INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

GMIT Formal Response to Expert Panel Report

24th March, 2011

General

The Institute welcomes the report of the Expert Panel following the "Institutional Review of Galway-Mayo Institute" (28-30 September 2010) and in particular the key findings, that:

- "The effectiveness of the Quality Assurance arrangements operated by Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology has been assessed and the arrangements have been found to be generally effective in accordance with the seven elements of Part One of the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance* 2009, Helsinki, 3rd edition, and the HETAC *Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures in Higher Education*, 2004.

- Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression, as determined by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

- Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology meets the criteria for the delegation of authority to make awards that relate to Operations and Management; Education and Training Programmes; Council Conditions related to Delegation of Authority and the Objects of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999".

GMIT understands 'generally effective' to be the second highest HETAC category, more generally referred to as the 'Well Established' and to mean that:

"The activity in this area is generally effective and a well developed system exists which should be monitored going forward. For example

- A well-structured system exists for the activity which covers all or nearly all activities (e.g. most/all key policy, procedures, roles and responsibilities have been clearly documented and defined);
- The activity is integrated with other relevant activities;
- There is good evidence that feedback from learners and other stakeholders is captured and that it informs decision making;
- There is good evidence that staff have engaged in and taken ownership of the activity;
- There is good evidence that corrective actions are taken when required."[1]

The Institute welcomes the statement that the panel received full cooperation throughout and also the acknowledgement that all necessary documentation was made available to them in their deliberations.

The Institute is very pleased to have received commendations under each of the objectives. This is an endorsement of the Institute's ethos reflecting its ethos and commitment to continuous Quality Improvement.

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[1] Supplementary Guidelines for the Review of the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance Procedures, HETAC (2008, p. 13)

The Institute received thirty-nine recommendations in the report. These include recommendations that are strategic and structural in nature, and others that are specific and operational. Some of the specific operationally focused recommendations have already been implemented. The Institute welcomes the recommendations and looks forward to addressing them comprehensively as outlined in the attached Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

Some general comments on the commendations and recommendations are presented below.

Objective 1 – Public Confidence

Commendations
- The Institute is committed to building on the consultation process that proved very effective during the compilation of the self-evaluation report.
- The strategic planning process incorporates a rolling review mechanism. This enables the outcomes of the self-evaluation process to inform the evolution of the strategic plan in practice.
- The Institute recognises and values the impact of the Innovation in Business Centres (IiBC) on its reputation in the local enterprise sector and welcomes this commendation from the panel.

Recommendations
- GMIT is focused on improving its strategic and planning framework. The Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is indicative of this. A key element in this process is quarterly reporting to the Governing Body on performance with respect to high level KPIs.
- A Communications and Marketing strategy will be developed, consistent with the strategic plan. A member of the Executive Board has been assigned responsibility for this development.

Objective 2 – Strategic Planning and Governance

Commendations
- The Institute values the active engagement of the Governing Body with the strategic planning process.
- The Institute is committed to a comprehensive staff and student consultation process in the management of change and plans to continue along this path.
- The Institute is committed to the implementation of its strategy on Learning, Teaching and Assessment.

Recommendations
- The importance of internationalisation is recognised and the Institute is considering ways to enhance the internationalisation process.
- The Institute does not currently make dual awards in collaboration with other HEIs. Should this situation change then the Institute will comply fully with HETAC policy in this regard.
- The Strategic Plan is currently being reviewed by the Executive Board. Staff involvement will be actively sought in this process.

Objective 3 – Quality Assurance

Commendations
- The Institute welcomes the finding that its QA policies and procedures are extensively employed within the organisation.
- GMIT is committed to further improving its compliance with the Bologna Process and the National Framework of Qualifications. The Institute welcomes the panel's findings in relation to its achievements on learning outcomes.
- The Institute is proud of its efforts to provide students with an integrated learning experience and the quality of its Student Support Services. Commendations from the panel for these achievements will further incentivise the organisation to strive for even higher standards.

