire is completed during February to obtain feedback on assessments, and changes made as a result of the previous questionnaire. These questionnaires take place in the classroom to ensure a high rate of completion. Additionally learners complete a questionnaire at the end of each clinic block. The questionnaires are developed/revised by the Programme Committee (with feedback from tutors) and administered and collated by Administration. These questionnaires provide learners with the opportunity to identify areas where improvement can be introduced. In seeking feedback, the focus is on how the services/activities contributed to learners' successful learning. The results of the questionnaires are reported to the Programme Committee by the Course Leader for review and action as required.

Post examination feedback takes the form of a short open-ended questionnaire providing the learner with an opportunity to comment on the strengths or weaknesses of the examination. These are available on request from the invigilator and serve to alert IPTAS to any unforeseen problems, which may have arisen such as insufficient time allocated for the examination. This feedback is reported to the Programme Board by the Head of assessments for action as required.

Additionally, focus groups can be established on an ad hoc basis by the Programme Committee for the purpose of facilitating small groups of learners discuss specific issues with the view to suggesting improvements. Facilitation enables learners gain a clearer and more comprehensive view of the situation, thus allowing better understanding, leading to more informed opinions. Feedback from the focus groups is reported to the Programme Committee for review and action as required.

Student Clinic Coordinator's Report

Reports are generated after each 6-week clinic block by the Student Clinic Coordinator, outlining the findings from clinic audits including the number of clients seen on each clinic block; and collated findings from learner questionnaires. Findings from these reports together with minutes of the Student Clinic Team meetings and proposed actions are reported to the Programme Committee.

Graduate Survey

The graduate survey is conducted in April / May of each year. The survey is developed by the Programme Committee and administered and collated by administration. The survey asks graduates to outline work opportunities; how they occurred; their intention to work part-time or full-time; plans with regard to further study. It also seeks to establish how the graduate would evaluate the programme in terms of personal/professional aims and ambitions; value for money; strengths and weaknesses of the programme; how they would describe the programme to prospective new learners; and willingness to participate in follow-up surveys. The results of the survey are submitted to the Programme Committee for review and action as required.

Minutes of Interim Examination Board Meetings

The Programme Boards meet as a combined Dublin/ Limerick Team twice a year in January and May/June to address exam statistics and develop an action plan. A summary of the action plans are submitted to the Programme Committee for review and approval. This informs curricular change for the next year. In the event that action is required in order to improve teaching & learning or assessment in the second term, the effect is monitored and reported at a subsequent Programme Committee meeting. Progress is reported at Education and Academic Council meetings.

Internal Examiners Report

The internal examiner compiles this report during the assessment time period. It seeks to elicit his/her views on: the extent to which assessment adequately evaluated the learning outcomes; the extent to which learners achieved the learning outcomes; learner feedback on the assessment; and level of reliability, validity and manageability. Proposed changes to the teaching, learning and assessment are recorded. These reports are discussed at the Interim Examination Board meetings and key points recorded in the minutes. Head of Assessments provides a summary at Programme Committee meeting. This information informs curricular change.

Module Leader Reports

Module Leader reports are completed by each module leader in late June /early July of each year. It seeks the module leader's view on: overall student achievement including assessment data; feedback from students throughout the year, action taken and its effect; reflections and proposed changes for the next year. The module reports are collated by the Course Leader and together with the Internal Examiner's reports and assessment statistics provide a rationale for changes to be made to the curriculum. Following consideration by the Programme Committee and Education Board, a summary of the changes are presented to Academic Council as part of the end of year report in October.

First Year Experience

The 1st year experience is tracked through a series of questionnaires and focus groups, conducted throughout the year. While data collection and collation at each phase of the project will be coordinated by the Programme Committee, the 1st Year Programme Board will deliberate on the findings and report to the Programme Committee monthly. Interim reports are presented to the Education Board and hence to Academic Council and the final end of year report is discussed in October. Both qualitative and quantitative measurements of success are used and in particular progression rates from 1st year into 2nd year. Learner profile is an important starting point and is compiled by the Programme Committee in September. Actions are agreed and communicated to the 1st year Programme Board for implementation.

End of Programme Questionnaire

This survey is conducted in June and asks final year students to comment on issues such as accuracy and extent of public information, whether expectations had been met, strengths and weaknesses of the programme and suggestions for improvement, and future plans. The report is deliberated upon by the Programme Committee and recommendations considered first by the Education Board and then by Academic Council.

Pass rate and progression rate

Following the repeat Board of Examiners' meeting in September, a table of statistics consisting of average mark, pass rate and standard deviation are collated for all modules. Progression rates are provided for all years and compared with the previous four years. This is considered by the Programme Committee and Education Board. Academic Council considers this data in conjunction with end of year report and action plans for the coming year at the October meeting.

QA of Teaching Staff

In July of each year the Programme Committee considers general student feedback, exam results, module reports and general feedback from staff appraisals to propose a staff development programme for the next academic year. The proposal is discussed by the Education Board and amended version forwarded to Academic Council for their approval.

Faculty and Academic Support Staff Survey

There are two surveys conducted - January and May. The first survey seeks faculty and academic support staff's views on organisation and management issues such as staff development and resources. This report is collated by the Staff Development Facilitator and presented to the Programme for their consideration. A proposed action plan is generated and communicated directly to Academic Council and Board of Directors.

The second survey aims to review actions taken as a result of the first survey and is included in the Programme Director's end of Year report to Academic Council.

Report on extenuating circumstances, complaints, disciplinary procedures and plagiarism

A report on extenuating circumstances, nature of complaints received during the academic year and management of disciplinary procedures are presented to the Programme Committee by the Administrator in July of each year. The Programme Committee compiles a report for Education Board and thereafter for Academic Council.

Individual Tutor Level

This is considered to be a very important level of quality assurance and enhancement. Individual tutors are the people in the front line when it comes to the delivery of the programme and evaluation of learning and are thus in the best position to influence the quality of the learner's experience.

There are two main aspects to consider – quality in relation to teaching, learning and assessing and quality in relation to the tutors continuing professional development.

Evaluating the Quality of Teaching

The ultimate assurance of quality in the tutor/learner interaction must be in the knowledge, skills and attitude of the individual tutors themselves. Tutors who are well qualified in what they teach/facilitate and have enthusiasm for their subject are essential ingredients in assuring teaching quality on the programme. Interest in the learner; ability to apply knowledge of subject area to practice; ability to communicate knowledge and arouse the learner's interest; ability to access information on their performance; and ability to apply research to practice are of primary importance in ensuring quality.

In addition to IPTAS led monitoring of the quality of Teaching & Learning, tutors engage in a continuous cycle of learning through:

- Ongoing student evaluation of their learning experience.
- Self-evaluation of teaching.
- Appraisal.

Ongoing Student Evaluation of Their Learning Experience

Evaluation forms are made available on *The IOS* for tutors to download and amend, as they feel necessary. It is advisable that they contain some open-ended questions. It is suggested that at every 2nd to 3rd class these are distributed amongst the class and learners are given 10 minutes or so to complete. Tutors collate the findings (keeping hard copies on file in tutor portfolio) and make the necessary changes to their teaching. The tutor, in subsequent evaluation forms, monitors these changes. In this way, it becomes an on-going and developmental process whereby each evaluation form is designed to show progress in all of the areas that learners and tutors have identified as in need of attention. Key performance indicators outlined in the tutor's job description are, over the academic year, included in the questionnaires.

Self Evaluation of Teaching

Class evaluation by Tutor forms are available on the IOS for tutors to download. These forms encourage reflection on a class-by-class basis. IPTAS recommends that tutors keep hard copies in their portfolio.

Appraisal

Tutors initially meet with the Staff Development Facilitator to establish their individual goals and training needs. At these meetings, tutors are required to prepare and submit in advance their completed *self-appraisal form*. This should include:

- Review of goals and key targets, with comments on level of achievement.
- Feedback from tutor buddy
- Summary of learner feedback
- Outline of any additional or revised targets. Review of competencies as outlined under key performance indicators.
- Review of training and development needs.

Tutors are required to present their *tutor portfolio* for review at this meeting.

2.2 Programmatic Review

Procedures and Guidelines for Programmatic Review

The objectives of Programmatic Review are as follows:

- To analyse the effectiveness and the efficiency of the approved programme
- To review the development of the programme since its last review
- To evaluate the physical facilities provided by IPTAS for the provision of the programme
- To evaluate the Institute's flexibility in responding to market requirements and educational developments
- To remain in compliance with the National Framework of Qualifications the NQAI

There are two distinct elements to a Programme Review: an internal element and an external element. The internal element comprises a self-evaluation of the programme and a revised programme document. The external element entails a group of external experts considering the evidence of the self-evaluation document and conducting their own evaluation of the revised programme document and plan.

In monitoring the programme the focus is on the effectiveness of the programme in meeting its stated aims and also on the success of the learner in reaching the intended learning outcomes. The accumulation of the data from the annual monitoring process is fundamental to the self-evaluation.

Stages in the development of the Self-evaluation Report (SER)

The Programme Review team (as a subcommittee of the Programme Committee) presents a plan to the Academic Council for conducting a rigorous self-evaluation approximately eighteen months before the intended Programmatic Review. This plan outlines the process to be followed in conducting this review and also identifies when specific elements of the work are to be completed and by whom. The specific elements to be addressed during programmatic review will be determined based on the annual monitoring reports over the past years. The Academic Council will consider this plan and makes recommendations.

The self-evaluation begins approximately one year before the Programmatic Review date. The Programme Review Team will have responsibility for conducting the review and may delegate responsibilities as required. A report on the progress of the self-evaluation will be reported at each Education Board and Academic Council meeting until the process is successfully completed. Draft copies of the SER will be presented to the Education Board and Academic Council on a timely basis for review and recommendations.

The Board of Directors will examine the draft SER in terms of the Institute's Strategic Plan and the Institute's resource planning and make recommendations to the Academic Council.

The final document will be approved by the Academic Council.

The External Phase of Programme Review

The Programme Director, acting on behalf of the Academic Council, will facilitate the External Expert Group's consideration of the SER prior to meeting the Institute's staff. The External Expert Group will examine the SER in terms of the Institute's procedures, HETAC requirements and also the procedures of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) in relation to Access, Transfer and Progression.

The External Expert Group presents a short report at the end of their visit to the Programme Director and Managing Director. The Chairperson of the Expert Group will compile an agreed interim report for the group and will forward it to the Programme Director.

The Programme Director will bring the interim report of the Expert Group to the notice of the Academic Council.

The Programme Committee in conjunction with the Education Board will address the Expert Group's recommendations on school issues. The Programme Committee will have responsibility for developing and monitoring an action plan that addresses the recommendations. This will be a standing agenda item on the Programme Committee Agenda.

The Board of Directors will consider any recommendations from the group that have wider Institute implications. The Institute's response to the Interim report of the External Expert Group will be brought to the attention of the Academic Council.

The Academic Council, through the Programme Director, will forward the amendments and the Institute's response to the Chair of the External Expert Group for consideration by the group.

In the event that the External Expert Group needs to meet as a group, or meet again with Institute staff, the Programme Director will facilitate the required meeting(s).

The Chairperson, will complete an agreed final report for the Expert Group. The Academic Council will consider this final report and may request additional changes to the submission document.

The Programme Director submits the response from IPTAS to the report and the proposed programme schedule to HETAC for approval.

The Academic Council will review adherence to conditions of approval until the first cohort of learners have completed the amended programme.

The Programme Director will maintain a file on the Programmatic Review.

2.3 New Programme Approval

Purpose

The purpose of these procedures and guidelines is to ensure new programme development is:

- Consistent with the Institute's Strategic Plan and contributes to achieving the Institute's aims and objectives
- Consistent with the Institute's resource planning
- In-line with HETAC standards and the National Framework of Qualifications

Procedures for the Design and Validation of New Programmes

The development and approval of programmes at IPTAS will follow a rational and consistent process to ensure that programmes meet the objectives of the strategic plan and are both educationally viable and administratively sustainable. All programmes will be in line with the NFQ and meet the standards set forth by HETAC.

Ideas for proposed programmes should be brought to the attention of the Programme Director. The Programme Director in consultation with the Education Board will make the decision if a proposed programme should continue to the next level.

Once approved by the Programme Director the proposers must submit an outline of the programme for consideration by the Academic Council and the Board of Directors. This outline should include the following:

- General information on title, award status, number of credits, etc.
- Rational for the programme
- Demand from prospective learners (including a market survey)
- Access to the programme
- General aims of the programme
- General summary of the programme structure
- Suggested course design – general module content to be included
- Resources – technical and staffing implications

The outline should be submitted to Administration at least three week before the next Academic Council meeting.

The Academic Council will consider the proposal at the next scheduled meeting.

The Academic Council will examine the outline proposal in terms of The IPTAS Strategic Plan and overall mission. If the Academic Council feels the outline meets the objectives of the mission

and strategic plan the outline will be referred to the Board of Directors to assess the financial viability of the programme.

If the Academic Council does not feel the programme meets the required objectives of the strategic plan or the mission or if they need more information, it will be referred back to the developers for revision or more information.

Once approved by the Academic Council and the Board of Directors the development of the programme will be coordinated by the Programme Director and designees.

The programme will be fully aligned with the National Framework of Qualifications.

The development of new programmes must be carried out in a manner consistent with the HETAC policies and procedures. The HETAC submission document will be prepared by the Programme Director and designees. The Academic Council will be updated at their meetings as to the progress. Any issues requiring Academic Council input or feedback will be presented to the Academic Council in a timely manner.

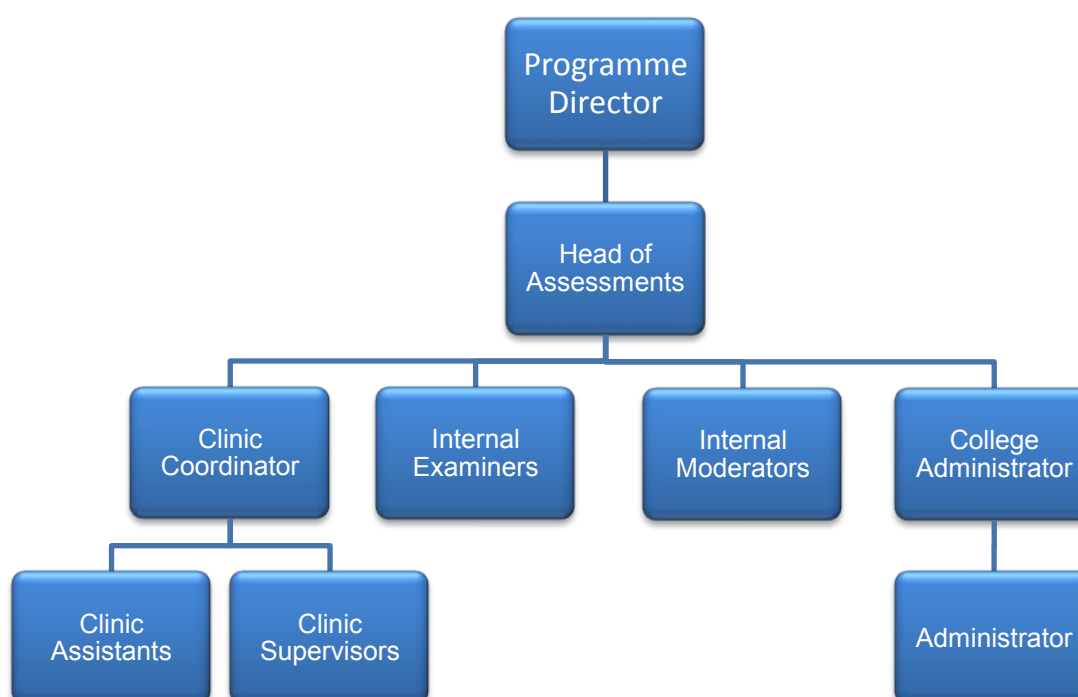
All HETAC policy and procedures in regards to programme approval will be adhered to.

Section 3 - Assessments of Learners

IPTAS believes that assessment is a subjective process and not an exact science, one that is value laden and requires professional judgement. For this reason, it is the policy of IPTAS to support Internal Examiners articulate clear standards of expected performance and engage in benchmarking their assessment practice to allow for wider perspectives. This is achieved primarily through the teaching teams and internal moderation system.

3.1 Roles and Responsibilities of Individuals, Committees and Boards Involved in Assessments

Roles & responsibilities of individuals involved in assessments



Programme Director will do the following in relation to the assessment process:

- Oversee the assessment process to ensure alignment with all policies and procedures.
- Ensure the proper conduct of examinations including invigilation.
- Ensure appropriate accommodation arrangements are made for each examination candidate.
- Ensure proper arrangements for holding Examination Board meetings.
- Ensure timely transmission of recommendations of Examination Board meetings to the Academic Council.
- Provide orientation and support to External Examiner

Head of Assessments will do the following in relation to the assessment process:

- Provide a report for Academic Council in response to the External Examiner's annual report, outlining action plans for the year
- Ensure that assessment information is accurate and up-to-date.

- Effectively manage the pre and post assessment process
- Provide support to new tutors in their role as internal examiner and internal moderator
- Work collaboratively with Administrator in managing the administrative aspect of the assessment process
- Support Programme Boards and individual members in evaluating the extent to which their assessments were valid, reliable and manageable.
- Record minutes of Examination Board meetings and provide a summary to Academic Council at the end of each term
- Attend examination appeal meetings
- Analyse learner feedback on assessment and report findings and recommendations to Programme Committee
- Work collaboratively with Programme Committee in carrying out QA audit
- Produce end of year report for Academic Council and External Examiner

Tutor / Internal Examiner will do the following in relation to the assessment process:

- Prepare assessment brief & marking grids in line with the guidelines & submit on time.
- Ensure that assessment information to learners is correct
- Develop insight into the effects of assessments on student learning for the purpose of improvement.
- Regularly inform learners of the assessment regulations.
- Mark assessments within allocated time.
- Collaborate with Internal Moderation team.
- Provide high quality feedback to learners.
- Maintain fairness in grading, giving due attention to borderline marks and regulations on compensation
- Collate post assessment feedback and report findings at Interim Examination Board meeting
- Monitor and support 'at-risk' learners
- Complete internal examiners report in a timely fashion
- Collaborate with administration in managing learner complaints, requests for reviews, or appeals.
- Uphold ethical standards in relation to assessments.
- Attend Interim Examination Board meetings and Board of Examiners meetings.
- Engage in quality assurance evaluation.

Clinical Supervisors and Clinical Assistants will do the following in relation to the assessment process:

- Regularly inform learners of the relevant assessment regulations.
- Grade fairly and consistently, giving due attention to borderline marks and regulations on compensation
- Work collaboratively with clinical assistant in managing continuous assessment.

- Uphold ethical standards in relation to assessments (avoids assessment situations where there may be a conflict of interest, real or apparent).
- Collaborate with administration in managing learner complaints, requests for review, rechecks or appeals.
- Ensure that continuous assessment marking grids are completed satisfactorily, discussed with learner (copy provided) and submitted to administration for the attention of the Clinical Coordinator.
- Attend interim Examination Board meetings and Board of Examiners meetings.

College Administrator will do the following in relation to the assessment process:

- Upload on the IOS all examination schedules, briefs and marking schemes.
- Process and format examination papers and assessment / assignment forms and other documentation related to examination process.
- Issue learners with provisional examination results after the Interim Examination Board meeting and final examination results after the Board of Examination meeting.
- Maintain records and minutes of meetings of IPTAS Examination Board.
- Maintain records of examination process, academic results etc.
- Ensure security of assessments
- Oversee the work of the Administrator in relation to assessments

Administrator will do the following in relation to the assessment process:

- Monitor date that marking grids and examination scripts are received from Internal Examiners
- Assist College Administrator with logging of the examination marks
- File examination papers and examination grids in the learners' files.
- Forward marking grids and cover of examination script to learners.

Internal Moderators will do the following in relation to the assessment process:

- Sample scripts/assignments/practicals and comment on:
 - The extent to which they were marked in accordance with the agreed marking scheme
 - The extent to which there was internal consistency in marking in the case of one examiner or consistency between examiners in the case of more than one examiner

External Examiners will do the following in relation to the assessment process:

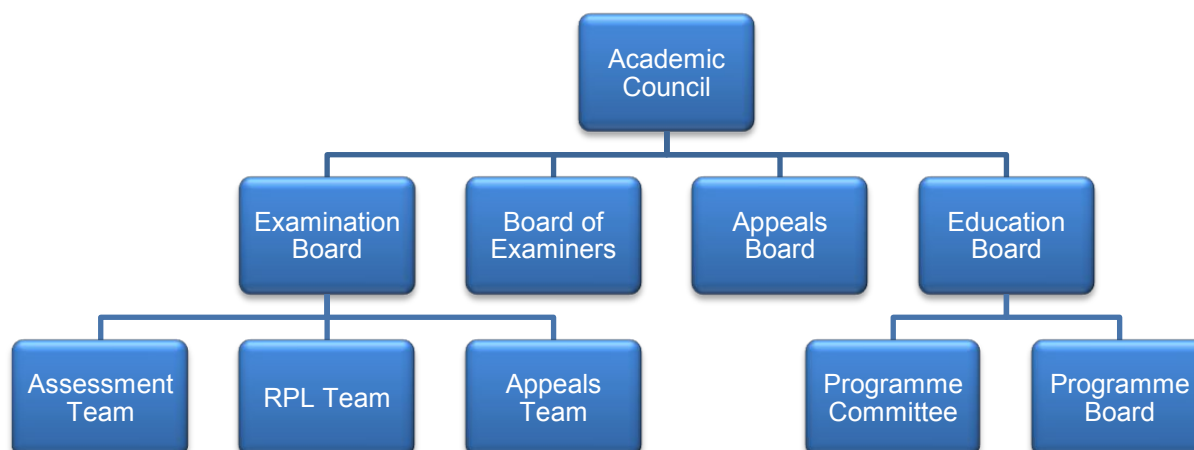
- Review the appropriateness of the intended programme learning outcomes
- Probe the actual attainment of learners (actual programme learning outcomes) using information agreed with and supplied by IPTAS
- Compare and contrast both the minimum intended programme learning outcomes and the actual attainment of learners with the relevant award standards, with the NFQ, and with academic standards from other programmes in the same discipline in other higher education institutions in Ireland and beyond.
- Determine whether or not the applied procedures for assessment are valid, reliable, fair and consistent.

