

Institute of Physical Therapy and Applied Science



**QUALITY ASSURANCE
And
ENHANCEMENT MANUAL**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Manual sets out the Quality Assurance & Enhancement policy 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.

Principles underpinning IPTAS quality assurance and enhancement are as follows:

- Accepting responsibility for the quality and standards of our educational provision;
- Exploring means for further enhancing the student experience;
- 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 programme's strengths and weaknesses;
- Publishing the results of the quality assurance and enhancement processes.

IPTAS considers the following functions as key in ensuring and enhancing the quality of its educational and training programme:

- Staff recruitment and development;
- Curriculum development;
- Teaching and learning;
- Assessments and examinations;
- Communication;
- Learner access, Transfer and Progression;
- Learner support;
- Programme delivery and management;
- Collaboration with the profession;
- Premises, Equipment, Facilities and Services.
- New programme development

The quality assurance standards in this Manual are laid out in six chapters and relate to the following areas:

- IPTAS Quality Assurance and Enhancement - Introduction and underlying principles;
- Quality Values & Ethos;
- Policy Statements;
- Evaluation & Monitoring Of Programme at Programme and individual tutor levels;
- IPTAS Organisation & Management Structure;
- Policies, Procedures and Guidelines For The Assessment Of Learners;
- Procedures & Guidelines for Obtaining & Managing Feedback.

INTRODUCTION TO PHYSICAL THERAPY

Physical therapy is an holistic form of manual therapy that focuses on the exclusive use of hands-on techniques. It is used to diagnose, treat and prevent a wide range of musculoskeletal problems and symptoms such as overuse or sporting injuries, back and neck pain as well as other problems with a muscle component. It is a form of healthcare that is complementary to orthodox or mainstream medical treatments, utilising a client-centred approach where the therapist views clients as the primary manager of their own musculoskeletal symptoms, seeking treatment, support and guidance from a practitioner of their choosing.

Physical therapists meet the needs of their clients by providing musculoskeletal assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, treatment intervention and re-evaluation. As complementary health care practitioners they liaise with other health care practitioners such as medical doctors, osteopaths, chiropractors, acupuncturists, homeopaths and other allied health professionals.

Physical therapists use a variety of safe and gentle manual techniques and provide advice on exercise, stress, posture, ergonomics and other aspects of daily life that contribute to the musculoskeletal well-being of their clients.

As a health profession, physical therapy assumes foundation principles and practices in common with other professional groups. It is now making significant headway particularly in the area of professional development. It is at an early stage in the development of some of its characteristics such as the area of research. Evidence based practice, while only recently established in our college includes clinic audit of issues such as client progress and side effects of treatment.

NEED AND DEMAND FOR THE PROGRAMME

The growth of the physical therapy profession as a provider in the field of primary contact health care depends on its ability to position, market and promote itself as an effective alternative to existing forms of treatment. Success to date is testament to the popularity of a hands-on approach in the treatment of soft tissue problems, the efficacy of the techniques employed and the effectiveness of anecdotal reports in establishing practitioners locally. The profession needs to develop to compete effectively and will need to add an evidence base to support its claims of efficacy and a recognised qualification to reassure the public of the safety and standards achieved by its practitioners.

A comprehensive occupational analysis survey, conducted across the entire existing profession by the Institute of Physical Therapy in the summer 2004 indicates a strong demand from established physical therapy practitioners to recruit graduates or associate practitioners to meet current demands from existing clinics. As the profession becomes established, there is evidence that public awareness of the efficacy of physical therapy grows and that demand increases exponentially. Our current 3-year programme provides the education and training required for registration with the professional body and successful practise. IPTAS currently has 160 students enrolled in its programme.

The Bacon report into *Current and Future Supply and Demand Conditions in the Labour Market for Certain Professional Therapists* (2001), estimates that an increase of 102% on the current supply of physiotherapists will be needed to fill requirements to 2015. In the short term, the report identified a solution to the current shortage as being the recruitment of qualified physical therapists to work within the Public Sector for the first time. This current severe shortage and ongoing increase in demand is likely to underpin the opportunities for graduating physical therapists into the next decade. Even if physical therapists do not immediately seek to pursue positions within the Public Sector, they can benefit from shortfalls there caused by a bigger percentage of physiotherapy graduates taking the permanent and pensionable option. The opportunity exists for physical therapy to position itself as the first-stop provider of treatment for musculo-skeletal problems in private practise.

A number of current selection policies combine to make physiotherapy inaccessible to candidates who would also be suitable for physical therapy training. Also, a growing emphasis on non-manual treatment coupled with a narrower focus towards hospital-based practise increases demand for the physical therapy approach as education and training for a career in private practise.

To date, the physical therapy diploma programme has attracted mainly mature students. The strengths of such candidates include well-developed interpersonal and caring skills and a high level of motivation to apply these skills in a health care environment.

SECTION 1 – IPTAS QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT

MISSION STATEMENT

The Institute of Physical Therapy and Applied Science (IPTAS) is a third-level institute of higher learning and professional training providing specialist education in the disciplines of physical therapy and applied health science to meet identified needs of students and physical therapy practitioners, nationally and internationally. It offers opportunities predominantly for mature learners through its extended pathway programme and is committed to providing access to learners from a variety of backgrounds.

The educational services provided by the Institute include, teaching, consultancy, research, and development. Through these services the Institute serves most particularly its current students and alumni, but also the wider society.

IPTAS aims to produce capable, professional graduates and to support further development of the physical therapy profession.

The Institute of Physical Therapy and Applied Science (IPTAS) is committed to consistently achieving excellence in the provision and execution of its programme(s) and services. Its overarching aim is to ensure graduate competence in physical therapy and learner satisfaction. It plans to achieve this by establishing and maintaining quality assurance and quality enhancement procedures for the purpose of further improving and maintaining the quality of its clinical education and training programme.

INTRODUCTION

The prime consideration is the achievement of mutual confidence by the students, staff, other stakeholders and the public in the quality of the Institute's learning and teaching provision and of its specialist consultancy, research and scholarship. 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 and procedures, clear criteria with regard to students transferring from other programmes and with regard to the process for seeking and granting exemptions;
- Curricula and teaching programmes that are well organised, clearly focused and based on up-to-date scholarship;
- Syllabuses with clear, explicit and achievable learning outcomes, which are appropriate to the level of 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.

AIMS

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.

IPTAS aims to develop competent, professional graduates and to support further development of the physical therapy profession. It is committed to develop continuously as a provider of high quality clinical education and training.

QUALITY ASSURANCE MANUAL

This Manual sets out the procedures through which the Institute ensures that its programme(s) 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;
- Ensure learner involvement, participation and regular formal feedback in our programme development, delivery and monitoring processes;
- Subject 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;
- Engage in self-evaluation, identifying our programme's strengths and weaknesses
- Publish the results of the our quality assurance processes.

IPTAS is committed to the aims of the Bologna process and to the goals and timetable in the Berlin Communiqué. The ultimate aim of the Process is to establish a European Higher Education Area by 2010 in which staff and students can move with ease 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 periodically in the light of experience in implementing its procedures and feedback received from staff, students and other stakeholders. All members of the Institute of Physical Therapy and Applied Science are invited to recommend improvements to the Manual arising from their experience. They can do so by informing their tutor or Programme Director.

This Manual should be read in conjunction with the Institute's other documents, including *Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy and Strategy 2005* and *Marks and Standards*, both of which are reviewed and updated periodically. Users of this manual who require further clarification or information, should in the first instance consult the Programme Director. 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.

SECTION 2 - QUALITY VALUES & ETHOS

INTRODUCTION

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 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 one's 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.

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 Team, consisting of all lecturers, develops the academic vision, overall objectives and learning outcomes and future direction for the specific programme. The Programme Committee consisting of representatives from the Programme Team, Programme Director, Quality Assurance Manager, Student Clinic Co-ordinator and Administrator are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the specific programme. The collaborative approach of the Programme Team and committee facilitates the creation of imaginative solutions to programme development and quality enhancement. The Programme Team and committee operate as sensitively as possible through co-operative approaches of considering alternatives and negotiation and compromise.

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 Programme Teams/Committee, 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 is also committed to liaising with Programme Committees with a view to reaching a consensus on making appropriate use of finite resources. It clearly acknowledges that without adequate resources to deliver the desired quality, the Programme or a Programme module 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.

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, IPTAS believes that internal examiners must articulate clear standards of expected student performance and simultaneously engage in benchmarking their assessment practice to allow for wider perspectives. This is primarily achieved through dialogue within the Internal Moderation Teams, consisting of small groups of internal examiners involved in a particular theme, such as, health science, clinical practice, physical therapy or practitioner skills. Their function is to provide support and challenge to each other with regard to assessment of the learner.

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT TEAM

The QAE Team consists of Team Leader, Coordinator / Secretary and three members. Their main area of responsibilities are:

- Policy and procedures for QA
- Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards
- Assessment of students
- QA of teaching staff
- Learning resources and student support
- Information systems
- Public information

Main functions of the QAE Team are:

- Monitoring the ongoing operation of the programme.
- Monitoring the implementation of short term changes to the programme in response to feedback from stakeholders.
- Reviewing policies and procedures and making recommendations for change.
- Monitoring the quality of student learning.
- Monitoring client satisfaction and progress in student clinic.
- Reviewing job opportunities available to new graduates and following up a year later.
- Carrying out a three-yearly programme review.
- Ensuring adherence to the course document and marks and standards, which includes alignment of the module outcomes with programme goals and alignment of the assessments with the modular learning outcomes.
- Monitoring the implementation of the teaching, learning and assessment policy and strategy.
- Evaluating adequacy and effectiveness of support services and making recommendations for change.
- Communication of information to and from stakeholders.
- Continually reviewing the effects of changes made.

SECTION 3 – POLICY STATEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

IPTAS considers the following functions as key, and having a significant impact, in ensuring and enhancing the quality of its educational and training programmes

- Staff recruitment and development
- Curriculum development
- Premises, Equipment, Facilities and Services
- Teaching and learning
- Assessments and examinations
- Communication
- Learner access, transfer and progression
- Learner support
- Programme delivery and management
- New programme development
- Collaboration with the profession

STAFF RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

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. See Procedure for Interviewing Academic Staff.

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) the 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.

IPTAS provides ongoing staff development programmes, which are responsive to changing staff and programme needs. Its primary function 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 fill 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. See *Procedure & Forms for Tutors Appraisal*.

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.

Teaching staff are empowered to contribute to overall programme development and success through participation in the programme team, as internal examiners, members of the Examination Boards and through representation on the programme committee and the Education Board.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

This undergraduate curriculum for Physical Therapy is designed to offer learners a constructive learning experience through a specialist programme in physical therapy, defined by core modules that comprise the programme pathway and establish its cohesive structure.

IPTAS has designed a wholly integrated curriculum whereby the learner's intellectual and emotional maturity, perceptual and kinaesthetic skills are developed to enable him /her to work effectively on his/her own and with others, and to respond to the ever-changing needs of professional clinical practice.

The Institute's curriculum, is designed to develop transferable skills progressively across the programme of study. Modules are designed to develop progressive capability skills through the programme. The expected outcome is a competent, critically reflective and problem-solving, independent graduate/professional practitioner. Learners are increasingly made aware of the value of capability skills, both professionally and in the ways in which they contribute to personal development.

The currency and relevance of the curriculum are influenced by the participation of academics in research, consultancy and staff development activities. Such participation has underpinned this programme development and adds strength and relevance to the curriculum.

The changing needs of the new graduate are met by conducting an occupational analysis as part of a three yearly programme review and updating the curriculum goals and contents accordingly.