Recommendations

- The GMIT Quality Assurance policies and procedures are universally applied to Out-Centre locations as they are at all of the campuses. Staff employed by GMIT to deliver programmes at out-centres are recruited through the normal recruitment process.
- The Institute's current procedures for conducting programmatic reviews comply with HETAC guidelines. Should the new Quality Assurance Agency of Ireland (QAAI) change these guidelines the Institute will then amend its QA Framework accordingly.
- The Academic Council considered anonymous marking in the past and concluded that successful implementation was not practicable under existing operational arrangements. The Institute will continue to keep anonymous marking under review in the context of best practice both nationally and internationally.
- Team based assessment is but one example of the range of assessment methodologies regularly employed in GMIT. The promotion of innovative and varied assessment methodologies received significant attention through the SIF II HEA funded project.
- The practice of appointing External Examiners prior to the commencement of the academic year has not been applied rigorously. This will be addressed in the QIP.
- The Institute recognises that the quality assurance of teaching staff is of paramount importance. Specific actions to address the panel's recommendations on performance monitoring, professional responsibilities and staff development are addressed in the QIP. The Institute also recognises that a culture of continuous professional development can be best served through the promotion of a culture of academic responsibility and self-development. GMIT will continue to actively support such a culture. Academic Council's recent re-affirmation of the centrality of the academic community in the design and assessment of programmes demonstrates this commitment.
- The Institute considers that the previous implementation of PMDS did not adequately address its strategic needs and priorities for staff development. The QIP proposes a new approach.
- GMIT acknowledges the recommendations outlined in relation to learning resources and support, and the QIP indicates how the recommendations will be addressed. The Institute contends that resources provided to post-graduate students are meeting the requirements of this group.
- The Institute is aware that reporting requirements at all levels must be addressed. Key to this is the development and implementation of a reporting environment.
- The Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) sub-committee of the Academic Council is convening a working group to develop an Institute retention strategy.

Objective 4 – Qualifications Framework, Access, Transfer and Progression

Commendations

- The Institute's success in attracting and supporting students from a wide diversity of socio-economic groups is evident in the panel's commendations for efforts made in relation to access, transfer and progression.

Recommendations

- Greater engagement with second-level/further education providers is envisaged. The Institute is represented on a number of bodies dealing with Lifelong Learning. Special access initiatives are being considered for schools with students attending from lower socio-economic profiles.
- GMIT recognises the academic value of offering a diverse range of modules, particularly those aligned to the ECTS framework as a means of progression to accredited programmes.

Objective 5 – Operation and Management of Delegated Authority

Commendations

- GMIT welcomes the commendations and is committed to a continuous improvement process as outlined in the attached QIP.

Recommendations

- GMIT welcomes the continuation of Delegated Authority as provided for in the Qualifications (Education & Training) Act 1999.

Objective 6 – Recommendations for Enhancement

The on-going development of a planning framework incorporating the QIP and the implementation of the Strategic Plan will ensure the delivery of the plans and actions as identified in the Self-Evaluation Report.
A planning framework incorporating the QIP and the implementation plan in support of the Strategic Plan (Your Place – Your Future) is being developed and the plans/actions identified in the Self Evaluation Report will be delivered.

Institutional Review

Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

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GMIT Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) Addressing Recommendations in IR Report

