

**HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING AWARDS COUNCIL, IRELAND**

Comhairle na nDámhachtainí Ardoideachais agus Oiliúna, Éire

**Institutional Review of Providers of Higher Education and Training**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology**

**SET**

[www.hetac.ie](http://www.hetac.ie)

**Higher Education and Training Awards Council**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW OF**

**Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology in September 2010**

STATUS: SET

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## **Section 1. Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to specify the Terms of Reference for the institutional review of Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology in September 2010. The HETAC Institutional Review policy applies to all institutions providing HETAC accredited programmes or programmes accredited under Delegated Authority. These Terms of Reference are set within the overarching policy for Institutional Review as approved in December 2007 and should be read in conjunction with same. These Terms of Reference do not replace or supersede the agreed policy for Institutional Review. The Terms of Reference once set may not be amended and any significant revision required to the Terms of Reference will result in a new Terms of Reference to be set by HETAC following consultation with the institution. These Terms of Reference should be read in conjunction with the supplementary guidelines for Institutional Review.

The objectives of the Institutional Review process are

1. To enhance public confidence in the quality of education and training provided by the institution and the standards of the awards made;
2. To contribute to coherent strategic planning and governance in the institution;
3. To assess the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance arrangements operated by the institution;
4. To confirm the extent that the institution has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications and procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression;
5. To evaluate the operation and management of Delegated Authority where it has been granted;
6. To provide recommendations for the enhancement of the education and training provided by the institution.

It is possible that, within the objectives outlined above, Institutions may have specific sub-objectives to which they will attach particular importance and wish to emphasise in their TOR. To maximise the benefits of the review process, Institutions may also consider including additional objectives relevant to its context.

The approach taken by HETAC to Institutional Review will:

- Acknowledge that institutions have ownership of and responsibility for their activity;
- Be conducted in a spirit of partnership with institutions, with a view to improvement and enhancement, whilst acknowledging statutory requirements for accountability;
- Be conducted in a manner which adds value to the institution, minimises overhead and assists in building Institutional capacity;
- Be flexible, adaptable and scalable in order to meet the needs of diverse institutions;
- Be conducted in an open, consistent and transparent manner;
- Be evidence-based in accordance with established criteria;
- Promote learning and development for all involved;
- Reward innovation and experimentation when it seeks to enhance our understanding of good practice;
- Promote collaboration and sharing of good practice between institutions;

## **Section 2. Institution Profile**

### **Introduction**

Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) is one of 14 Institutes of Technology in Ireland. Originally known as the Regional Technical College Galway, it was founded in 1972. GMIT is located in Galway city on the West Coast of Ireland. It is a multi-campus organisation with two significant outcentres each located approximately 50 miles from the main campus, one in Letterfrack on the outer edge of Connemara and the other in Castlebar, Co Mayo. Table 1 refers to the full range of off-campus provision, Mountbellew is 26 miles from the main campus and the School of Art and Design in Cluain Mhuire is one mile from the main campus. GMIT and the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) are the two providers of higher education in the city of Galway and the surrounding region. GMIT's multi-campus structure ensures that it serves several counties across most of the western region. The total student population is 9000 students, of which 4,905 are full-time undergraduates with the total full time student enrollment at 5,213. The 1,728 part-time students are comprised of students registered on HETAC accredited programmes and the 2,058 Lifelong Learning students are registered on non accredited short term programmes. GMIT has provided a further breakdown on the student profile in Table 1.

GMIT was one of the first Institutes of Technology in Ireland to be granted delegated authority to make its own awards. In October 2001, authority was granted by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) to GMIT to make awards at Level 6 and Level 7 from the academic year 2000/2001. The Institute now has authority to confer its own awards at Levels 7, 8 and 9 in respect of all taught programmes on the National Framework of Qualifications. The Institute was granted delegated authority in 2006 to confer its own awards for research at Levels 9 and 10 in two disciplines, Aquatic Science and Mechanical Engineering. Student numbers and other statistics are shown in table 1. The Institute agreed quality assurance policy and procedures with HETAC in 2003.