The programme objectives, derived from an agreed set of core skills and graduate attributes, are broken down into level descriptors for each stage, providing a framework from which to devise the modular outcomes. Mapping progression from year to year is integral to the process of ensuring achievement of the overall programme objectives and is strongly linked to the stages of development from novice through advanced beginner to competent practitioner. Intellectual progression is evident from the intended learning outcomes and tested through examinations/assessments with learners progressing from knowledge to understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

PREMISES, EQUIPMENT, FACILITIES AND SERVICES

IPTAS ensures that its premises are suitable for education and training purposes. Classrooms are allocated with reference to the space required with extra floor space deployed for use in practical class. All classrooms are equipped with the necessary teaching equipment such as overhead projectors, white boards and flip charts. Additional non-standard equipment is hired or provided on request.

Adequate teaching aids such as skeletons, bones and charts are available for teachers with additional available by request. Hydraulic plinths are provided in all clinic treatment rooms. Portable plinths are stored at Lower Ground Level in Milltown Park and are available to all classes. All equipment is checked annually for faults and repaired/renewed as required. Outside of annual inspection, tutors are asked to report faulty equipment to the College so that it can be repaired or replaced as appropriate.

Through its library the Institute seeks to provide and promote access to those information resources and services integral to the scholarly endeavours of learners, staff and researchers of the school. The Institute is committed to developing its library as both a 'gateway' to electronic collections, and as a 'place' from which its physical collections and services may be accessed.

The Institute's policy guides the library's collection development activity in order to ensure the creation and maintenance of scholarly information directly relevant and supportive to the learning, teaching, research and scholarship endeavours of the College. As well as providing access to paper based collections IPTAS seeks to embrace the growing range of electronic materials. It aims to acquire, preserve and provide access to diverse collections of scholarly information, available from the library and from remote locations to support distance learners.

Current budgetary allocation to the development of the library collection is developed in response to the number of students, the number of individuals involved in research and usage data. The library supports the teaching and learning endeavours of the school by providing copies of texts, essential and recommended readings as cited on Course Reading Lists. Accessibility for staff and students is ensured through weekdays and at evenings and weekends by arrangement.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Institute's overarching aim is to provide high-quality learning experiences for its learners. It is our intention to facilitate the learner in achieving as high a level as possible of competence, confidence, motivation, and autonomy so that he/she can provide optimum care to his/her clients and pursue a career path that is personally satisfying and rewarding.

The provision of a challenging, yet supportive learning environment with teachers having positive assumptions about their learner's ability is fostered. Respect for individual views is paramount. Emphasis is placed on the learner and the quality or effectiveness of his/her learning strategies. Faculty members are encouraged to employ teaching strategies that help the learner understand that learning is a function of his/her own efforts and effective learning strategies.

An ability to reflect on learning experiences, recognise strengths and weaknesses and identify learning needs are regarded as essential in enabling the graduate to continue to learn when formal teaching has ended. Emphasis is on the learner's self-management and development.

Ethical practice and integrity, is strongly linked with IPTAS values and beliefs of person-centeredness and supported through reflective practice.

Also, support is provided for learners to develop skills in working collaboratively, through providing cooperative learning and assessment tasks and clearly defined roles within clinical teams.

IPTAS promotes an orientation to learning that is focused on developing understanding rather than learning isolated facts. Emphasis is on the integration and application of knowledge. As physical therapy is an applied science, graduates must be able to use their biomedical knowledge and skill to explore and explain health problems i.e. what's causing the problem and what to do about it. Consequently our teaching is designed to ensure that the learner can apply his/her knowledge and skills effectively to a client's problem. Subject matter, where appropriate, is organised around problem scenarios (i.e., problem-based learning) with learners working in teams to solve or manage these problems. The learner needs time to discuss and reflect on new ideas and concepts and build on what he/she already knows.

Tutors, as facilitators of student's learning strive towards developing a range of pedagogical and andragogical skills that enhance this process. The fundamental task of the tutor is to encourage the learner to engage in learning activities that are likely to result in his/her successfully achieving the learning outcomes.

Further details are available in IPTAS Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy and Strategy 2005.

ASSESSMENTS AND EXAMINATIONS

There are three key questions that we address in our assessment and examinations policy statement: why assess? what to assess? and how to assess?

With regard to why to assess, it is the policy of IPTAS to ensure that assessments guide student learning, measure achievement of the intended learning outcomes and consequently the overall programme goals, enable the learner progress through the programme, attain a standard appropriate to the level of award sought and ensure that stakeholders have confidence in our system.

When it comes to determining what to assess, the primary concern is the 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 each module is a co-ordinated and integrated activity, ensuring that adequate attention is given to a range of concepts and topics throughout the ensemble of examinations for each particular year.

Examinations of various kinds – written and practical, oral and aural, simulations, projects, reports, group presentations, continuous assessment of clinical practice, portfolio's, learning contracts – are used to measure the progress and performance of learners in achieving the outcomes of the course.

All assessments and examinations are administered under clear procedures and formal written regulations, which are included in Section 6 of this manual – *Policies, Procedures and Guidelines for the Assessment of Learners*. These are widely published and implemented transparently.

IPTAS ensures that assessments and examinations are valid, reliable and guide learners' efforts through clearly indicated learning objectives and stated outcomes for each module. Assessment design is effective and appropriate across all stages of the curriculum. Marking is consistent, anonymous, transparent and fair. This is achieved through a system of Internal moderation, which is coordinated by

the Module Leader and overseen by the External Examiner. *Procedure for Internal Moderation of Written Examinations, Procedure for Internal Moderation of and Guideline son Moderating Examinations* Assessment and Examination policies are discussed in greater detail in Section 6.

COMMUNICATION

IPTAS provides a comprehensive and standard system of internal and external communication. This means that information is produced, processed, exchanged and distributed in accordance with clear and efficient procedures and standards. All published information is accurate and up-to-date. Collaboration is regarded as a key strategy in communication therefore all relevant stakeholders are consulted in devising policies and procedures such as *Disciplinary Procedure, Complaints Procedure* etc.

IPTAS has a well-published and transparent management and committee structure, with each post and function clearly defined and lines of communication mapped out. (Section 5).

Modes of communication include formal and informal meeting and email. IOS is the institute's intranet, which provides stakeholders with access to all relevant information, such as, mission, curriculum, assessment schedules, manuals, class plans, policies and procedures etc. It also provides discussion forums. Changes and developments to the programme are reported in newsletters and on the web site. The mechanism on how existing and new policies, organisational systems, procedures, guidelines and other official IPTAS documents, are being drafted, developed, approved and altered are set and defined according to IPTAS quality assurance aims, standards and practices.

LEARNER ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION

Learner access to our programme is characterised by flexibility and fairness and includes a diversity of learning populations.

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.
- 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 his/her 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.

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.

LEARNER SUPPORT

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

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

“At risk” students are identified early to ensure that the necessary support structure is made available to facilitate their progress.

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. In this way, all assessment tasks are formative experiences, conducted in an environment of continuous individual improvement.

PROGRAMME DELIVERY AND MANAGEMENT

The Programme Teams and Programme Committee has responsibility, under the overall guidance of the Programme Director and academic leadership and administration of the Institute, for developing, operating and monitoring the programme. The roles and functions of each board committee and team are clearly outlined, transparent and published on the IOS (Section 5).

Roles and responsibilities for all key staff are also available on the IOS.

Programme evaluation and monitoring operates at two levels; programme level, through IPTAS’ annual monitoring and programme review and individual tutor level (Section 4).

NEW PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

IPTAS has a process in place that facilitates the development of new programmes. The course design model consists of: establishing the need and demand for the course; establishing student characteristics; determining the content; setting goals and objectives; choosing teaching, learning and assessment strategies; and implementing, evaluating and adjusting elements as necessary. Initially the focus is on collecting and analysing information on what might be taught; sorting out beliefs and values about education and agreeing the broad goals for the programme; considering how the programme might be structured; identifying entry requirements for students and the kinds of support they might need; and considering assessments and identifying any constraints. Once the framework has been agreed, more detailed specifications are developed for each module to include: aims, learning outcomes, teaching and learning strategies, assessments, texts, pre-requisites and co-requisites.

In line with IPTAS’s policy of ensuring strong application to the workplace, the central questions to be answered throughout the design process are ‘what are the most important things that students need to know and need to be able to do? What might be the best ways for them to learn?’

IPTAS provides considerable support to new programmes through on-going review and staff development.

COLLABORATION WITH PROFESSION

In the design and development of new and existing programmes, consultation occurs with the profession in order to enhance the students’ learning experience and the ability of the Institute’s graduates to perform and develop in the workplace. This is facilitated in a number of ways; by conducting a three-yearly occupational analysis study, a yearly graduate and employer/clinic manager survey, professional representation on the Education Board and the Continuous Professional Development Team.

SECTION 4 - EVALUATION AND MONITORING OF PROGRAMME

INTRODUCTION

Quality Assurance is the system of procedures, involving internal and external peer oversight and judgment, described in this Manual and in other documentation of the Institute, for maintaining and improving the academic and clinical standards in the Institute. IPTAS uses a quality assurance software programme to assist in monitoring. Action lists with status reports are generated for discussion at Education Board meetings.

The Education Board is responsible for continuously appraising the programme and engaging in curriculum development. In this context the term “curriculum” encompasses four main aspects of education provision:

- Learning outcomes
- Outcome related subject matter
- Teaching and learning processes
- Assessments

The Education Board reports to the Academic Council and submits to them a detailed end-of-year report.

A comprehensive system of reporting ensures the programme is evaluated and monitored.

The maintenance of quality operates at two levels:

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

PROGRAMME LEVEL

Annual programme monitoring

The Physical Therapy programme is managed and monitored by a Programme Committee. This committee, normally chaired by the Programme Director, has the following responsibilities:

- Advising the Education Board, and as appropriate, through it, Academic Council, on matters relating to the programme
- Following appropriate internal approval, monitoring the implementation of the programme
- Incorporating approved modifications in the Programme Document after annual monitoring;
- Carrying out the critical self-study of the programme and the preparation of revised documentation and other tasks in relation to three-yearly programme reviews.

Programme monitoring involves the continuous appraisal of the programme by the programme committee through regular Programme Committee meetings and the production of monitoring reports for the Education Board and Academic Council. This includes:

- Progress made in implementing the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy & Strategy.
- Statistical evidence on learners’ performance and progression.
- Quality related issues at programme and where appropriate module level.
- External examiners reports.
- Minutes of programme team/committee meetings.
- Learner feedback from a variety of sources.
- Action taken as a consequence of the previous years monitoring report.

- Action taken or required as a consequence of the current years monitoring report.
- Nature of complaints made.
- Rationale for proposed changes to the programme.

The Programme Committee, includes representatives from the Programme Team, Programme Director, Quality Assurance Manager, Student Clinic Co-ordinator and Administrator, has responsibility for the day-to-day management and ongoing evaluation of the programme.

Programme Review

Programme Review is the process by which the approved programme is critically evaluated, normally at three-yearly intervals, with inputs from external and internal peers, and from the Occupational Survey. The self-study is the initial step and during the review process, planned changes to the programme are judged, with the aim of confirming that it continues to meet the requirements of the Institute [and HETAC] in relation to the standard of its award. It is a major review of a programme, providing an opportunity for the Programme Committee to conduct a critical evaluation of the programme and to make significant changes, if appropriate.

INDIVIDUAL TUTOR LEVEL

This is considered the most important level of quality assurance and enhancement. Individual tutors are the people in the front line when it comes to the delivery of teaching, facilitation and evaluation of learning and are thus in the best position to influence the quality of the learner's teaching and learning 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 profession 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 learners interest; are of primary importance in ensuring quality.