Objective	Improvement / Recommendation	Actions	Responsible	Monitoring/Progress	Timeline
1) Public Confidence	1.11 – 1 Establish detailed action plans with timelines and responsibilities in relation to the recommendations arising from the Self-Evaluation and Institutional Review reports.	This QIP will address this recommendation.	President, Registrar, YP-YF sponsors, Executive Board, Management Group, Academic Council	Annual progress report and review reporting to Academic Council and Governing Body	Reviewed annually
	1.11 – 2 Co-ordinate and focus the different means of communicating with the public.	Communications audit Develop and implement a coordinated communications and marketing strategy. Annual engagement with external stakeholders.	Head of School of Business	Communications and marketing strategy developed. Feedback report to AC, Ex. Bd and GB stakeholder engagement	December 2011 Annually
	1.11 – 3 Make GMIT's distinctive mission clearer and communicate it to all stakeholders, especially employers.	Terms of Reference for Communications and Marketing Strategy	President Head of School of Business	Communications and marketing strategy developed.	December 2011
	1.11 – 4 Exploit potential opportunities for work placements and other collaboration with all local industries including multinational companies.	Considered under Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (Objective 2) Develop implementation plan for LTA strategy	Head of L&T Registrar	Institute planning framework published Annual report from schools to the Executive Board	December 2011 Annual

	1.11 – 5 Revisit the element of the strategic plan dealing with community engagement and ensure that prominence is given to engagement with public and other stakeholders in implementing the plan.	Considered under 1.2 and also under Community Engagement Pillar in Strategic Plan (Objective 2). Revisit recommendations from Community and Voluntary focus groups. Integration with work placement strategy.	Head of School of Business	Implementation report on Community Engagement Pillar to Ex. Bd. and Gov. Body Report on level of engagement with Community and Voluntary groups	Annual
2) Strategic Planning and Governance	2.14 – 1 Ensure that the internationalisation and collaboration 'pillars' of the strategic plan develops coherently in relation to the other four pillars and <u>states an understanding of HETAC policy on this area of activity</u>.	Align this pillar with HETAC policy and procedures. Appoint Head of internationalisation / Collaborate with other HEI's on the management of this area.	Head of L&T President	Internationalisation and Collaboration pillar amended in strategy review Annual report to Academic Council on Internationalisation	April 2011 Annual
	2.14 – 2 In the context of the current rate of change, urgently develop and use operational-level performance indicators in relation to the top-level KPIs and ensure that they are monitored.	Develop implementation plan for Your Place – Your Future (YP-YF) 2010 - 2015	Head of School of Science + YP-YF sponsors	Quarterly reporting on YP-YF to the Executive Board	Quarterly, from April 2011

3) Quality Assurance [7 elements]	3.8 – 1 Develop procedures for programmes run in out-centres and incorporate these procedures into the quality assurance system and documentation.	Same policies and procedures cover all campuses and out-centres as GMIT . GMIT will conduct an audit of the programmes, from a QA perspective, delivered at out-centres.	Registrar	Audit Report considered by Academic Council and the Executive Board	Frpm September 2011
	3.8 – 2 Develop a learner-friendly document on the quality assurance system as a whole of the kind described in *European Standards and Guidelines* Part 1 paragraph 1.1.	GMIT recognise the need for this. Document will define the roles of the various bodies / committees.	Registrar	Document approved by Academic Council and Governing Body.	December 2011
	3.21 – 1 Define the point at which proposed amendments to programmes change the programme sufficiently to require external expert input.	Process to be clearly documented in COP No 2. as an appendix and PB more involved Incorporate the use of MMS in tracking changes. Programme Boards to annually review changes to modules.	Registrar Registrar / Assistant Registrar / HODs	QA Framework updated and reapproved by AC and GB MMS protocol incorporated in QA Framework as appendix to COP No. 2 Existing QA Framework updated in 2010	May 2011
	3.21 – 2 Seek external advice whenever a new award is in prospect, whether or not the modules have been separately approved.	Existing QA Framework amended in November 2010	Registrar	Approved by AC in Nov. 2010	Complete

