



Ollscoil na hÉireann
National University of Ireland

**Degrees and qualifications
of the National University of Ireland**

Procedures and Regulations for the approval of

New Programmes

and

**Programmes where there are major or minor changes to the
content and overall learning outcomes**

(June 2013)

To Note:

In the context of the current environment for quality assurance and enhancement in higher education, NUI has revised its procedures and regulations governing the approval of programmes provided in recognised colleges and which lead to NUI degrees and other qualifications. The procedures and regulations contained in this document have been developed following consultation with institutions and review of existing national and international standards relating to programme approval in higher education. In particular, we have focused on the standards and policies in place in the NUI constituent universities and acknowledge these as a valuable source of information in compiling the document.

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SECTION 1: Introduction

Under its Charter, the National University of Ireland (NUI) is empowered to recognise colleges of higher education and award degrees and other qualifications in those colleges. Accordingly, since its establishment, NUI has fulfilled responsibilities in relation to the standards and quality of its awards in those colleges, seeking to ensure comparability between those qualifications and other qualifications of the National University of Ireland (awarded by NUI in the constituent colleges up to 1997 and by the constituent universities since then). With the establishment of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), the NUI has endeavoured to ensure consistency between the standards and quality of programmes leading to NUI qualifications and those of the Framework. The enactment of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 under which NUI is a 'designated awarding body' has placed further significant responsibilities on the University in relation to the establishment and publication of its quality assurance procedures. These procedures will be subject to periodic review by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), the Authority established under the Act to oversee the National Framework of Qualifications and the quality assurance of further and higher education and training in Ireland.

NUI is the designated awarding body for all programmes leading to NUI qualifications in the Recognised Colleges. Proposals for these programmes, both major and non-major, are subject to approval by the NUI Senate.

NUI will seek to assure itself that programmes of study which lead to NUI qualifications in the Recognised Colleges are of an appropriate academic standard and that they adhere to University policy and procedures, as appropriate.

The NUI will seek to ensure that:

- Programmes leading to NUI qualifications are designed in accordance with the University's requirements for programme design as specified in the NUI Programme Approval Procedures and Regulations
- Aims and learning outcomes are clear and coherent and the proposed level of the award is in accordance with national standards
- Curricula, teaching, learning and assessment methods enable students to reach an appropriate standard to achieve the award
- Student support arrangements are appropriate within the Recognised College and sufficient to enable the student to achieve their award aim
- There are sufficient resources (both learning and physical) and staffing in the Recognised College to support the proposed programme aims and objectives
- There are adequate procedures in place in the Recognised College to assure the quality and standards of programmes accredited by NUI, including arrangements to support the student experience and monitor student performance
- Programmes of study take appropriate account of relevant external subject benchmarks and professional requirements and include the involvement of external stakeholders, including employers and graduates, where appropriate.

SECTION 2: The submission of new programmes for approval

1. Procedures for the submission of new programmes for approval

1.1. Documentation to accompany all proposals for new programmes:

- a) The Programme proposal (in hard-copy and electronic format) from the relevant School / Faculty in the Recognised College. See Appendix 1 for suggested criteria
- b) The full report of the external assessor (where appointed by the Recognised College)
- c) The report of the Recognised College addressing any issues raised by the external assessor
- d) Any relevant supporting documentation relating to the programme proposed and the internal programme approval process in the Recognised College.

2. Time-frames for the submission of new programmes

2.1. For new undergraduate programmes, it is recommended that proposals be made at least 10 months in advance of the next academic year or 10 months before it is planned to offer the programme to students.

2.2. For new taught postgraduate programmes, it is recommended that proposals be made at least eight (8) months in advance of the next academic year or eight (8) months before it is planned to offer the programme to students.

3. External review process for new programmes

3.1. Introduction

The NUI is responsible for ensuring that effective methods for the approval of new programmes are established and maintained to ensure the standards and quality of proposed new programmes within the University are maintained both nationally and internationally and are consistent with those in place in the NUI constituent universities.

To support this process, the Senate requires that all new programmes leading to NUI qualifications in the Recognised Colleges be subject to external and independent review.

3.2. External review process for programmes leading to major awards

All programmes leading to **major awards** in the NFQ: Levels 7, 8, 9 and 10 will be reviewed by at least two external assessors, one to be appointed by the NUI and one to be appointed by the Recognised College.

It is acknowledged that for some new programmes participation by professional, regulatory or employer bodies may be desirable as part of the review process. The Recognised College is asked to consult with the NUI concerning the form of such participation.