How Do We Measure / Monitor The Quality Of Our Teaching?

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

Ongoing Tutor-Led 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. Twice yearly, tutors meet with the Programme Director to discuss issues relating to ongoing professional development. 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 each meeting.

HOW DO WE MEASURE / MONITOR THE QUALITY OF OUR PROGRAMME?

The programme is evaluated through reports from the following:

- Learner Evaluation of the Programme
- Learner Evaluation of Assessments
- External Examiners report
- Graduate Destination and Programme Evaluation Survey
- Faculty and Academic Support Staff Survey
- Internal Examiners Report
- Tutors Report on Subject/Module Appraisal by Learner
- Examination Boards Report
- Administrators Report.
- Student-Clinic Management Team Report.
- Programme Director's Report

Learner evaluation of the programme

Learner evaluation of the programme occurs in two ways, questionnaires and focus groups. These are conducted twice a year. Questionnaires are administered both in the classroom and in the student clinic and are separated into sections, which includes communication, resources, services and teaching and learning. These questionnaires provide learners with the opportunity to identify areas where improvement can be introduced. In seeking feedback about services and facilities, the focus is on how they contribute to learners' successful learning.

Focus groups are conducted for the purpose of facilitating small groups of learners in discussing specific issues with the view to suggesting improvements. Facilitation enables learners to gain a clearer and more comprehensive view of the situation, thus allowing better understanding, leading to more informed opinions.

Analysis of all learner evaluation is available for the final Education Board meeting and forms part of the Programme Director's end of year report. A distinction is made between those issues that arise which can be addressed in the short term and those, which are addressed, in the long term. Short-term issues are dealt with quickly by the programme team and subsequently monitored throughout the year. Long-term issues require further investigation and are discussed at the final Education Board meeting. These primarily focus on curriculum development.

Learner Evaluation of Assessments

Feedback is sought from learners on examinations in two ways: immediately after written and practical examination and at the latter part of the academic year. 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 as to unforeseen problems, which may have arisen such as insufficient time allocated for the examination. Later in the year, focus groups are facilitated in commenting on individual modules and the extent to which the examination had guided their learning.

Collated data is discussed at the Examination Board meetings and informs decisions on the overall validity of the assessment tool in question. This is recorded as an attachment with minutes of the Examination Board meeting and presented as part of the Programme Directors report to the Education Board at the end of the year.

As part of the end of year “learner evaluation of programme”, learner focus groups are asked to comment on the quality of examination briefs and marking criteria; feedback received from examinations and the time frame in receiving this feedback.

External Examiners Report

The external examiner is appointed by IPTAS in accordance with the marks and standards and is required to submit a report which includes:

- The extent to which issues from the previous year have been appropriately addressed.
- Issues relating to the development of the teaching, learning and assessment of learners such as internal moderation systems.
- The extent to which procedures and regulations applied in in-term, final and progression board meetings were consistent and fair.
- The standard of the overall programme in comparison to similar provision elsewhere, if known.
- Activities completed by the external examiner, such as, moderation of examinations, attendance at Examination Board meetings etc. Observations/issues arising and agreed action for the coming year.
- Issues raised by the external examiner are addressed in the Education Boards annual monitoring report. This includes measures/actions taken and their effect. This report is presented to the first Education Board meeting of the next academic year and the Academic Council.

Graduate Destination and Programme Evaluation Survey

A survey is conducted asking 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 course in terms of personal/professional aims and ambitions; value for money; strengths and weaknesses of the course; how they would describe the course to prospective new learners; and willingness to participate in follow-up surveys at the end of year one. This information is analysed and results discussed at the second Education Board meeting.

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 presented at the second Education Board meeting.

The second survey aims to review actions take as a result of the first survey and also elicits tutors views on issues relating to the modules they teach, such as timetabling; time allocation; estimated learner effort; level of learner achievement of intended learning outcomes and recommendations for change. This report is presented at the final Education Board meeting.

Tutors Report on Subject/Module Appraisal by Learner

This report forms part of the tutors portfolio and should demonstrate how feedback from learners were considered and acted upon. The Programme Director collates the information and a general report is made to the Education Board. More specific information may be used as rationale for changes to the curriculum for the following year.

Internal Examiners Report

The internal examiner on completion of marking a set of examinations or conducting a practical examination compiles this report. It seeks to elicit his/her views on reliability; validity; areas where learners have done well; areas where learners have not done well and proposed changes for next year. These reports are discussed at the Examination Board meeting.

Examination Boards Report

This report is presented at the final Education Board meeting of the academic year and consists of recommendations made by the Interim Examination Boards in relation to proposed changes to the programme's examinations/ assessments, policies or procedures. These recommendations occur as a result of discussions on the alignment of the assessments with the intended learning outcomes, the extent to which different examiners award the same marks and the extent to which the assessment

instrument provided useful feedback to the learner. The views of both internal examiners and the learners are considered in all of these issues. Deviations from the intended learning outcomes are identified with suggested corrective action.

Administrators Report

This report consists of; the number of admissions into each year; a general account of the academic backgrounds of new learners; number of learners who satisfactorily completed each year; number of learners who progressed into year 2 and year 3; number of learners who are scheduled to graduate. This report is presented at the 1st Education Board meeting.

The administrator presents updates on the identification and support for 'at risk' learners at the 2nd and final Education Board meeting, and an overview of penalties incurred by learners.

Student Clinic Management Team Report

This report by the student clinic co-ordinator, outlines the actions taken as a result of team meetings, surveys with regard to the quality of learners experience in clinic, findings and recommendations from ongoing clinic audits and client focus groups. A report is presented at each of the Education Board meetings.

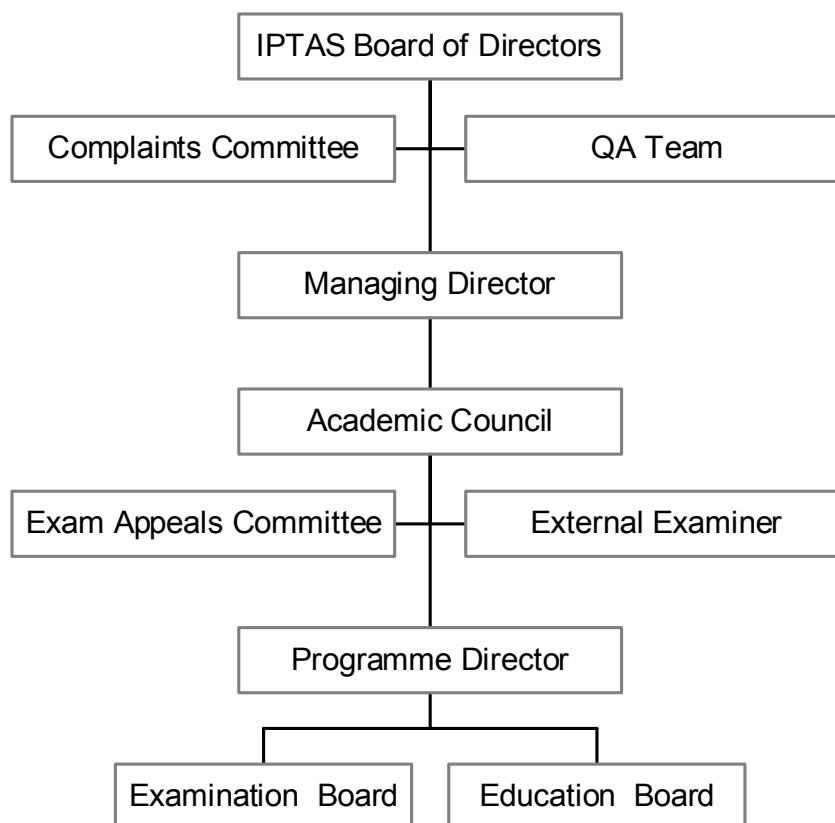
Programme Directors Report

This report focuses on evaluation of the current curriculum and proposed changes for the following academic year. As the primary aim is ensuring that the programme goals are being met, the report outlines the extent to which the assessments measured the intended learning outcomes and the overall alignment of the modular learning outcomes with the programme goals. Feedback from a variety of sources is used to justify proposed changes to the curriculum. These sources include; recommendations from the Examination Board, Programme Team, learner and graduate evaluation of the programme.

SECTION 5 – IPTAS ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

This section outlines the roles and functions of each board, committee and team and their lines of communication.

IPTAS ORGANISATION



ACADEMIC COUNCIL

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

Academic Council has the following functions:

- To make recommendations to the Board of Directors for the establishment of appropriate structures to implement the course of study.
- To approve the appointment of external examiners.
- To approve the appointment of internal examiners
- To approve major changes to the existing programme.
- To approve the development of new courses.
- To oversee examination procedures i.e. the work of the examination boards.
- To confirm module assessment results, student progression and award classifications.
- To exercise any other functions, delegated by the Board of Directors.
- To approve links with other institutions.
- To approve the work of the education board.

- To set up Examination Appeals Boards where necessary.
- 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 meets twice a year and membership includes; Managing Director, Programme Director, four external members representing the following disciplines:

medicine, health education, general education and physical therapy. The IPTAS Administrator acts as secretary.

Note: Roles and functions of both the Education Board and the Academic Council are currently being considered by the Academic Council to ensure optimum functioning.

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 and strategies are being implemented effectively.

Academic Council has the following functions:

- (i) To make recommendations to the Board of Directors for the establishment of appropriate structures to implement the course of study.
- (ii) To contribute to the programme development
- (iii) To exercise any other functions, delegated by the Board of Directors.
- (iv) To foster links with other institutions.
- (v) To approve the work of the education board.
- (vi) To set up Examination Appeals Boards where necessary.
- (vii) 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; Managing Director, Programme Director, four external members representing the following disciplines: medicine, health education, general education and physical therapy. The IPTAS Administrator acts as secretary.

Proposed Standing Orders For Academic Council

1. 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.

2. Adoption, amendment and suspension

These standing orders, having been approved by a special majority, should remain in force except as provided below.

Standing orders 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 Standing Orders.

Standing orders 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.

3. 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.

4. Meetings

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 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 Chairman should endeavour to complete the business within the stipulated time, while giving due regard to each item on the agenda.
- 4.3 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.

5. Procedure at meetings

- 5.1 The chairperson should open the meeting at the appointed time or as soon thereafter as a quorum is present.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 The secretary to the Council will be nominated by agreement with the chair.
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 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.

6. Agenda

- 6.1 An agenda for each meeting should be prepared by the Administrator. 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.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 The agenda for ordinary meetings of the Council should include the following sequence
 - (a) Apologies received
 - (b) Minutes of previous meeting
 - (c) Matters arising
 - (d) Individual agenda items
 - (e) 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.

7. Minutes

- 7.1 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.

- 7.2 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 other than by circulation of minutes.

- 7.3 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.
- 7.4 When the minutes, with or without amendment, have been adopted, members may raise questions on matters arising there from.
- 7.5 Minutes as adopted by the Council should be signed by the chairperson and secretary. In the event of the adopted minutes including a change from the draft minutes, copies of the signed minutes should be circulated to members of the Council within ten days of the meeting.

8. Attendance

Attendance at Council meetings will be reflected in the minutes.

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

9. Motions

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 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.
- 9.3 The debate may be closed by any of the following procedural motions, viz
- (a) that the question be now put
 - (b) that the motion be adjourned to the next meeting
 - (c) 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.

- 9.4 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.

10. Interpretation of standing orders

The ruling of the chairperson on any interpretation of standing orders, 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.

11. **Any other business**

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

12. **Committees of the Council**

- 12.1 The Council may establish such committees or ad hoc groups to consider specific issues as it may from time to time consider appropriate.
- 12.2 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.
- 12.3 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.
- 12.4 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.
- 12.5 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 four members.
- 12.6 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.