- Review the appropriateness of the programme assessment strategy and the assessment procedures and flowing from this, subsidiary module assessment strategies
- Review key assessment tasks prior to their assignment in light of the programme assessment strategy and module assessment strategy and learners pre-requisite (prior) learning. Where key tasks include important continuous assessment tasks, it might not be feasible to review them prior to assignment, but they should still be reviewed by the external examiner.
- Confirm that policies and procedures are being implemented as stated in the QA Manual
- Report findings and recommendations to IPTAS and HETAC

Learners will do the following in relation to the assessment process:

- Familiarise self with examination regulations posted on the IOS.
- Provide feedback on the assessment process.
- Act professionally when provided with feedback on assessments

Roles & responsibilities of boards, committees and teams involved in assessments



Programme Board will do the following in relation to the assessment process:

- Monitor 'at risk learners' and liaise with the necessary individuals or teams where necessary.
- Coordinate assessment activities ensuring that adequate attention is given to a range of concepts and topics.

RPL Team will do the following in relation to the assessment process:

- Implement the RPL policy and procedures.
- Determine if exemption should be granted in the case of recognition of prior certified learning;
- Determine the level of specific credit and the marks to be awarded to a learner in the case of submission for recognition of prior experiential learning.
- Determine whether the learner should be required to present further evidence in support of his/her submission, or that the learner might rewrite the submission or repeat the interview.

- Forward to the External Examiner and Examination Board a statement detailing the number of credits which are recommended for award at each level.
- Record and monitor RPL decisions.
- Evaluation of RPL process
- Ensure that the integrity of the academic standard of the award is observed.

Programme Committee in relation to the assessment process:

- Oversee the QA process as it relates to assessments.
- Propose new policies and procedures or policy changes based on research on best practice
- Monitor the management of 'at risk learners' and liaise with the necessary individuals or teams where necessary.

Interim Examination Boards will do the following in relation to the assessment process:

- Agree provisional results for each assessment & identify at-risk learners.
- Agree provisional marks for modules
- Analyse each assessment in terms of its validity, reliability and manageability.
- Use statistical evidence to:
 - compare results between Dublin and Limerick cohort
 - compare results where relevant between examiners
 - identify problems in individual examinations
- Where problems exist, determine the possible cause and make recommendations.
- Confirm the decisions made by the extenuating circumstances team
- Confirm RPL decisions
- Identify where the 'at risk' strategy is working well and where it is not.

Board of Examiners (HETAC) will do the following in relation to the assessment process:

- Determine eligibility to progress from one stage to the next
- Determine eligibility for higher education and training awards
- Determine classification of those awards, where applicable

Academic Council will do the following in relation to the assessment process:

- Propose appointment of External Examiners.
- Oversee the examination process and the work of relevant boards and individuals charged with assessment functions
- Set up Academic Appeals Boards where necessary.

Education Board will do the following in relation to the assessment process:

- Monitor assessment policy and strategy.
- Monitor the QA process in relation to assessments.

Academic Appeals Board will do the following in relation to the assessment process:

- Adjudicate on an appeal against the provisional examination results of the Examination Board.

Invigilators will do the following in relation to the assessment process:

- Invigilate the examination, paying close attention to the guidelines provided by IPTAS

3.2 Policy and Strategy for Assessments

There are four key questions that we address in our assessment policy and strategy statement:

- Why assess
- What to assess
- How to assess
- Who should assess

With regard to why to assess, it is the policy of IPTAS to ensure that assessments promote and support effective learning and teaching, measure achievement of the intended learning outcomes and consequently the overall programme learning outcomes; attain a standard appropriate to the level of award sought; enable the learner progress through the programme; and ensure that stakeholders have confidence in our system. When it comes to determining what to assess, the primary concern is measurement of the intended learning outcomes. Generally, one assessment may measure a number of learning outcomes. As the learning outcomes are broad, sampling the content of the module is a coordinated and integrated activity, ensuring that adequate attention is given to a range of concepts and topics throughout the ensemble of assessments for each particular stage. A wide range of assessment types are used to measure the progress and performance of learners in achieving the programme learning outcomes.

With regard to how we assess, all assessments are regulated, professionally managed and coordinated. Procedures exist for all assessment activities and are fair, consistent and fit for purpose. Good academic conduct is encouraged and supported while academic misconduct is discouraged. When deciding who should assess, it is the policy at IPTAS that assessments are undertaken by people who understand the role of assessment in the progression of learners towards the achievement of the knowledge and skill associated with their intended qualification.

Learner assessment procedures, where possible, do not rely on the judgements of single examiners.

Strategies for the achievement of each policy statement are outlined below.

Policy 1: Assessments promote and support effective learning & teaching.

We achieve this by:

- Aligning assessments with the intended programme learning outcomes, stage learning outcomes and module learning outcomes;
- Devising and publishing module assessment strategies and programme assessment strategies;
- Ensuring that the effort required of a learner to complete an assessment task is proportional to the associated educational benefit to him or her;
- Using formative assessment to provide timely, individualised feedback on progress towards the attainment of the intended learning outcomes;

- Tutors and learners sharing in the responsibility for effective learning;
- Encouraging learners to be involved in the design of some assessment tasks and criteria, where this would not lead to a conflict of interest, along with self and peer assessment;
- Authentic assessments;
- Ensuring that assessment results including provisional results are communicated to learners as soon as possible after assessments
- Using assessments to inform the continual adaptation of the learning environment to learners' individual and collective needs

Policy 2: Learners who are recommended for an award have actually attained the programme intended learning outcomes and by implication the relevant award standard.

We achieve this by:

- Aligning the programme learning outcomes with HETAC award standards;
- Working from the principle that award standards are threshold standards, i.e. they describe the minimum learning outcomes to be attained before an award is made;
- Using criterion referencing rather than norm referencing;
- Producing programme assessment strategies for each programme and module assessment strategies for each of its constituent modules;
- Systematically evaluating our assessments for their validity and reliability as performance measurement instruments and taking action where necessary.

Policy 3: Assessment procedures measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and other programme objectives.

We achieve this by:

- Devising Programme learning outcomes and mapping them through each stage of the programme;
- Periodically reviewing intended programme and module learning outcomes to ensure they keep pace with evolving needs;
- Aligning modular learning outcomes with stage learning outcomes;
- Supporting tutors in designing assessments that are aligned with the module learning outcomes and stage learning outcomes;
- Supporting tutors and learners in developing a deeper understanding of the intended programme and module learning outcomes
- Assisting learners in understanding the standard being aimed for, their current level of performance and the standard required, and supporting them in closing this gap;
- Systematically evaluating the extent to which assessments are aligned with the learning outcomes;
- Providing new assessment methods with special attention until experience and confidence in the assessment is built up

Policy 4: Assessments attain a standard appropriate to the level of award sought and ensure that stakeholders have confidence in our system.

We achieve this by:

- Ensuring that assessment procedures are secure, confidential and compliant with Data Protection;
- Maintaining secure and accurate records to facilitate monitoring and review;
- Implementing procedures for the circulation of assessment results including notification of results to HETAC;
- Publishing procedures for appeals and complaints by learners;
- Appointing an expert External Examiner for each award programme;
- Providing clear information to learners about the assessment strategy being used for their programme, what examinations or other assessment methods they will be subject to, what will be expected of them, and the criteria that will be applied to the assessment of their performance.

Policy 5: Assessment procedures are fair, consistent and fit for purpose.

We achieve this by:

- Using valid and reliable assessments;
- Clearly informing learners about the assessment strategy being used for their programme, what examinations or other assessment methods they will be subject to, what will be expected of them, and the criteria that will be applied to the assessment of their performance.
- Using inclusive and unbiased assessments that accommodate the natural diversity of learners
- Ensuring that where any person might have a conflict of interest (actual or potential, real or apparent) if he/she were to act as an assessor in a particular situation he/she is not required to act as an assessor in that situation;
- Anonymity is preserved to reduce the likelihood of bias;
- Assessment tasks and criteria which appropriately reflect the learning opportunities that were available to the learners;
- Appropriate facilities and equipment for assessment;
- Learners being well informed about how and why they are assessed;
- Learners being, at appropriate times, informed about and understand the precise criteria that will be used to assess them (the language used in teaching should normally be the language used in assessment);
- Ensuring that the process for assessment complaints and appeals meet the same standards of fairness, consistency and fitness for purpose as assessment in general (in particular that they are straightforward, efficient, timely, and transparent);
- Consistency in grading – comparable performance levels are reflected in comparable grades; assessment tasks and criteria that are clear and unambiguous;
- Providing clear learner assessment regulations, including regulations covering learner absence, illness, and other mitigating circumstances. (Regulations covering mitigating circumstances uphold the principles and guidelines for assessment. reasonable accommodations are made where necessary);
- Internal review of assessment tasks and criteria, arrangements, model answers and grading schemes prior to use

- Providing a grading scheme for all assessments;
- Providing individual marks for learners undertaking team-based assessment tasks;
- Consistency in the use of assessment findings in decision making, including decisions of boards of examiners concerning awards, grades, entitlement to credit or access, transfer or progression;
- Learners being offered three repeat attempts at an assessment;
- Assessment decisions being assigned to Boards of Examiners;
- Learner assessment procedures being subject to administrative checks for accuracy of the procedures and learners being involved;
- New assessment methods being subject to scrutiny (validity, reliability, manageability);
- Procedures for review, recheck, appeal and complaints being communicated to learners at intervals throughout the year and published on IOS.

Policy 6: Assessment is regulated, professionally managed and coordinated.

We achieve this by:

- Producing programme assessment strategies for each programme and module assessment strategies for each of its constituent modules;
- Providing procedures for the development, approval, monitoring and evaluation of learner assessments;
- Maintaining records to facilitate monitoring and reviews;
- Regularly and systematically reviewing assessment procedures;
- Undertaking a regulatory impact assessment of new assessment procedures prior to their introduction, and from time to time thereafter;
- Providing regulations that govern the use of continuous assessment which are made clear to learners;
- Providing clear regulations covering learner absence, illness and other mitigating circumstances with reasonable accommodations made where appropriate;
- Providing procedures for the circulation of assessment results;
- Providing procedures for appeals and complaints by learners;
- Continuing to develop the system of internal moderation whereby there is critical evaluation before and after the assessment;
- Coordinating assessments so that important concepts and topics are assessed throughout each stage of the programme;
- Ensuring that roles and functions are outlined for everyone involved in assessments including Boards of Examiners;
- Providing clear and published criteria for marking

Policy 7: Good academic conduct is encouraged and supported while academic misconduct is discouraged.

We achieve this by:

- Publishing policies and procedures with appropriate clearly explained deterrents;
- Regularly and at key times reminding learners of the standard of conduct expected of them and warning of the penalties for detected misconduct;

- The design of programme and modular assessment strategies;
- The design of individual assessment tasks;
- The training provided to learners about the learning process (how people learn), their responsibilities and the need for perseverance in studies when difficulties arise;
- Having fair and consistent procedures for detecting academic misconduct and imposing appropriate sanctions;
- Educating teachers on issues of academic misconduct, such as plagiarism.

Policy 8: Assessments are undertaken by people who understand the role of assessment in the progression of learners towards the achievement of the knowledge and skill associated with their intended qualification.

We achieve this by:

- Requesting assessors to assess learning outcomes which they are competent to assess
- Supporting examiners understand that their contribution is as part of a team effort designed to help learners attain the intended learning outcomes and other objectives of the programme;
- Supporting examiners develop a deep understanding of the Programme Assessment Strategies as well as the Module Assessment Strategies for the modules directly affecting them
- Supporting examiners understand the role of assessment in the learning process and that it demands a certain expertise in the discipline of teaching and learning;
- Providing job descriptions with key performance indicators for people and committees involved in making assessment decisions and recommendations.
- Providing clear ethical guidelines governing a person's involvement in assessment related processes (fairness, consistency, including objectivity, confidentiality, declaration of interests, and the avoidance of conflicts of interest).
- Offering appropriate development opportunities to the staff which allow them to demonstrate and enhance their expertise in assessment and in the design, maintenance and review of module and programme assessment strategies.

Policy 9: Learner assessment procedures, where possible, do not rely on the judgements of single examiners.

We achieve this by:

- Internal Moderators reaching their professional judgements and decide their recommendations independently;
- Internal Examiners being accountable to IPTAS for the standards they use and the fairness and consistency (including reliability and validity) of their methods;
- Assigning the authority to make assessment decisions to the Board of Examiners;
- External Examiner acting as Independent assessors of our internal moderation process.

3.3 Policy on Progression

Progression

On successful completion of IPTAS 3-year programme, graduates receive two distinct awards – a qualification to practice as a Physical Therapist, issued by IPTAS and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Applied Health Science (level 7), awarded by the Higher Education & Training Awards Council (HETAC). Because these awards are different, the assessment regulations differ. The following outlines both IPTAS and HETAC requirements to progress from one stage (year) to the next. It is important to note that it is possible for a learner to progress under HETAC regulations and not progress under those of IPTAS. This could result in the Learner achieving a B.Sc but not IPTAS certification to practice as a Physical Therapist. Where there is a possibility of this happening, learners are informed well in advance and steps taken to remedy the situation.

IPTAS Requirements for Progression

Progression will be permitted only to learners who have passed the required assessments and fulfilled all other course requirements from the previous year. Progression can be extended to one year of absence from the course.

Conditions

A learner is permitted three further attempts at an assessment if the in-term mark is below the pass mark. First attempt occurs over the summer of the academic year in questions and two further attempts occur during the following year. Generally a learner who fails an assessment on the first two attempts is required to re-take the module.

A learner who does not avail of a repeat assessment is deemed to have failed, except where extenuating circumstances prevent the learner from attempting the assessment. Proof of extenuating circumstances must be produced in writing and submitted to the Administrator.

A maximum mark of 40% will be recorded for all repeat assessments.

Compensation

A learner may be condoned to pass in an individual element of a module if this element is marked between 35 and 39 percent (inclusive) where the overall module mark is at least 40. There is no compensation between the modules unless it is stated otherwise in the Curriculum.

Eligibility to progress carrying the failed modules

Normally, learners are required to pass all modules identified as essential pre-requisites for progression. However, IPTAS may on a case-by-case basis and under exceptional circumstances allow learners be permitted to carry failed modules while progressing to the next stage, provided the module is not a pre-requisite. The maximum number of missed credits will not exceed 10 in any given stage.

HETAC Requirements for Progression

To be eligible to progress to the next stage (year), a learner is normally required to demonstrate achievement of the minimum intended learning outcomes of all the preceding stages. Subject to any special conditions of the programme (specified in the Curriculum), there are three exceptions to the general requirements of passing all the required modules in order to progress to the next stage. These are:

- Pass by Compensation
- Exemption from part of the programme (with or without the allocation of a grade and credit)
- Eligibility to progress carrying the failed modules to be passed during the subsequent stage.

Pass by Compensation

Grades which are greater than or equal to 35%, but less than 40% are awarded when a learner has nearly (but not quite) demonstrated attainment of the relevant minimum intended learning outcomes for a particular assessment task. Performance at the first attempt in modules in a given stage may be used to compensate in the same stage, provided no module in the same stage has been failed outright (below 35 %). A Pass earned in this way is referred to as “Pass by Compensation” and is credit bearing. Compensation can take place where aggregate mark for all modules at that stage is greater than or equal to the defect of marks in the modules to be compensated. Compensation can only occur where results are from the first attempt. Compensatable modules cannot exceed 20 credits in a 60-credit stage.

Exemption from part of the programme

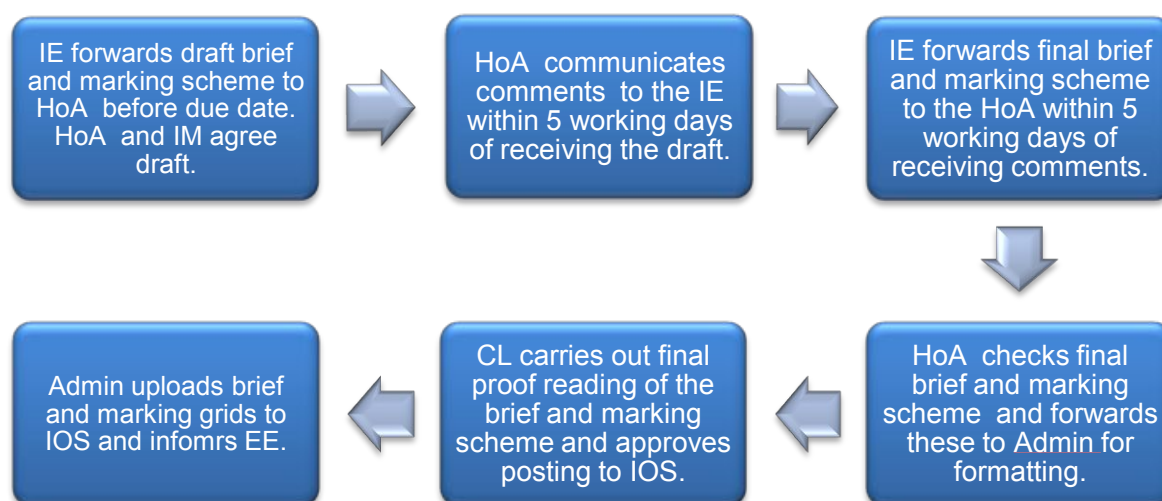
For details see “Policies and Procedures for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)”.

3.4 Guidelines for Managing Practical Assessments

The following flow chart depicts the process involved in managing practical assessments from inception through to confirmation of results. Three types of practical assessments are referred to – Viva, Objective Structured Practical Examinations (OSPE) and Clinical assessments.

(Abbreviations: ML – Module Leader, HoA – Head of Assessments, CL – Course Leader, EB – Examination Board, EE – External Examiner, IE – Internal Examiner)

Pre-assessment Process



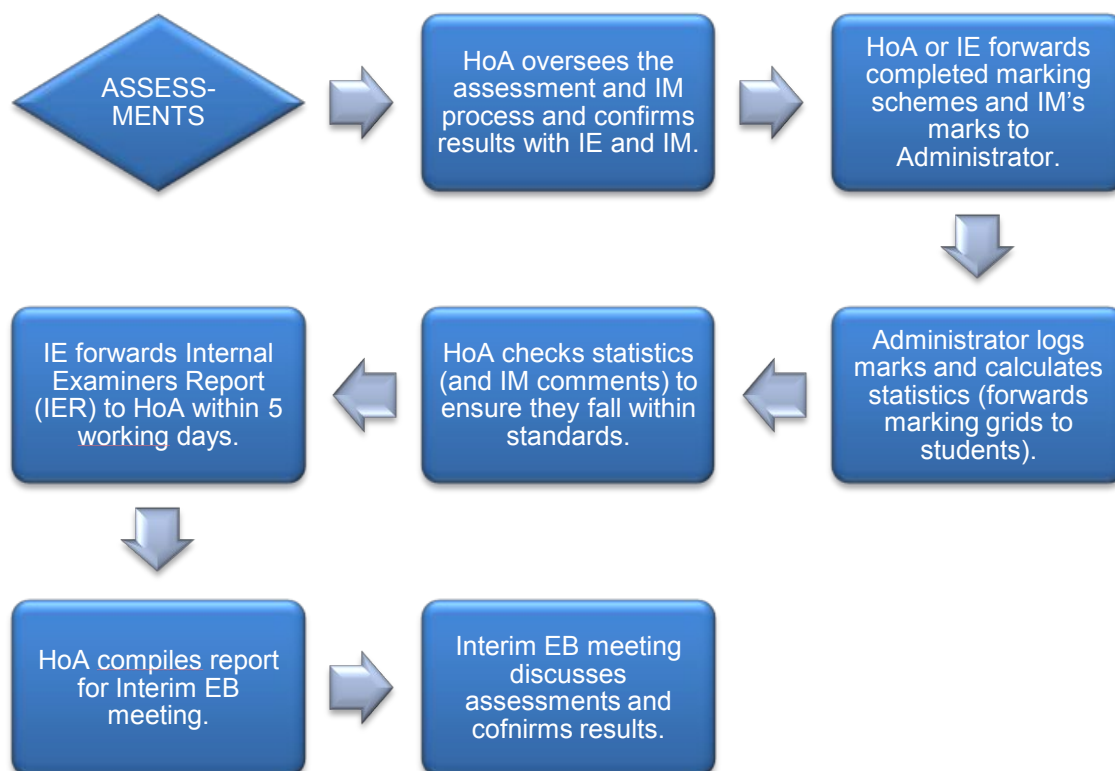
VIVA: IE and IM discuss and agree awarding of marks.

OSPE: Moderation occurs during formative assessment and sampled at the beginning of summative assessments.

Clinical Practice: Systematic moderation of samples in clinic.