3.3. External review process for programmes leading to non-major awards

All programmes leading to **non-major awards, i.e. minor, special purpose or supplemental awards** at all levels in the NFQ will be subject to external review as follows:

- a) Programmes (< 60 credits) leading to non-major awards at NFQ: Levels 6, 7, 8 and 9 will require support by an external assessor who is expert in the relevant discipline area. The external review of these programmes can be carried out by:
 - An external assessor independently appointed by the Recognised College or
 - The Extern Examiner currently appointed by NUI to review existing programmes in a related discipline area;
- b) Programmes (> 60 credits) leading to non-major awards at NFQ: Levels 6, 7, 8 and 9 will require support from an external assessor appointed by the Recognised College in consultation with NUI;
- c) There may be occasions when the NUI will seek independently to appoint an external assessor to review a short programme, irrespective of the credits associated with the programme or the proposed NFQ Level. Any such review will be conducted in consultation with the relevant Recognised College.

3.4. The Role of the External Assessor

The primary role of the external assessor is to act as independent discipline expert. The assessor is invited to comment on any aspect of the proposal, which may include the following:

- Admissions criteria and the targeted student market
- The suitability of programme content in the light of the aims and objectives of the programme
- The alignment of module and programme learning outcomes with assessment methods and the suitability of the assessment instruments
- Whether the proposed programme meets the academic quality and standards of similar programmes offered by other institutions.

3.5. External Assessors appointed by the NUI Senate

- a) The External Assessor is appointed by the University to make recommendations to Senate in respect of new programmes proposed by the Recognised College.
- b) The External Assessor, appointed by NUI, will be required to report his/her findings and recommendations directly to the NUI Registrar.

Full criteria and guidelines are contained in Appendix 8.

4. Outcomes of Approval

4.1. The NUI Senate may:

- a) Approve a programme;
- b) Approve a programme subject to the fulfilment of certain conditions. Conditions are requirements, which must be met prior to the admission of a student onto the programme;

- c) Approve a programme subject to minor amendments/editorial changes to be completed as soon as possible and suggested recommendations for improvement which may be considered by the Programme Team at their discretion;
- d) Withhold approval of a programme pending further development.

5. Implementation of the Approved New Programme

- 5.1.** The NUI Registrar will inform the Head of the Recognised College in writing of the Senate's decision regarding the approval of a programme.
- 5.2.** Final programme documentation (incorporating any proposed amendments) shall be submitted to the NUI Registrar.
- 5.3.** A start-date for the programme will be confirmed.

SECTION 3:

Classification of major and minor changes to existing programmes and Guidelines when considering major changes to existing programmes

1. Classification of major and minor changes to existing programmes

1.1. Major changes to existing programmes

- a) A change in programme title or the addition of a non-major award/exit route;
- b) A change in the overall credits for the programme;
- c) A substantive change in programme structure and/or regulation(s);
- d) A substantial change in programme content and/or programme learning outcomes;
- e) The creation/withdrawal of subject areas/pathways/streams within a programme;
- f) The creation of a new subject area not previously taught in the Recognised College;
- g) The deletion/withdrawal of a Programme previously approved by NUI from the Recognised College portfolio;
- h) The addition of a new partner for programmes delivered in collaboration or addition of a partner to an existing programme approved by NUI;
- i) A change to undergraduate admissions requirements;
- j) Entry Requirements for Taught Postgraduate Programmes - where a proposed change results in a departure from the entry requirements originally approved, this may be considered a major change e.g. if the proposal results in an exclusion of a cohort previously allowed apply for the programme, or makes the entry requirement harsher than those specified at original programme approval.

1.2. Minor changes to existing programmes

These include any change in programme structure or module description that is not considered Major as defined above.

- a) Change in existing title and credit value of module(s);
- b) The replacement of module(s);
- c) The addition of new module(s);
- d) The discontinuation of modules;
- e) The change in the ratio of core to elective modules;
- f) Introduction of full-time or part-time option for existing programme;
- g) A change in the mode of the delivery or learning environment (e.g. blended learning of an existing programme);
- h) Entry Requirements for taught postgraduate programmes only - any change other than those outlined in 9.1(j) above

***Note:** Recognised Colleges are requested to consider the impact of any minor changes on the overall integrity of the programme as originally approved, (especially where minor changes are introduced to a programme over a number of years consecutively).