13. **Secretariat**

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

- (a) 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.
- (b) correspondence addressed to the Council
- (c) communicating resolutions of the Council to the appropriate persons or bodies.

EDUCATION BOARD

The Board of Directors appoints the Education Board. Its role is to continuously monitor the programme and engage in curriculum development. Members of the Board have collective responsibility for the quality of the curriculum which includes determining the learning outcomes and subject matter relating to those learning outcomes; teaching and learning processes and assessments, The day-to-day operation of the programme is the responsibility of the Programme Team.

Functions

Each Education Boards has the following responsibilities:

- Advising the Academic Council on relevant academic matters in the Institute which includes making recommendations for change to the course and further development of facilities.
- Monitoring the teaching, learning and research in the subject areas for which it is primarily responsible.
- Monitoring the academic progress and welfare of students registered on the Institute's programme for which it is primarily responsible.
- In conjunction with the Programme Director, recommending members to Review Panels.
- Submitting names of approved external examiners to the Academic Council for the Institute's programme for which it is responsible.

- Carrying out such other functions as are considered appropriate subject to the approval of Academic Council;
- Preparing and submitting an annual report on its work to Academic Council.
- Monitoring reports from quality assurance manager to ensure implementation of institutes quality programme.
- Carrying out a three yearly programme review.
- Self evaluating its effectiveness and recommending development strategies.

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 and Programme Director. The Programme Director 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 shall meet at least three times per academic year and at such other times as required. An aide memoir or minutes should be recorded and available in the Office of the Administrator and published on the IOS intranet.

Membership

Membership of the Education Board includes: two senior students who are nominated by their colleagues; two tutors involved in the programme; three Module Leaders; student clinic co-ordinator; Quality Assurance Manager; Administrator and Programme Director.

The Education Board is chaired by the Programme Director and agreed minutes are disseminated to the members and available on the college intranet. An Education Board monitoring report is produced annually and submitted to the Academic Council. This will also be available on the IOS.

PROGRAMME TEAM

The Programme team is a subcommittee of the Education Board with primary responsibility for developing and operating the Institute's programme. It includes all of the lecturers teaching on a programme with the Programme Director as its chairperson. It is responsible for the development of the existing programme within the constraints of resources, for which the Institute's Board of Directors and management team is responsible. The Programme Team develops the academic vision, overall objectives and learning outcomes and future direction for the Institute's programme.

PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

The Programme Committee consists of representatives from the Programme Team, Programme Director, Quality Assurance Manager, Student Clinic Coordinator and Administrator. The Programme Committee is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the specific programme.

The terms of reference are:

- Ensuring the effective day-to-day management of the programme.
- Implementing short-term changes in response to feedback from stakeholders.
- Making recommendations to the Education Board with regard to long-term changes to the programme.
- Monitoring learner progression, identifying and supporting "at risk" students.
- Monitor the on-going operation of the programme.
- Carry out a yearly review of the programme.
- Monitor the quality of student learning.

- Monitor client satisfaction and progress.
- Review job opportunities available to new graduates and follow up a year later.
- Carry out a three-yearly programme review.
- Implement recommendations from other boards and bodies.
- Ensure adherence to the Course document and Marks and Standards.
- Monitor the implementation of the *Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy & Strategy*.
- Ensure that the Student Handbook is up-dated yearly.
- Ensure alignment of the assessments with the learning outcomes.
- Ensure that modular learning outcomes facilitate progression.
- Ensure alignment of modular outcomes with the programme goals.
- Evaluate adequacy and effectiveness of support services.

Recommend use of resources and services and make recommendations for changes or additions to the programme.

STUDENT CLINIC MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Student Clinic Management team is responsible for ensuring that clients receive optimal care; that the clinical education and experience of learners is optimised; that the continuous assessment of 3rd year learners is conducted in a fair and consistent manner and that at risk students are identified and the necessary support provided. The team consists of Programme Director, student clinic co-ordination, clinical supervisors and clinical assistants. It meets four times per year and reports directly to both the Education Board and the Examination Board.

EXAMINATION BOARD

Membership of the Examination Board comprises of the Programme Director, relevant Internal Examiners, External Examiner and Examination Clerk. Its primary function is to determine what should be the result and level of performance recorded in respect of each candidate for the ensemble of mandatory examinations. This determination is made in accordance with the marks and standards.

The Programme Director is responsible for preparing the list of awards to be made for submission to Academic Council.

Examination Board meetings also provide an opportunity to evaluate the quality of each assessment in terms of validity and reliability.

Matters relating to individual candidates and examiners, that arise in the examination process and in the discussions at the Examination Board, must be treated as strictly confidential by all examiners. Furthermore, the attendance sheet for the Examination Board, which members sign at the Examination Board, shall include a declaration that each examiner must maintain strict confidentiality in relation to matters arising during the examination process and in the discussions at the Examination Board. A distinction is made between in-term Examination Boards and Progression Examination Boards.

In-term Examination Boards

In-term Examination Boards are established for each year of the programme and meets twice yearly, March and June. Their function is to:

- Agree the marks to be recorded for each examination.
- Use statistical evidence to identify problems in individual examinations and determine the possible cause.
- Recommend how the assessment could be further developed.

Progression Board

The Progression Examination Board meets in early August, after repeat examinations have been marked. Its function is to consider each candidates examination results from each module and agree his/her overall standing. Decisions on whether a learner may progress onto the next year are based on published criteria.

The existence of any extenuating circumstances, which may have a bearing on a candidates result, should be notified in writing by the candidate to the Examination Review and Extenuating Circumstance Team through the Administrator. This team will decide on the candidate's plea and notify the Examination Board of its decision, seeking their confirmation.

Reports from these boards are presented to the Education Board and the Academic Council.

Standing Orders

The Chairperson is the Programme Director or his nominee. 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.

The examination Appeals and Extenuating Circumstance Team are responsible for notifying the Examination Board of its decisions of whether or not to grant extenuating circumstances status to candidates. This decision is to be confirmed by the Examinations Board.

The members of the Examination Board are responsible for familiarising themselves with the General Examination Regulations and the relevant Marks and Standards document appertaining to the programme(s).

The Chairperson of the Examination Board is responsible for the proper regulation of the proceedings of the meeting.

The Chairperson of the Examination Board will inform the Board of any reported instance of infringement of examination regulations by a candidate.

The decisions of the Examination Board will normally be 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.

The examination results, as determined by the Examination Board, including recommendations, if any, in respect of each candidate, should be recorded on the official examination results sheets.

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 Programme Director should inform all candidates of their provisional results as soon as possible after the Examination Board meeting.

The provisional examination results for each year leading to an Institute award should be forwarded by the Administrator to the Academic Council for confirmation.

EXAMINATION REVIEW AND EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES TEAM

The Examination Review and Extenuating Circumstance Team is appointed by the Board of Directors and reports to the Examination Board. The Team is composed of Programme Director, Quality Assurance Manager, Administrator and one Tutor / Examiner who is directly involved in the particular review or extenuating circumstances case. The chairperson of the Team is the Programme Director.

The function of the Team is to adjudicate on an appeal against the provisional examination results, review and / or to consider the pleas referring to extenuating circumstances surrounding the examination process. If a review is granted, the team forward the appellants examination for review to both the internal and external examiner. Further details are provided in Section 6 under *Examination Rechecks, Reviews and Appeals*.

The decisions of the Team in respect of reviews / pleas will normally be formulated by consensus. Where the Team is divided, the outcome will be decided by a majority decision. In the event of an equality of votes the Chairperson of the Team will exercise the casting vote. The decision, along with the rationale, will be made in writing, on the appropriate form. This will be recorded by the Administrator in the relevant student's files and will be communicated to the appellant by e-mail. The

team will report its decisions to the Examination Board, on the occasion of Boards regular meetings, seeking their confirmation.

In the case that the appellant is not satisfied with the Team's decision he / she may make an appeal to the Examination Appeals Committee.

EXAMINATION APPEALS COMMITTEE

The Examination Appeals Committee is a subcommittee of the Academic Council. The Committee 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 Committee will be appointed on an ad-hoc basis. The chairperson of the Appeals Committee is appointed by the members of the Committee at their first meeting.

The function of the Examination Appeals Committee 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.

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

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 Examination Appeals Committee.

The Examination Appeals Committee 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 Examination Appeals Committee.

While the Examination Appeals Committee may at its discretion consult other parties, the only parties to an appeal are the Institute and the appellant concerned. The Examination Appeals Committee 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 Examination Appeals Committee in respect of appeals will normally be formulated by consensus. Where the Committee is divided, the outcome will be decided by a majority decision. In the event of an equality of votes the Chairperson of the Committee will exercise the casting vote.

The decision of the Examination Appeals Committee will be final. The Committee 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 Examination Appeals Committee will make a recommendation which will be binding on the Institute.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING TEAM

The RPL Team is appointed by the Board of Directors and is responsible for the following:

- Facilitating candidates application for RPL
- Forwarding to the Examination Board a statement detailing the number of credits which are recommended for award at each level
- Ensuring that the integrity of the academic standard of the award is observed.

Further information is available in Section 6, *Policies, Procedures and Guidelines for the Assessment of Learners* under request for exemption.

COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE

The Board of Directors appoints the Complaints Committee. Its sole function is to resolve complaints that remain outstanding following instigation of the complaints procedure.

CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM

The role of the team is to provide continuous professional development support for postgraduates through seminars and workshops. Membership includes Programme Director, Continuous Professional Development Co-ordinator and graduate representatives. Their functions include:

- Researching graduates needs and interests for further professional development.
- Researching availability of a range of expertise in related fields.
- Organising all details relating to delivery of seminars and workshops.
- Evaluating satisfaction level of participants.

SECTION 6 - POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

The procedures outlined below aim to guide all staff with regard to conducting learner assessment. This section is also relevant to all staff and external assessors involved in IPTAS approval and validation of new programmes and the periodic programme evaluation process which forms part of the quality assurance at Institute level.

INTRODUCTION

Assessment measures the extent to which the learning outcome, specified for a module, have been achieved by the learner. Thus the purpose of assessment is to establish the level to which learners have fulfilled the objectives in terms of learning outcomes of the individual modules taken and have demonstrated knowledge, skill and competence with respect to the various components which constitute each module. Further, the overall assessment process covering a set of modules enables students to demonstrate that they have

- Satisfied the conditions for progression from one stage of the programme to the following stage, or
- Attained a standard appropriate to the level of award sought.

Policies

It is an accepted fact that assessment governs the direction of learner's effort. Consequently it is our policy to ensure that assessment is an integral part of all activities throughout the programme. Formative assessment tasks therefore, are integrated into the teaching activities so that the learner has ample opportunity to know how well s/he is progressing and how s/he can improve as s/he works his way through the programme.

All assessments are concerned with the application of understanding. Deep learning as opposed to superficial or surface learning is encouraged whereby learners consciously reflect on the content of the course, grasp its key characteristics and develop meanings within their own current understanding. In this way, learning tends to be permanent and can be applied in new circumstances.

The primary aim of IPTAS is to produce learners who can reflect on their learning experiences, recognise their strengths and weaknesses and identify their learning needs so that they will continue to learn when formal teaching and the programme has ended. To enable this to occur, learners must be provided with feedback on their learning to enable them to become aware of their present strengths and weaknesses and their future learning needs. Assessments therefore are designed with learner feedback in mind. It should be evident to the learners why they obtained the mark they did. It should also be clear how their marks could be improved upon.

Facilitation of learners to engage in both self and peer assessment provides a powerful tool in reflection and encourages life long learning.