Post-assessment Process

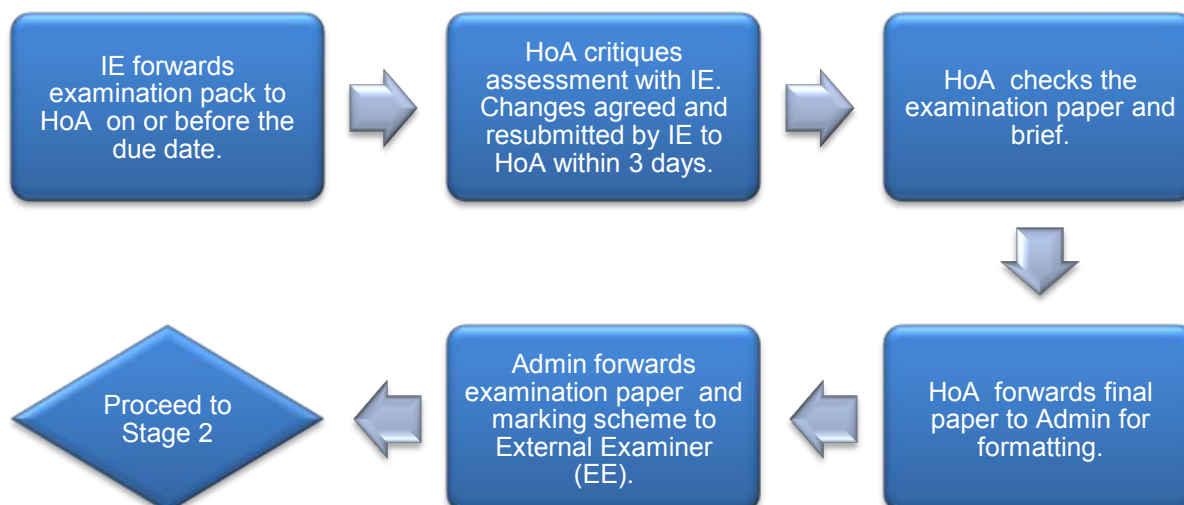
(Abbreviations: ML – Module Leader, HoA – Head of Assessments, CL – Course Leader, EB – Examination Board, EE – External Examiner, IE – Internal Examiner)



3.5 Guidelines for Managing Written Assessments

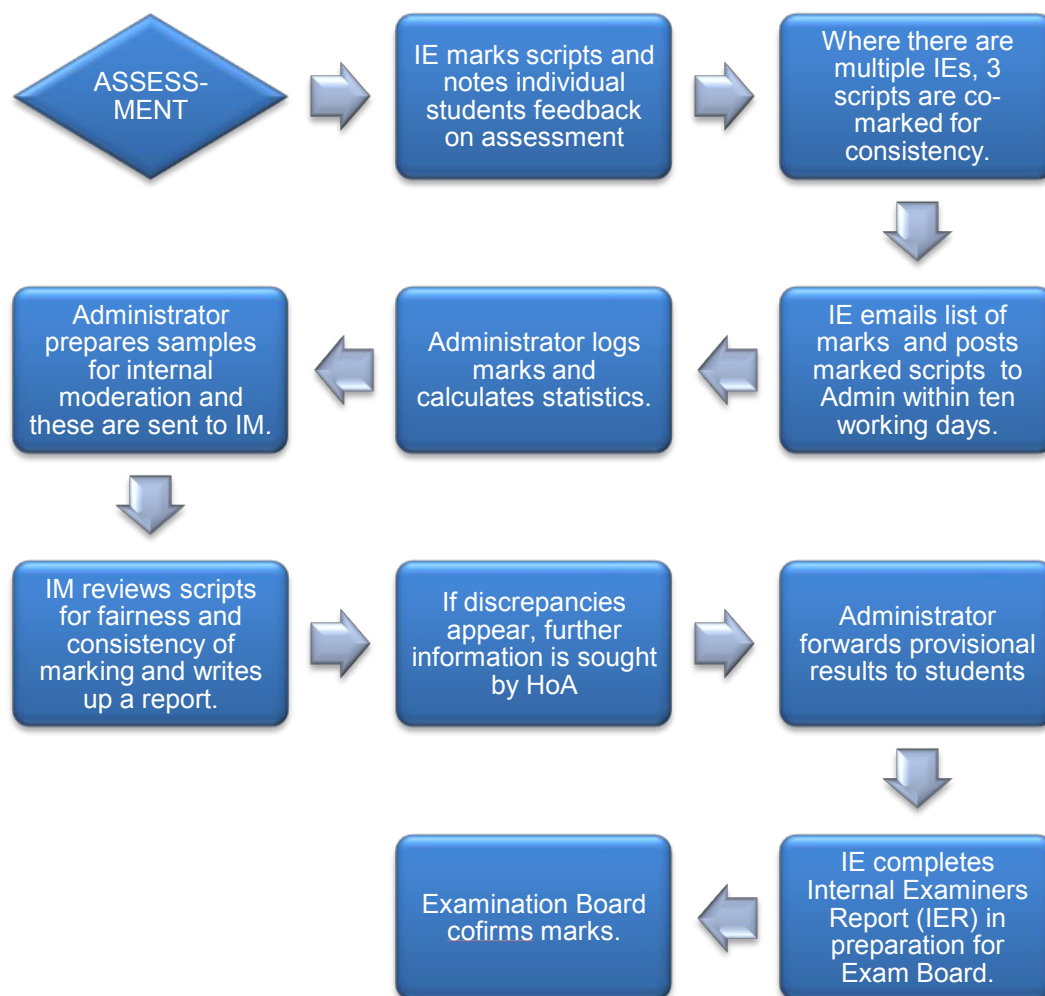
The following flow chart depicts the process involved in managing written assessments from inception through to confirmation of results.

Pre-examination Process



Post-examination Process

(Abbreviations: ML – Module Leader, HoA – Head of Assessments, CL – Course Leader, EB – Examination Board, EE – External Examiner, IE – Internal Examiner)



3.6 Guidelines for Internal Examiners for managing assignments

Setting the Assignment

- Module leader takes responsibility for managing the setting of the assignment.
- Total mark for the Assignment is 100.
- Ensure that the assignment adequately assesses the appropriate learning outcomes. (Learning outcomes should be numbered and taken directly from curriculum so as full alignment between assessment and curriculum is evident).
- Devise an assessment brief (see assessment brief template on IPTAS forum).
- Devise a marking scheme based on IPTAS general grade descriptors. Learning outcomes should be written out in full in the left hand side column of the grid.
- Refer to grade descriptors for presentation / writing skills and/or grade descriptors for reflective essays if these elements are included in your assignment.
- Clearly allocate range of marks in each box.

- Module leader to email assignment brief and marking scheme to Head of Assessments on or before the due date.
- Make the necessary changes based on discussion / recommendation from Head of Assessments.
- Email final draft to Head of Assessments within 5 days of receiving the feedback.

Please note that assessments cannot be moderated if lay out, grammar, spelling etc. is not of a high quality. Words must be written in full e.g. ROM must be written as Range of Movement. Appropriate verbs should be used to ensure that learners understand what is being asked e.g. Describe/Explain/Differentiate etc. and avoid using words such as 'What'.

Marking the Assignment

- Completed marking grids should be emailed to the administrator on or before 4 weeks of assignment submission date.
- Marking grids should clearly demonstrate to the learner where he gained and lost marks by shading/underlining the appropriate description. This can include more than one grade descriptor. Marks should be clearly displayed on the left hand column. Total marks to be displayed at bottom of marking grid.
- Additional feedback should be included. As with all feedback, written and verbal, care should be taken to ensure that it is encouraging and motivating. It should be clear and specific with examples given where appropriate. Offer alternatives and invite a response from the learner. Feedback to learners should be addressed to the learner and not about them.
- In the event that the learner has a marginal borderline fail (33/34%), the tutor must take a holistic view of the assessment and award marks to indicate a definite fail (less than 33%) or a 'compensatable fail' (35% or higher).
- In the event that a learner has a marginal fail (38/39%), the tutor must take a holistic view of the assessment and award marks to indicate a definite compensatable fail (less than 38%) or a pass (40% or higher).

3.7 Late Submission of Assignments

A late submission is a submission, which is received after 5pm on the published due date.

Request for Extension of Due Date

If a learner requires an extension of time, he/she must make the request in writing to the Administrator by completing the appropriate "Assignment Extension Request" form at least one week (where possible) before the due date, and furnish documentary evidence of the reasons why the extension is necessary.

Extenuating circumstances include illness, accident / injury and close family bereavement; however circumstances will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

Social activities and holidays not considered to be grounds for granting extension. Learners should not apply for extension based on any of these.

Where there are extenuating circumstances, an extension of time will be granted and the assignment marked without penalty if submitted by midday on the new date.

The longest extension available is two weeks. Any extensions beyond this are at the discretion of the Extenuating Circumstances Team (Sub-committee of the Programme Committee).

Failure to Submit an Assignment / Late Submissions

Failure to submit by the due date or by the new, extended date (considered to be two weeks from the due date) will result in recording mark as “zero”, meaning that Learner has failed this assessment.

The next opportunity to submit assignment will be during the period of repeat assessments. Failure to submit assignment on revised submission date will result in a second “zero” mark being recorded. In that case, Learner will have two further repeat opportunities over the following year, with the next year class. If a Learner does not submit assignment with next year’s class, there will be no other opportunity to submit this assignment, meaning that the Learner failed and must withdraw from the course.

Non-submission of an assignment (without approved extenuating circumstances) by the repeat date will result in Learner failing the module. In this case compensation cannot occur in any module for that year, which may prevent him / her from progressing into the next year. If a Learner is in award stage, classification of your award may be affected.

During the whole process of submissions / late submissions of assignments IPTAS will not send any reminders, warnings or similar to learners. It is entirely the responsibility of the learner to submit their assignment on time.

3.8 Invigilation of Written Examinations

Invigilators are appointed to ensure that examinations are conducted in a fair and equitable manner in accordance with the examination regulations of The Institute. Security of examination papers is paramount and it is Invigilator’s responsibility to ensure that these are held in a secure place and manner from the time they have been received from Administrator to the time they have been handed back or dispatched to Administrator. Entry to the Examination Hall will be confined to candidates and Invigilators. No other person may enter the Examination Hall except at the request of the Invigilator.

Specific duties of Invigilators

- Report to the Examination Centre at least twenty minutes before the commencement of each examination.
- Ensure that a clock is available and is clearly visible to each candidate.
- Ensure that candidates sign the attendance sheet.
- Ensure that candidates are familiar with their examination number.
- Admit only those candidates who are eligible. Such candidates may be admitted to the Examination Hall five minutes before the commencement of the examination.

Before Commencement of Examination:

- Ensure that books, bags, notes, drawings or other unauthorised materials are left in a designated place in the Examination Hall. Coats must be deposited well away from the candidates. Ask candidates to check their pockets in case they have inadvertently brought any notes or other materials into the Examination Hall.
- Instruct candidates that they may not leave the Examination Hall during the first half-hour.
- Advise candidates of emergency fire exits, which should not be blocked.
- Ensure that candidates are in possession of the correct examination papers, face down.
- Ensure that candidates are in possession of Examination Feedback forms.
- Announce the commencement of the examination.

During the Examination:

- Supply extra answer books at the request of candidates
- Maintain constant supervision of the candidates in order to ensure that they do not avail of unfair assistance by consulting books or notes or by communicating with another candidate in any manner. If a candidate is found to be using unfair assistance then the procedure for Breach of Examination Regulations must be followed.
- Not engage in any activity likely to cause disturbance to candidates.
- Ensure that no candidate will engage in any activity likely to cause disturbance to other candidates.
- Ensure that misprints, defects in the examination papers or requests for elucidation brought to his attention are referred immediately for resolution to the Programme Director. Any clarification or correction received should be brought to the attention of all relevant candidates. Where resolution is not forthcoming a candidate may be asked to note his interpretation of the question on his answer book. The Invigilator will record any such difficulty on the Invigilator's Report Form.
- Complete and sign each page of attendance list(s).
- Normally advise the candidates when 30 minutes remain of the allotted time for the examination.
- Ensure that the number of scripts coincide with the signed attendance sheet and recorded in the Invigilator's Report form.

Conclusion of the Examination:

- Announce the end of examination period and ensure that candidates stop writing when instructed to do so.
- Ensure that each candidate clearly identifies his examination materials by entering his examination number on them and submits all answer books and other materials including any pages which have been used for rough work during the examination.
- Ensure that all candidates remain seated while the answer books are being collected.
- Ensure that all candidates have returned all answer paper supplied to them, whether used or unused, together with other materials furnished. Any work once taken out of the Examination hall by a candidate, even for a very short period, may not be put forward for marking.
- Complete the Invigilator's Report Form. Any incident, however small, should be reported.
- Ensure that all answer papers for the examination be immediately returned to the Administrator (Unless specifically instructed otherwise) at the conclusion of the examination, together with the attendance form, invigilator's report, surplus examination question papers and other materials.
- All above materials should be placed in a labelled envelope, sealed, signed and handed to Administrator (or couriered as agreed with Administrator beforehand).
- At any time the examination script should be kept in a secure location and manner.
- Candidates Leaving the Examination Hall (*Due to Illness or other circumstances*):
- *A candidate who leaves the Hall during any period of examination without the permission of the Invigilator will not be re-admitted during that examination.*

- In the event that a candidate becomes distressed or ill the Programme Director, or his deputy, must be immediately informed. In such circumstances a candidate may be permitted to leave the Examination Hall accompanied by an Invigilator or other authorised person.
 - In the event that such candidate is able to continue with the examination after a period of time has passed the permission of the Programme Director (or his deputy) must be obtained before the candidate is permitted to proceed. Such candidate must have been in the care of an authorised person during the entire period of absence from the Examination Hall.
 - In such circumstances a time extension equal to the period of absence from the examination may be granted by Programme Director.
 - The Invigilator will note on the Invigilator's Report Form the time at which the candidate had to leave the Examination Hall and the time at which they were permitted to return, together with details of the problem.

Late Admission to Examinations:

- No candidate will be admitted to the Examination Hall more than one half hour after the start of the examination: In exceptional circumstances, however, and provided that no other candidate sitting the same paper has withdrawn and left the Examination Hall, a candidate may be admitted later, at the discretion of the Programme Director or Invigilator if Programme Director is not immediately available. In such circumstances extra time may normally be allowed.

Breaches of Examination Regulations

Where a candidate is considered to be in breach of these or any other Regulations of The Institute relating to examinations such as having in his possession unauthorised materials.

The Invigilator will:

- Identify the breach i.e. use of notes, textbook.
- Confirm the identity of the candidate.
- Remove any unauthorised material.
- Warn the candidate that the alleged breach will be reported to the Programme Director and
- Inform the candidate that he/she is allowed to continue with the examination.
- Make a signed written report to the Programme Director.

The Programme Director will take the following steps:

- Instruct Administrator to send an e-mail to the candidate inviting him/her to meet and give an explanation of the incident. The Programme Director will also notify the Administrator in the event that an Appeal Board might be required.
- If there is no response from the candidate a second attempt is made to contact him/her by sending a registered letter.
- If there is no response to the above, a registered letter care of the contact person given in the candidate's application form is used in order to ensure that every effort is made to give the candidate an opportunity to respond. If there is still no response the learner will not be allowed to return to the class until the matter is settled.
- If a response is received from the candidate the Programme Director informs the Administrator who will set up an Appeal Board, if required.

- If the breach is confirmed by the candidate and/or the Appeals Board then the Administrator will notify the Academic Council and the candidate by letter. The penalty for the breach will be decided by the Appeals Board.
- If the breach is not confirmed the candidate's examination script is regarded as valid and processed as normal.

3.9 Access, Re-check, Review and Appeal of Assessment

Policy

In line with IPTAS's commitment to the concept of lifelong learning and the development of self-directed autonomous practitioners, the college encourages learners to gain insight into the expected standards so that they can improve their learning. This includes encouraging learners to access their examination scripts and seek a recheck where they feel that marks are less than they expected.

With regard to learners seeking a review or appealing a decision of a Board of Examiners it is the policy of IPTAS that the process meets the same standards of fairness, consistency and fitness for purpose as assessments in general. In particular the college ensures that the process is straightforward, efficient, timely and transparent.

Procedure

When communicating with regard to above please use Application for Access, Re-check, Review and Appeal of Assessment Results Form (available from the IOS)

Procedure for requesting a Re-check

Re-check means the administrative operation of re-checking (again) the recording and combination of component scores of the module and / or stage. A re-check may be sought where a Learner suspects there has been an error in the determination of his / her result. The re-check does not entail a remarking or reassessment of the script. It involves establishing that the marks awarded in respect of all answers, part answers and/or other assessment materials have been included in the computation of the Learner's overall result. An unsuccessful outcome, from the Learner's perspective, arising from this process may not be used as grounds for appeal.

A request for a re-check must be received by the Administrator, in writing, not later than five working days after the examination results have been issued. Only a written request for a re-check will be considered. A fee of €25 will be applied and is refundable if the original mark is incorrect.

Procedure for requesting access to examination script

A request for access to examination paper and an opportunity to discuss the paper with the examiner must be made in writing to the Administrator, not later than five working days after the examination results have been received. Arrangements are made for the learner to view script. Where learner is unclear about awarding of marks, he / she is encouraged to seek further feedback from examiner.

Procedure for requesting a Review

Review means the re-consideration of the assessment decision, either by original assessor or by other competent persons. Learners are required to state the ground for requested review, having already had access to examination script. The grounds for the review will normally be that Learner suspects that the assessment was erroneous in some respect. A request for a review must be received by the Administrator not later than five working days after the provisional results have been issued or five working days after the re-check results have been issued. The Programme Committee will then decide if there are grounds for a Review.

Only a written request for a review from the person concerned will be considered. A review will automatically include a re-check. A fee of €150 is applied, which in the event of a successful review, is refunded.

The Grounds for Review

Before a review procedure is initiated a detailed submission in the format specified by IPTAS must be received in writing from the Learner.

The submission must identify the element or elements of the examination for which the review is being sought. It must also specify the grounds on which the review is sought and must contain all information, which the Learner requires to have taken into account in the review.

The grounds for review should be specified under three headings:

- The examination regulations of the Institute have not been properly implemented.
- The regulations do not adequately cover the Learner's case.
- Compassionate circumstances related to the Learner's examination situation were made known to the college by the Learner prior or during the course of the examination concerned of which the Board of Examiners were unaware.

Administrator will advise learner in presenting their case.

A review is carried out by an Internal Examiner appointed by the Programme Committee. The results of review are reported to the next Examination Board.

Procedure for requesting an Appeal

An Appeal is a request to a higher authority for the alteration of the decision or judgment of a lower one. In the context of assessments the lower authority refers to the Programme Committee (acting on behalf of the Education Board), and the higher authority refers to the Academic Appeals Board (Sub-committee of Academic Council).

HETAC does not have a role in the Appeals process.

An appeal must be made in writing using the appropriate form not later than 10 days after receiving the results of the review.

Compassionate consideration should apply only to the examination situation and not, for example, to factors affecting study leading to the examination.

In the event that an appeal has not been heard prior to the commencement of the academic year the appellant will be entitled to apply for temporary registration on the following stage of the programme pending the outcome of the appeals process. If the appeal is not upheld the temporary registration will terminate.

An appellant will have the right to present his case, and/or be represented, to the Academic Appeals Board.

The decision of the Academic Appeals Board is final. The Administrator will notify in writing the Academic Council and the appellant of the Academic Appeals Boards' decision immediately. In the event that an appeal is successful then the Academic Appeals Board should make a recommendation, which will be binding on the Institute.

Note: Where a learner wishes to make a complaint about an assessment that does not necessitate a recheck, review or appeal, the general complaints procedure should be followed. A complaint is expression of concern that a particular assessment procedure is either unfair, inconsistency of unfit for purpose. For details on the general complaints procedure see document entitled "General Complaints Procedure".

3.10 Plagiarism

Policy

IPTAS aims to prepare learners academically and professionally for a career in Physical Therapy. This includes developing an independent and critical approach to learning. Being able to locate, evaluate and use information in a critical and scientific way is an essential component; therefore learners need to be able to gain knowledge by building on existing knowledge whilst still maintaining academic integrity and avoiding plagiarism. In education, when plagiarism is used to gain credits for a module(s) it is regarded as a dishonest act. According to HETAC (2009:40), degrees of plagiarism in education may range “*from unintentional and minor to clearly intentionally and extensive*”. Whilst IPTAS will take into account the nature and extent of plagiarism and the seniority of the learner, it will treat all identified cases of plagiarism seriously and with appropriate penalisation.

While learners are aware that plagiarism is to be avoided, at times, learners may not always be aware that they are plagiarising sources and breaching both IPTAS and HETAC policies on plagiarism and may sometimes plagiarise unintentionally. Nevertheless, all learners are responsible for being familiar with IPTAS policy on plagiarism and if in doubt, need to seek guidance from a member of IPTAS staff. The following section aims to clarify plagiarism and how to avoid it.

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is a particular form of cheating and consists of the utilisation of someone else’s work without giving appropriate acknowledgment of the sources (identifying the author(s) or person(s) who owns the work that was sourced) and presenting the work as his/her own. Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided, however, by citing/quoting sources and using referencing accurately.

Types of Plagiarism

The following points consist of plagiarism and are unethical in academia and therefore must be avoided in assignments:

- Passing off words/ideas of someone else as Learners own
- Copying words/ideas from someone else without giving acknowledgment to the source(s) (this includes copying and pasting from any published source, class notes, online source, encyclopaedias and websites).
- Using a quote from someone else and omitting the quotation marks and source of the quotation
- Supplying false information about the source of a quotation/reference
- Changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- Summarising someone else’s words/ideas without acknowledgement of source
- Text manipulation or modifying text of someone else’s work, for example, changing words/sentences of a source’s text with one’s own or replacing words but copying sentence structure without giving acknowledgment of the source
- Submitting someone else’s work as Learners’ own including using another learner’s work and maintaining it as learner’s own, regardless if Learner get their permission or not. This is known as “**collusion**”.
- Acquiring someone else’s work from commercial sources, friends, family, work or any third party source and presenting as Learner’s own work.
- Translation from one language to another without acknowledging source
- Copying a substantial amount of words or ideas from a source so that it makes up the most of Learner’s work, whether credit is given or not.

How to Avoid Plagiarism – Instructions for Learner

Copying

- Do not copy work / ideas / text without acknowledging source.
- Do not present work that you have copied extensively with only minor text changes from any source including books, journals, internet etc
- Do not copy assignments from the web or purchase essays etc online. Do not copy other learners' work.

Quotations

If you use exact words of your source-ensure they appear in quotation marks and are referenced correctly e.g. According to Cash (2002:22) "deep tissue work on the trapezius is beneficial for chronic TMJ" while Rodney (2007:45) uses stretch exercises daily as his main approach. When using the exact text of the source (as with Cash), the text appears within quotation marks whilst when referring to the sources idea but not the exact text (as with Rodney) no quotation is used.

Citing Work

The main point is that you cite all the sources that you have used including web sources. Follow the IPTAS guidelines on referencing. If you only cite some and the assignment marker notes an extract from another source not cited, your assignment will be investigated for plagiarism.