	3.21 – 3 Complete the evaluation of the programmatic review process and implement changes including a forward schedule for programmatic reviews.	School meetings to be scheduled to review the process. Forward schedule to be prepared. Consult with Castlebar staff and management re upcoming programmatic review.	HOS/Centre Registrar	Reports forwarded to Registrar and compiled. Lessons learned reviewed at Academic Council Planning meeting held in Castlebar	May 2011
	3.21 – 4 Find an effective means of providing feedback to learners on the outcomes of their evaluations of programme quality.	Attach to function of Programme Board. Annual school meeting to brief students on actions arising from feedback on previous evaluations. School student reps meeting to be briefed. Annual focus group with students.	AC Programme Boards / Learner reps. HODs	Programme Board reports to Ac. Council Programme chairs receive analysis of QA3 forms.	From Sept. 2011
	3.21 – 5 Find a way to achieve more equal rates of return from evaluative questionnaires administered at different campuses.	Setup QA3 forms online Continue using online student survey Report to Registrar, circ to AC Monitored on a cross sectional and longitudinal basis	Head of School of Science	Report on annual rates of return to Registrar for Ac. Council and circulated to HOS	From Sept. 2011

3.21 – 6 Establish procedures for the induction of international students and improve induction procedures for postgraduate students. Ensure that research students are adequately supported in particular in communicating their work	International students induction programme established from Sept. 2010. Further develop support systems for international students. Implementation plan of Research pillar to address supports for research students. Prepare an induction manual for postgrad students. Update the research section of the website. School based seminars by postgrad students. Financial support for postgrad students to attend conferences.	Head of L&T Student Services Head of Research LTA committee	Procedures developed and published on web. YP-YF review Implementation plan developed. Education Conference Website updated	From Sept. 2011 April 2011 Q.4 2012 Immediately
3.32 – 1 Introduce a means whereby Academic Council or the Academic Standards Committee is regularly able to consider comparative performance in assessment across the whole Institute.	More quantitative analysis in report on External Examining presented to Academic Council. Reports should also be considered at school level. Design and implement a statistical report across schools that capture the performance of all stages in a programme. Performance reports on each module to be available at Exam Boards.	LTA Committee / Ac Council / Registrar / Prog. Boards	New template developed for Ex. Examiner report to Ac. Council Benchmark findings with other HEI's in the sector. New performance reports developed and considered at Exam Boards. Annual Report to Academic Council	May 2011 Sept. 2011

	3.32 – 2 Define expected standards for feedback from teaching staff to learners on individual items of assessed work.	Incorporate institutional expectations in QA Framework. Roll-out pedagogical upskilling plan. Continue to develop a culture of professionalism in academic practice.	LTA Committee Ac Council Head of L&T	QA Framework reapproved by Ac. Council and Gov. Body. Trends in uptake of APD modules / PGCE / PGDE.	From Sept. 2011
	3.32 – 3 Consider GMIT practice in relation to HETAC guidelines in Assessment and Standards, 2009, on anonymous marking and team-based assessment.	Staff Development is scheduling a CPD programme on assessment.	Registrar Ac Council Head of L&T	CPD programme on assessment	From March 2011
	3.32 – 4 Coordinate the date of required submission of external examiners' reports with the prescribed date of programme board meetings for discussion of monitoring data.	Schedule Programme Board meetings in October to review reports from External Examiners.	Registrar	Reflected in the Operations/Academic Calendar	From Sept. 2011
	3.32 – 5 Replace external examiners early enough to ensure each programme always has an external examiners in post.	Heads of School to notify the Registrar in April of External Examiner changes for the following academic year, with recommendations for replacement. Consider and develop enhanced mechanism for identification and recruitment of EE both at Institute level and national level.	Registrar Ac Council HOS LTA Committee	New External Examiners appointed no later than September 30th.	From Sept. 2011