In designing new programmes and reviewing existing programmes, it is IPTAS' policy that the rationale for the various assessment methods are examined and justified and that the provision of assessment feedback is adequately planned for. Choice of assessment techniques is based on how they govern learners' effort towards achieving specific learning outcomes within a module. Congruity with the overall programme goals and graduate attributes must be clearly articulated.

In using a particular assessment method it is the particular emphasis that it is given which often prompts the appropriate responses from the learner. This emphasis is made explicit through the publication of assessment criteria, which conveys what is really sought in the assessment task and why. The learner should be helped to understand what the different bands imply through the use of examples, self and peer assessment and formative tutor assessment.

IPTAS monitors learners' progress, ensuring that learners with poor assessment results and/or poor attendance records are identified early and provided with the necessary support.

When planning the curriculum, assessment design is incorporated into the overall programme design. Agreement is sought from all those delivering the programme.

Learners have access to all relevant information on assessments through the college's intranet. This includes; general examination regulations, marks and standards, examination schedules with weighting of examinations, examination briefs and relevant marking schemes. Every effort is made to ensure that the learner understands the assessment methods and criteria.

Measurement of the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved provides the Institute with a strong indication as to how successful the learning has been. Ensuring that the form of assessment chosen provides an appropriate measurement tool is essential. A range of procedures is in place to provide feedback on our level of success. This is based primarily on both self (tutor) and peer review consisting of the programme team and external examiners.

Examination, Management and Organisational Structure

Our examination system is a core activity in the Institute's management and organisational structure. The programme team, consisting of all of the Tutors and Programme Director, determine the form and structure of the assessments. They also operate an internal moderation system providing both support and challenge to colleagues in devising and marking examinations and assessments.

The Examination Board, a subcommittee of Academic Council has responsibility for implementing and administering the academic functions of the Institute and, in the context of this Manual, for implementing quality assurance and enhancement procedures.

The primary role of the External Examiner within this process is to ensure that the examination system is fair. He/she also provides feedback on the comparability of standards with other similar programmes.

Examiners (internal) on the programme, leading to the physical therapy award of the Institute, are members of academic lecturing staff. They are nominated and formally appointed by the Board of Directors and approved by Academic Council each year. A sub-committee of the Examination Board processes extenuating circumstances and examination re-checks and reviews. The Examination Appeals Committee, a sub-committee of Academic Council, adjudicates on examination appeals.

A comprehensive administrative support system is in place to facilitate the management of our examination system. Assessments and Examinations are administered under the *General Examinations Regulations* of the Institute and any other regulations laid down for the programme in the HETAC approved Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Programme Documents.

INFORMATION TO STAKEHOLDERS

The following includes the specific information, which learners and Institute staff require to enable them to manage their responsibilities within the assessment process.

Information to learners includes:

- Examination schedule, outlining individual assessment weighting in the overall module, date of assessments and date Examination Brief is due to be published.
- Assignment cover-sheets, which include details of penalties for plagiarism and policy on non or late submission of assignments
- Examination brief which includes: title; duration; examiner; weighting in overall module; number of sections / questions in each section; style of questions e.g. short answer / structured long answer etc.
- Assessment criteria including descriptions of expected standards for each grade.
- Regulations applying to candidates sitting examinations. (Section 6)
- Breach of examination regulations. (Section 6)
- Application form for extenuating circumstances status.
- Application for recognition of prior learning
- Examination rechecks, reviews and appeals. (Section 6)
- Marks and Standards.
- Study and writing skills manual, which includes guidelines on referencing.
- Examination regulations applying to invigilator. (Section 6)

Information to Internal Examiners includes:

- Marks and Standards

- Examination Schedules
- Examination regulations applying to internal examiner (Section 6).
- Guidelines for Internal Examiners on setting and marking written examinations.
- Guidelines for Internal Examiners on setting and marking assignments
- General grade descriptors.
- Grade descriptor for presentation of written work, reflective practice and referencing.
- Breach of assignment regulations. (Section 6)

Information to Internal Moderators includes:

- Marks and Standards.
- Examination Regulations applying to internal moderators (Section 6)
- Guidelines on moderating examinations.
- Procedures for internal moderation of written examinations and Procedure for internal moderation of assignments.
- Relevant course documentation with modular outcomes.

Information to External Examiners includes:

- Marks and Standards
- Examination regulations (Section 6).
- Relevant course documentation with modular outcomes.
- Internal examiner and internal moderators guidelines.

ASSESSMENT TERMINOLOGY

Assignment Brief

This is a detailed account of individual assessments and includes, in addition to the above, assignment guidelines and assessment criteria. A marking grid accompanies this document. These are published on the IOS no later than 8 weeks prior to the submission date.

Assessment Criteria

Assessment criteria define the knowledge, understanding, skill and attitude that a learner is required to achieve for a particular grade band. It is presented in broad terms to help assess assignments, practical skills, clinical competence etc. A number of assessment criteria grids have been developed by IPTAS to assist internal examiners and include core skills such as reflection, written presentation, oral presentation and referencing. Assessment criteria is useful in increasing the power to discriminate and adds objectivity to scoring, improving both validity and reliability.

The assessment criteria should be clear to both learners and tutors and published prior to learners being assigned the work.

Examination Brief

This is a detailed account of individual closed-book examinations and includes, module title, weighting in overall module, examination date, time, duration and venue, internal examiner, learning outcomes and type of questions e.g. four structured long answer questions or twenty short answer questions. Examination briefs are issued 2 weeks prior to the examination date.

Examination Schedule

This is an outline of the assessment requirements for the programme and is published and made available to learners at registration. It states the module title, examination type and duration, weighting in the overall module, intended publication date of examination/assignment brief and assessment criteria, examination/submission date for assignments and repeat examination dates.

Formative Assessment

Assessment used to provide feedback is referred to as formative assessment. It helps both tutor and learner to see how the learner is being formed by his/her learning. It is particularly useful in helping learners identify areas of misunderstanding or weakness and direct them to where further study is needed. It is a two-way process, which results in the tutor and learner altering their approach as a result of the feedback provided.

Modular Programme of Study

A modular programme of study is an approved, academically coherent and integrated series of modules leading, on successful completion, to the academic award of the Institute and to such awarding or professional body recognition as may be established from time to time. The IPTAS programme consists of a set of modules, which, together are a defined set of learning outcomes which include a combination of intellectual and practical skills as appropriate.

Module credit values shall be expressed only in multiples of 5 ECTS credits, up to a maximum of 20 credits, except for theses and dissertations, unless otherwise approved by Academic Council.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The recognition of prior certified learning is defined as the assessment of previously acquired certified learning within the context of the programme in which the learner is currently enrolled. On the other hand, recognition of prior experiential learning is defined as the process by which appropriate experiential learning is assessed and accredited. Experiential learning can be described as the knowledge and skills acquired through life experience, work experience and study, which are not formally attested through any educational or professional certification. It may also include instruction-based learning, provided by any institution, which has not been formally validated by a state appointed body.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability means that the measurement is dependable, consistent and trustworthy. Something that is reliable, will perform in the future as it has in the past. Reliability occurs when data measures the same thing more than once and results in the same outcomes. It meets the criterion of replication. An assessment method that is reliable will have the following characteristics:

Different examiners award the same marks [within a range] for the learners work.

Examiners award the same mark for the work on subsequent occasions.

Validity is a more complex concept than reliability. Validity means the extent to which an assessment instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. If a test/research process is valid, it must actually measure what it is you need to measure or describe. It must be truthful, accurate, authentic and sound. An assessment method is said to have high content validity if it measures achievement of a number of the intended learning outcomes. Curricular validity suggests that the assessment embraces what has been taught and does not stray into areas not taught. Construct validity refers to the appropriateness of the assessment to the core subject or profession

Re-Checks

This relates to the administrative operation of checking the recording and addition of marks.

Review

Review relates to the re-consideration in detail of all or part of the existing examination material where feasible by the internal and external examiner(s).

Summative assessment

This is where assessment is used to grade learners and allocate awards or places.

GENERAL EXAMINATION REGULATIONS

The General Examination Regulations are concerned with matters relating to the IPTAS modular programme of study, the assessment of students, the general structure of Programme, and the ECTS credit-based system used in determining eligibility for the award of the Institute.

All learners following programmes leading to the award of the Institute [HETAC] are required to undertake such assessments as may be prescribed for the modules constituting the programme. The required assessments shall be detailed in the Programme Document (or in reference to the relevant module descriptions) and shall comply with the Institute's General Examination Regulations.

To be eligible for the award of credit, learners must be registered for one or more modules and is required to undertake such examinations/assessments as may be prescribed.

Learners are responsible for familiarising themselves with the documents which were outlined earlier in this section and are available on-line on the *IOS*:

The Academic Council is the sole authority for the confirmation of modules assessment results, student progression, awards of the Institute, [HETAC] and award classifications. All results pertaining to these assessments, progression and awards must be presented through the Examination Board to the Academic Council for final approval.

Registering for Examinations

Eligibility to sit for examinations will normally be granted to those registered students who have otherwise complied with the general regulations of the programme and are in good standing. If a candidate is found to be ineligible to sit for the examinations s/he will be so informed.

Eligibility to sit repeat exams is subject to a candidate being in good standing, and having completed the programme, timely payment of examination fees and submitting the appropriate form available from the IOS, to the Administrator.

Candidates who are unsuccessful in an in-term examination may be permitted to apply for and sit a repeat examination.

Candidates who fail to attend an examination are required to send a written explanation to the Programme Director within 5 working days of date of examination. If the absence is due to illness or accident, a medical certificate must accompany the written explanation.

Any late submissions of assignments will be regarded as repeat examinations unless extension has been approved by the examiner and registered by the Administrator. Thereafter only a maximum of a pass grade can be granted. Request for an extension of time must be made in writing to the appropriate examiner through the Administrator, where possible one week before the due date. This should be furnished with documentary evidence of the reason why the extension is necessary. Additional information is provided under *Late submission of Assignments and Extenuating circumstances* later in this section.

Examination Centres

The location of the Examination Centre(s) is notified to the candidates when formal notice of the examination is communicated through examination briefs which are issued two weeks in advance of the examinations.

Conduct During Examinations

Normally, no candidate shall be admitted to the Examination Centre more than a half an hour after the commencement of the examination. In exceptional circumstances, and provided that no other candidate sitting the same paper has withdrawn and left the Examination Centre, a candidate may be admitted later, at the discretion of the Invigilator in consultation with the Programme Director or his/her nominee. In such circumstances additional time shall not normally be allowed. In the event that the circumstances warrant additional time, this may be permitted at the discretion of the Programme Director or nominee.

- Candidates should present themselves for each examination in an orderly manner.
- Candidates should normally be in their places in the Examination Hall five minutes before the scheduled starting time of the examination.
- Other than authorised materials, no candidate should have in his possession while in the Examination Hall, any books, notes or paper whatsoever, except such answer books and other materials as provided by the Invigilator. Retention of any unauthorised source of reference may be taken as constituting evidence of intent to evade the regulations and candidates who do so will be requested to follow the procedure as stated in *Breach in Examination Regulations*, which can be found later in this section.
- Personal effects such as coats or bags must be deposited in such place as the Invigilator may direct.
- No candidate should take from the Examination Hall any examination papers and / or answer books, whether used or unused. All rough notes must be submitted with examination scripts.
- Candidates must sign the Attendance Form when requested by the Invigilator(s). Candidates should ensure that they are in possession of the correct examination paper.
- Candidates should read carefully and comply with the instructions printed on each examination paper. They should also devote special attention to any instructions on the answer books. Rough work should be done in the answer book and identified as such.
- A candidate should not be permitted to withdraw from the Examination Hall until half an hour has elapsed after the start of the examination.