Paraphrasing

If paraphrasing a source, ensure you acknowledge the source (reference). The more sources you use, the less likely that you will be repeating content.

Common Knowledge

Common knowledge refers to information, which is generally known, can be found in numerous places and ubiquity and is likely to be known by a lot of people. This does not require to be cited as a piece of work. Each subject area will have its own set of common knowledge e.g. the muscle anatomy location is common knowledge and hence does not need to be cited.

Collusion

When working with other learners, ensure you don't copy work off each other. It is best to avoid looking at other learner's assignments or discussing points/ideas before starting your assignment. Collusion applies to individual assignments and not assignments where group work is a requirement e.g. group projects or group presentations.

Procedure for managing plagiarism

IPTAS will examine all alleged instances of plagiarism thoroughly and enforce such penalties as it considers appropriate where plagiarism is established to have taken place. These penalties vary according to whether the plagiarism is negligent on the learner's behalf to direct dishonesty with the penalties varying accordingly. Penalties may be applied in whole or in part e.g. a minor negligent plagiarism may require the resubmission of coursework with a capped grade whilst a direct dishonest plagiarism may require the withdrawal of the learner from the module or programme. The Examination Board make the final decision on the level of plagiarism and appropriate penalty. Please note that learner appeal procedures apply as normal.

Conclusion

The best approach is to avoid plagiarism in the first place and take note of the above points. Tutors/Internal Examiners have numerous ways of identifying work that is not the learners.

References

HETAC (2009) Assessment and Standards. Higher Education and Training Awards Council, Ireland.

3.11 Applying for Repeat Assessments

Procedure

Permission to attend in-term (1st sitting) assessments will be granted to learners who have complied with all the requirements of the course, including those related to attendance and timely payment of tuition fees.

Schedule of in-term assessments is contained in the detailed “Class Plan” and “Assessment Schedules and Briefs” is published on the IOS. Learners need not to apply or pay for in-term assessments.

Repeat examinations are usually held in August (2nd and 3rd weeks). Dates and times will be published on the IOS (“Assessment Schedules and Briefs” page).

Eligibility to repeat assessments is subject to payment of a repeat examination fee and submitting appropriate form (“Repeat Examination Application” - available from IOS), by post or email to Administrator, at least two weeks before scheduled repeat assessment.

It is solely the learner’s responsibility to apply for a repeat assessment. Repeat assessment will not be scheduled and the learner will not be allowed to attend unless he/she applies in writing and pays the appropriate fee.

Although the Institute will make all reasonable effort to provide information individually to candidates regarding the assessment requirements and regulations, assessment schedules and results, is the responsibility of the candidates to inform themselves of all matters relating to the assessment process and any specific requirements related to the assessment. Such information will be available from the IOS in the forms of assessment briefs and schedules.

3.12 Continuous Assessment Regulations

Policy

Continuous assessment is regulated in the same way as all other assessments with zero mark recorded for non attendance.

Procedure

In the case of a learner missing one session, such as PBL or Professional Supervision, with evidence of approved extenuating circumstances, there is no penalty and the average mark is calculated out of the number of sessions attended. Please refer to procedure for applying for extenuating circumstances approval.

In the case of a learner missing one session without extenuating circumstances, a zero mark is recorded and the remaining marks are averaged over the total number of sessions.

It is the learner’s responsibility to provide proof of being granted extenuating circumstances status by IPTAS to the tutor in question otherwise he/she will be considered absent for the session in question.

It is the responsibility of the tutor to contact the Head of Assessments if any learner misses one session regardless of circumstance.

It is worth noting that there is no opportunity to repeat continuous assessment in the same year, therefore progression into the following year will not be possible. An opportunity to redo continuous assessment element will be made available in the following year with the next year’s class.

3.13 Approving Extenuating Circumstances

Policy

It is IPTAS policy to treat all learners equitably. Where extenuating circumstances exist, learners will be considered on an individual basis. Confidentiality will be maintained in so far as is possible. The application for approving extenuating circumstances should be dealt with as quickly as possible by the Assessment Team.

Extenuating circumstances include illness, accident and close family bereavement. Work schedules and holidays are usually not considered to be sufficient grounds for recognising existence of extenuating circumstances.

Procedure

When applying for the recognition of existence of extenuating circumstances, learners should adhere to the following procedure:

1. Furnish documentary evidence of the reasons why they believe extenuating circumstances exist
2. Submit the “Extenuating Circumstances Form” (Available from the IOS) to IPTAS Administrator by e-mail well in advance but where possible not later than one week before the due date of examination or other event related to the plea.
3. Administrator will bring the learner’s plea to the attention of the Assessment Team at a regular weekly meeting and inform the applicant and relevant tutors or examiners about the Team’s decision on the same day.
4. Learners are reminded that unless the Assessment Team approves extenuating circumstances, all missed examinations will incur a “zero” mark. Any repeat examinations (except for those following non-attended in-term examinations where extenuating circumstances were recognised by the Programme Committee) will incur a maximum mark of “forty” percent. All repeat examinations, including those following non-attended in-term examinations for any reason, will incur appropriate fee.

Section 4 - Teaching Staff

4.1 Teaching Staff Selection

Policy

IPTAS employs tutors who possess the necessary academic and professional qualifications, the pre-requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes to ensure graduate competence and learner satisfaction. . Three approaches are considered in the search for the most suitable candidate

- Suitable member of teaching staff is invited for interview
- Post advertised internally
- Post advertised externally

Potential candidates are provided with a job description, which includes Key Performance Indicators.

IPTAS aims to ensure that suitable candidates fulfil the following criteria:

- Possess expert knowledge of the subject area.
- Possess an ability to apply their knowledge to physical therapy.
- Possess a strong interest in the learner.
- Possess an ability to communicate information effectively
- Possess an ability to work as part of a team

Procedure for Staff Selection

Phase 1 - Pre-interview Process

Candidates are identified and invited to submit their CV's and application letters together with proof of qualifications.

Potential candidates receive orientation, introducing them to the vision, mission and strategy of the college so that they have an opportunity to consider the context of the post and whether it fits with their beliefs and values.

Interview

IPTAS interview panel consists of Programme Director and a member of either Board of Directors or Programme Committee as required.

Phase 2

In the event that the candidate is successful in phase one, he/she is now offered a position subject to agreeing to undertake initial training and engaging in staff development activities.

Phase 3

Once an agreement is reached, the successful candidate will be asked to sign a Position Description and provide other documents required.

Appointment of Teachers Staff

Conditions of employment are the responsibility of the Board of Directors.

Outside employment

Under certain circumstances regular part-time employee may need to hold two jobs at the same time. We must ask, however, that responsibility to the IPTAS as principle employer comes first. Any conflict of interest will be decided on its individual merit, and management reserves the right of final decision.

Re-hiring of former employees

The IPTAS is open to the re-hiring of former employees. Such candidates will be considered on the same basis as other applicants. Of course, knowledge of and experience with the college will be taken into account.

Employment status and eligibility

Only written contracts of employment or signed Position Descriptions executed by authorized management, will be recognized by the IPTAS.

- Full time - employees who work an average of 35 hours per week or more.
- Part time - employees who work less than an average of 35 hours per week. Remuneration will be calculated on the hourly rate agreed.
- Temporary - full or part time employees hired for specific periods (such as seasonal periods, holidays, etc.) and less than 120 days of employment per year.

Probationary period

During the first three months an employee is considered to be on probation. Every possible assistance will be provided during this period to succeed. An evaluation of work performance during the probationary period will be made at least 7 days before expiration of the probationary period by the Staff Development Facilitator.

Termination of employment

A letter of termination of employment by the employee or the IPTAS (except in cases of gross misconduct and during the probation period) must be presented:

- One week during the probation period of employment;
- One month prior to the effective date of termination of contract if period of employment is less than one year.
- Two months prior to the effective date of termination of contract if period of employment is one year or more.

Within one week of termination of employment, the employee is required to return to the IPTAS all items issued on the basis of their employment.

The final settlement of accounts upon termination will be made under the condition that the employee has returned to the IPTAS all items as set above.

4.2 Induction and Training of Teaching Staff

Policy

All new members of our teaching staff receive induction and training to ensure that the programme remains true to its original intentions i.e. beliefs and values and the educational principles on which it is based.

This occurs in two ways:

1. Completion of a learning pack, compiled by the Institute, entitled *Your role as a tutor in promoting student learning*

and

2. Attendance at workshops which systematically introduce new staff members to the philosophy and pedagogical policies, procedures, organisational structure, handbooks and other documents.

Support is provided for the development of key skills such as writing learning outcomes, planning a class, and using learner feedback.

4.3 Staff Development

Policy

IPTAS provides ongoing staff development, which is responsive to changing staff and programme needs. It is embedded in all activities associated with teaching, learning and assessing.

The primary function of staff development at IPTAS is to support teaching staff in developing their roles as learning facilitator, information provider, role model, assessor, planner and resource developer. IPTAS acknowledges the complexity and multifaceted nature of the teaching roles, and realise that it would be unreasonable to expect tutors to be competent in all roles.

While all tutors are expected to fulfil roles such as learning facilitator, information provider, and assessor, other roles, such as planner and resource developer may require more specialised skills. Tutors, where possible, are matched with the roles for which they have the greatest aptitude. This involves a yearly appraisal and review of the tutor's performance within the teaching process and occasionally a re-negotiation of his/her job description.

IPTAS is committed to an environment of openness and trust, which is essential to the achievement of improved teaching and learning. For this reason, our staff development programme focuses on shared insights into teaching, learning and assessment practice with reflective practice skills being facilitated.

It is IPTAS policy that all tutors seek to increase their conception of teaching and learning, in particular the effect of their teaching on students' learning. Tutors must learn how to access anonymous learner feedback on their teaching, how to interpret this feedback and take appropriate action.

When conducted on a regular basis, IPTAS believes that this is one of the most effective strategies for improving teaching. IPTAS plans to develop a system whereby there is tangible recognition of the contribution to quality assurance work of those who demonstrate particular excellence, expertise and dedication.

Teaching staff are empowered to contribute to overall programme development and success through participation in the Programme Boards, as Internal Examiners and through representation on the Education Board.

4.4 Staff Appraisal

Policy

Staff appraisal forms part of IPTAS staff development. It is the policy of IPTAS that all teaching staff have an opportunity to reflect on experiences gained throughout the year in relation to position as tutor and assessor. Appraisal occurs twice a year, in the first and second term and includes the following procedure

Term 1

- Goal setting discussion
- Goals agreed for each Key Performance area
- Key targets for the remainder of the year agreed
- Training and Development needs agreed

Term 2

- Review of Goals and Key targets
- Comment on level of achievement
- Summary of learner feedback
- Comment on overall performance
- Review of year's performance
- Review of competencies & plans for further development

Where there is concern about a tutor's performance, support is provided to rectify the situation. In the event that this is unsuccessful, a tutor will be provided with a one-month notice of termination of employment.

4.5 Staff Grades & Progression

There are two grades for IPTAS teaching staff: Tutor and Assistant Tutor (for teaching staff in class environment), and Clinical Supervisor and Clinical Assistant (for teaching staff in Student Clinic environment).

Requirements, qualifications, accountabilities and key performance indicators for each of the above four positions are outlined in their respective Position Descriptions. Enclosed please find position descriptions for all members of teaching and administrative staff.

Progression from Assistant to Tutor / Clinical Supervisor is outlined below:

Promotion Criteria from Assistant Tutor to Tutor

- Meet the qualifications outlined for Tutors
- Minimum of 2 years relatively full-time clinical practice
- Overall positive student feedback on student surveys pertaining to the class
- Positive feedback from Tutor and Course Leader
- Evidence of satisfactory completion of the Tutor learning pack

Promotion criteria from Clinical Assistant to Clinical Supervisor

- Meet the qualifications outlined for Clinical Supervisors
- Clinical Assistant for minimum of 2 years
- Overall positive student feedback on student surveys pertaining to the clinic
- Overall positive feedback from Clinical Supervisor and Student Clinic Coordinator
- Evidence of satisfactory completion of the Tutor learning pack

Section 5 - Learning Resources and Learner Support

5.1 Policy on Learning Resources

Policy

IPTAS ensures that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered.

In addition to their tutors, learners rely on a range of resources to assist their learning. These vary from physical resources such as libraries or computing facilities to human support in the form of tutors, administrators, and other members of staff. Learning resources and other support mechanisms are readily accessible, designed with learners' needs in mind and responsive to learner feedback. IPTAS routinely monitors, reviews and improves the effectiveness of the resources available to learners.

Student Clinic

IPTAS Student Clinic is a valuable resource providing opportunity for learners to gain work experience. IPTAS aims to provide an educational environment that is both challenging and supportive. The College is committed to supporting continuing professional development of its clinical staff.

Premises

IPTAS ensures that its premises are adequate and appropriate for education and training purposes. The premises are comprised of classrooms in Milltown Park, Dublin and in Mary Immaculate College in Limerick, as well as in Student Clinic, Dublin and Limerick.

Learning Aids

All premises are equipped with the necessary teaching equipment. Learning aids are available in class as well as in Student Clinic. Online learning aids are available through the IOS (IPTAS Online Services)

Library

IPTAS library is comprised of a virtual, online library interface, including IPTAS catalogue, online journals and a physical library located in the Priory Clinic. The aim of the library is to provide online support and research facilities for learner and staff. The library is updated on a regular basis.

5.2 Policy and Procedure on Learner Support

Policy

Continuing support is provided for the learner in his/her journey through the programme. This support structure is flexible and readily available. New learners are guided in accessing all relevant documentation relating to the Institute and their course of study.

A framework is in place to facilitate new learners in establishing learning groups with their peers. This is supported through organised cooperative learning and assessment activities dispersed throughout the programme.

Formative assessment is integrated into the Teaching and Learning Strategies throughout the programme, providing learners with ample opportunity to know how well they are doing and how to improve.

A framework for “mastery learning” of practitioner and clinical skills is integrated into the curriculum. This allows the learner multiple attempts at acquiring the skill – the emphasis is not on the time taken, but ensuring that every learner attains his/her highest potential.

“At risk” learners are identified early to ensure that the necessary support structure is made available to facilitate their progress. “At Risk” is defined for these purposes as any learner who may have difficulty progressing through the programme. This might be due to ongoing health problems, family or work difficulties, academic difficulty, or issues related to professional behaviour.

Poor attendance and lack of progress academically or practically despite repeated feedback tends to be the most common symptoms that signal potential problems.

Procedure for Supporting “At-risk” Learners

- Tutor who identifies any small potential problem should speak informally to the learner about the problem or perceived problem. Assistant tutor should be present.
- If problem is significant the tutor should communicate and follow up the issue with the Programme Board. If problem is deemed to be very significant the tutor should arrange a meeting with the learner and a Programme Committee member.
- Programme Board discuss, agree action and monitor progress of ‘At Risk’ learners. Recommendations and learners progress are recorded in Programme Board meeting minutes.
- If insufficient progress is made, the Programme Board should alert the Programme Committee and together decide if further action including disciplinary action should be instigated (written warning etc.)
- The Programme Board reports on progress at the interim Exam Board meeting.
- To assist with supporting progression of learners to the next stage tutors will carry out a ‘Handover’ from year to year. This will be carried out at Programme Board Meetings at the beginning of the year.
- A similar handover will be managed by the Student Clinic Coordinator from one clinic block to the next.

5.3 Policy and Procedure on Support to Learners with disabilities, Learning Difficulties or Illness

Introduction

Learners bring a unique mix of experiences, abilities and strengths to college. Those that are differently abled or have specific limitations are no exception. We acknowledge that learners learn in different ways: no one way is superior to another. We do not believe in reducing or altering course requirements for learners with specific limitations.

We are committed to providing ongoing support to learners with disabilities, learning difficulties or a significant ongoing illness. The Institute of Physical Therapy will try, wherever possible, to facilitate learners participation in our degree programme. In an attempt to do so, we acknowledge that there might be a need to allow for special accommodations or that we need to modify the way in which we present information or assess and evaluate learner progress.

We believe we are able to include learners with disabilities in the following categories:

- Sensory Disability: (a) Deaf or Hard of Hearing (b) Visual Impairment
- Chronic Illness: Epilepsy, Diabetes
- Learning disability: ADD; ADHD; Dyslexia
- Mental Health Condition

We are guided by the legal requirements outlined in the following:

- Disability Act 2005
- Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004
- Equal Status Acts 2000 and 2004
- The Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004

Information for Learners

Disclosure of Disability

Disclosing your disability or specific learning difficulty to The Institute of Physical Therapy enables us to prepare in advance the necessary supports to allow learners with disabilities to participate fully in our degree programme. Disclosure of a disability or specific learning difficulty will not adversely affect a learner's application or legal rights in any way.

Forms Required

If you require special support to facilitate your studies, you must provide the relevant forms to the Institute of Physical Therapy, completed by a consultant or specialist. A GP's letter is not sufficient. If you have a specific learning disability, you must also provide a copy of an educational psychologists' report, issued within the last three years. The forms we require you to submit can be downloaded from the IOS (Institute of Physical Therapy website iptas.com) You need to complete both forms: *Evidence of Disability* and *Second Level Academic References*.

The table on the following page provides clarification on which specialists might be consulted for specific disabilities and the time specifications for reports.

Evidence of Disability

Type of Disability	Accepted Medical Consultant / Specialist	Age of Report
ADD/ADHD	Appropriately qualified psychiatrist / psychologist who is a member of their respective professional or regulatory body.	No age limit
Blind/Vision Impaired	Ophthalmologist / Ophthalmic Surgeon	No age limit
Deaf/Hearing Impaired	Professionally qualified Audiologist and / ENT Consultant	No age limit
Mental Health Condition	Psychiatrist	Must be less than 3 years old
Speech and Language Disabilities	Speech and Language Therapist	No age limit
Significant ongoing illness	Epilepsy : Neurologist Diabetes Type 1: Endocrinologist Other: relevant medical consultant / specialist	Must be less than 3 years old
Specific Learning Disability incl. Dyslexia	Enclose a full psycho-educational assessment completed by an appropriately qualified psychologist. See www.dyslexia.ie - Adult section	Must be less than 3 years old

Educational Supports for Learners with Disabilities

Asthma, Diabetes, Epilepsy, Mental Health Conditions, Significant ongoing illness

Learners with any of the above-mentioned disabilities may require one or a combination of the supports listed below.

Before starting the college year, learners with disabilities need to check to see which of the disability supports are available to them. Learners must remember that in order to avail of any of these supports they will have to negotiate for them with the Programme Director

Educational Supports Offered

- Recording of lectures on audio-tape. You will be permitted to record lectures on audio-tape in order to transcribe them at a later stage.
- Copies of lecturers' notes/ overheads. Many of the tutors will make class notes available prior to the lecture being delivered. Tutors might use additional notes when delivering the lecture. These notes might only be meaningful to them. Some tutors might for valid reasons not wish to make notes available prior to class. You need to be prepared to deal with this.
- Time extension for class and other assignments. In obtaining additional time to complete assignments, it is important to remember that you might place yourself under undue pressure by accumulating assignments to be completed.
- Provision for Examinations – see below

Examinations

Ongoing assessment and examinations are core to the academic process. Learners with disabilities are requested to make arrangements and request appropriate support at the start of each academic year. It is the individual learner's responsibility to apply well in advance for the appropriate supports to enable them to demonstrate their knowledge in the subject being examined. Individuals making use of any support facility are required to have the required level of practice and skill to use the facility in the examination. This will avoid unnecessary delays or errors during the examination.

The following examination facilities are available to learners:

- Extra time to complete the exam: the amount of time given depends on the nature of the learner's disability needs.
- Dictation to a scribe: the learner is responsible for arranging a scribe who has a good working knowledge of the subject being examined.
- A Reader: will read or re-read any part of the examination paper as well as any part of the learners response, as requested. The learner is responsible for arranging a reader.
- Recording the answers on audio-tape for transcription later.
- Enlarged print to A3 size.

Deaf and Hearing Impaired Learners / Speech and Language Disabilities

Learners with any of the above-mentioned disabilities may require one or a combination of the supports listed below.

Before starting the college year, learners with disabilities need to check to see which of the disability supports are available to them. Learners must remember that in order to avail of any of these supports they will have to negotiate for them with the Programme Director.

Educational Supports Offered

- Recording of lectures on audio-tape. You will be permitted to record lectures on audio-tape in order to transcribe them at a later stage.
- Copies of lecturers' notes/ overheads. Many of the tutors will make class notes available prior to the lecture being delivered. Tutors might use additional notes when delivering the lecture. These notes might only be meaningful to them. Some tutors might for valid reasons not wish to make notes available prior to class. You need to be prepared to deal with this.
- Spelling and grammar allowance: given by the examiner due to the educational disadvantage the deaf or hard of hearing learner experiences.
- Time extension for class and other assignments. In obtaining additional time to complete assignments, it is important to remember that you might place yourself under undue pressure by accumulating assignments to be completed.
- Provision for Examinations – see below

Examinations

Ongoing assessment and examinations are core to the academic process. Learners with disabilities are requested to make arrangements and request appropriate support at the start of each academic year.

It is the individual learner's responsibility to apply well in advance for the appropriate supports to enable them to demonstrate their knowledge in the subject being examined. Individuals making use of any support facility are required to have the required level of practice and skill to use the facility in the examination. This will avoid unnecessary delays or errors during the examination.

The following examination facilities are available to learners:

- Extra time to complete the exam: the amount of time given depends on the nature of the learner's disability needs.
- Recording the answers on audio-tape for transcription later.
- Separate examination room and invigilators.
- Spelling and grammar allowance: given by the examiner due to the educational disadvantage the deaf or hard of hearing learner experiences.
- Announcements: supervisory staff will ensure that all announcements are properly interpreted for all hearing impaired learners.

Blind and Visually Impaired Learners

Learners with any of the above-mentioned disabilities may require one or a combination of the supports listed below.

Before starting the college year, learners with disabilities need to check to see which of the disability supports are available to them. Learners must remember that in order to avail of any of these supports they will have to negotiate for them with the Programme Director. Arrange for a mobility orientation of the college where lectures held/ the clinic.