	3.32 – 6 Revise external examiners' periods of office to meet HETAC guidelines.	The Code of Academic Policy (No. 7) will be reviewed with reference to the HETAC guidelines and in the context that GMIT offers progression to L8 on all programmes.	Registrar	QA Framework reapproved by Ac. Council and Gov. Body. Specifically the Code of Academic Policy No. 7.	May 2011
	3.37 – 1 Consider ways in which the quality of teaching may be monitored more systematically and effectively, and in particular find a means of making better use for feedback from learners on teaching.	QA3 forms placed online. Online student survey. Analysis of online data considered by Programme Boards and incorporated in Programme Board reports to Academic Council	Registrar Ac Council	QA3 forms completed online. Response tracked. Response rate to online survey.	From Sept. 2011
	3.37 – 2 Define clearly the relative responsibilities of programme chairs, heads of department and heads of school in relation to teaching quality.	Responsibilities will be documented in QA Framework. Recruitment processes and procedures reviewed and updated.	Registrar Ac Council HR Function	QA Framework reapproved by Ac. Council and Gov. Body. Staff recruitment and selection processes to clearly specify responsibilities.	From Sept. 2011
	3.37 – 3 Find ways of making a teaching qualification and pedagogical programme more attractive to staff.	New staff encouraged to attend one module on pedagogical upskilling. Sectoral framework in place for professional post-grad qualifications in this area. Consider informal mechanisms	Head of L&T Registrar HOS/HOD	APD module on **Technology Enhanced Learning** running in GMIT this term. Track number of additional APD modules offered to staff and no. of staff gaining	With immediate effect. Annual

		e.g. monthly staff seminars Engage academic managers in good practice in this area. Identify staff training needs. Education conference internally.		qualifications via this route.

Education Conference | Q.4, 2012 |
| | 3.37 – 4
Find a more systematic means of identifying individual staff development needs. | HODs and line managers to hold annual discussions with staff to determine their needs and approve CPD consistent with institution strategy. | Head of L&T

Management Group and Executive Board | Staff development plan published on intranet.

Report to Executive Board | From Sept. 2011 |
| | 3.48 – 1
Consider how best to meet the study needs of the different learner populations, especially as regards availability of library study facilities and careers guidance. | Conduct stakeholder needs analysis survey of the library. Implement findings of the survey, subject to resource constraints.
Career guidance to have greater visibility and prominence. Enhanced support will be provided for this function. | Head of L&T

Registrar

Librarian

Careers Officer | Needs analysis survey of library conducted.

Support for Career Guidance in place | From Sept. 2011 |
| | 3.48 – 2
Ensure that the limitations of the student registration systems do not impede the legitimate study needs of learners. | Special registration status afforded to all students to allow immediate access to learning facilities.
Online registration under consideration. | Registrar | TR registration status available until Oct. 31st

Online registration in place | Complete

From Sept. 2012 |

	3.48 – 3 Ensure the adequacy of library resources for postgraduate student programmes, especially in respect of availability of journals.	The Library operates an effective and efficient inter-library loan system, e-journals and on-line resources. More specialised journals to meet established needs of postgraduate students will be provided.	Head of Research Librarian	Report on increased range of journals in the library.	Annually
	3.48 – 4 Include key learning support managers as members of relevant academic deliberative committees, particularly Academic Standards and Learning Teaching and Assessment Committees.	This will be facilitated where appropriate. Adjust the LTA membership to incorporate library staff. Academic Standards to consider this recommendation. Develop a procedure for communicating new resource requirements to the library.	Registrar Ac Council	Membership of LTA committee expanded to include Library representative, Access Officer and/or Student Services Officer.	Complete (Feb. 2011)
	3.48 – 5 Devise a systematic means of ensuring that learning support staff are informed of the outcomes of routine evaluative procedures at programme level, especially annual monitoring and programmatic review.	1. HODs will inform learning support staff in relation to developments in his/her department. 2. Student Services personnel will address school meetings annually. 3. Registrar's Office to setup a document management system where evaluative reports will be published and available to all staff.	Registrar HOS Head of L&T	Each HOD to brief learning support staff One school meeting per year addressed by appropriate member of Student Services. EDMS in place for the Registrar's function.	From Sept. 2011