- Candidates wishing to temporarily leave the Examination Hall may not do so unless approved by an Invigilator. In any event no person may enter or leave the Examination Hall without the Invigilator's permission.
- A candidate may not seek the return of an answer script once it has been handed to and accepted by the Invigilator.
- After the commencement of the examination no candidate should aid or attempt to aid another candidate or obtain or attempt to obtain assistance from another, or communicate in any way with any other candidate in the Examination Hall.
- Where a candidate wishes to ask a question, he/she should raise his hand and seek the attention of the Invigilator. Extra answer book(s) etc. may be obtained only from an Invigilator.
- Candidates should not pass any item from one to another. They must supply their own pencils / rulers etc.
- When the Invigilator announces the end of the examination candidates should immediately cease working and remain in place until all scripts have been collected. Candidates may leave the Examination Hall only when instructed to do so by the Invigilator.
- Candidates may not remove from the Examination Hall any items provided by The Institute.
- Where a candidate becomes distressed or ill during the course of an examination, such candidate may be permitted to temporarily leave the Examination Hall accompanied by an Invigilator. In such circumstances a time extension may be allowed to the candidate to complete the examination.
- Candidates found in breach of any of the aforementioned Regulations or any other regulations of The Institute governing the conduct of examinations will be asked to follow the procedure as stated earlier in this document.

Communication of Provisional Examination Results

The Institute will notify all candidates of their provisional results in writing.

EXAMINATION REGULATIONS APPLYING TO INVIGILATORS

It is the practice of IPTAS to establish a panel of suitable persons who act as invigilators. A schedule is set up in November of each academic year, outlining each invigilators roster. It is the responsibility of the invigilator to inform the Programme Director if he/she is unable to attend any of the scheduled dates.

Invigilators are usually persons with experience in supervising assessments. It is the responsibility of the invigilator to familiarise themselves with roles and responsibilities as outlined in this document.

Invigilators are appointed to ensure that examinations are conducted in a fair and equitable manner in accordance with the examination regulations of The Institute. Entry to the examination hall should be confined to candidates and Invigilators. No other person may enter the examination hall except at the request of the Invigilator.

To ensure the proper conduct of Examinations and that no examination hall is left unattended it is the responsibility of the Institute to ensure that an adequate number of Invigilators be on duty at each examination centre.

Specific duties of Invigilators

Each Invigilator should:

- Report to the Examination Centre at least twenty minutes before the commencement of each examination.
- Ensure that the Examination Hall has been set out adequately.
- Ensure that a clock is available and is clearly visible to each candidate.

- Admit candidates 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.
- Advise candidates that examination comment forms should be completed.
- Ensure that candidates are in possession of the correct examination papers, face down.
- 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 as stated in 8.5 *Breach of Examination Regulations* must be followed.
- Not engage in any activity likely to cause disturbance to candidates.
- Ensure that no candidate should engage in any activity likely to cause disturbance to other candidates.
- Ensure that each candidate signs the attendance form.
- Supply appropriate materials as specified for the examination(s).
- 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 or deputy. Any clarification or correction received from the Examiner 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 should 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 record on invigilators 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 are counted and that the number corresponds to the number of learners who have sat the exam i.e. signed the attendance sheet. This must be recorded in the invigilators report.
- Ensure that all answer papers for the examination be immediately returned to the Programme Director or deputy at the conclusion of the examination, together with the attendance form, invigilator's report, surplus examination question papers and other materials. These should be placed in the labelled envelopes supplied and sealed.

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 should 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 should 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. In such circumstances extra time may normally be allowed.

Breach of Examination Regulations

Where a candidate is considered to be in breach of the regulations of The Institute relating to examinations;

The Invigilator should:

- 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.
- Inform the candidate that he/she is allowed to continue with the examination.
- Make a written report to the Programme Director. The candidate will read and sign the report and the second invigilator will witness it.

EXAMINATION REGULATIONS APPLYING TO INTERNAL EXAMINERS

Internal Examiners are academic staff appointed by IPTAS to deliver part of a programme and evaluate learners achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Internal examiners are responsible for the preparation and assessment of such examinations as are required by the Institute. In accepting a position as Internal Examiner, he/she shall declare all relevant business, professional or personal interests in respect of any candidates involved in the examinations concerned. Internal Examiner

should produce examination papers, assignment and practical assessments in accordance with the scheduled dates as specified by the Programme Director.

Internal examiners should:

- Ensure that the examination adequately assesses the intended learning outcomes and that this is clearly recorded on the draft assignment brief / draft examination cover sheet.
- Ensure that a range of examination style questions is included and that these appropriately match the level of the learners being assessed.
- Ensure that the course content is adequately sampled. Important relevant concepts should be given priority. True / False questions and safety questions should incur negative marking.
- Ensure that higher order questions incur higher marks than lower order questions.
- Ensure that appropriate verbs are used such as describe, justify etc.
- Ensure that there are no spelling or grammatical errors.
- Ensure that examination questions are broken down into sections where appropriate.
- Ensure that in devising assessments consideration should be given to reliability, validity, manageability and its power to discriminate between the varying levels of learner abilities.
- Ensure that a mechanism is in place to provide feedback to learners on their assessment performance.
- In accordance with the examination schedule, provide and make available to the Head of Assessments, Internal Moderator and External Examiner, typewritten draft question papers together with appropriate marking schemes and worked solutions to numerical questions involving qualitative data. Total mark is 100. In the case of assignments, an assignment brief and quantitative marking scheme is submitted in line with the alphabetical grading scheme.
- Ensure that the examination cover sheet includes any additional advice to learners e.g. allocation of time per question or section and application of negative marking for true/false questions.
- Attach any diagrams that form part of the paper.
- Ensure that where there is more than one Internal Examiner, appropriate consultations should take place between them concerning the formulation of the proper balance of the examination before their submission to the Head of Assessments.
- Contact between the Institute and the External Examiner(s) in relation to the level and content of examination papers will be through the Programme Director.
- Give due consideration to all suggestions, criticisms, deletions, additions and other amendments made by the Head of Assessments, Internal Moderator, and External Examiner.
- Be contactable throughout the examination period to respond to queries from learners or invigilators. If the internal examiner is present in the college he may not enter the examination room unless specifically requested to do so. In exceptional circumstances such as illness, a suitably qualified person may be appointed by the Programme Director to deputise for an Internal Examiner during the examination.
- When assessing the learner's scripts, have regard to the minimum pass mark, and compensation level. The marks awarded will be in accordance with the marking scheme submitted for the examination.
- Upon completion of the marking process, should return to the Administrator all scripts and other assessed material such as reports, projects, assignments, clinical assessment sheets, etc. Scripts should be returned within the time specified by the Programme Director. Marked scripts should indicate clearly the marks awarded to each examination question or part of question attempted by the candidate. The marks allocated to each point

are written in pencil on the right hand side. The total mark for the question is written beside the question number (top left) and is recorded as the allocated mark over the total mark available, i.e. 12/20. Comments are written on the front cover sheet to guide learner's further study of the subject.

- In the case of assignments, prior to engaging in overall marking, should co-mark a sample of learners' assignments with the internal moderator and agree changes if necessary to the marking scheme in light of the marked sample.
- In the case of written examinations, provide feedback for the learners in the examiners comment box. In the case of assignments, feedback must be provided by returning the marking grid with additional comments either typed or legibly written on the learners' assignment. Pen should be used, not pencil. It is the responsibility of the Internal Examiner to ensure that feedback is encouraging and motivating. It should be clear and specific with examples given where appropriate. In the case of assignments, it is useful to invite a response from the learner where appropriate.
- Submit examination marks and scripts to the Administrator within 10 working days of receipt of scripts. Marked assignments must be submitted to the Administrator within four weeks of receipt of same.
- Ensure that no error has occurred in the calculation of the marks or in transferring the marks from the assessment/scripts to the marking sheet.
- Unless specifically excused by the Programme Director, attend the Examination Board meetings for all modules in which they are involved and participate in determining the examination result for each candidate. Attendance at the progression Examination Board meeting is compulsory. The proceedings of Examination Board meetings are confidential. Individual examiners should not divulge details of marks or overall results obtained by candidates. The Programme Director reserves the sole right to issue examination results including provisional results.
- Submit *Internal Examiner's Report* to the Head of Assessments at least five days prior to the Interim Exam Board meeting on the extent to which the assessment was valid, reliable and manageable. Proposed changes should be included with the rationale. Student feedback should be taken into consideration when drafting the report.

Internal Examiners may be required to:

- Carry out a re-check of examination scripts and other examination materials when requested to do so by the Programme Director. They should return to the Programme Director all such rechecked scripts and examination materials, indicating clearly the changes, if any, and the reasons therefore. Results of re-checks should not be divulged to candidates by Internal Examiners.
- Meet with students to discuss their assessment if requested to do so. Submit brief summary to Programme Director of any action to be taken
- Attend and give evidence to the Examination Appeals and Extenuating Circumstance Team or the examination appeals committee if requested to do so.

EXAMINATION REGULATIONS APPLYING TO INTERNAL MODERATORS

Internal Moderators are academic staff appointed by IPTAS to provide support and critique to colleagues in drafting examination papers/assignments/practicals and their respective marking schemes and in ensuring that these marking schemes are adhered to.

Internal moderators should:

- Evaluate assigned assessments in relation to: balance of marks; use of language, congruency with the marking scheme; worked solutions and intended learning outcomes.
- Discuss concerns/recommendations with the Head of Assessments and agree the necessary changes.
- Sample scripts/assignments and comment on the extent to which they were marked in accordance with the agreed marking scheme.

- In the case of assignments and qualitative written assessments, co-mark a sample prior to the Internal Examiner engaging in the overall marking and agree changes if necessary to the marking scheme in light of the marked samples.

See flow charts - *Procedure for Internal Moderation of Written Examinations/ Assignments/Practical Assessments* - for details of the internal moderation process.

EXAMINATION REGULATIONS APPLYING TO HEAD OF ASSESSMENTS

The Head of Assessments is appointed by IPTAS to co-ordinate and facilitate the internal moderation process.

Head of Assessments should:

- Ensure that information to students regarding assessments is up-to-date. All data must be processed through administration.
- Devise assessment schedules with Programme Director and in consultation with Tutors and Internal Moderators. Agree how each assessment will be internally moderated.
- Ensure that draft assessments (assessment brief, paper and marking scheme) are received by the agreed date.
- Provide support to new tutors in devising assessments. In the case of practical assessments, the Course Leader will facilitate meetings of the Internal Examiners to devise the assessment. Head of Assessments may have a collaborative role in this process also.
- Provide support to Internal Moderators in critiquing the assessment.
- Ensure that changes have been implemented or in the case that the Internal Examiner disagrees, consult with all parties, including Programme Director.
- Submit final draft of assessment to administrator for formatting by and for submission to External Examiner - Oct 1st for phase 1 and Dec 1st for phase 2
- Record all recommendations in Internal Moderation Report for External Examiner.
- Review feedback from External Examiner and initiate the internal moderation process if changes have been recommended.
- Review post-assessment feedback from students and forward summary to Course Leader.
- Ensure that assessment results have been submitted to administration by the agreed date.
- Meet with Programme Director and administrator to discuss statistics and to compare Internal Examiner and Internal Moderator marks. Include this information in Internal Moderation report. If a problem is evident, instigate an investigation, i.e. meet with student focus group, discuss with Internal Examiner.
- Work with tutors towards the end of the college year in evaluating the extent to which their assessments were valid, reliable and manageable. Record proposed changes and use Interim Examination Board meeting to discuss justification for these proposed changes and to agree changes. Submit a report for consideration by the Education Board.
- Attend Examination Board meetings and record minutes, particularly in relation to action to be taken with regard to particular assessments.
- Attend examination appeal meetings.
- Manage the RPL process, i.e. meet with perspective candidates to advise on the modules that he/she might seek credit for. Liaise with the administrator and appropriate tutor. Report outcome to Examination board.