Learners need to become familiar with routes to lecture halls, the canteen, toilet facilities etc. Check that any equipment the learner plans to use is compatible with technology used at the college.

Educational Supports Offered

- Recording of lectures on audio-tape. You will be permitted to record lectures on audio-tape in order to transcribe them at a later stage.
- Copies of lecturers' notes/ overheads. Many of the tutors will make class notes available prior to the lecture being delivered. Tutors might use additional notes when delivering the lecture. These notes might only be meaningful to them. Some tutors might for valid reasons not wish to make notes available prior to class. You need to be prepared to deal with this.
- Time extension for class and other assignments. In obtaining additional time to complete assignments, it is important to remember that you might place yourself under undue pressure by accumulating assignments to be completed.
- Enlarged texts: tutor's notes, overheads and other documentation can be enlarged for learners with partial sight.
- Provision for Examinations – see below

Examinations

Ongoing assessment and examinations are core to the academic process. Learners with disabilities are requested to make arrangements and request appropriate support at the start of each academic year. It is the individual learner's responsibility to apply well in advance for the appropriate supports to enable them to demonstrate their knowledge in the subject being examined. Individuals making use of any support facility are required to have the required level of practice and skill to use the facility in the examination. This will avoid unnecessary delays or errors during the examination.

The following examination facilities are available to learners:

- Extra time to complete the exam: the amount of time given depends on the nature of the learner's disability needs.
- Recording the answers on audio-tape for transcription later.
- Separate examination room and invigilators.
- Dictation to a scribe: the learner is responsible for arranging a scribe who has a good working knowledge of the subject being examined.
- A Reader: will read or re-read any part of the examination paper as well as any part of the learners response, as requested. The learner is responsible for arranging a reader.
- Enlarged print to A3 size.
- Rest period(s): we may provide short rest periods as required during the examination.

Learners with Specific Learning Disabilities (Dyslexia)

Before Starting College

It is important that learners with specific learning difficulties, who require specific supports, provide documentation supporting their disability. Learners who do not have supporting documentation, should arrange to have themselves assessed. A qualified psychologist will be able to carry out a full psycho-educational assessment and prepare the necessary report for the college. The following website has the contact details of registered psychologists: <http://www.psihq.ie> (choose the 'Find a Psychologist' option from the left drop down menu). The Dyslexia Society of Ireland offers an assessment service through their Dublin office.

Educational Supports Offered

- Recording of lectures on audio-tape. You will be permitted to record lectures on audio-tape in order to transcribe them at a later stage.
- Copies of lecturers' notes/ overheads. Many of the tutors will make class notes available prior to the lecture being delivered. Tutors might use additional notes when delivering the lecture. These notes might only be meaningful to them. Some tutors might for valid reasons not wish to make notes available prior to class. You need to be prepared to deal with this.
- Time extension for class and other assignments. In obtaining additional time to complete assignments, it is important to remember that you might place yourself under undue pressure by accumulating assignments to be completed.
- Lecture notes / handouts printed on different coloured paper and in user-friendly font.
- Supplementary interview: to allow for clarification of the content of assignment scripts
- Spelling and grammar allowance: given by tutors due to the educational disadvantage the learner with a learning difficulty experiences.
- Provision for Examinations – see below

Examinations

Ongoing assessment and examinations are core to the academic process. Learners with disabilities are requested to make arrangements and request appropriate support at the start of each academic year. It is the individual learner's responsibility to apply well in advance for the appropriate supports to enable them to demonstrate their knowledge in the subject being examined. Individuals making use of any support facility are required to have the required level of practice and skill to use the facility in the examination. This will avoid unnecessary delays or errors during the examination.

The following examination facilities are available to learners:

- Extra time to complete the exam: the amount of time given depends on the nature of the learner's disability needs.
- Recording the answers on audio-tape for transcription later.
- Separate examination room and invigilators.
- Dictation to a scribe: the learner is responsible for arranging a scribe who has a good working knowledge of the subject being examined.
- A Reader: will read or re-read any part of the examination paper as well as any part of the learners response, as requested. The learner is responsible for arranging a reader.
- Supplementary interview: to allow for clarification of the content of exam scripts
- Spelling and grammar allowance: given by the examiner due to the educational disadvantage the deaf or hard of hearing learner experiences.
- Impact of impairment awareness: our examiners will be made aware of the educational disadvantages that learners with specific learning difficulties experience.
- Examination papers printed on different coloured paper and in user-friendly font.

What Learners Can Do To Access Support

It is a learner's choice whether or not to inform class tutors of their disability related needs. Tutors will only be able to provide facilities or supports if they know about learners' needs. The following might help you gain the support you need and facilitate maximum benefit from lectures:

- Introduce yourself to tutors at the beginning of a module and explain how your disability may affect you or limit you in doing certain tasks. Discuss any academic supports you may require. For example, if you need to use a tape recorder to record lectures.
- Find a suitable position in the classroom; you need to establish in which position you can gain maximum benefit from the lecture. For example if you are hard of hearing sitting near the front might be best for you.
- Ask for help as soon as you need it: don't wait until you are experiencing difficulty.
- Discuss your academic needs with your study group. In this way you can build your own support network from people you know and trust.

Details of General Support Services Available

Name	Contact Details	Nature of Services
National Disability Authority	25 Clyde Road, Dublin 4 Ph: 01 6080444 Email: nda@nda.ie Web: www.nda.ie	NDA is the lead state agency on disability issues and universal design, providing independent expert advice to the Government on policy and practice.
AHEAD	East Hall UCD, Carysfort Avenue, Blackrock, Co. Dublin Ph: 01 716 4396 Email: ahead@ahead.ie Web: www.ahead.ie	AHEAD, Association for Higher Education Access and Disability is an independent non-profit organisation working to promote full access to and participation in further and higher education for learners with disabilities
Higher Education Authority	http://www.learnerfinance.ie See 'Fund for Learners with Disabilities'	The website offers a convenient and user-friendly source of information on financial support for further and higher education.
The Dyslexia Association of Ireland (DAI)	Suffolk Chambers, 1 Suffolk Street, Dublin 2 Ph: 01 6790276 Email: info@dyslexia.ie Web: www.dyslexia.ie	DAI is a voluntary organisation with charitable status. It aims to promote awareness of Specific Learning Disability/Dyslexia and to serve the needs of people with this difficulty.
National Council for the Blind (NCBI)	(Head Office) Whitworth Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9 Ph: 1850 33 43 53 Email: info@ncbi.ie Web: www.ncbi.ie	NCBI is a not for profit charitable organisation which provides support and services nationwide for people experiencing sight loss.
National Association for Deaf People (NAD)	Citizen's Information Centre, 35 North Frederick Street, Dublin 1 Ph: 01 872 3800 Email: nad@iol.ie Web: www.iol.ie/nad	NAD aims to promote the right of every deaf and hearing impaired person to enjoy an equality of opportunity in all aspects of life.
Irish Hard of Hearing Association	35 North Frederick Street Dublin 1 Ph: 01 817 5700 Email: ihha@deafhear.ie Web: www.ihha.ie	IHHA is a small charitable and voluntary that aims to improve the lives of people with an acquired hearing loss.

5.4 Complaints

Policy

The purpose of this policy is to facilitate the parties involved to air their views on the incident in question and to consider each others point of view. Acknowledging that people differ in their perceptions is an important consideration of the physical therapist. Likewise physical therapists need to be able to critically evaluate their own actions and consider the consequences in light of any new knowledge afforded to them through feedback. Every effort should be made to produce a speedy resolution.

Each complaint provides us as a college with information regarding our services and an opportunity to consider aspects of our programme which we may not have had previous recourse to. For this reason the programme director includes a section on complaints in her annual programme report to the academic council. Information that could identify any of the parties is not included in the report.

Procedure

This complaints procedure has been put in place to facilitate the fair and speedy resolution of disagreements between;

- Learner and a staff member
- Learner and fellow Learner
- Staff member and fellow staff member

In the event that a Learner or staff member has a complaint against another Learner or staff member, every effort should be made to resolve the problem through dialogue as quickly as possible. Therefore this complaints procedure should only be seen as a last resort in finding a solution to the problem.

Complaints should be communicated to the programme director within 14 days where possible of the alleged incident.

Stage 1

The complainant attempts to address the problem with the person concerned. Guidelines for giving feedback should be adhered to i.e.

- Conduct in private.
- Conduct as soon as possible.
- Describe the incident and how you felt about it.
- Invite the subject of the complaint for his/her comments.
- Agree to meet soon to discuss further.
- Resolve the issue.

Stage 2

In the event that stage 1 proved unsatisfactory, a more formal approach may be necessary. The complainant should in this instance complete a Complaints Report form (available on IPTAS forum) and forward to the administrator.

The administrator will acknowledge receipt of the Complaints Report Form (available from the IOS) within 3 working days. It is the aim of IPTAS to resolve complaints within 21 days.

The administrator writes to the subject of the complaint and includes a copy of the complaints form submitted by the complainant. The administrator arranges to meet both parties independently and may speak to any witnesses identified by the complainant in the complaints form. The subject of the complaint may be accompanied by a person of their choice.

A written record of the meeting is maintained. Where appropriate, the administrator will set up a meeting where both parties are invited to attend. The administrator shares his view on the situation, his decision and rationale.

Both parties also receive notification of his decision in writing.

Stage 3

In the event that the complaint remains unresolved, either party may appeal the decision of the administrator by writing to the complaints committee within 14 days, outlining how the complaints resolution process has progressed in their opinion.

The administrator will be required to submit all documentation with regard to the management of the complaint i.e. Learner complaints form, reports on meetings, decision made and rationale.

The Programme Director will seek advice on the composition of the complaints committee .

Programme director will forward the complaint and all accompanying documentation to the complaints council for their consideration. On examining the evidence provided, the committee must decide either to uphold the decision of the administrator or to seek further clarification by arranging to meet any of the parties involved.

Minutes of the meeting will be recorded with the agreed decision.

It is the aim of IPTAS to complete this process within 21 days. Any delays will be communicated to the parties involved.

Programme director will inform both parties in writing of the decision reached by the complaints committee, their reasons and recommended action.

5.5 Disciplinary Matters

Policy

The Institute has produced the following procedures to ensure that all disciplinary matters are dealt with fairly and speedily. This is closely related to the policy of managing behaviour in clinic and Code of Practice.

Procedure

Acceptance of these procedures is a condition of participation in the course. These procedures will be subject to review from time to time.

Note The Institute will have the right to set aside these procedures where the degree of Offence/Breach of Discipline warrants such action and implement appropriate sanctions.

The procedure is designed to ensure that a fair and uniform approach to all learners is adopted by all tutors when disciplinary action is to be taken against a learner.

The procedure is not designed to cover all day-to-day situations, some of which may be of a minor nature and could be dealt with through counselling by a tutor without recourse to formal disciplinary procedure.

A learner would be deemed to be in breach of Course discipline where:

- The learner obstructs or frustrates the ability of others to achieve their legitimate learning objectives
- A learner's behaviour is of a disruptive nature
- The learner causes wilful damage to college property or neglects to adhere to the regulations in respect of acquiring a loan of books, videos, journals etc.
- A learner's attendance is unsatisfactory or he/she is regularly unpunctual.
- The learner plagiarises another's writings or ideas without appropriate attribution to the source.

The learner shall have the nature of the complaint fully explained to him/her by the staff member and shall be given an opportunity to reply prior to any disciplinary action being taken. T

he complaint will normally be explained to the learner in terms of above.

Stage 1- Verbal Warning

- Arrange to give a verbal warning to learner.
- Ensure that details of the reasons for the warning, and the date and time of issue, are recorded and submitted to the Administrator.
- The learner should be advised accordingly
- During this process, counselling as to appropriate behaviour must be given, and a time-scale for improvement indicated.
- A verbal warning will be held on record for 6 months.

Stage 2- Written Warning

- If a verbal warning fails to produce the required improvement within the stipulated time, or if the learner commits a further, or more serious offence, further disciplinary action will be taken
- The Programme Director will issue a written warning indicating the reason for such warning
- A copy of the written warning will be retained for the period of one year
- Should this process fail to effect the desired improvement, or if a learner commits any other breach of discipline, stage 3 of the procedure will be implemented.

Stage 3- Final Written Warning

- The Programme Director will issue a final written warning
- This will be sent to the learner's normal mailing address by registered post
- Any further breach of the conditions of these warnings, will lead to the implementation of sanctions against the learner, i.e. suspension *or* expulsion from the programme.

5.6 Managing Poor Behaviour in Clinic

Clinical observation and practice in the Student Clinic is a significant feature of the Physical Therapy programme. This is a privilege created through the consent of patients on the understanding that the responsible clinical tutor will maintain standards of care and safeguard their interests. This means that a Clinical tutor is obliged to temporarily exclude a learner from clinical attendance if the learner's behaviour conflicts with the maintenance of this duty of care. An exclusion will continue until the learner has demonstrated appropriate development in ethical awareness (including critical evaluation of his/her own level of skill, ability to use constructive feedback appropriately) through the procedures laid out in this policy. Learners should be aware that clinical attendance lost through temporary exclusion cannot be rescheduled in that academic session and may result in the learner's failing some clinical assessments and modules.

This policy outlines the underlying principles upon which it has been developed, and then describes procedures for three categories of behaviour

- Behaviour that is unacceptable in the clinical environment;
- Behaviour that is unethical in terms of medical ethics;
- Behaviour that causes substantive concern as to the learners' fitness for practice on health grounds. These three categories will be addressed in subsequent sections.

Underlying Principles

- Supervision of learners' contact with patients and patient information must be appropriate to the level of knowledge, skills and attitudinal development of the learner;
- Ethical management of the patient's interests will take precedence over the learner's educational needs or interests;
- The decision as to what will count as ethically inappropriate behaviour is a matter of professional judgement on the part of the clinical tutor, acting in consultation with a second clinical tutor and the Programme Director;
- The question of whether a patient or colleague was actually harmed or distressed is not relevant to the consideration of whether the behaviour was ethically inappropriate and should not be a consideration for the implementation of this policy;
- Pre-scheduled clinical hours that fall during a period of suspension from clinic attendance may not be rescheduled. This means that, where a minimum number of hours is required for a pass the operation of this policy may result in the learner's failing the module.

Inappropriate behaviour in the clinical environment

Any learner who is drunk, under the influence of drugs, who is violent (including verbal violence) towards anyone in the Student Clinic, or who makes inappropriate advances towards a patient will be excluded from the clinic immediately, and for the remainder of that clinic session. Any such exclusion will be recorded at the time as an incident and on the learners clinical assessment file. In making such a judgement the clinic tutor should work in consultation with another tutor, clinic coordinator or other witness to the behaviour. This other person should also sign the incident report form.

Behaviour that indicates a lack of ethical awareness

If in a tutor's judgement a learner's interaction with a patient or information concerning that patient, or with the tutor her/himself or other colleagues, suggests a lack of appreciation of appropriate boundaries, the matter will be discussed with the learner and entered on his/her continuous clinical assessment as a matter for personal development.

Stage 1

Learners are expected to record constructive feedback from clinical tutors concerning incidents that the tutor considers bring into question their (the learner's) understanding of what constitutes ethical behaviour and attributes. Demonstration of how this feedback has been acted upon will form part of the assessment related to the learner's clinical practice. The tutor should briefly note the incident in the learner's clinical assessment sheet.

Stage 2

Three incidents of constructive feedback related to the learner's personal development of appropriate boundaries, as recorded in the learner's clinical assessment sheet for personal development, or a serious incident that would be likely to cause distress or compromise safety, will normally result in the learner's immediate temporary exclusion from the clinic, or from direct contact with patients, as is seen to be appropriate for safeguarding patients' interests. In taking this decision the tutor will work in consultation with another senior clinical tutor and the Programme Director. The incident and action must be recorded in the learner's electronic assessment record under Clinical Practice and then managed in accordance with the guidelines below.

Behaviour that indicates a lack of fitness to practice

Where a learner's behaviour over a period of time displays symptoms of mental or physical ill-health to the extent that in the clinical tutor's judgement there is doubt as to whether the learner is able to maintain appropriate boundaries between their own concerns and the patient's needs the tutor will discuss his/her concerns with the Clinical Coordinator. If after this discussion the tutor is still concerned as to the learner's fitness for clinical responsibility the learner will be invited to attend a meeting with the Clinical Coordinator and Course Leader. In this event the tutor will write a report of his/her concerns and the incidents that have given rise to them, which will form the basis of the discussion at the meeting. At this meeting a decision on whether to exclude pending a return to fitness will be taken, including how the learner will demonstrate this return to fitness if required. In these circumstances the learner should be advised as to the support mechanisms within the college, and as to procedures for claiming extenuating circumstances

In the event of a learner being excluded from the Student Clinic criteria will be set for a piece of reflective critical evaluation of the client-centred/safety/ethical/issues in the incident, and the timescale and any other requirements for the learner's return to the Student Clinic. This will normally include a viva related to the critical paper and discussion scenarios relevant to the incident.

The Student Clinic Coordinator, Clinical tutor and one other person will appraise the work by the learner to demonstrate ethical development. Their decision will be reported to the Programme Board and Interim Examination Board.

5.7 Clinic Attendance

Policy

It is IPTAS policy to require full attendance in the Student Clinic. All learners must be in clinic by 4.45 at the latest and 4.30 on the first night of each block. It is recommended that 3rd year learners should arrive in clinic from around 4pm to prepare for seeing patients. Learners cannot leave clinic early as it adversely affects the other group members.

Procedure

All missed clinic night must be made up. Where there is no extenuating circumstances there will be a cost of 125 Euros for each makeup night. Where there are extenuating circumstances such as illness, accident, or close family bereavement, you must speak directly to the Student Clinic

administrator and proof of the extenuating circumstances must be forwarded in writing within 5 working days.

If the extenuating circumstances are approved the session must be made up but there will be no cost to the learner. If extenuating circumstances are not received within 5 days the absence will be considered unexcused and require makeup and payment for the night.

Where more than one night in the same block is affected, even with proof of extenuating circumstances, the learner will have to be rescheduled for another block at the end of the year. While every effort will be made to accommodate a learner who must complete an additional clinic block as a result of extenuating circumstances, we cannot guarantee that this can occur in sufficient time for graduation.

In the case of a learner not presenting himself or herself for clinic without advanced notification the Clinical Supervisor will contact the Student Clinic administrator to inform her of the learner's non-attendance.

It is the learner's responsibility to contact the clinic administrator about the absence. If extenuating circumstance exists and documentation is provided within the timeframe the policies outlined above will apply.

In the event where there are no extenuating circumstances or proof of extenuating circumstances is not provided within the timeframe, the learner is informed that the discussion constitutes a verbal warning and will be held on record for 6 months. In the event of further non-compliance with the regulation, disciplinary action as detailed in the disciplinary procedure will be applied (this information is available on IOS).

Where a learner is late (after 4.45) for clinic, the clinic supervisor initiates a verbal warning and a discussion to determine the cause and consider how this might be avoided in future. In the case of a second offence occurring a 2nd verbal warning is issued. A third offence results in a written warning being issued by the Clinic Director and recorded on Student Record. Following a written warning any further offences occurring will result in disciplinary action as detailed in the disciplinary procedure to be applied. Offences are accumulated from one block to the next.

5.8 Bullying and Harassment

Policy

IPTAS fully supports the right of all employee/learners to work or study in an environment, which is free from harassment and bullying and maintains the dignity of the person. IPTAS also requires that employee/learners also support this right

It is IPTAS's policy to make every effort to provide a supportive workplace and learning environment free from any form of harassment or bullying. Appropriate disciplinary action, which may include dismissal for serious offences, will be taken against any employee/learner who is proven to have violated this policy.

Definition

Workplace bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work. An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity at work but as a once off incident is not considered to be bullying.

Generally harassment and bullying is taken to mean repeated and persistent offensive behaviour.

Harassment and bullying can occur in any kind of work place, and the aim of this policy is to inform employee/learners as to their rights and responsibilities regarding this issue.

Forms of Harassment and Bullying

Harassment may take many forms. The Employment Equality Act 1998 prohibits harassment based on the following nine grounds: sex, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, race, age, disability and membership of the traveller community. Harassment and Bullying behaviour often results in the recipient experiencing severe stress, which can lead to ill health — physical and mental illnesses. For this reason the Health and Safety Authority have included, as an issue that the Authority's Inspectors will consider when examining workplace safety Statements.

For the purpose of Company's policy, the examples included in this document distinguish between sexual harassment and other forms of harassment and bullying behaviours.

Here are some examples of bullying.

Unwanted physical contact

- Jostling
- Assault

Verbal

- Derogatory nicknames
- Verbal abuse or threats
- Shouting or public humiliation
- Persistent unwarranted criticism
- Rumours or slander

Non verbal /visual

- Offensive graffiti
- Isolation or non co-operation at work
- Aggressive or threatening gestures
- Unfair allocation of work
- Staring or aggressive facial expressions

It is important to remember that it is the impact of such conduct on the recipient not the intention of the perpetrator that determines whether the behaviour is harassment or bullying.

Information for Learners

What can I do if I am being harassed or bullied?

The first thing to do is to tell the person or persons that his / her behaviour is unwelcome and unacceptable and ask them to stop. You might find this difficult to do, if you are intimidated or scared of them, in such circumstances you might ask a trusted work colleague or fellow learner to make the approach. It must be made clear to the perpetrator that their behaviour is unacceptable. This may be all that is needed to stop the harassment. If however the harassment does not stop you should make a formal complaint.

Your complaint can be lodged with your manager or in the case of a learner with the Programme Director. If this is not appropriate you can raise the issue with any member of management.

However, the procedures to follow to resolve complaints of any form of harassment are identical.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is defined as unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex affecting the dignity of women and men at work. It is behaviour that is unwanted, unsolicited, and personally offensive to the recipient and fails to respect the individual rights of others. While harassment is usually defined as repeated offensive behaviour, a single incident of sexual harassment of gross or outrageous conduct is also recognised as such; it doesn't have to be repeated.