	3.48 – 6 Consult relevant learning support staff routinely on the development and approval of new modules and programmes.	The Academic Standards sub-committee will incorporate this as a requirement for the proposers of new modules and programmes, where appropriate.	Registrar HOS AC Standards	Code of Practice No. 2 amended to reflect this recommendation.	From Sept. 2011
	3.48 – 7 Make the routine evaluation of the various student support services more systematic, and consider reviews of key learning support services on the agendas of relevant academic committees.	Reviews of these areas will follow the five year cycle as per programmatic reviews. Report from Student Support Services to be made to the Ac. Council twice per year and Gov. Body once per year.	Head of L&T Registrar	Schedule of reviews published with programmatic review schedule. Student Services presentation to Ac. Council (March and October) and to Gov. Body in November.	From Sept. 2011
	3.48 – 8 Co-ordinate more effectively the work of all student support services.	Institute Student Services Officer appointed (Jan. 2011) who is also a member of the Management Group.	Head of L&T	Complete	Complete
	3.51 – 1 Should find a means of making data held in the student information system more readily accessible to staff for decision making and routine quality assurance purposes.	A complex problem to address due to internal and external demands on reporting. 1. Conduct analysis of information to inform managerial decisions requiring evidence-based data 2. Conduct requirement analysis of reports required. 3. Scope a reporting project, possibly in collaboration with other HEI's	Registrar IT Manager	Reporting environment to support QA and evidence-based decision making in place.	From Sept. 2012

	3.51 – 2 Should ensure that attrition reports are accompanied by action plans with timelines and responsibilities identified.	Develop an Institute Retention Strategy	HOS Registrar LTA Committee	Institute Retention Strategy approved by Ac. Council and Gov. Body. School retention and achievement policy aligned to Institute Retention Strategy.	From Sept. 2012
	3.54 – 1 Should coordinate open days with those of other local providers.	This initiative was piloted in the past and failed. Reconsidered with local HEI (Feb. 2011) and decision reached to retain individual open days.			
4) Qualifications Framework, Access, Transfer and Progression	4.8 – 1 Should liaise with second level and further education providers about the relationship between the Institute's programme portfolio on the needs of further education students	Review activities currently taking place. New modules and/or programme offerings to meet the needs of FE students.	Head of L&T Registrar HOS	A forum / workshop will be established to explore this area further.	From Sept. 2012
	4.8 – 2 Expedite its intention to accredit all formal learning in the Institute.	The Institute will increase the number of Special Purpose Awards and accredited modules on offer in a flexible delivery format.	Registrar Ac Council Lifelong Learning	Track percentage increase in number of accredited modules on offer in a flexible delivery format.	Ongoing

5) Operation and Management of Delegated Authority	5.7 – 1 Delegated Authority granted to Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology be continued as provided for in the Qualifications (Education & Training) Act 1999.	GMIT welcomes this recommendation and is committed to a continuous improvement policy from a QA perspective as evidenced in this quality improvement plan.	President Registrar Ac Council	Reporting on the KPIs in this plan and the implementation plan aligned to the Institute's Strategy 'Your Place – Your Future' (YP-YF).	Ongoing.
6) Recommendations for Enhancement	The panel recommends that the Institute proceed with the plans/actions as identified in the SER. Chapter 8: "Summary and recommendation for enhancement", pgs 56-59.	A planning framework incorporating this QIP and the implementation plan in support of YP-YF is being developed and will ensure the plans/actions identified in chapter 8 of the SER will be delivered.	Ac. Council Exec. Board All staff	Planning Framework published	September 2011

Acronyms and Abbreviations:

AC	Academic Council	**GB**	Governing Body	**LTA**	Learning, Teaching and Assessment
APD	Academic Professional Development	**HEI**	Higher Education Institute	**PB**	Programme Board
COP	Code of Practice	**HOD**	Head of Department	**PGCE**	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
CPD	Continuous Professional Development	**HOS**	Head of School	**PGDE**	Postgraduate Diploma in Education
Ex. Bd.	Executive Board	**L&T**	Learning and Teaching	**YP - YF**	Your Place – Your Future