- Participate as a member of the QA team in supporting 'at risk' students. Liaise with the programme team where appropriate.

EXAMINATION REGULATIONS APPLYING TO EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

IPTAS appoints external examiners in accordance with the general examination regulations and marks and standard in respect of the assessed work of this programme in order to provide an annual peer judgement on the standards achieved at the completion of the programme.

External examiners approve draft examination papers and marking schemes, as appropriate, consider marked examination scripts and other assessment materials, attend examination board meetings and ensure that the results achieved by candidates are appropriate.

The external examining system assists the Institute in the comparison and benchmarking of academic standards for this award, ensures that the assessment process is fair and fairly operated in the marking, grading and classification of student performance and provides the Institute with informed and appropriate points for the comparison of academic standards. As some external examiners come from outside Ireland, the comparison is international in character.

In accepting a nomination as external examiner, he/she shall declare all relevant business, professional or personal interests in respect of any candidates involved in the examinations concerned.

At least one external examiner for the programme is familiar with manual therapy, thus helping to ensure the clinical/professional relevance of programmes.

Nomination

The Academic Council approves the appointment of External Examiners, having satisfied themselves that the person(s) is competent to fulfil the role.

The Programme Director seeks recommendations for nominations through other colleges where similar programmes are offered. Consultation occurs with the proposed nominee to determine his/her suitability and availability to act as External Examiner.

In the case of a new appointment, the Programme Director should normally nominate persons for appointment as External Examiner to the Academic Council by October 1st of the academic year.

Approval

The Academic Council should consider nominations for the position of External Examiner, received from the Programme Director and Education Board.

The Academic Council must satisfy itself that the person nominated for the position of External Examiner satisfy the criteria for appointment as set out below.

The Academic Council appoints such and as many persons as it deems necessary to act as External Examiners for such periods as it decides.

Criteria for the Nomination and Appointment of External Examiners

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

External Examiners should be drawn from academic institutions where they hold senior positions in both teaching and management. They should be professionally qualified in a similar discipline to that which they will act as External Examiner and have demonstrated a commitment to educational development.

External Examiners should hold an academic qualification to a level higher to that of the programme to which he/she has been nominated.

Appointment

Following approval of nomination by the Academic Council, the Managing Director of IPTAS should issue a letter of appointment to the External Examiner, along with a contract to be signed by both parties. The contract should include:

- Job Description.

- Term of office
- Reporting relationships
- Reporting requirements
- Fees payable
- Termination of contract procedures
- Conflict of interest declaration

The External Examiner will be appointed from the date of signing of the contract by the External Examiner and Managing Director or his/her nominee.

The term of office should normally be for a period of three years, and is subject to annual review and re-appointment. In exceptional circumstances, the appointment may be extended for one a further year only.

Normally the term of office should commence on November 1st of the academic year in which the External Examiner is appointed.

In the event that it is deemed necessary to terminate the contract of employment, the Programme Director must furnish the reasons for the proposed termination of the contract to the Academic Council. The Director should then notify the External Examiner of the Councils decision in writing.

Following appointment, the Programme Director will ensure that the External Examiner receives all necessary documentation to enable him understand the examination system. Documentation should include:

- Quality Assurance Manual, specifically Section 8, *Policies, Procedures and Guidelines for the Assessment of Learners*.
- Curriculum
- Examination schedules
- Marks and Standards.

The External Examiner is invited to visit the college before commencing assessment activities so that he can become familiar with the operational structure of the college and the requirements of the position.

Number of External Examiners

In determining the number of External Examiner to be appointed, the Academic Council must be satisfied that:

the standard of modules that make up the programme as a whole and learner performance can be adequately moderated.

the assessment and determination of awards are being fairly and consistently conducted.

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

In the event of a new subject being introduced into a Programme, of which the External Examiner is totally unfamiliar, a subject expert may be appointed to provide additional support.

Where the External Examiners are required to act as a team, IPTAS should ensure that an opportunity to meet prior to the Examination Board meeting is facilitated.

Assessment of Learners

External Examiners should attend the Institute at the time of determination of results and at such other times as may be determined by the Institute in consultation with the External Examiner for the purpose of assessing the standard of the programme and/or learner performance.

External Examiners will serve as members of the in-term and progression Examination Boards.

External Examiners and Programme Director should agree the procedure for evaluating examination papers prior to examinations. As an Internal Moderation system is in place the

External Examiner may select draft examination papers/model answers, assignment briefs/marketing schemes and practical assessment criteria for the purpose of evaluating the quality of the Institutes Internal Moderation system. The Programme Director should ensure that such material is provided to the External Examiner in good time.

External Examiners should determine if, in their expert opinion, the assessment procedures are fair and consistent, that they are in compliance with best practice on comparable programmes and in accordance with the appropriate standards.

External Examiners and Programme Director should agree the procedure for evaluating the Internal Moderation system in relation to the marking of examinations, assignments and practical assessments. Normally, the External Examiner, should sample marked and internally moderated scripts.

External Examiners should provide a written report on his findings with regard to each examination evaluated to the Programme Director.

External Examiners may be required to examine a particular script where there is a lack of consensus between internal examiner and internal moderator.

External Examiner should examine candidates orally, when this is considered necessary and appropriate.

External Examiners should either attend practical assessments or evaluate the quality of the Internal Moderation of such assessments.

External Examiners should submit to the Institute a written report on the examinations with which they were involved. The report should include comments on the general standard achieved by the learners, the array of assessment tools used, the conduct of examinations and the general operation of the Programme.

External Examiner's role within the Examination Boards

External Examiners should prior to the In-term Examination Board meetings, have reviewed sample scripts, including borderline cases and internal moderators reports.

Where there is a lack of consensus between the External Examiner, Internal Examiner or Internal Moderator, effort should be made to achieve consensus with regard to proposed amendments in advance of the Examination Board meeting.

Where the External Examiner proposes adjustment to the results of a group of learners as a whole, efforts should be made to achieve consensus by the Board.

In the event that the External Examiner's recommendation is not accepted by the majority of the Board, his/her opinion on the matter should be recorded on the minutes of the meeting.

Reporting Arrangements

The External Examiner will provide a report to the Programme Director by October 1st. This report is forwarded to the Education Board and Academic Council, together with details of the proposed action plan.

The Report of the external examiner includes:

- The extent to which assessment and examination issues from the previous year have been appropriately addressed.
- Issues relating to the development of the teaching, learning and assessment of learners.

The extent to which procedures and regulations applied in in-term, final and progression board meetings were consistent and fair.

The standard of the overall programme in comparison to similar provision within Europe.

Activities completed by the external examiner.

Observations/issues arising and agreed action for the coming year.

Issues raised by the external examiner are addressed in the Education Boards annual monitoring report. This includes measures/actions taken and their effect. This report is presented to the first Education Board meeting of the next academic year.

Specific Responsibilities of External Examiners

External Examiners are required to oversee the work of the Internal Moderation Team in relation to all draft examination papers with model answers and marking schemes, assignment briefs with marking grids and practical marking criteria. External Examiners should have the right to make such suggestions, criticisms, deletions, additions and amendments, as they deem appropriate.

External Examiners are required to review the records of learners' continuous assessment of clinical skills and learning contracts. This may also include a review of the records of discussions between individual learners and clinic coordinator with regard to learners' progress.

REQUEST FOR EXEMPTION – RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

Guidelines And Procedures

The term RPL is sometimes used as a generic acronym to cover both experiential and certificated learning. It can be used to gain admission to a programme, or to gain exemptions from some part of a programme.

Prior learning can be formal learning or informal learning. Formal learning or certified learning takes place through programmes of study or training that are delivered by education or training providers, and which attracts awards. These educational providers are either universities or colleges whose programmes are included within the National Qualifications Framework. Non-formal, informal or uncertified learning can occur in the workplace, as a part-time course, voluntary sector, trade union or community-based learning. It does not lead to formal qualification. There are two forms of RPL then, Recognition of Prior Certified Learning and Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning. In the case of Recognition of Prior Certified learning, the prior learning can be recognised and may entitle the applicant to exemptions from some parts of the programme. The assessor examines the level of the prior certified learning on the framework, the learning outcomes and syllabus, and grade achieved by the learner when making the decision to award an exemption or not. It is up to the learner to provide this information.

Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning involves the awarding of credit for learning from experience. In this case the learner must provide evidence of learning by producing a Portfolio of Evidence to support the claim for access or credit. As a general principle, credit is given for learning not for experience per se. When an applicant seeks recognition for prior uncertified or experiential learning, the learner is expected to prepare a portfolio of evidence based on the learning outcomes of the module(s) he/she seeks recognition on. The learning outcomes for a module are written in a way that allows an individual to demonstrate he/she has the knowledge, skills and competence for that module. Candidates must demonstrate that they have a good grasp of the theory as well as the practical learning elements. They must demonstrate that they are capable of applying the learning in a new context and that their learning is at an appropriate level.

Awarding of exemptions and credits

The term ECTS - Credits refers to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation system, which is used as the standard for comparing the study attainment and performance of students of Higher Education across Europe and other collaborating countries. Credit is awarded for successfully completing a programme of study. One academic year corresponds to 60 ECTS credits, which is equivalent to approximately 1200 hours of study.

Modules are self-contained units of study, usually worth 5 or 10 credits. They are useful for the purpose of recognition of prior learning as they contain details of the learning outcomes, syllabus content, teaching and learning strategies, assessments and readings for that module. While modules are self-contained, IPTAS modules are not stand-alone units generally. They support other modules in the same year (co-requisite) and their successful completion is necessary to understand modules in the following year (pre-requisite).

Learners may gain credit from courses, which they have previously taken at what is deemed to be Higher Education level. This may be a course, which they have completed, or alternatively, any part of a

course, which they have successfully passed, if they did not complete the award for which they were registered.

Normally, it is assumed that if the learner completed the certificated learning more than 5 years ago the learning will be out of date and no exemption can be given. However, if the learner has been working professionally and building on the learning in the interim period, appropriate exemption could be considered.

Credit for experiential learning may be gained from a variety of sources e.g. within the workplace, from training courses which the individual has completed but which are not certificated, through experience in voluntary work, or by individual study. The source therefore is not important as long as the learning can demonstrate that he/she is at an appropriate level and in relevant subject areas. Credit once awarded is not distinguished by its source.

Both exemption and credit signifies that the learner is considered to have completed the module for the purposes of pre-and/ or co-requisite.

Exemption may be awarded at Levels/years 0, 1, 2 and 3. As marks have already been awarded for certificated prior learning, a decision must be made at the time of the award of exemption as to whether the marks, in their original or an amended form, will be included on the learner record and therefore contribute to the calculation of the final award.

Credit may be awarded at Levels/years 0, 1, 2 and 3. Marks are awarded on the basis of the portfolio and interview and are included on the learner's record and therefore contribute to the calculation of the final award.

RPL exemptions and credit can only be awarded in respect of whole modules, and may not be given in respect of part of a module.

The Institute does not guarantee the award of any exemption or credit to any learner who makes a claim.

Credit cannot be awarded until the appropriate fees have been paid.

Application for Recognition of Prior Certified Learning

All learners must be informed of the timescale for making an application prior to their registration. Normally this is four weeks.