The following examples of sexual harassment are considered inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour;

Physical

- Unnecessary touching
- Pinching or brushing up against another employee/learners body
- Assault
- Coercing sexual intercourse

Verbal

- Unwelcome sexual advances
- Demands of sexual favours
- Suggestive remarks, innuendoes or lewd comments
- Continued suggestions for social activity outside of work after it has been made clear that it is unwelcome

Non verbal / visual

- Display of pornographic or sexually suggestive pictures and objects
- Leering, whistling, sexually suggestive gesture

Sex Based conduct

This is behaviour, which denigrates or ridicules or intimidates or physically abuses and humiliates employee/learners because of his/her sex, e.g. derogatory, degrading gender related abuses of insults.

Harassment / Bullying

Harassment /Bullying may take subtle or hidden forms or can be obvious or openly aggressive. The impact of bullying and harassment can be devastating, it can wear a person down, affect their work performance, health and personal life outside of work.

On receipt of a complaint an immediate investigation will be held. All employee/learners are guaranteed a fair and impartial hearing.

The alleged offender will be made aware of the allegations and will be given a chance to respond.

If the investigation confirms the complaint as valid, immediate action will be taken including if necessary disciplinary action if part of the action means relocation the emphasis will be on relocating the harasser not the victim.

Procedures

Complaints Procedure

There is both an informal and formal procedure to deal with the issue of bullying/harassment at work. Any investigation should be completed as quickly as possible.

Informal Procedure

It is often preferable for all concerned that complaints of bullying or harassment are dealt with informally whenever possible. This is likely to produce solutions which are speedy, effective and minimize embarrassment and the risk of breaching confidentiality.

Thus, in the first instance a person who believes that they are the subject of bullying/harassment should ask the person responsible to stop the offensive behaviour. If a person finds it difficult to approach the alleged perpetrator directly then a person should seek help and advice on a confidential basis from the Programme Director.

Having consulted with the contact person, the complainant may request the assistance of the contact person in raising the issue with the alleged perpetrator(s). In this situation the approach of the contact person should be by way of a confidential, non-confrontational discussion with a view to resolving the issue in an informal low-key manner.

A complainant may decide, for whatever reason, to bypass the informal procedure. Choosing not to use the informal procedure should not reflect negatively on a complainant in the formal procedure.

It is recognised that it may not always be practical to use the informal procedure particularly where the bullying or harassment is serious or where the people involved are at different levels in the organisation. In such instances the employee/learner should use the formal mechanism set out below.

Formal Procedure

Where formal complaints have been made, then the employee/learner should contact their supervisor/manager as soon as possible. If this is inappropriate, then the employee/learner should contact the College Director.

The person making the complaint will be required to put their allegation in writing.

In the interests of natural justice the alleged bully or harasser will be notified in writing of the nature of the complaint, given a copy of the allegation, informed of his or her right to representation and will be given every opportunity to rebut the detailed allegations made. He or she should be given a copy of the complainant's statement and advised that he or she shall be afforded a fair opportunity to respond to the allegation(s)

The complaint should be subject to an initial examination by a designated member of management or if deemed appropriate an agreed third party, who can be considered impartial, with a view to determining an appropriate course of action. The investigator(s) should meet with the complainant and alleged perpetrator(s) and any witnesses or relevant persons on an individual confidential basis with a view to establishing the facts surrounding the allegation(s). Both the complainant and alleged perpetrator(s) may be accompanied by a work colleague or employee/learner/trade union representative if so desired. An appropriate course of action at this stage, for example, could be exploring a mediated solution or a view that the issue can be resolved informally. Should either of these approaches be deemed inappropriate or inconclusive, a formal investigation of the complaint should taken place with a view to determining the facts and the credibility or otherwise of the allegation(s).

Whilst it is desirable to maintain utmost confidentiality, once an investigation of an issue begins, it may be necessary to interview other staff if this is so, the importance of confidentiality will be stressed to them. Any statements taken from witnesses will be circulated to the person making the

complaint and the alleged harasser for their comments before any conclusion is reached in the investigation.

When the investigation has been completed both parties will be informed as to whether or not the complaint has been upheld.

Both parties should be given the opportunity to comment on the findings before any action is decided upon by management.

All complaints received will be treated seriously, confidentially and dealt with as soon as is practicable.

Strict confidentiality and proper discretion will be maintained, as far as is possible, in any necessary consultation to safeguard both parties from innuendo and harmful gossip.

A record of all relevant discussions which take place during the course of the investigation will be maintained by management.

Both parties will be given an opportunity to comment on the conclusions of the investigation team. Both parties will be given a copy, in writing, of the conclusions reached by the investigating team.

Action Post Investigation

Where a complaint is upheld a disciplinary hearing will take place. The disciplinary action to be taken will be in line with the company's disciplinary policy. Should a case of bullying/harassment be proven then the organisation will take appropriate disciplinary action. This may include transfer or other appropriate action up to and including dismissal. Records of any warnings for bullying/harassment will remain in the employee/learner's file and will be used if any further offences of the same or similar nature occur in the future.

If either party is unhappy with the outcome of the investigation, the issue may be processed through the normal industrial relations mechanisms.

Regular checks will be made by the Manager investigating the complaint to ensure that the bullying/harassment have stopped and that there is no victimisation. Retaliation of any kind against an employee/learner for complaining or taking part in an investigation concerning bullying or harassment at work is a serious disciplinary offence.

Training/awareness rising

All personnel who have a role in both informal and formal procedures will receive training and clarification of the policies. All staff will be made aware of the policies at induction.

Further Information

All questions relating to the execution or interpretation of this policy should be referred to Programme Director.

Section 6 - Information Systems

6.1 Information Systems

Policy

It is the policy of IPTAS to employ available information technology and human resources in order to advance its quality assurance in the area of managing information systems. IPTAS is focused on developing, controlling and enhancing information systems in order to produce a range of accurate textual, numerical, visual and other data required for the successful operation of all aspects of its activities.

The goal of our information systems is to collect, analyse and use relevant information to effectively manage the programme of study and other activities. Information includes learner progression and success rates, learner satisfaction with their programmes, patient satisfaction, patient numbers, learner numbers, tutor job descriptions and performance indicators and other are used by management to plan, develop and improve systems and day-to-day operations.

Data analysis provides important information about the success of the College's operations, areas requiring improvement and planning on improvements.

IT System and Data Management

The key system for data collection, storage and management is a dedicated IPTAS Server with a Local Area Network, and a MS Office Professional software suite (together with other relevant software packages), both with different levels of data protection, access and privileges for authorised members of staff. Overall responsibility for Data management, storage and security lies with the Board of Directors who authorise, review and control flow of information on a strategic level. For details see Policy and Procedure for Data Protection.

IPTAS Online Services (IOS)

IPTAS Online Services is a dedicated intranet website exclusively dedicated to IPTAS learners, staff and alumni. It is password protected for each authorised member, and contains information on the following main areas:

- College information,
- Programme,
- Curriculum & handbooks,
- Assessment schedules & briefs,
- Class notes & video samples,
- Student Clinic,
- Policies, procedures and forms,
- IPTAS on-line library access,
- IPTAS Newsletters,
- Learner, teacher and alumni discussion forums,
- Help & technical support
- Teachers IOS
- Alumni IOS

Release of information on the IOS is approved by a member of Programme Committee or higher body, in accordance with data policies and procedures and information are uploaded and maintained by College Administrator.

Apart from IOS, IPTAS operates a range of external websites, and manages and releases information for the use in communication with the general public, for details see Policy and Procedure for Managing Public Information.

Personal Data

Personal data are collected and maintained for the following purpose:

- Learners – registering, following academic progress and certification with accrediting bodies.
- Staff – employment status and staff development
- Clients – providing health care and record keeping

Personal data includes date of birth, gender, PPS number, home and work address, country of birth and nationality, email and telephone contact details, and other data that may be required by IPTAS and HETAC for statistical purposes

This information is collected through appropriate forms and is updated annually (in case of learners) or as required. It is the policy of the College not to make any amendment without written confirmation.

Effectiveness of Teaching

Each tutor is responsible for delivering academic quality in all her/his activities. The management and academic structures of the Institute are designed to guide, underpin and help each individual in his/her work. IPTAS provides tutors appraisals and implements tutor development. This is reported through the Examination Board to the Academic Council. Effectiveness of teaching is also measured through the detailed and regular tutor appraisal questionnaires completed by all individual learners.

Learner Profile

Learner profile is devised on an annual basis, it is used for statistical and operational purpose in the form of reports to HETAC and Academic Council for the purpose of marketing, improving learner support and similar.

Learning Resources Available and Their Cost

See “learning resources” section.

Key Performance Indicators

The goal of information systems is to collect, analyse and use relevant information to effectively manage programme of study and other activities. Information includes learner progression, learner satisfaction, patient satisfaction, patient numbers, learner numbers, tutor job descriptions, performance indicators and others and are used by management to plan, develop and improve systems and day-to day operations. For example, we use the Clinic Office software to generate reports on patients, response to treatment and then to drive decisions and changes in the Student Clinic.

Technical Support

For the purpose of efficiently collecting, analysing, managing, distributing and utilising information IPTAS has made investments in up-to-date hardware and software infrastructure, such as local computer network with remote access, a number of public and internal websites, including the IOS, on-line library, Clinic Office patient management system.

Progression Data

Progression Data is entered and updated by College Administrator (with another Administrator or Member of Programme Committee) on a weekly basis. Hard copies are kept in secured learner files.

Distribution of data for the purpose of academic statistics, analysis, decision making and quality control is made in a wide range of different forms and reports, starting with individual learners Statements of Academic Results to Annual Progression Reports to Academic Council to Broadsheets of Assessments as required by HETAC.

Feedbacks and Surveys

Learner and Staff feedback and surveys are devised by the Programme Committee and data processed and collated by college administrators through a series of module and end of year surveys. This Data is then analysed by the Programme Committee and presented to higher bodies as required for the purpose of quality control and enhancement.

Quality Control and Enhancement

Data which are considered to be critical are managed with a particular purpose of quality control and enhancement, and includes:

- Learner registration statistics
- Assessment results
- Staff and learner feedback and surveys

6.2 Data Protection

Policy

IPTAS is committed to preserving the privacy of its learners and employees and to complying with the Data Protection Act 1988 and 2003. To achieve this commitment information about our learners, employees, clients and other contacts must be collected and used fairly, stored safely and not unlawfully disclosed to any other person.

Information that is already in the public domain is exempt from the Data Protection Act 1998 and 2000. It is College policy to make as much information public as possible. **Principles**

The College, its staff and others who process or use any personal information must ensure that they follow the data protection principles. These are that personal data shall:

- Be obtained and processed fairly and lawfully.
- Be obtained for a specified and lawful purpose and shall not be processed in any manner incompatible with that purpose.
- Be adequate, relevant and not excessive for those purposes.
- Be accurate and kept up to date.
- Not be kept longer than is necessary for that purpose.
- Be processed in accordance with the data subject rights.
- Be kept safe from unauthorised access, accidental loss or destruction.
- Not to be transferred to a country outside the European Economic area, unless that country has equivalent levels of protection for personal data.

The College will not release staff or learner data to third parties except to relevant statutory bodies. In all other circumstances the College will obtain the consent of the individuals concerned before releasing personal data.

Responsibilities

- Board of Directors: The Board of Directors are responsible for the oversight and implementation of this policy.
- The Managing Director and Programme Director: It will be the responsibility of the Managing Director and Programme Director to ensure compliance with the policy and for communicating the policy to all staff.
- Data Protection Coordinator: The nominated Data Protection Coordinator for the College is the College Administrator.
- Tutors: All tutors are responsible for ensuring that any personal data which they hold is kept securely and personal information is not disclosed in any way and to any unauthorised third party.
- All Learners and Staff: Learners and staff are responsible for ensuring that all personal data provided to the College is accurate and up to date.

Compliance

Failure to comply with the data protection policy and procedure could result in disciplinary action.

Review

This policy and related procedures will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Procedure

The College needs to keep certain information about its employees, learners, clients and other users to allow us to monitor recruitment, attendance, performance, achievements and health and safety. The College and all staff or others who process or use any personal information must ensure that they follow these principles at all times. In order to ensure that this happens, the College has developed the Data Protection Policy, available on the IOS. The College will keep a register of staff authorised to access and process learner, staff and client data and these members of staff will be asked to sign a confidentiality statement.

Responsibilities of Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Checking that any information they provide to the College in connection with their employment is accurate and up-to-date.
- Informing the College of any changes to information, which they have provided, i.e. change of address.
- Informing the College of any errors or changes. The College cannot be held responsible for any errors unless the staff member has informed us of them.

Information about Other People

All staff must comply with the following guidelines:

All staff will process data about individuals on a regular basis, when logging data, writing reports or references, or as part of academic role. The College will ensure through registration procedures, that all individuals give their consent to this type of processing, and are notified of the

categories of processing. The information that staff deal with on a day-to-day basis will be 'standard' and will cover categories such as:

- General personal details such as name and address.
- Personal information as required by HETAC for statistical purposes
- Personal information as required by IPTAS for statistical and marketing purposes
- Details about class attendance, course work marks and grades and associated comments.
- Notes of personal supervision, including matters about behaviour and discipline.
- Personal information from clients required by IPTAS Student Clinic for treatment purposes
- Personal information on state of candidate's health at the enrolment stage

All staff have a duty to make sure that they comply with the data protection principles, which are set out in the IPTAS Data Protection Policy. In particular, staff must ensure that records are:

- Accurate
- Up-to-date
- Fair
- Kept and disposed of safely, and in accordance with the College policy

The College will designate staff in the relevant area as 'authorised staff' as necessary. These staff are the only staff authorised to access data that is not standard data or sensitive data. Authorised staff will be responsible for ensuring that all personal data is kept securely. In particular staff must ensure that personal data is:

- Put away in lockable storage
- Not left on unattended desks or tables.
- Unattended IT equipment should not be accessible to other users.
- IT equipment used off-site must be password-protected.
- Data files on CD or memory stick or email attachments used off-site containing personal data must be password-protected.
- Paper records containing personal data must be destroyed where appropriate.

Staff must not disclose personal data to any individual, unless for normal academic or treatment purposes, without authorisation or agreement from the College Administrator, or in line with the College policy.

Before processing any personal data, all staff should consider the following:

- Is it really necessary to record the information?
- Is the information 'sensitive'?
- If it is sensitive, did the data subject express his / her consent?
- Is this particular member of staff authorised to collect/store/process the data?
- Are the data properly secured?

Rights to Access Information

Staff, learners and clients of the College have the right to access any personal data that is being kept about them either on computer or in certain files. Any person who wishes to exercise this right should contact the College Administrator. This request should be made in writing.

The College aims to comply with requests for access to personal information as quickly as possible, but will ensure that it is provided within 21 days unless there is good reason for delay. In such cases, the reason for delay will be explained in writing to the data subject making the request.

Consent

In many cases, the College can only process personal data with the consent of the individual. In some cases, if the data is sensitive, express consent must be obtained – such as verbal consent by the client or a learner client before the treatment. Agreement to the College processing some specified classes of personal data is a condition of acceptance of an individual onto any course, and a condition of employment for staff. This includes information about previous criminal convictions and state of individual's health. The College will only use the information in the protection of the health and safety of the individual.

The Data Controller

The College's designated data controller is The Managing Director.

Retention of Data

Note: this part has to be reviewed in line of IPTAS requirements

Guidelines for Retention of Personal Data	Suggested Retention Period
Personnel files including training records and notes of disciplinary and grievance hearings.	6 years from the end of employment
Application forms/interview notes	At least 6 months from the date of the interviews.
Facts relating to redundancies where less than 20 redundancies	3 years from the date of redundancy
Facts relating to redundancies where 20 or more redundancies	12 years from date of redundancies
Income Tax and NI returns, including correspondence with tax office	At least 3 years after the end of the financial year to which the records relate
Statutory Maternity Pay records and calculations	As Above
Statutory Sick Pay records and calculations	As Above
Wages and Salary records	6 years
Accident books, and records and reports of accidents	3 years after the date of the last entry
Health records	During employment
Health records where reason for termination of employment is connected with health, including stress related illness.	3 years
Learner records, including academic achievements, and conduct.	At least 2 year from the date the learner leaves the College (hard copy). Academic results in electronic form will be kept indefinitely.

Section 7 - Public Information

7.1 Policy and Procedures for Managing Public Information

Introduction

It is IPTAS policy to regularly publish up to date, impartial and objective information both quantitative and qualitative about the programmes and awards offered.

Means of Communication

Public information is communicated to stakeholders through a IPTAS websites, publications, advertisements and other marketing materials. The main public information outlets are as follows:

Websites and Social Networks

www.iptas.ie

www.mybody.ie

www.prioryclinic.ie

www.facebook.com/iptas.physicaltherapy

Publications

IPTAS Prospectus

IPTAS Newsletter

Other

PR Publicity – articles and reviews

TV, radio and newspaper advertisements

Brochures, flyers and other marketing and promotional materials

Implementation and Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the Managing Director to implement this policy.

Measurement and Evaluation

The policy will be reviewed annually by the Programme Committee. Stakeholders may be invited from time to time to evaluate the quality through focus groups or similar surveys. Results of annual audit and surveys will provide basis for continual Quality improvement.

Scope of Information

- Mission, Programme and Award titles and Accrediting Body
- College background and Physical Therapy
- Level of the award on NFQ, HETAC, and associated credits
- Intended learning outcomes
- Programme content, modules, assessments, class dates
- Learner profile

- Application process, entry requirements, fees, credits and exemptions
- Teaching, learning and assessment procedures used
- Learning opportunities available to learners
- Learner profile
- Learner Support structures
- Access, transfer and progression arrangements
- Career opportunities
- Job offers
- Newsletters
- TV and radio ads
- Press releases and clippings and other marketing materials
- Locations, maps and contact details

Relevant documents as may be required by HETAC, including the QA Manual, are published on the main IPTAS website.

Chapter 5 - National Qualification Framework, Access, Transfer and Progression

Policies and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression

Learner access to our programme is based on the potential to successfully complete the award rather than merely obtaining entry to the programme. The physical therapy course is designed primarily for learners with the maturity and experience to have decided that Physical Therapy is their chosen career path. Learners over 23-years-old are considered mature learners. We encourage applications from mature learners who may have a non-standard educational background. All applications are dealt with individually and applicants are required to show both written and spoken fluency in English. Good communications skills are also considered essential and these will be assessed at interview. Applicants also need to demonstrate the potential to study to third level.

Prerequisite knowledge, skill and competencies necessary to successfully participate in the programme are communicated to learners at the outset. These include:

- Higher level Leaving Certificate (or equivalent) in English and a Science subject.
- Written and verbal communication skills.
- Evidence of a 'caring' attitude.
- Knowledge of the course, profession and its position within the healthcare community
- A basic working knowledge and skill in computers

In the case of a mature learner, prior certified knowledge of a science subject or English at higher level may be waived. Such a candidate is required to provide evidence of their potential to study to third level. Prior work-based and experiential learning are taken into consideration. A standard of English appropriate to communicating with clients and health professionals is essential. In addition, writing skills appropriate to researching and writing in a level 7 programme is also necessary.

Access to and design and delivery of the programme facilitates underrepresented learner groups (*those with special education needs, learners from disadvantaged communities, learners in the workplace and adult learners generally.*) Weekend classes, flexible clinic hours and location-based study groups help facilitate adult learners.

Learners bring a unique mix of experiences, abilities and strengths to college. Those that are differently abled or have specific limitations are no exception. We are committed to providing ongoing support to learners with disabilities, learning difficulties or a significant ongoing illness. We believe we are able to include learners with disabilities in the following categories:

- Sensory Disability: (a) Deaf or Hard of Hearing (b) Visual Impairment
- Chronic Illness: Epilepsy, Diabetes
- Learning disability: ADD; ADHD; Dyslexia
- Mental Health Condition

At induction stage all applicants are directed to our Policy on Learning Support and assisted in identifying if support will be required. In addition throughout the programme learners are monitored and any 'at risk' learners are identified and supported. See Section on Learner Support. Transfer and progression is facilitated through our modular system and through the identification of progression routes into our programme and onwards. Recognition of prior learning is facilitated for the purpose of access, transfer and progression. Details are available in Section 6 – Request for Exemptions/RPL guidelines and Procedures. Bridging, the availability of add-on learning opportunities in a modular form, is available for previous graduates.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Introduction

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)¹ is an important element of EU policy for widening access to qualifications, and supporting lifelong learning. In common with its European partners, the Irish government has made a commitment to support RPL (Gov. of Ireland, 1998, 2000; Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999).

RPL can be used to gain admission to a programme, or to gain exemptions from some parts of a programme. The purpose of RPL is to expand access to programmes/qualifications for people lacking formal qualifications, and to reduce the time and cost of programmes for people who already possess some of the knowledge, skill and competence which a programme seeks to develop in learners.

In 2004, the EU issued the Common European Principles for Validation of Non Formal and Informal Learning. Following this, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland issued its guidelines on RPL in 2005.

In line with this IPTAS has developed these RPL arrangements to support the development of RPL in IPTAS by providing a coherent framework, principles and procedures which can be used by both staff and applicants to guide them in the operation of RPL. These arrangements are based on research of current best practice and are in harmony with the NQAI and HETAC RPL policies, and takes account, as they do, of the Common European Principles.

1.1 IPTAS RPL Policy

Overarching Principles

IPTAS is committed to fully complying with the NQAI and HETAC RPL policies. The principles and guidelines in these inform the policy and procedures following below.

IPTAS is committed to the principles of transparency, equity and fairness in RPL and to the principle of valuing all learning regardless of the mode or place of its acquisition. In this regard RPL is fully embedded in Quality Assurance Procedures and Assessment Regulations.

IPTAS is committed to the principle that recognition of prior learning will provide opportunities for access, transfer and progression to education and training. In exceptional circumstances IPTAS will consider RPL at award stage and possible recommendation to HETAC for achievement of a full award. IPTAS should ensure that any such circumstances do not contravene the principle that Recognition of prior learning should maintain the standards of the National Framework of Qualifications and its awards.

1.1 Definitions

Prior Learning is learning which has taken place prior to admission to a programme. The learning can be certified or experiential (non-certified). Prior learning may have been acquired through formal, non-formal, or informal routes' and should encompass all forms of learning.