2. Guidelines for a Recognised College when considering major changes to programmes:

2.1. When considering proposed major changes to existing programmes, the Recognised College should have consideration for the following:

- a) Major changes to existing programmes are designed in accordance with the NUI's Policies and Procedures governing the approval of new programmes and curriculum change
- b) Aims and learning outcomes are clear and coherent and the proposed NFQ level of the qualification is in accordance with national standards in the revised programme
- c) Curricula, teaching, learning and assessment methods in the revised programme enable students to reach the appropriate standard to achieve the award
- d) The alignment of assessment to module learning outcomes, and in turn, the alignment of module learning outcomes to the programme learning outcomes
- e) Student support arrangements in place for the programme are appropriate and sufficient to enable the student to complete the programme and achieve the qualification (e.g. in the case of students going on placement abroad)
- f) The revised programme takes appropriate account of relevant external discipline benchmarks and professional, statutory and regulatory body requirements
- g) Existing cohorts of students are not materially disadvantaged by the proposed change. If it transpires that a change might be to the detriment of any student(s), consent to the change should be sought appropriately from each affected student.

2.2. It is recommended that where a Recognised College is considering a major change to a programme, a representative group from the Programme Team (including the Programme Coordinator) be included in the decision-making process.

SECTION 4:

Procedures for minor and major changes proposed for existing programmes

1. Procedures for minor changes to existing programmes previously approved by the NUI Senate

1.1. In circumstances where the proposed changes do not significantly alter the content and overall learning outcomes of the programme (as indicated in section 3 (1.2)) and have been subject to approval by the appropriate authorities in the Recognised College, the recommendations regarding the approval of minor changes will be reported to Senate.

1.2. Documentation to accompany all programmes with proposed minor changes:

- a) Statement from the Registrar or relevant Head of School / Faculty supporting the application and detailing the nature of the proposed minor changes.
- b) Statement of support for the proposed minor changes from the current extern examiner appointed to the programme by NUI. If the extern examiner is unavailable to review the minor changes then the Recognised College will nominate and appoint an alternative independent assessor in consultation with the NUI Registrar.

2. Procedures for major changes to existing programmes previously approved by the NUI Senate

2.1. In circumstances where a major change(s) is proposed to an existing programme, (as indicated in section 3 (1.1)), the Recognised College is required to make an application to NUI seeking approval by Senate.

2.2. Documentation to accompany all programmes with proposed major changes:

- a) A short course document outlining the proposed major changes to the programme and detailing the impact of these changes on the overall structure and associated learning outcomes of the programme
- b) Statement from the Registrar or relevant Head of School / Faculty supporting the application and providing a rationale for the proposed major changes
- c) Details of the process undertaken to review the proposed major changes and to include support by:
 - i. The current NUI-appointed extern examiner in the related discipline area or
 - ii. An external assessor independently appointed by the Recognised College.

2.3. Occasionally, proposed changes to an existing programme may be so substantial that the proposal should be classified and processed as a new programme. The Recognised College is asked to consult with the NUI Registrar for guidance in such instances.

3. Changes to Marks and Standards

3.1. Marks and Standards are the rules and regulations governing examinations and are used in the presentation of results to examination boards. While a policy for marks and standards is principally the responsibility of the Recognised College, the NUI will seek to be assured that the standards in place are consistent with those of the NUI constituent universities and of the QQI.

3.2. Changes to Marks and Standards may include the following:

- a) Time of the formal end-of-year written examinations
- b) Total marks for each year of the programme
- c) Pass (and progression) standard for the award
- d) Calculation of honours for final award
- e) Carrying forward of marks towards final award
- f) Regulations governing approved exit awards for the programme
- g) Exemptions
- h) Rules governing examination in a Supplemental and/or Repeat year.

SECTION 5: APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1:

Suggested Template for Proposals for New Programmes

A proposal for a new programme should include but is not restricted to the following:

New Programme Overview	
Title of Award / Qualification	e.g. Bachelor of Science
Title of programme	e.g. Biomedical Sciences
School / Department	
Proposed start-date	
Award-type	Major or Non-major (Minor, Special Purpose or Supplemental)
Minor / Exit Awards to be included	
NFQ: Level	
Duration of Programme	Full-time / Part-time delivery
Total Credits (ECTS) of programme	
Entry requirements	e.g. formal qualifications or pre-requisites needed to undertake the programme and additional selection criteria, where appropriate.
Outline of programme structure	Diagrammatic overview
Marks and Standards	These are the examination regulations used in the presentation of results to examination boards; for determining pass/progression within the programme; for decisions on the awarding of the qualification; the honours or other classification awarded; the requirements for completing outstanding requirements, repeat examinations, etc.
Programme Aim	In general terms, the knowledge and skills set attained by students completing the award.
Programme Content	Outline in general terms of the topics covered.
Programme Learning Outcomes	These are statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate having completed the programme. Statements should focus on what the student will have achieved rather than focussing on the content of what has been taught.
Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategies	Teaching, learning and assessment strategies including the alignment of module and programme learning outcomes with assessment methods. This section should make clear the extent to which a programme includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continued assessment and the proportion