The learner must provide information on his/her certificated learning. In all cases documentary proof that the qualification, or part thereof, has been obtained must be provided. It is the learner's responsibility to provide this documentation together with the following:

- The title of the award/ qualification for which the exemption is sought;
- The name and code of the modules for which exemption is sought
- The institution where the certificated learning was undertaken
- The dates and duration of the study;
- The mode of study;
- Details of learning outcomes, syllabus content, assessments, marks achieved.
- Proof of successfully completing the certified learning or part thereof.

Application for Recognition of prior Experiential Learning

The Learner

- Will be encouraged during the enrolment period to identify any areas of previous experience where learning has taken place;
- Will be responsible for the decision as to whether any claim will be made for this learning;
- Will prepare and submit a portfolio of evidence to support claim for seeking credit for one or more modules.

- Will be responsible for submitting his/her claim, with supporting evidence by the set date to the named person within the RPL team;
- Will attend an interview with the Internal Examiner
- Will be responsible for any revisions to his/her submission, requested by either the Internal Examiner or the RPL Team.

Information to be provided in portfolio includes: cover sheet with name, PPS number, name of the programme, name and code of the module, date of submission; table of contents; introduction to oneself and experience in Physical Therapy; portfolio with lots of examples from practice.

RPL Team

The RPL Team is a subcommittee of the Examination Board. Its membership consists of the Head of Assessment and Internal Examiner(s) and it is responsible for the following:

- 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;
- Ensuring that the integrity of the academic standard of the award is observed.

Head of Assessments

- Coordinates all aspects of the RPL process.
- Communicates on behalf of the RPL Team with the learner

Internal Examiner

Is a member of academic staff with subject expertise in the area of the submission;

- 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 has since been forgotten;
- Present to the RPL team the marks awarded for the combined portfolio and interview. These marks are subject to ratification by the Examination Board.

Role of Examination Board

The External Examiner, while not directly involved in the RPL process, is informed of any recommendations of credit for prior certificated or experiential learning. Marks must be confirmed by the relevant Examination Board to ensure that the credit is formally entered on the learner's record.

Appeals

An appeal may be submitted only if the learner believes there has been material irregularity in the processing of his/her application. All such appeals must be made in writing to the Managing Director.

LATE SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS & EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

Submission of assignments or other work is deemed late when an unauthorised missing of a deadline has occurred.

A formal mechanism for considering requests for extensions to deadlines for assignments is in place through the Examination Review and Extenuating Circumstance Team. The learner must forward a request, through the *Application for Extension of Submission Date of Assignment* form to the Administrator. Where possible, this request must be received by the Administrator at least one week before the due date and furnish with documentary evidence of the reasons why the extension is necessary.

Extenuating circumstances include illness, accident and close family bereavement. Work schedules and holidays are not considered to be sufficient grounds for granting extension.

Where there are extenuating circumstances, an extension of time will be granted and the assignment marked without penalty if submitted by the new date. The longest extension available is two weeks. Any extensions beyond this are at the discretion of the Examination Review and Extenuating Circumstance Team and approved by the Examination Board.

In cases where an exemption is granted, it is the responsibility of the learner to ensure that the assignment is submitted on the new agreed date.

Failure to Submit / Late Submissions

Failure to submit assignments by this new date will result in the extension being withdrawn and “zero” mark recorded. Late submission of up to 2 weeks will incur a reduction of 60% of available marks and fine of €100.

Assignments submitted after 2 weeks of original submission date will not be accepted and a “zero” mark will be recorded. In the event that a learner fails to submit an assignment within the allowed 2-week time frame, the learner is required to re-submit the assignment one academic year later.

The Education Board and external examiner are informed of instances where penalties have been applied.

BREACH OF EXAMINATION / ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS

The Education Board is responsible for monitoring procedures that are in place for informing learners about the Institutes’ regulations and ensuring adherence in the operation of these regulations.

Breach of examination regulations involves plagiarism or cheating or both.

Plagiarism is defined as both the misappropriation of ideas of others and/or unattributed copying of another’s work (i.e. direct copying of text from articles, books, colleagues, assignments, course notes, web page or other sources) without proper acknowledgement.

Cheating is defined as the use of unauthorised material in an exam; unauthorised access to exam material; unauthorised collusion with another learner; dishonest behaviour in respect of assessments and deliberate plagiarism.

Breach of written examination regulations

Where a candidate is considered to be in breach of examination regulations e.g. having in his possession, unauthorised materials the following procedure will apply:

The Invigilator will take the following steps:

- 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.
- Inform the candidate that he/she is allowed to continue with the examination.
- Make a written report to the Programme Director. The candidate will read and sign the report and the second invigilator will witness it.

The Programme Director will take the following steps:

- Send a registered letter to the candidate inviting him/her to meet and give an explanation of the incident.
- If there is no response from the candidate a second attempt is made to contact him/her. 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 Programme Director will inform the Administrator and if the learner returns to the Institute he/she will not be allowed to return to class until the matter is settled.
- If a response is received from the candidate the Programme Director will convene the Examination Appeals and Extenuating Circumstance Team to discuss the candidate's situation.
- If the breach is confirmed, the penalty for the breach should be decided by the Examination Appeals and Extenuating Circumstance Team. The candidate will be notified about the decision in writing.
- If the breach is not confirmed the candidate's examination script is regarded as valid and processed as normal.

Breach of assignment regulations

In the event that a candidate is considered to be in breach of examination regulations, e.g., plagiarism or cheating in an assignment:

The Internal Examiner will:

- Identify the breach.
- Confirm the identity of the candidate.
- Warn the candidate that the alleged breach will be reported to the Programme Director.
- Make a written report to the Programme Director.

The Programme Director will take the following steps:

- Send a registered letter to the candidate inviting him/her to meet and give an explanation of the incident.

If there is no response from the candidate a second attempt is made to contact him/her. 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 Programme Director will inform the Administrator and if the learner returns to the Institute he/she will not be allowed to return to class until the matter is settled.

If a response is received from the candidate the Programme Director will convene the Examination Review and Extenuating Circumstance Team to discuss the candidate's situation.

If the breach is confirmed, the penalty for the breach should be decided by the Examination Review and Extenuating Circumstance Team. The candidate will be notified about the decision in writing.

If the breach is not confirmed the candidate's assignment is regarded as valid and processed as normal.

EXAMINATION RE-CHECKS, REVIEWS AND APPEALS

Procedure for requesting access to examination paper

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 ten working days after the examination results have been issued. The learner must use the *Application for Access to Examination Paper* form.

Procedure for requesting a recheck

A recheck may be sought where a candidate suspects there has been an error in the determination of his/her result. The recheck 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 candidate's overall result. An unsuccessful outcome, from the candidate'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 ten working days after the examination results have been issued. The learner must use the *Application for Re-check of Examination* form.

Only a written request for a re-check, signed by the person concerned, will be considered.

A fee of €25 will be applied and is refundable if the original mark is increased by +5% or more.

Procedures for requesting a Review

A request for a review must be received by the Administrator not later than ten working days after the results have been issued or five working days after the recheck results have been issued.

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 100 euro 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 candidate..

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 candidate requires to have taken into account in the review.

The grounds for review should be specified under three headings:

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

A review is carried out by the internal examiner and external examiner and must be approved by the Examination Board. In the case of dispute, the final decision is made by the Examination Appeals Council.

Procedure for requesting an appeal

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

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

Examination Appeals lodged with the Institute should be referred promptly to the Administrator who has responsibility for presenting them to the Examination Appeals Committee.

In the event that an appeal has not been heard prior to the commencement of the academic year the appellant should 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 should terminate.

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

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

REPEAT EXAMINATIONS & PROGRESSION

Repeat examinations are generally scheduled for late July. A learner is permitted three further attempts at an examination if the mark is below the pass mark. A learner who does not avail of a repeat examination is deemed to have failed, except where extenuating circumstances prevent the learner from attempting the examination e.g. illness, accident or immediate family bereavement and these have been communicated in writing to the Administrator.

Learners are not admitted to a second or subsequent stage without first having passed all required examination subjects from the preceding stage. Where, in exceptional circumstances a learner is admitted to a second or subsequent examination stage, who has not fulfilled the requirements set out above, the learners performance will not be considered at the Examination Board unless the learner has completed the requirements of the previous examination stage.

Proof of extenuating circumstances must be produced in written along with supporting documentation and forwarded to the Administrator.

A maximum mark of 40% will be recorded for all repeat examinations. A learner who is granted permission to repeat an examination may be required to repeat attendance.

There is a charge for repeat examinations. See *The IOS* for details of cost. Where such a fee is not paid in a timely manner the learner is not notified about the outcome of the examination.

SECTION 7 - PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES FOR OBTAINING & MANAGING FEEDBACK FROM THE LEARNER

INTRODUCTION

IPTAS is committed to obtaining continuous feedback from the learner in all areas relating to quality assurance and enhancement. This feedback, once analysed, is acted on as quickly as possible and the effect of these changes monitored. In line with its mission statement and quality values and ethos, IPTAS believes in facilitating a person centred approach with personal development at its core. Each learner is encouraged to provide feedback both formally and informally and not rely on class representatives to air their views. The importance of two-way feedback is emphasised from the beginning with workshops exploring the personal consequences of giving / not giving feedback and receiving / not receiving feedback. Consequently learners are facilitated in developing guidelines for both of these. Reflective essays periodically seek learners' reflection on their developing skills of giving and receiving feedback. Feedback from the learner is sought through focus groups and questionnaires.

LEARNER APPRAISAL OF SUBJECT / MODULE

Tutors are responsible for seeking regular feedback (every 2 to 3 classes) through questionnaires from the learners on their learning experiences in the class room, student clinic and learning groups. Tutors collate their findings, reflect on it, and decide on the necessary changes. These changes are communicated to the learners at the next class and their effects monitored through the next questionnaire. Hard copies of the questionnaire are kept by the tutor in their professional portfolio, with a summary of the findings and actions to be taken. Administrative support is available if requested.

Subsequent questionnaires are then designed by the tutor, to seek feedback on areas that were shown in previous questionnaires to be in need of improvement. Questions on areas the tutor would like to identify / improve on themselves are also added. Over the course of the academic year these should incorporate all key performance indicators from the tutors' job description i.e. promoting a deep approach to learning; creating a class room environment that is motivating, positive, supportive and free from negativity and criticism; supports learners personal, professional and intellectual development; manages class room environment effectively. The cycle thus continues throughout the academic year, with changes being continuously made and recorded by the tutor. Staff development workshops provide a support network for tutors to discuss their feedback and possible actions. Individual support is also available to tutors from the staff development facilitator in designing the questionnaire and in developing pedagogical, andragogical and classroom management skills.

At the end of the academic year, tutors produce a report detailing the areas identified and changes that were made. This report is completed using the form "Tutors Report On Subject/Module Appraisal By Learners" and submitted to the Programme Director. Summary information from all modules will be shared at the final Education Board meeting and included in the annual monitoring report for the Academic Council.

LEARNER APPRAISAL OF THE PROGRAMME

The Quality Assurance Manager is responsible for ensuring that learner feedback is sought on the programme. This is conducted through surveys, twice yearly. The first survey focuses on communication, resources and support services, while the second focuses on pre-enrolment information, induction, communication, feedback on examinations, physical resources, library and other support services. These surveys are anonymous. Learners are requested to identify areas where improvement could be made. Analysis of the first survey is available for the second Education Board meeting. The second survey is designed to incorporate changes made as a result of the first. Learner focus groups provide an opportunity to seek more qualitative data, which is further used in developing the curriculum. Analysis of the findings, both qualitative and quantitative, is available at the final Education Board meeting and included in the annual monitoring report to the Academic Council.