Accreditation refers to the process of identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of past learning.

Accreditation of Prior Certified Learning (APCL): Where an applicant has already been awarded a certificate for a formal programme taken at another recognised educational institution or other higher education / training provider, this prior learning may be recognised and can entitle the applicant to exemptions from some parts of a programme.

¹ For the purposes of this paper, RPL is considered as encompassing all types of prior learning: AP(E)L has tended to become a collective term which encompasses, for example, Accreditation of Prior learning (APL); Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL); Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL); Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL); Accreditation of Prior Learning and Achievement (APL&A); Recognition of Current Competencies (RCC) and, more recently Learning Outside Formal Teaching (LOFT).

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL): This involves the awarding of credit for learning from experience. This experience could be paid work, voluntary work, life activities or independent study which has not been formally assessed. In this case, the candidate must prove the learning by producing a portfolio to support the claim for access, exemption or credit. As a general principle, credit is given for learning, not for experience per se. See Section 2.5 for explanation of APEL.

Advanced Academic Standing (Advanced Entry): This refers to exemption from a year/stage or group of modules on the same level so that a learner may progress to a more advanced part of the programme. This is based on prior certified learning and does not involve the awarding of credit. For example in the future IPTAS may be in a position to approve programmes in other educational institutions which allow progression directly to stage 2 of the IPTAS Programme.

Credit in this document refers to the European Credit Transfer Scheme (ECTS) as part of the National Approach to Credit. A unit of credit is equal to 25-to 30 hours of learner effort.

Awarding Credit: This describes the outcome of the recognition process when a learner with prior experiential learning (uncertified learning) demonstrates that the prior learning satisfies the learning outcomes or standard for the module, subject or other unit of learning. The learner then gains the credit value attaching to the relevant learning outcome(s). Generally learners with prior certified learning will already have been awarded credit and can not be awarded credit again for the same learning.

General credits are awarded when an RPL claim has been processed in relation to a stage of the programme or to a set of programme modules but not necessarily in relation to individual module outcomes. These types of credits are awarded as exemption from a block of study or stage.

Specific credits are awarded when a claim has been processed in relation to the module learning outcomes and credits of the programme. Normally the same level and number of credits as available for the module will be awarded where the applicant can provide evidence of learning equivalent to the learning outcomes of the module and where RPL is acceptable for module exemptions for that particular module.

Exemption means the learner is not required to attend class, study or to be assessed in the exempted module(s). The learner will have demonstrated that they have already achieved the learning in the module(s) either by APCL or APEL. If by APEL, the learner will be awarded credits in addition to exemption. If by APCL the learner will generally be awarded an exemption only.

Learning Outcomes are sets of competences, expressing what the learner will know, understand or be able to do after completion of a process of learning.

Module is a component of the programme to which credits are attached. A module consists of a group of related learning outcomes.

Stage is a group of modules and generally relates to a year of study on the programme.

1.2 Range and Scope of RPL Availability

Entry Level

RPL is available to gain entry to the IPTAS programme.

The IPTAS physical therapy programme is designed primarily for mature learners for whom most places are reserved. Learners over 23-years-old are considered mature learners.

The standard entry requirements include both written and spoken fluency in English, good communications skills and the potential to study to third level demonstrated either by prior achievement of third level education or demonstration of the ability to achieve this. Where an applicant depends on second level education to gain entry e.g. Leaving Certificate, the requirement is or equivalent to a pass Leaving Certificate with a minimum of two honours at higher level (or equivalent) and a pass in Maths. One of these honours must be in English and the second in a Science subject.

IPTAS encourages applications from mature learners who may have a non-standard educational background. Each application will be given individual attention and the applicants' potential to gain entry using RPL if required will be discussed and assessed.

Learners who have not yet attained 23 years, but have a post Leaving Certificate qualification, or a qualification in a related area (Personal Training, Exercise and Fitness, Sports Therapy, Massage, etc.) are also encouraged to apply.

Advanced Standing

RPL is available to gain entry to the programme at an advanced stage. This means applicants demonstrating the required learning via APCL or APEL can gain exemption from a stage (year) and advance to the subsequent stage (year).

Exemption

RPL is available via APCL or APEL to gain exemption from modules of the programme. While modules are self-contained and based on learning outcomes to facilitate RPL, IPTAS modules are not stand-alone units generally. They support other modules in the same stage/year (co-requisite) and their successful completion is necessary to understand modules in the following stage/year (pre-requisite). This will be taken into account by the RPL team (See Section 2.6) when making decisions to award exemptions.

Generally *exemption will be for a full module* and not for elements of the module. To gain exemption from a module, applicants must demonstrate learning for all of the learning outcomes in a module. The RPL team and Programme team have discretion to recommend self study or other alternatives to applicants to enable them to achieve full exemption from module where they already have partial exemption. Applicants can then be reassessed to achieve full exemption. Where an applicant has obtained exemption from a module in a stage (year), this module is excluded from any '*pass by compensation*' calculation for the stage unless the module has been assessed and graded.

Exemptions gained via APCL will not be graded and grades from external institutions will not be used, unless the external learning maps precisely onto the IPTAS programme learning and where there are agreed and published equivalences, or mechanisms to establish such equivalences, between the grades awarded by the other institution and the IPTAS grading scheme (decision on whether this may apply is up to the individual module tutor and RPL Assessment team.) Generally exemptions gained via APCL will not be awarded credits as credits will normally have been already awarded for this learning by the certifying Institution. Generally exemptions gained via APCL will be limited to 50% of the total credits for the programme.

Exemptions gained via APEL will be assessed in such a way as to allow grading. Decisions regarding whether and how grades will be recorded on learner records and Diploma Supplements will be made by the Examination Board. Generally exemptions gained via APEL will be awarded credits.

Generally *exemptions at award level* (at stage/year 3) will only be granted under exceptional circumstances and must be approved by the Examination Board. Learning demonstrated to gain such exemption will be assessed and graded.

Applicable to Individuals

RPL credits and exemptions apply only to the individual registered on the IPTAS programme or to a cohort of learners on the programme, where such cohort has been identified and approved by IPTAS.

One RPL Application

IPTAS will normally consider only one RPL application by an individual resulting in entry, advanced standing, exemption or award; multiple applications for multiple exemptions/awards drawing upon the same body of evidence of learning will not be permitted. Learner records and the Diploma Supplement will facilitate monitoring in this regard.

1.3 Recognition and Assessment of Prior Certified Learning (APCL)

APCL applications must include copies of relevant certificates, transcripts of examination results, copies of course curricula, reading lists, examinations papers etc.

NARIC or other appropriate databases may be used for comparison of awards.

Award of RPL is subject to evaluation of the following: learner's academic record;

course/programme of study; syllabus, course description, learning outcomes, number of contact hours, form of assessment(s); NQAI level of qualification awarded and awarding institution.

The RPL team over time will record and document any indications of the types of certified learning potentially accepted as equivalent for the purposes of RPL for each module / stage of the Programme. The RPL Team and Programme Team will make informed decisions and record the decisions for comparison against future applications.

Currency of learning: The course for which APCL is to be claimed must normally have been completed within 5 years prior to the claim. Where the course was completed more than 5 years previously, supporting evidence must be submitted which gives an account of ways in which learning achieved through the course has been applied and updated within the past 5 years.

1.4 Recognition and Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

Applicants for credits/ module exemption based on APEL are required to submit relevant evidence of prior learning in relation to the learning outcomes of the stage of the programme or modules concerned.

Such evidence may be compiled in the form of a dossier or portfolio of documents as indicated by the RPL portfolio guidance and includes photocopies of original certificates, work record and job descriptions, publications, awards, prizes, testimonials etc. Applicants must write a reflective piece in support of their application to show an awareness of their experiential learning in relation to the programme and to show their capacity to succeed on and benefit from participation in the programme. Assessment may be based on written application (portfolio) or a mix of written application, interview, presentation and practical assessment.

Criteria for APEL assessment include the level, relevance, validity, sufficiency, authenticity and reliability.

Currency of learning: Learning must be up to date. Particular attention should be paid to learning/achievement which has taken place during the previous 5 years.

1.5 Roles and Responsibilities for the award of RPL exemptions and credits

The RPL Team is a subcommittee of, and reports to the Examination Board. Its membership consists of the RPL Coordinator, Head of Assessment and Internal Examiner(s).

The RPL team is responsible for the following:

- Development of RPL policy and procedures. The Programme Director is responsible for their approval.
- Determining if exemption should be granted in the case of recognition of Prior Certified Learning;
- Determining the level of specific credit and the marks to be awarded to a learner in the case of submission for recognition of prior experiential learning;

- Determining whether the learner should be required to present further evidence in support of his/her submission, or that the learner might rewrite the submission or repeat the interview;
- Forwarding to the External Examiner and Examination Board a statement detailing the number of credits which are recommended for award at each level;
- Recording and monitoring RPL decisions. Evaluation of RPL process.
- Ensuring that the integrity of the academic standard of the award is observed.

RPL Coordinator

- Coordinates all aspects of the RPL process.
- Communicates on behalf of the RPL Team with the learner
- Provides guidance to the applicant regarding their eligibility for RPL.
- If the RPL claim is via APEL the RPL Coordinator will provide the applicant with advice, a guide to portfolio preparation, assessment briefs and marking grids. The RPL Coordinator will provide assistance and guidance to the applicant in developing their portfolio.

Head of Assessments

- Reviews and advises on all RPL Assessment mechanisms
- Ensures RPL assessment mechanisms are consistent with and are integrated with the Programme Assessment Strategy.

Internal Examiner

- Is a member of academic staff with subject expertise in the area of the submission;
- Is not involved in providing guidance or support to the RPL applicant;
- Examines the documentation, or other material, which has been presented and interviews the learner.
- Establishes whether academic learning has taken place as a result of the experience and ensures that this is current i.e. not learning which may have since been forgotten;
- Present to the RPL team a statement detailing the results of the RPL process. This should include the recommended exemptions, credits, advanced entry, and the marks (if graded). The statement should explain the basis for the recommendation. This recommendation is forwarded to the other RPL team members and recommendation is discussed and agreed. Recommendation is provisional to allow the applicant to commence the Programme stage and is then subject to ratification by the Examination Board at the next Examination Board meeting.

Role of Examination Board

- Ratification of RPL recommendations

Marks must be confirmed by the relevant Examination Board to ensure that the exemption /credit is formally entered on the learner's record.

Role of External Examiner

The External Examiner is informed of any recommendations of credit for prior certificated or experiential learning.

Information to External Examiners includes:

- Marks and Standards
- Examination regulations.
- Relevant course documentation with modular outcomes.
- Internal examiner and internal moderators guidelines.

Role of Education Board and Academic Council

- The RPL team produces an annual report which summarises all ratified RPL recommendations.. The Education Board will review the report and all RPL progress in the year.
- Any amendments to RPL policy and Arrangements are submitted to the Education Board for Approval.
- The RPL Report is approved by the Education Board and submitted to Academic Council. Any amendments to RPL policy and Arrangements are submitted to Academic Council for approval.

1.6 Right to Apply for RPL

Eligibility to apply for RPL on the IPTAS Programme does not guarantee admission or advanced entry or award of credits or module exemptions.

Advanced Entry to the Programme may depend on places being available.

1.7 Responsibility for RPL Applications

Participation in RPL is a voluntary matter. The applicant is responsible for preparing the claim for RPL. The RPL Application form must be completed and must indicate whether the claim is for entry, advanced entry or module exemptions. IPTAS may provide initial guidance to the applicant regarding their eligibility for RPL prior to their Application being submitted.

Each RPL application is considered on its own merits though previous cases may be used for reference.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide true and accurate information regarding their prior learning.

1.8 RPL Results

RPL Application will result in one of the following:

- RPL Approved
- RPL Not Approved
- Resubmission required for Additional Information

1.9 RPL on Learner Records

RPL credits and exemptions awarded and accepted by the applicant are recorded on the learners' academic record. If the RPL process resulted in a grade this is indicated on the learner record with the specification that it is an RPL grade.

Examination broadsheets for Examination Board Meetings will clearly indicate modules achieved through RPL both where marks are awarded and where marks are not awarded.

The Diploma Supplement will indicate RPL elements.

1.10 RPL Appeals

Appeals to IPTAS will be permitted only on grounds of substantial evidence being omitted /unavailable at the time of application but subsequently available.

Unsuccessful applications may be submitted for a second attempt but not subsequently.

An interview/viva voce or other appropriate assessment mechanism may be used to substitute for a second attempt or where a portfolio / practical test was indecisive.

All appeals must be made in writing to the Academic AppealsBoard through the Administrator.

1.11 Quality Assurance

RPL Policy and procedures will be subject IPTAS standard Quality Assurance Procedures

1.12 Timeframes

Applications for RPL must be submitted at least 4 weeks prior to commencement of the Programme. For existing learners applying for module exemption, Application must be made at least 4 weeks prior to the commencement of that module.

Where the application is for APEL, the applicant should allow if possible a greater time period than that indicated above in order for sufficient advice and guidance to be given and for assessment to take place.

RPL decisions will generally be made and outcomes notified within 6 weeks of receipt of claim documents or date of other assessment mechanism (e.g. practical assessment).

Applicants should confirm in writing their acceptance of RPL credits or module exemptions.

1.13 Information Provision and Support for Applicants

The Institute will provide sufficient information on RPL on its website and in its recruitment literature. This will include a user friendly explanatory guide and FAQ's.

The RPL team will act as first point of contact for RPL enquiries. Guidance will be provided to the applicant regarding their eligibility for RPL.

If the RPL claim is via APEL the RPL team will provide the applicant with advice, a guide to portfolio preparation, assessment briefs and marking grids.

The RPL team will provide assistance and guidance to the applicant in developing their portfolio. From time to time and especially if there is a cohort of applicants the Institute will arrange information sessions or workshops on APEL.

1.14 Monitoring and Evaluation

All RPL decisions and cases will be recorded and made available for audit purposes if required. RPL process will be regularly evaluated.

This policy, procedures and Information for Applicants will be monitored and reviewed periodically as part of the general review of quality assurance procedures in place to determine effectiveness.

1.15 Costs

Guidance on eligibility for RPL is provided free of charge.

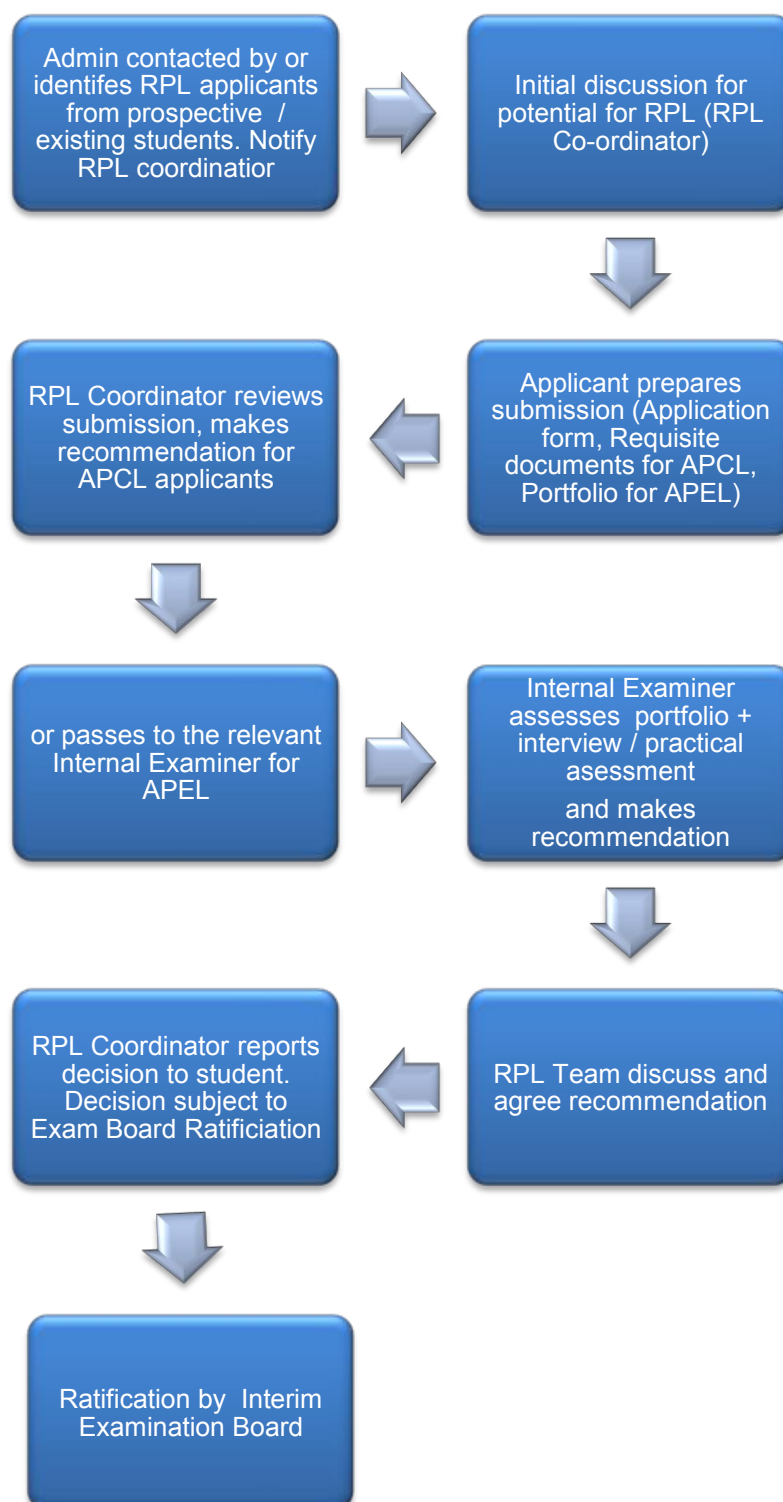
Charges apply for processing RPL claims for advanced entry or module exemptions /credits.

Charges for processing RPL claims for module exemption should in general reflect the staff effort involved in the assessment process.

RPL Procedures

The IPTAS RPL procedures are intended to provide the detailed guidelines on the operation of the RPL principles documented in the IPTAS RPL Policy. These procedures represent current guidelines on the operation of RPL but are not prescriptive. Procedures may differ between stages/ modules and for different applicants and cohorts of applicants but will always comply with the principles in IPTAS RPL Policy.

1. Flow Chart



2. Prospective Learners

On application for admission to the programme prospective learners often request information regarding RPL (exemption from one or more modules or stages), or alternatively IPTAS Administration may identify that an applicants' prior education and or experience may entitle them to apply for RPL. The following guidelines while not prescriptive can be used by IPTAS Administration to decide if a prospective learner should be referred to RPL coordinator.

APCL (Recognition and Assessment of Prior Certified Learning)

- Learning must be current – have taken place in last 5 years . If longer than 5 years applicant must have kept learning up to date through Continued Professional Development or APEL.
- Learning must be at least NQAI level 6
- Learning must be in a relevant field and should from initial appearances at least map closely to IPTAS module or modules.
- IPTAS Administration may refer to RPL Decision Database for information and guidance regarding previous RPL decisions made. Previous decisions may act as a guide but will not act as precedent as each application may have individual specific factors influencing the decision.

APEL (Recognition and Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning)

- Applicant may have learning achieved through independent study, a non recognised programme, or experience.
- Learning should be current
- Learning should be in relevant field and should from initial appearances at least map closely to IPTAS module or modules.
- IPTAS Administration may refer to RPL Decision Database for information and guidance regarding previous RPL decisions made. Previous decisions may act as a guide but will not act as precedent as each application may have individual specific factors influencing the decision.

An applicant may have a combination of both APCL and APEL.

IPTAS Administration will briefly explain to the applicant how granting of exemptions (Recognition of Prior Learning RPL) operates. IPTAS Administration may use the following description as a guide:

“There are two methods. The first is where the applicant has completed a recognised course in the last 5 years the in which learning achieved very closely maps to IPTAS learning. Approval is subject to evaluation of the learner’s academic record, course or programme of study, syllabus, course description, learning outcomes, number of contact hours, form of assessment(s), NQAI level of qualification awarded and awarding institution. If approved Exemption is granted.

The second method is where the applicants learning may be based on experiential learning, course undertaken more than 5 years ago, or a non recognised course. In these cases it is not possible to determine if the learning and assessment of it is very close to IPTAS learning and standards and the learning must therefore be assessed. The applicant is asked to complete a portfolio to demonstrate their learning. Depending on the module(s) in question the applicant may also have to have a practical assessment and or interview. When these are marked and if successful the applicant will be awarded credit for the module and will not have to take that module.”

The applicant can then decide if they want to proceed with application for RPL and will be referred to the RPL Coordinator.

3. Existing Learners

Existing learners in Stage 1 may be eligible to apply for RPL for a module or modules in Stage 2 of the Programme. Towards the end of Stage 1 learners will be reminded of the RPL policy and the Stage 2 Curriculum will be made available to them. If they consider that they may be eligible for RPL they will be directed to contact RPL Coordinator. Learners will be required to make an application for RPL at least 4 weeks before the commencement of the module.

4. RPL Process

Potential APCL Applicant Referred to RPL Coordinator:

The RPL coordinator will contact the applicant and initiate discussion to determine potential for RPL. If deemed to have potential the RPL coordinator will send out RPL application and request the other required documents and details:

- Dates course undertaken
- Awarding Institution
- Transcripts of results
- Syllabus content
- Full Learning Outcomes
- Assessment Methods - (should be recorded in course documentation)
- Contact Hours

On receipt of required documents and details the RPL coordinator will review the application and documents, request any additional information required, and usually have a conversation with the applicant. RPL coordinator will write a report of recommendation and send it to the RPL team. The RPL team will discuss and agree a recommendation. The Applicant is informed of the decision by the RPL coordinator. Decision is conditional on ratification by Interim Examination Board. RPL decision will be communicated to applicant generally within six weeks of receipt of all claims documents. Applicants should confirm in writing their acceptance of RPL credits or module exemptions.

All documents including RPL application and Report of Recommendation will be sent to IPTAS Administration for insertion in learner file. APCL decision will be logged by Administration and head of Assessments. RPL decision database should be updated by RPL coordinator for all new RPL decisions and shared with IPTAS Administration.