	<p>of marks allocated to both continuous assessment and examinations;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice-based elements where applicable.
Progression/Exit Pathways	<p>Where appropriate a general statement should be included to advise students on pathways to further study on completion of their initial award aim and any specific requirements in terms of academic standard, attendance, etc.</p> <p>Where exit awards are offered please provide separate Learning Outcomes for each award.</p>
Professional / regulatory considerations	Where relevant.
Details of each Module offered	<p><u>To include for each module:</u></p> <p>Core / optional</p> <p>Credit volume</p> <p>NFQ Level</p> <p>General Aims and Objectives</p> <p>Module-specific Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Appropriate learning resources</p> <p>Assessment criteria</p>
Resources Statement	<p>Description of the overall resources required for the programme, staffing and physical resources, and the evaluation of the adequacy of resources and ease of access for students.</p> <p><u>To include:</u></p> <p>Teaching staff profiles</p> <p>Learning resources and student supports</p> <p>Information Systems</p> <p>Public Information</p>
General memorandum of understanding (MOU) in relation to academic cooperation between a Recognised College and other relevant partner institution(s) (where applicable)	To be completed in the case of programmes offered jointly with one or more other partners.

References to national and international guidelines:

ENQA (2009), *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, http://www.enqa.eu/files/ESG_3edition%20%282%29.pdf, [Accessed 2 May 2013]

FIN (2009), *University awards and the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ): Issues around the Design of Programmes and the Use and Assessment of Learning Outcomes*, http://www.nfqnetwork.ie/Section_1_Final/Default.140.html, [Accessed 2 May 2013]

IUQB (2012), *National Guidelines of Good Practice for the Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes*, http://www.iuqb.ie/info/good_practice_guides.aspx?article=4b9d7b37-0b78-4dc9-

[a577-f423d2524ed0](#), [Accessed 2 Mary 2013]

Appendix 2:

Suggested Template for Proposals for Major Changes to Existing Programmes

A proposal for major changes to existing programmes should include but is not restricted to the following:

Title of Award / Qualification	e.g. Bachelor of Science
Title of programme	e.g. Biomedical Sciences
School / Department	
Proposed month and year for implementation of the proposed change	e.g. September 2012
Year(s) of Programme(s) to which change applies	First year, second year etc.
Award-type	Major or Non-major (Minor, Special Purpose or Supplemental)
NFQ: Level	
Total Credits (ECTS) of programme	
Summary of the Proposed Change: To include the following details:	(i) A brief narrative of what is proposed and the key differences from current provision. (ii) A rationale for the proposed change(s): to include academic, strategic, staffing, resource or other. (iii) Effect of proposed changes on (a) current and (b) future student cohorts (list advantages and disadvantages)
Outline of revised programme structure	Diagrammatic overview: to include original modules and proposed changes
Revised Programme Overview: To include details of any changes in the following areas:	
Marks & Standards	
Programme Aim	

Programme Content	
Programme Learning Outcomes	
Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategies	
Progression / Exit pathways	
Professional / regulatory considerations	
Details of changes to Modules offered	<p><u>To include for each module:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Core / optional (ii) Credit volume (iii) General Aims and Objectives (iv) Module-specific Learning Outcomes (v) Appropriate learning resources (vi) Assessment criteria
Details of changes in Resources	<p><u>To include:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Teaching staff profiles (ii) Learning resources and student supports (iii) Information Systems (iv) Public Information

Appendix 3:

NUI Policy in relation to the usage of titles

The Senate favours a policy of non-proliferation of degree titles and as far as possible, the use of generic titles.

The usage of degree titles should be based on the following guiding principles and provisions:

- The degree titles BA & MA and BSc & MSc should continue to be regarded as generic titles and not exclusive to the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences and the College of Science, Engineering and Food Science, respectively
- However, the connotations of the titles BSc and MSc in terms of course content, duration, general academic quality and rigour, when used in the Faculty of Science, should not be undermined by the usage of those titles generically in other Colleges/Faculties. Accordingly, the usage of those titles by other Colleges/Faculties for new degree programmes should be acceptable only if, in terms of content, duration, general academic quality and rigour, the interests of the College of Science, Engineering and Food Science are safeguarded
- In other circumstances, Colleges/Faculties should use their own College/Faculty titles, with any new specialism in parentheses, e.g. BComm (Management)
- In addition, the degree title Bachelor of Applied Science should be made available as a new generic degree title (Master of Applied Science being among the existing titles)
- Consideration should also be given to the introduction of further generic titles such as BPhil.