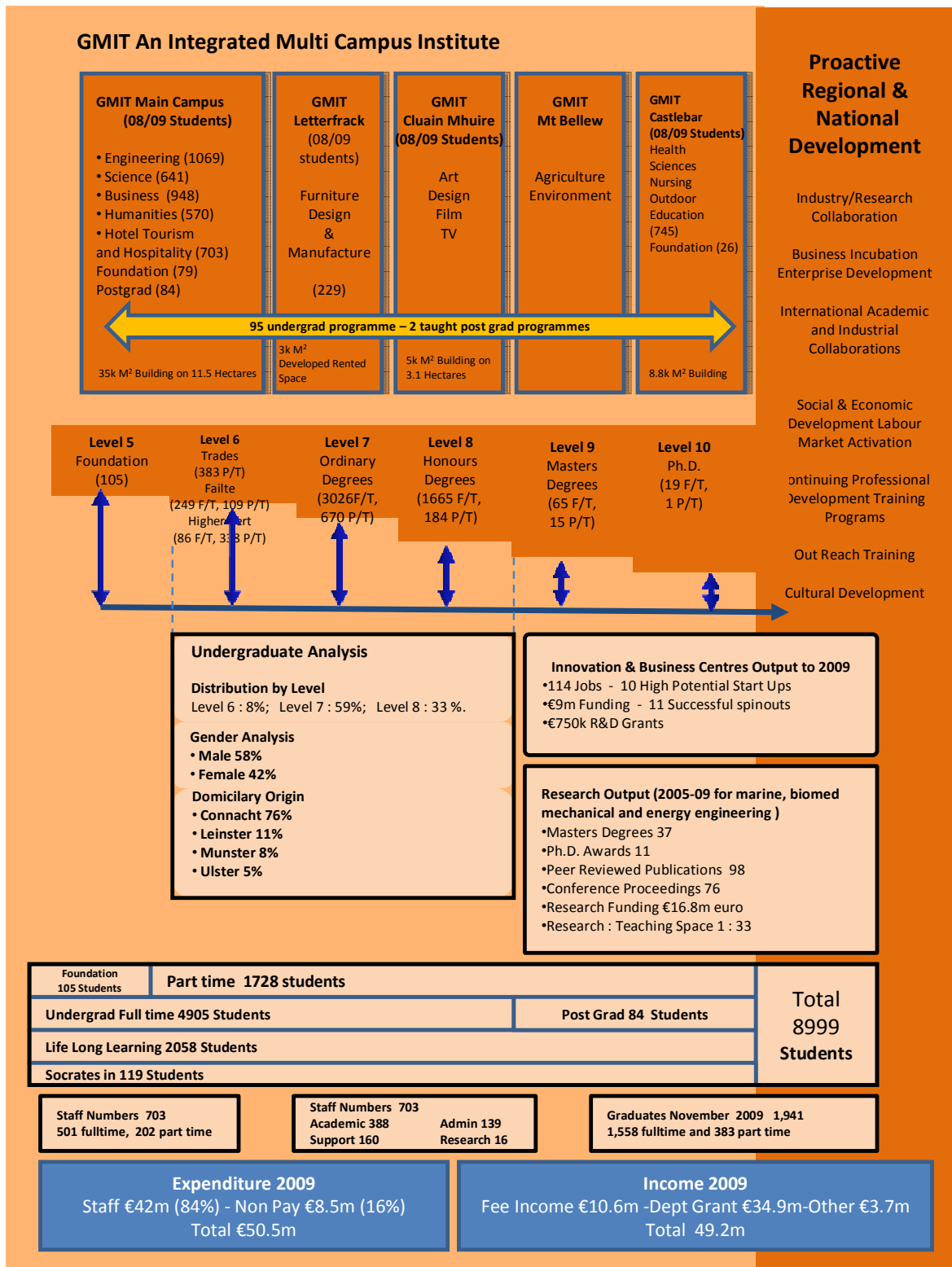
As a publicly funded higher education institution, GMIT is proud of its identity and role as an Institute of Technology. GMIT's Strategic Plan 2010-15 is driven and shaped by the Institute's mission:

**“At GMIT we develop life-long learning opportunities through our teaching and research, by supporting regional development and by implementing national higher education policy.”**

GMIT offers a broad range of programmes ranging from apprentice Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications to doctoral Level 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications. Table 1 below indicates the diversity of programme provision offered by GMIT in each of the campuses, which range from Agriculture to the niche area of Furniture Design and Manufacture to Nursing.

The Institute considers that its reputation is largely determined by the employability and quality of its graduates and the importance of providing a stimulating and rewarding experience for students remains at the heart of GMIT's vision. GMIT considers itself to be very student centered with good relationships between staff and students. The Institute refers to evidence of this positive relationship in all recent programmatic review reports for the Schools of Business, Engineering, Humanities and Furniture in the Letterfrack campus.

Table 1 - GMIT at A Glance



## **Student Experience**

The Institute states it is committed to an applied approach to learning which is underpinned by strong theoretical knowledge and contextualised to the disciplinary focus of the study programme. It considers that learning in this manner is a differentiator of the type of higher education provided by the Institutes of Technology in general and GMIT in particular. This applied approach to learning is also underpinned by work placement opportunities and placements are currently offered on 43 programmes. During the 2009/2010 academic year 1,270 students took up opportunities on a broad range of placements. GMIT also offers its students opportunities to travel abroad to participate in cultural and educational exchange programmes. In the 2009/2010 academic year, for example, 26 GMIT students enrolled on Erasmus and US exchange programmes. Simultaneously, 106 students from countries including France, Germany and the US attended GMIT to participate in the educational and cultural exchange programmes on offer there.