Potential APEL Applicant Referred to RPL Coordinator:

The RPL coordinator will contact the applicant and initiate discussion to determine potential for RPL. If deemed to have potential the RPL coordinator will explain what is involved in APEL and determine if the applicant would like to proceed. Applicant will be requested to submit the RPL fee to IPTAS administration. On receipt of fee by IPTAS, the RPL coordinator will send the applicant the RPL Application form and details and guidance for the relevant portfolios required for submission.

The RPL coordinator will be available to give the applicant some guidance in preparation of portfolios. On receipt of Application form and Portfolios, the RPL coordinator will review these and if deemed complete and in accordance with guidelines will submit to Internal Examiner(s) for assessment. Internal Examiner(s) will assess the portfolio(s) and return marking grids and recommendation to RPL coordinator generally within one week of receipt of portfolio. RPL coordinator will organise any interview and or practical assessment with Internal Examiner(s) and Applicant.

Internal Examiner(s) will return all marking grids and recommendations to RPL coordinator within 3 days of the practical exam or interview. RPL coordinator will collate all marks, write report of recommendation and send it to the RPL team.

The RPL team will discuss and agree a recommendation. The Applicant is informed of the decision by the RPL coordinator. Decision is conditional on ratification by Interim Examination Board. RPL decision will be communicated to applicant generally within six weeks of receipt of all claims documents or date of other assessment mechanism (e.g. practical assessment).

Applicants should confirm in writing their acceptance of RPL credits or module exemptions. All documents including RPL application and Report of Recommendation will be sent to IPTAS Administration for insertion in learner file. APEL decision and assessments will be logged by Administration and head of Assessments. RPL decision database should be updated by RPL coordinator for all new RPL decisions and shared with IPTAS Administration.

5. Curricula and Assessment Supporting the RPL Process for APEL

- All Learning is described in terms of learning outcomes in programme documentation.
- All Learning Outcomes by module are restated for RPL to give applicants guidance on how to demonstrate their learning in their portfolio.
- To ensure fairness and consistency the Assessment Strategy for RPL applications for Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) is considered and devised as part of the overall assessment strategy (i.e Overall Assessment Strategy applies to both assessment of modules taken at the Institute and to assessment of prior learning.)
- Where possible the same marking grids will be used for assessment of RPL as are used for modules taken at the Institute. This includes marking of portfolios.
- All Assessment marking grids map closely to the Learning Outcomes

6. Arrangements for achieving full exemption in a module

RPL is available via APCL or APEL to gain exemption from modules of the programme. Generally *exemption will be for a full module* and not for elements of the module. To gain exemption from a module, applicants must demonstrate learning for all of the learning outcomes in a module.

The RPL team and Programme team have discretion to recommend self study or other alternatives to applicants to enable them to achieve full exemption from module where they already have partial exemption. Applicants can then be reassessed to achieve full exemption.

Where partial exemption is achieved and the RPL team has recommended study / tutorials and reassessment, the RPL coordinator will agree a schedule of study / tutorials and re-assessment with the applicant, the Programme team delivering any tutorials and the Internal Examiner(s).

Details of the RPL team decision and reassessments required will be logged by Administration and Head of Assessments. The RPL coordinator will monitor the agreed schedule with the applicant, Programme Team and Internal Examiner(s) to ensure completion.

Internal Examiner(s) will return all marking grids and recommendations to RPL coordinator within 3 days of the re-assessment. On completion of all reassessment the RPL coordinator will collate all marks, write report of recommendation and send it to the RPL team. Normal review, ratification and communication procedures will then apply (as described in section 4 above).

7. Specific Procedures – Cohorts

From time to time specific cohorts of applicants may require to be assessed for RPL. In these instances different assessment arrangements may be required. These arrangements should still be considered and devised as part of the overall assessment strategy of the Institute and should ensure consistency and fairness.

8. Portfolio Guidance

General Guidance on Compiling Portfolio – Information to Learners

You should provide evidence of skills, knowledge and competence for each of the learning outcomes below. Evidence should include examples from your workplace/personal life and education to date. Your portfolio should include the following:

- Cover sheet with your name, title (Recognition of Prior Learning and module name) and date of submission. Note if you are claiming for more than one module you should have a separate section and cover sheet etc. for each module.
- Table of contents (Page 2).
- You should introduce yourself and outline your experience of Physical Therapy to date (Page 3).
- Response to all sections of each learning outcome (from Page 4).
- You should read all sections in each learning outcome. Some sections require the use of a case history and assessment; so ensure that a suitable case is chosen to enable you to answer all sections within that learning outcome.
- Each page should include footer with your name and page number (Page x of x).
- When starting a new learning outcome it is advisable to begin on a new page.
- Evidence should be provided for and reference each learning outcome. Evidence might include excerpts from your client cases, written statements / validation from your clients (testimonials), peers or self, other certification, visual evidence such as DVD, or other media / information that you feel provides evidence of achievement of the learning outcome in question. All evidence should be independently verified where possible. Verification consists of confirmation that the applicant was responsible for the work, comment (where qualified to) on the quality of the work, signed and dated by the independent verifier (i.e. someone other than the applicant). Independent verifiers could include previous tutors, relevant work colleagues, clients.

Sample Portfolio Answer

Example Learning Outcomes – Stage 1, Module – Diagnosis + Practice

Learning Outcome 1: Interpret the history and examination findings of a limited amount of seen stage 1 cases and devise a treatment plan.

You will be given a detailed account of a client case including history and symptoms. Identify from the case the Key Items of Information and explain why they might be key and what they might suggest. Outline your Assessment plan and rationale. You will be given assessment findings – Interpret each of these findings and describe your working diagnosis relating back to history and symptoms.

Evidence to support this learning should include some or all of the following:

- Excerpts from a client case of your own showing how you identified the key items and what they suggested
- Excerpts from a client case of your own showing your assessment findings, interpretation of them and working diagnosis

Learning Outcome 2: Accurately and safely assess the upper body, having sought informed consent.

You should describe what you understand in meant by 'accurate and safe assessment'. Describe what you understand by 'informed consent'.

Evidence to support this learning should include some or all of the following:

- Excerpts from a client case of your own showing your assessment
- Demonstration of your assessment techniques – in your own words, visual evidence DVD etc.
- Testimonials from client describing your Informed Consent

A selection of sample portfolio answers will be available for guidance for RPL applicants. Generally an applicant will not be given a sample that relates to the module for which the applicant is claiming RPL.

RPL Application Form Sample

Applicant Information		
Full Name:		
Address:		
Tel No:		Email:
One copy of this section of the form must be completed for <i>each module</i> for which RPL is sought. You must attach to this sheet your supporting evidence which must be clearly marked with 'attachment 1, attachment 2 etc' so that it tallies with the list below.		
Name of module:		
Basis of Application - APCL or APEL or BOTH:		
Name of module:		Stage (Year):
Basis of Application - APCL or APEL or BOTH:		
APCL	Name of Programme of previous Learning:	
	Level of Programme:	
	Name of Education Provider:	
	Date Award Achieved:	
Learning outcomes of module	Prior Learning (Demonstrate how prior learning APCL or APEL achieves the Learning Outcome)	Evidence of prior Learning (For APCL this would include copy of Learning Outcomes of Programme of Previous Learning, Transcripts of Results. For APEL ref will be to your Portfolio)
Discuss the business and operating environment for complementary therapies and for specific pathways including current regulatory frameworks, ethical issues, professional body requirements (as appropriate) and trends affecting growth;	APEL – Self study and Research, Member of other Professional Body	Portfolio
Discuss the critical success factors for a practice, including business, financial, marketing, continuing professional development and preparing themselves for practice;	APCL – Diploma in Business Studies 2002. Ongoing CPD	2a.Diploma certificate 2b.Diploma curriculum 2c.Diploma transcripts (results) 2d.CDP certs

I certify that the information given above is accurate and I understand that giving false information may constitute a disciplinary offence within the regulations of IPTAS.

Signed:

Name in capitals:

Date:

Information for Applicants

Disclaimer: The information below is for information purposes only and in no way represents a legal obligation. While IPTAS is committed to ensuring accuracy of its public information it is inevitable that information about RPL will be updated from time to time.

Entry, Advanced Entry and Module Exemption can all be facilitated by RPL

What is RPL?

RPL (recognition of prior learning) is a process which acknowledges, and gives value to, learning achieved prior to registering for the IPTAS programme or prior to seeking the award.

Prior learning may be a result of successful participation in a formal learning programme for which you were awarded certification. If you use your prior certificated learning towards the IPTAS BSc, the process is called: Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL).

Prior learning may also be an outcome of non-formal or informal learning achieved through work, voluntary activities or private study, for which you may not have a certificate. The process of using this type of learning for higher education purposes is called: Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).

It is not uncommon for both APCL and APEL to be considered together in an RPL process.

What RPL is used for in IPTAS?

RPL can be used for a number of purposes in IPTAS including the following:

for entry to programme at the initial stage where the applicant may not meet the standard entry requirements

for advanced entry to a programme at a stage beyond the first stage

for exemption from some programme elements or from programme modules

Where RPL is available there may be specific conditions, limitations and application procedures.

The RPL Process

There are different processes for RPL depending on the purpose for which it is used. However, all RPL processes require the applicant to provide evidence of appropriate past learning, whether that is certificated or experiential learning. In some cases it may be sufficient for the applicant to provide copies of appropriate certificates. In other cases there may be a self-assessment exercise, preparation of a file or 'portfolio' of appropriate evidence of learning, an interview, and perhaps a demonstration or assessment task.

Where to go for information about RPL in IPTAS

The first place to contact for general information is IPTAS Office:

Phone: 1800 -254-642 Email: info@iptas.ie

Your enquiry may be referred onwards to the RPL Coordinator:

Fionnuala Corcoran, fcorcoran@iptas.com

Information current for July 2011

Frequently asked questions about RPL in IPTAS

1. What precisely is RPL and what is its purpose?

RPL stands for 'recognition of prior learning'. Its purpose is to give formal acknowledgement to past, or prior, learning. Past learning may contribute to further learning by using it to gain entry to the IPTAS programme at the first stage or at an advanced stage. Past learning may also be used to gain exemptions from parts of the programme (modules).

2. Where would I get detailed information about RPL in the IPTAS?

You will get detailed information on the IPTAS website at: <http://www.iptas.ie/>

3. Who could I contact in IPTAS to discuss RPL?

The first place to contact for general information is IPTAS Office:

Phone: 1800 -254-642 Email: info@iptas.ie

Your enquiry may be referred onwards to the RPL Coordinator:

Fionnuala Corcoran, fcorcoran@iptas.com

4. What precisely is prior certificated learning?

Prior certificated learning is formal learning achieved with a recognised education provider. The learning will have been assessed and a certificate issued on completion.

5. What is accreditation of prior certificated learning (APCL)?

APCL is the term used to describe the process of using awards gained through formal training or education - prior certificated learning - to gain entry to a programme or to gain module exemptions.

6. What is prior experiential learning?

Prior experiential learning is learning you have acquired through work, voluntary activities or private study. It is sometimes called non-formal or informal learning.

7. What is accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL)?

APEL is the process of using experiential learning in support of an application for the purpose of entry to the IPTAS programme or application for module exemption.

8. How could I use my prior certificated learning in the IPTAS programme?

In general, prior certificated learning may be used for entry purposes, for entry at an advanced stage or for module exemptions.

9. What are levels of learning as used in RPL?

RPL processes use the same levels of learning as described in the National Framework of Qualifications (NQF). Level 6 through to Level 10 apply to higher education. IPTAS Programme is a B.Sc Level 7

10. How would I know the level of my prior certificated learning?

All certificated learning/awards are now being placed on the National Qualifications Framework. In general awards of higher level than Leaving Certificate are from 6 to 10. Undergraduate degrees are level 7 or 8. Postgraduate programmes are at levels 9 and 10.

11. What are ECTS credits?

ECTS credits refer to a system of describing volumes of learner work on higher education programmes across Europe (European Credit Transfer System = ECTS).

The system now represents one credit as being roughly equivalent to twenty (20) learning hours, or hours of learner effort. So a module that is worth 5 credits would demand at least one hundred hours learning effort on the part of the learner.

Modules may be small as in a 5 credit module, or very large as in a 30 credit module. A year's programme would generally be designed to involve 60 credits.

12. What is meant by general RPL credits and specific RPL credits?

The IPTAS policy for RPL distinguishes among two types of RPL credits – general and specific - as follows:

- General credits are awarded when an RPL claim has been processed in relation to a stage of the programme or to a set of programme modules but not necessarily in relation to individual module learning outcomes. These types of credits are awarded as exemption from a block of study (stage or named modules).
- Specific credits may be awarded where APEL is used to achieve module exemption/s. In both these cases it is usual to award the same level and number of credits as available for the module where an applicant can provide evidence of learning equivalent to the learning outcomes of the module and where RPL is acceptable for module exemptions in the first instance as outlined in the programme validation document.

13. How would I know the value of my prior certificated learning?

Most certificates / awards are now related to the National Qualifications Framework. Awards on the Framework are allocated a range of ECTS credits at the different levels. For example, what is now described as a National Certificate at Level6 may have from 60 to 90 credits attached to it.

However, you should be aware for example, that just because your original programme module was 20 credits you may not get exemption from a 20 credit module in IPTAS programme. The value will depend on the learning outcomes and equivalency of actual learning.

14. How would I know if my prior certificated learning could be used to gain entry to the IPTAS programme?

The IPTAS physical therapy programme is designed primarily for mature learners for whom most places are reserved. Learners over 23-years-old are considered mature learners.

All applications are dealt with individually and applicants are required to show both written and spoken fluency in English. Good communications skills are also considered essential and these will be assessed at interview. Applicants will also need to demonstrate the potential to study to third level. Though many learners come to us having gained their primary degree, we are also pleased to have graduated many eminently successful practitioners who were embarking on a second career, sometimes without previous experience of third level study.

We encourage applications from mature learners who may have a non-standard educational background.

Learners who have not yet attained 23 years, but have a post Leaving Certificate qualification, or a qualification in a related area (Personal Training, Exercise and Fitness, Sports Therapy, Massage, etc.) are also encouraged to apply.

Where an applicant depends on their Leaving Certificate to gain entry, the requirement is a pass Leaving Certificate with a minimum of two honours at higher level (or equivalent) and a pass in Maths. One of these honours must be in English and the second in a Science subject.

Where an applicant cannot meet these entry requirements they may be able to gain entry to the programme by virtue of prior certified learning (e.g. Applicant may have 2nd or 3rd level education from another country) or by prior experiential learning. Applicants should contact IPTAS to discuss their eligibility for RPL for entry to the programme.

15. How would I assess myself for the value of my certificated learning?

As IPTAS RPL develops, programme documents may indicate how much prior learning may be used for entry and/or for module exemptions. Programme documents may list possible certificates that may potentially be used to gain entry or module exemption. Applicants should contact IPTAS to discuss their eligibility for RPL.

16. How would I know if my prior certificated learning could be used to get into the IPTAS programme at an advanced stage?

See 15 above. Applicants should contact IPTAS to discuss their eligibility for RPL.

17. How would I know if I could use my prior certificated learning to get exemptions from programme modules?

See 15 above. Applicants should contact IPTAS to discuss their eligibility for RPL.

18. When does my prior certificated learning go out of date?

It depends: some learning, such as latin, or algebra, stay in date for a long time. Other learning, such as software design goes out of date very quickly.

Applications for RPL are usually judged for their 'currency' or 'recency' of learning as well as other qualities. In health related sciences it is usually specified that the course for which RPL is to be claimed must normally have been completed within 5 years prior to the claim. Where the course was completed more than 5 years previously, supporting evidence must be submitted which gives an account of ways in which learning achieved through the course has been applied and updated within the past 5 years.

If your learning is quite old and you have not kept it up-to-date it might be wise not to look for module exemptions!

19. Would I need certificates to prove my prior learning?

Generally Yes! If you have lost your certificate you might be able to get transcripts of examination results, or a formal letter from the awarding body instead. However, it is best to discuss your RPL requirements with IPTAS in this regard.

20. Would I need examination results as evidence?

Generally Yes! In general you need to show your capacity to succeed and benefit from being offered a place at advanced entry or being exempt from modules.

21. Would I need detailed information about the courses I have successfully completed such as a syllabus or handbook?

Frequently Yes!

22. If I have no certificates would a letter do and whose letters might be acceptable?

Sometimes, as 19 above.

23. If I got my certificates in another country how could I use RPL?

Certificates from other countries are generally measured against data bases of known awards such as the NARIC system or Qualifications Recognition. Other countries may not use similar descriptions of awards as we do, so do not be surprised if a foreign qualification seems more or less valuable than a similar Irish award.

24. Who decides the exemption I get for my prior certificated learning?

The IPTAS RPL team decides about RPL credits and exemptions, and generally keeps a record of past decisions to guide current and future decisions

25. Can I appeal a decision about RPL credits and exemption and apply again?

You can appeal an RPL decision on the ground that you did not have all the necessary documentation required at the time of application but you now have them.

26. Would I have to be examined again for RPL if I have certificates?

Unlikely! But you may be required to attend an interview or to make a case in writing.

27. How is RPL recorded on my examination record?

In general RPL does not result in grades, but this may change. If you accept RPL credits or module exemptions you should understand the impact it might make on your final assessment results and award classification.

It is best to discuss this with the RPL Co-ordinator.

It will likely be the case that your academic record will show that you accepted RPL credits and/or module exemptions.

28. How is RPL graded for classification of awards?

In exceptional circumstances RPL may be granted at the award stage (year 3) of the programme. Where this is the case the learning will generally be assessed and graded.

29. Would I be better off taking a module instead of accepting RPL if it affects my final grade or award classification?

It is best to fully consider the implications of RPL for award classification before accepting any exemptions.

30. Is there a cost for RPL by certificated learning?

Guidance on eligibility for RPL is provided free of charge.

Charges apply for processing RPL claims for advanced entry or module exemptions /credits. Processing a claim for RPL by certificated learning if all documentation is submitted should take less time to process than a claim for RPL by experiential learning. This will be reflected in the costs.

However, payment for an RPL process cannot in any way be interpreted as payment for credits or exemptions.

31. How long might an RPL process take for a module exemption based on certificated learning?

This is generally a very quick process taking days rather than weeks. Be prepared to attend an interview if required.

32. What is my responsibility in making an RPL claim through certificated learning?

You, as applicant, are generally responsible for the entire application, including supplying the correct certificates, letters, exam results etc. though you may be given directions regarding what is required.

33. How would I prove that I have learned from work and life experience in an RPL claims?

When you contact IPTAS to discuss your eligibility for RPL you will be directed to the Application for RPL and guidance on preparation of a portfolio for the particular module(s) you require. This procedure should indicate what is involved for you to prove your prior experiential learning. You may be required to make a written application only, or a mix of written application, interview, presentation, practical assessment etc.

34. What kinds of APEL evidence might I offer as proof of appropriate learning?

You are likely to be required to provide authentic documents, letter of support etc.. You should be given specific advice on the size and content of the application required.

35. Who might guide me through the APEL process?

It is likely that you will receive sufficient guidance from the RPL co-ordinator.

36. How long would it take from application to decision?

Applications are generally processed in good time for start dates of programmes and modules. The more time you give yourself to prepare your application the better for yourself. So apply in good time.

37. How much does an RPL application cost?

Guidance on eligibility for RPL is provided free of charge.

Charges apply for processing RPL claims for advanced entry or module exemptions /credits. Processing a claim for RPL by certificated learning if all documentation is submitted should take less time to process than a claim for RPL by experiential learning. This will be reflected in the costs.

However, payment for an RPL process cannot in any way be interpreted as payment for credits or exemptions.

38. What are the risks and benefits of accepting RPL credits or module exemptions?

If you accept module exemptions you may miss out on important learning. You should note that while exemption may be granted on the basis of equivalence of learning, this does not mean that the learning is identical and availing of such exemption may mean loss of opportunity for specific relevant learning.

The main benefits are:

- Benefit 1: You do not need to learn again what you already know
- Benefit 2: You get more time to devote to other parts of the programme
- Benefit 3: You may not need to attend class as often

39. Can I apply for RPL at an award stage?

In exceptional circumstances IPTAS will consider RPL at award stage (generally stage/year 3). IPTAS should ensure that any such circumstances do not contravene the principle that Recognition of prior learning should maintain the standards of the National Framework of Qualifications and its awards.

40. Can I apply for a whole IPTAS award by RPL?

HETAC is the awarding body for IPTAS B.Sc awards. Under exceptional circumstances IPTAS may consider possible recommendation to HETAC for achievement of a full award. IPTAS should ensure that any such circumstances do not contravene the principle that Recognition of prior learning should maintain the standards of the National Framework of Qualifications and its awards.

41. How might I self-assess myself for my prior certificated learning?

At present it is not possible to self assess on line. In the future IPTAS may develop an on-line exercise which should assist applicants in preparing an RPL claim. Contact RPL coordinator to help you self assess.

42. Where might I see a sample of APEL evidence for an IPTAS module?

If you are applying for a module exemption on the programme you will be given sufficient information (Portfolio guidance, information on learning outcomes and sample portfolio answer) to put together a set of appropriate evidence. The type of evidence required will vary from module to module.

43. What assessment criteria are used for APEL assessment activities?

It is general practice that there are common RPL criteria such as: authenticity, sufficiency, relevance, currency, validity.

Additionally there may be other assessment criteria specific to the particular module or stage. It is best to request these criteria directly from RPL coordinator. The criteria will vary from module to module.

44. What happens at an RPL interview?

If you are applying for module exemptions the RPL interview team will probably use the opportunity to discuss your evidence of learning with you in relation to your RPL claim. If you are using RPL for entry purposes the interview team will wish to establish that your evidence is sufficient, relevant and valid, and that you have the capacity to succeed on the programme and to benefit from being offered a place.

45. How is RPL shown on the Diploma Supplement?

IPTAS is developing its Diploma Supplement and RPL exemptions may be indicated on it together with other standard information.

Note: The responses to the frequently asked questions above are for general information only and do not represent a contract.