The Senate accepts the case for greater specificity of titles, in the case of certificate and diploma and qualifications at undergraduate or postgraduate level, or those offered as part of continuing professional development. However, it is recommended that in these cases care should be taken to avoid titles which are excessively lengthy or whose language could be expected rapidly to become dated.

Appendix 4:

Guidelines in relation to the level and type of award to be assigned to NUI qualifications under the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) was established in 2003 and is a single structure mechanism for recognising all education and training in Ireland. The framework comprises ten levels, based on nationally agreed standards of knowledge, skill and competence and includes different classes or categories of awards / qualifications. The NFQ, whilst a national development, is also linked to similar initiatives that are taking place in other countries and at an overall European level.

1. Award level descriptors assigned to NUI qualifications (major and non-major awards) in the NFQ¹

Level 6: Certificate and Diploma

'Learning outcomes at this level include a comprehensive range of skills which may be vocationally-specific and/or of a general supervisory nature, and require detailed theoretical understanding. The outcomes also provide for a particular focus on learning skills. The outcomes relate to working in a generally autonomous way to assume design and/or management and/or administrative responsibilities. Occupations at this level would include higher craft, junior technician and supervisor.' (NQAI, 2003, p. 20)

Level 7: Certificate, Diploma and Ordinary Bachelor degrees

'Learning outcomes at this level relate to knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles in a field of study and the application of those principles in different contexts. This level includes knowledge of methods of enquiry and the ability to critically evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems. The outcomes include an understanding of the limits of the knowledge acquired and how this influences analyses and interpretations in a work context. Outcomes at this level would be appropriate to the upper end of many technical occupations and would include higher technicians, some restricted professionals and junior management.' (NQAI, 2003, p. 20)

Level 8: Honours Bachelor degrees / Higher Diplomas

'Innovation is a key feature of learning outcomes at this level. Learning outcomes at this level relate to being at the forefront of a field of learning in terms of knowledge and understanding. The outcomes include an awareness of the boundaries of the learning in the field and the preparation required to push back those boundaries through further learning. The outcomes relate to adaptability, flexibility, ability to cope with change and ability to exercise initiative and solve problems within their field of study. In a number of applied fields the outcomes are those linked with the independent, knowledge-based professional. In other fields the outcomes are linked with those of a

¹ NQAI (2003), *Outline National Framework of Qualifications – Determinations made by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland*, <http://www.nqai.ie/docs/publications/12.pdf>, p. 20.

generalist and would normally be appropriate to management positions.’ (NQAI, 2003, p. 20)

Level 9: Masters degree / Postgraduate Diploma / Postgraduate Certificate

Masters Programmes providing progression to programmes leading to Doctoral Degrees. Postgraduate Diploma which may exempt from part of the programme leading to a Masters Degree. **Continuing Professional Development Diplomas**

‘Learning outcomes at this level relate to the demonstration of knowledge and understanding which is the forefront of a field of learning. The outcomes relate to the application of knowledge, understanding and problem-solving abilities in new or unfamiliar contexts related to field of study. The outcomes are associated with an ability to integrate knowledge, handle complexity and formulate judgments. Outcomes associated with this level would link with employment as a senior professional or manager with responsibility for the work outputs of teams.’ (NQAI, 2003, p. 20)

Level 10: Doctoral degrees

‘Learning Outcomes at this level relate to the discovery and development of new knowledge and skills and delivering findings at the frontiers of knowledge and application. Further outcomes at this level relate to specialist skills and transferable skills required for managing such as the abilities to critique and develop organizational structures and initiate change.’ (NQAI, 2003, p. 21)

2. Award-type Descriptors contained in the NFQ which have been agreed between the universities and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI)

- **Major Awards** are the principle class of awards made at each level, e.g. Honours Bachelor degree (NFQ: Level 8) or Masters degree (NFQ: Level 9). The learning outcomes associated with these major award-types include many of the sub-strands of knowledge, skills and competence appropriate to the level and should be coherently planned to meet the aims and objectives of the award. Awards of a major-award type will provide learners with the options of (i) progressing to higher-level awards, (ii) transferring to other awards at the same level or (iii) gaining direct transition to employment.

Note: Where a major award is offered at an exit point, e.g. Postgraduate Diploma when exiting a Masters degree, then a separate set of learning outcomes should be included for this programme.