The Institute is proud of its record in attracting mature students and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. GMIT says that recent Higher Education Authority (HEA) Report on Access (2010) show that GMIT attracted the highest number of mature entrants across the Institute of Technology Ireland (IOTI) sector in 2007/2008 and again in 2008/2009. GMIT says it also attracted the highest number of entrants from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The Institute is currently focusing on broadening access to higher education by further developing its policy and procedures with regard to the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

In 2008 GMIT received funding from the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) to facilitate a project aimed at focusing on the 'student experience'. This move has facilitated a student-led learning project in collaboration with the Athlone Institute of Technology and the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG).

## **Learning Teaching Strategy**

The Institute is in the process of developing its first Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) strategy. The need for a LTA strategy arises from a number of challenges and opportunities for the Institute. The Institute's vision for Learning, Teaching and Assessment is to maintain and further develop quality and engaging environments for all students and staff. The LTA strategy applies to undergraduate, postgraduate and other programmes which are officially recognised by the Institute.

## **Staff**

GMIT employs a total of 703 staff of which 501 are full-time and 202 are part-time. 338 staff employed are academic with 139 administrative staff, 160 support staff and 16 staff members are engaged exclusively in research with other staff engaged on a part-time basis.

Since 2005, 83 staff members have completed further higher study programmes, of which eight were PhD programmes, funded by GMIT; in 2008, a total of 125 staff members attended short courses or conferences and 195 attended in-house training programmes – all of which were funded by GMIT. The Institute has expended €1.7m on staff development over the period 2004 to 2009.

Notable recent achievements by GMIT staff include the appointment of staff members to the Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology (IRCSET), to the Higher Education Authority (HEA), the Higher Education Review Body, HETAC, the Marine Institute and a number of others. The senior executive of the Institute will experience significant change in 2010 due to the impending retirement of the Registrar and the Institute President.

## **Research and Innovation**

GMIT considers its research strengths to be in areas of Marine and Freshwater Science, Biomedical Engineering and the Built Environment. The number of research graduates between 2005 and 2009 was 48. More recently, research in the areas of Energy, Tourism, Heritage, the Arts and Digital Multimedia are beginning to emerge. Since 2005, GMIT researchers in marine and freshwater science, biomedical engineering, mechanical engineering and energy engineering have contributed to 98 peer-reviewed publications and 76 conference proceedings. In 2006, two applied research facilities, ShellTec and GMedTec, were established as part of the applied research enhancement programme and are funded by Enterprise Ireland. GMIT's Built Environment Group was responsible for creating the Centre for Sustainable Resource Development.

GMIT's involvement in energy research has recently led to the construction of a green building on the Galway campus. It has also led to the development of Ireland's only EU-standard wind turbine site on the Galway campus; the installation of an EU-standard solar characterisation test facility, and the commissioning of the only online energy laboratory in Ireland which has the capacity to enable students apply their learning in unique conditions. The Institute says there are many other examples of applied research initiatives.

## **Innovation Centres**

GMIT focuses on building innovative capability and capacity, and stimulating entrepreneurship. The Innovation in Business Centres (iIBCs) in both Galway and Castlebar focus attention on the particular needs of entrepreneurs and start-up enterprises. These are self-financing enterprises on the GMIT campus. The business supports available to them include access to talented GMIT graduates coupled with access to dedicated research and development and enhanced technology transfer competencies within GMIT. Since 2005, ten high potential start-ups (HPSUs) have emerged from the iIBCs, all of which went on to become successful businesses. The ten high potential start-up businesses have created 40 plus jobs and raised €9 million from investors and other funders.

## **Regional and Community Engagement**

GMIT considers itself to be outward looking and says that it works closely with many different communities. It is acknowledged as a regional leader in sectoral areas which have been noted for development potential in the *Forfás Regional Competitiveness Agenda: Realising Potential: West (2009)*. These development potential areas are medical technologies, software and ICT services, tourism, renewable energy, creative sectors and digital media, food, fisheries and aquaculture.

GMIT says it is proud of its regional remit and its record in meeting the needs of the communities it serves. Some examples of meeting those regional needs include:

- Catering for the Irish language speakers living in its catchment area by delivering a number of programmes through the medium of Irish.
- The establishment of partnerships with local/regional organisations with a view to facilitating industry development and job creation in particular sectoral areas, for example the Arts, Film and Television, and Furniture Design through the Letterfrack Campus and others.
- The provision of customised programmes at its campuses in Galway city (main campus and Cluain Mhuire), Castlebar, Letterfrack and Mountbellew and in off-campus engagements from Belmullet Co Mayo, Ennis Co Clare to Sherkin Islands Co Cork. This includes the delivery of online/blended learning initiatives which are aimed at reaching out to a diverse, dispersed and disadvantaged population.
- GMIT's response to the economic downturn offering practical support to the recently unemployed. The offer of free tuition on the Higher Certificate in Business in Enterprise

Development is one such example. GMIT staff have provided their services in addition to their full workload on this programme on a pro-bono basis.