- **Minor Awards** provide recognition for learners who achieve a range of learning outcomes but not the specific combination of volume of learning outcomes required for a major award. The associated learning outcomes of these awards form a component part of the learning outcomes of a major award.
- **Special Purpose Awards** are stand-alone awards and recognise a specific or relatively narrow range of learning outcomes.
- **Supplemental Awards** recognise learning that is additional to a major award and could, for example, relate to the updating of knowledge or skills, or to continuing professional development.

Appendix 5:

Credit weightings for programmes

Undergraduate	
Ordinary Bachelor Degree (3 years)	180 credits
Honours Bachelor Degree (3 to 4 years)	180 - 240 credits
Diploma (1 to 2 years)	60 - 120 credits (typically 60)
Certificate (1 year)	< 60 credits (typically 30)

Postgraduate	
PhD / Practitioner Doctorate (3 to 4 year full-time)	270 - 360 credits
Taught Masters (12 to 18 months full-time) <i>[i.e. 1 calendar year 90 credits; 18 months concurrently up to 120 credits; 2 academic years 60 credits / year up to 120 credits]</i>	90 - 120 credits
Research Masters (1 to 2 years full-time)	90 - 180 credits
Postgraduate Diploma (1 year full-time)	> 60 credits (but < 90 credits)
Postgraduate Certificate (1 year part-time)	30 - 40 credits
Higher Diploma (1 year full-time)	60 credits

Under Bologna the notional student workload per 5-credit module is 100-150 hours (including contact hours, student study and examining time). Larger 10 or 15 credit modules would involve 2 or 3 times the workload of a standard 5-credit module.

Normally, a 5-credit module consists of 20 – 30 hrs lectures plus associated tutorials / essays / readings / practical / course-work OR the equivalent in student workload such as Literature projects, field courses, or indeed set reading assessed by written examination, work for problem sets, studying of legal materials and cases outside of lecture hours etc.

TO NOTE: Non-major Awards

In January 2006, the universities and NQAI agreed the credit ranges and associated qualification titles for non-major awards in the university sector. It was decided that the title Certificate would be used for non-major awards up to, but not including 60 credits, and that the Diploma would be used for non-major awards of 60 credits or more.²

² FIN (2009), *University awards and the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ): Issues around the Design of Programmes and the Use and Assessment of Learning Outcomes*, http://www.nfqnetwork.ie/Section_1_Final/Default.140.html, [Accessed 2 May 2013], p. 18.

Appendix 6:

NUI Grade Classifications

The following tables provide a guideline of the grade classifications applied to major and non-major programmes leading to NUI qualifications in a broad range of disciplines in the NUI federal system. It should be noted that while the standards applied are consistent with national norms there is some interchange between the grade classification titles used for non-major programmes leading to NUI qualifications in the NUI institutions.

Arts, Social Sciences, Business, Law, Sciences, Engineering and associated disciplines:

NUI Qualification	Award-type	NFQ Level	Classification	
NUI Certificate	Minor / Special Purpose	6, 7, 8	Distinction	(70% and above)
			Merit	(50% - 69%)
NUI Diploma	Minor / Special Purpose	6, 7, 8	Pass	(40% - 49%)
Ordinary Bachelor Degree	Major	7	1st Class Honours	(70% and above)
Honours Bachelor Degree	Major	8	2nd Class Honours, Grade 1	(60% - 69%)
			2nd Class Honours, Grade 2	(50% - 59%)
			3rd Class Honours	(45% - 49%)
Higher Diploma	Major	8	<i>(where awarded)</i>	
Professional Diploma in Education	Major	8	Pass	(40% - 49%)
			Pass	(40% - 44%) <i>(where 3rd Class Honours awarded)</i>
Professional Certificate	Special Purpose	7, 8, 9	Distinction	(70% and above)
Professional Diploma	Special Purpose	7, 8, 9	Merit	(50% - 69%)
			Pass	(40% - 49%)
Postgraduate Certificate	Minor / Supplemental	9	1st Class Honours	(70% and above)
Postgraduate Diploma	Major	9	2nd Class Honours, Grade 1	(60% - 69%)
			2nd Class Honours, Grade 2	(50% - 59%)
Masters Degree (taught)	Major	9	Pass	(40% - 49%)

Nursing, Health Sciences and Healthcare Systems:

NUI Qualification	Award-type	NFQ Level	Classification
NUI Certificate	Minor / Special Purpose	6, 7, 8	Distinction (70% and above) Merit (60% - 69%) Pass (50% - 59%)
NUI Diploma	Minor / Special Purpose	6, 7, 8	
Ordinary Bachelor Degree	Major	7	1st Class Honours (70% and above) 2nd Class Honours, Grade 1 (65% - 69%)
Honours Bachelor Degree	Major	8	2nd Class Honours, Grade 2 (60% - 64%) Pass (50% - 59%)
Higher Diploma	Major	8	
Professional Diploma in Education	Major	8	
Professional Certificate	Special Purpose	7, 8, 9	Distinction (70% and above) Merit (60% - 69%) Pass (50% - 59%)
Professional Diploma	Special Purpose	7, 8, 9	
Postgraduate Certificate	Minor / Supplemental	9	1st Class Honours (70% and above) 2nd Class Honours, Grade 1 (65% - 69%) 2nd Class Honours, Grade 2 (60% - 64%) Pass (50% - 59%)
Postgraduate Diploma	Major	9	
Masters Degree (taught)	Major	9	

Pharmacy:

NUI Qualification	Award-type	NFQ Level	Classification
BPharm BSc (Pharm)	Major	8	1st Class Honours (70% and above) 2nd Class Honours, Grade 1 (60% - 69%) 2nd Class Honours, Grade 2 (55% - 59%) Pass (50% - 54%)
MPharm	Major	9	1st Class Honours (70% and above) 2nd Class Honours, Grade 1 (60% - 69%) 2nd Class Honours, Grade 2 (55% - 59%) Pass (50% - 54%)

Medicine & Dentistry:

NUI Qualification	Award-type	NFQ Level	Classification
MB BCh BAO BDS	Major	8	1st Class Honours (70% and above) 2nd Class Honours (60% - 69%) Pass (50% - 59%)

Appendix 7:

European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) on approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards (extract)

1.2 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards³

STANDARD

Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards.

GUIDELINES

The confidence of students and other stakeholders in higher education is more likely to be established and maintained through effective quality assurance activities which ensure that programmes are well-designed, regularly monitored and periodically reviewed, thereby securing their continuing relevance and currency.

The quality assurance of programmes and awards are expected to include:

- development and publication of explicit intended learning outcomes;
- careful attention to curriculum and programme design and content;
- specific needs of different modes of delivery (e.g. full time, part-time, distance learning, e-learning) and types of higher education (e.g. academic, vocational, professional);
- availability of appropriate learning resources;
- formal programme approval procedures by a body other than that teaching the programme;
- monitoring of the progress and achievements of students;
- regular periodic reviews of programmes (including external panel members);
- regular feedback from employers, labour market representatives and other relevant organisations;
- participation of students in quality assurance activities.

³ ENQA (2009), *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, http://www.enqa.eu/files/ESG_3edition%20%282%29.pdf, [Accessed 2 May 2013], p. 16

Appendix 8:

Guidelines and Criteria for the appointment of External Assessors by the National University of Ireland

NUI policy for quality assurance recognises that the NUI Recognised Colleges have the primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance; the University, in turn, as the designated awarding body has quality responsibilities for the qualifications that it awards.

1. Criteria and Guidelines for the appointment of External Assessors

- 1.1. An External Assessor should be a specialist in the relevant field of study, have appropriate academic standing and expertise, and sufficient university experience to adjudicate on comparability of standards.
- 1.2. An External Assessor should not normally be appointed from a School / College where a member of staff in the host School / College is currently serving as an Examiner.
- 1.3. An External Assessor may not be involved in the teaching of a subject/degree programme, which he/she will be called on to moderate.
- 1.4. An individual should not be appointed as an External Assessor if his/her impartiality could be called into question because of a personal or professional relationship with a member of staff or a student in the NUI institution concerned.
- 1.5. An individual who has retired, but who remains active in academic life and continues to engage in teaching, research or other academic activities relevant to the external assessor role, is eligible for appointment as an External Assessor.
- 1.6. All programmes proposed by the Recognised Colleges which lead to **major awards in the NFQ: Levels 8, 9 and 10** will be reviewed by two External Assessors, one of whom will be appointed by the NUI.
- 1.7. Programmes proposed by the Recognised Colleges leading to **(i) major awards at Level 7 and (ii) non-major awards at all levels in the NFQ** will be reviewed by one External Assessor and will be appointed by the Recognised College in consultation with the NUI Registrar.

2. The Role and Responsibilities of the External Assessor

- 2.1. The primary role of the external assessor is to act as independent discipline expert.
- 2.2. An External Assessor(s) is appointed by the University to make recommendations to Senate in respect of new programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels proposed by the Recognised Colleges.
- 2.3. All External Assessors appointed by NUI and the Recognised College (where applicable) will be required to report their findings to the NUI Registrar. The Registrar will report the recommendations regarding the approval of individual programmes to Senate.
- 2.4. The NUI Registrar will provide the External Assessor, appointed by the University, with all relevant documentation including the documentation presented by the Recognised College on the proposed new programme and guidelines in respect of the report on the programme.
- 2.5. The assessor will be invited to comment on any aspect of the programme proposal which may include the following:

- Admissions criteria and the targeted student market.
- The suitability of programme content in the light of the aims and objectives of the programme.
- The alignment of module and programme learning outcomes with assessment methods and the suitability of the assessment instruments.
- Whether the proposed programme meets the academic quality and standards of similar programmes offered by other institutions.

3. The Report of the External Assessor

- 3.1.** As part of the review process, the External Assessor is asked to submit a report and make recommendations to the NUI Registrar with regard to the approval of the proposed new programme. For reference, suggested criteria are included in section 4 below.
- 3.2.** The External Assessor is encouraged to liaise with the Registrar/Head of Department/Course Director in the Recognised College and/or the NUI to satisfy themselves on any specific queries they may have in respect of the new programme, prior to the submission of recommendations to the NUI Registrar.
- 3.3.** The External Assessor, appointed by the University, is requested to send their report directly to the NUI Registrar and in addition may forward a copy to the relevant representatives within the Recognised College.
- 3.4.** It should be noted that the External Assessor's report may be:
- Subject to the Freedom of Information Act and that, accordingly, any person named in the report will be entitled to have access to it.
 - Used as part of the University's processes of quality audit and quality assessment.

4. Suggested criteria for the External Assessor Report following a review of the proposed new programme

Listed below are suggested criteria for consideration by the Programme Assessor, however, it should be noted that this list is not exhaustive and any additional comments are welcomed:

- 4.1.** The validity and relevance of the overall aims and objectives of the programme;
- 4.2.** The appropriateness and relevance of the main learning outcomes of the programme in relation to the stated aims and objectives;
- 4.3.** The provisions for teaching and learning in terms of the intended learning outcomes;
- 4.4.** The appropriateness of the curriculum design and content to the level of the programme and the degree or other qualification proposed, having regard to the relevant current national and international benchmarks;
- 4.5.** The appropriateness of the assessment scheme and the instruments of assessment;
- 4.6.** The provision of suitable student supports and guidance;
- 4.7.** The provision of adequate staffing and other resources for the programme to ensure the proposed learning outcomes can be achieved.

SECTION 6: REFERENCES

1. General Guidelines:

ENQA (2009), *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, http://www.enqa.eu/files/ESG_3edition%20%282%29.pdf, [Accessed 2 May 2013]

ECTS, Users' Guide (2009), http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ects/guide_en.pdf, [Accessed 2 May 2013]

FIN (2009), *University awards and the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ): Issues around the Design of Programmes and the Use and Assessment of Learning Outcomes*, http://www.nfqnetwork.ie/Section_1_Final/Default.140.html, [Accessed 2 May 2013]

IUQB (2012), *National Guidelines of Good Practice for the Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes*, http://www.iuqb.ie/info/good_practice_guides.aspx?article=4b9d7b37-0b78-4dc9-a577-f423d2524ed0, [Accessed 2 May 2013]

UCC (2013), *Handbook governing New Academic Programme Approval and Curriculum Change*, <http://www.ucc.ie/en/apar/curriculumapproval/handbook/>, [Accessed 2 May 2013]

2. Guidelines for Learning Outcomes

ENQA (2010), *Quality Assurance and Learning Outcomes*, <http://www.enqa.eu/files/WSR%2017%20-%20Final.pdf>, [Accessed 2 May 2013]

Kennedy, Declan (2007), *Writing and Using Learning Outcomes*, <http://www.nairtl.ie/workgroupDocs/4%20Kennedy%20D.pdf>, [Accessed 2 May 2013]

3. Useful Links

- **The Bologna Process**
http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/bologna_en.htm
- **National Framework of Qualifications (Ireland)**
<http://www.nfq.ie/nfq/en/>
- **UCC – Office for Academic Programmes and Regulations**
<http://www.ucc.ie/en/apar/>
- **UCD – Academic Secretariat - Programmes**
<http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/progs.htm>

- **Qualifications and Quality Ireland**
<http://www.qqi.ie/Pages/default.aspx>

Modified by	Approved by Senate
ADurnin – May 2013	27 June 2013