### **Internationalisation**

In addition to linkages with European and US universities, GMIT maintains strong collaborative links with universities in Australia, China and Saudi Arabia. Since 2005, it has been particularly active in China, where the focus is on the development of a series of in-depth collaborations to bring Chinese students to GMIT. Of these, the link with Nanchang University (NCU) is the most prestigious and has been selected by the Chinese government as a key university in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Currently, there are 31 Chinese students from NCU taking business, computing and hotel management programmes at GMIT. Additional students will be enrolling with GMIT in 2011. GMIT is in the process of developing strong links, with other Chinese universities including Wuxi South Ocean College, Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture, Guizhou University, Shanghai Ocean University and University of Shanghai for Science and Technology in the areas of aquatic science, biomedical engineering, civil engineering and technology.

GMIT in collaboration with Athlone Institute of Technology and Waterford Institute of Technology is actively engaged with Saudi Arabia's Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC). Currently 17 TVTC staff are studying at GMIT and TVTC staff attended summer training programmes in software, electronics and electric power generation.

GMIT is formally recognised by the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme in Saudi Arabia. This programme provides supports for Saudi students wishing to study abroad. All undergraduate programmes in GMIT are recognised under this programme.

At present all collaborative links involve bringing international students and staff to the GMIT campus. There is no international provision at present.

### **Recent Achievements of GMIT**

- The involvement of staff members across the organisation in mentoring and advice clinics for people in the GMIT catchment area who have lost their jobs or are at risk of becoming unemployed.
- GMIT made a deliberate decision to market and promote Level 7 awards as the preferred entry route to third-level education. GMIT had the highest number of Level 7 acceptances in the 2009 Central Applications Office (CAO) figures for all Institutes of Technology.
- GMIT says it is one of the top three Institutes of Technology offering progression routes to higher awards for recognition to teach as evidenced by the Teaching Council of Ireland. The Institute says it is the only Institute of Technology in Ireland offering a concurrent undergraduate teaching award in Design and Technology Education.
- GMIT is a partner in the Benchmarking in European Higher Education project coordinated by the European Centre for Strategic Management of Universities (ESMU). This project supports efficiency and innovation in order to adapt to new challenges in areas of governance, university/enterprise cooperation, curriculum reforms and life-long learning.
- In 2009, GMIT launched a joint strategic planning initiative with NUIG, with a view to establishing a collaborative strategy between the two institutions. The collaboration may, for example, look at provision of programmes for the region, the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and other feasible collaborative projects.

- In 2009, GMIT introduced an energy aware (eAware) project aimed at converting its main Galway campus site into a combined energy learning space and energy laboratory, which is suitable for use by various academic disciplines and members of the public alike. The green campus programme in Castlebar has led to major cost savings in energy usage.

### **Section 3. Institution’s Team**

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|---|---|
| <b>Full Legal Name of Institution</b>   | Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT)  |
| <b>Address</b>  | Dublin Road, Galway, Ireland  |
| <b>Telephone</b>  | +353 91 753 161   |
| <b>Fax</b>  | +353 91 751 107   |
| <b>Web address</b>  | www.gmit.ie   |
| <b>President</b>  | Ms. Marion Coy  |
| <b>Registrar</b>  | Mr. Bernard O’Hara  |
| <b>Liaison for Institutional Review</b>   | Ms. Deirdre Lusby   |
| <b>Steering Committee</b><br>Chairperson<br>Institutional Review Project Manager<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>Secretary | Mr. Bernard O’Hara (Registrar)<br>Ms. Deirdre Lusby (Head of Department, School of Business)<br>Mr. Colin Canny (Students’ Union Vice-President)<br>Mr. Martin Gibbons (I.T. Manager)<br>Mr. Michael Hannon (Assistant Registrar)<br>Mr. Hugh McBride (Senior Lecturer)<br>Ms. Deirdre McMahon (Lecturer)<br>Mr. Dennis Murphy (Head of Teaching and Learning)<br>Ms. Cait Noone (Head of Hotel School)<br>Dr. Rick Officer (Lecturer)<br>Ms. Susan Carolan |

*In addition, a wide range of consultation committees are involved in the Institutional Review.*



## Section 4. HETAC objectives for institutional review

There are six prescribed objectives for institutional review as outlined below. Institutions may wish to highlight any areas of specific importance to the institution within each of the objectives.

### **Objective 1: To enhance public confidence in the quality of education and training provided by the institution and the standards of the awards made**

This objective is to enhance public confidence in the quality of education and training provided by the institution and the standards of the awards made. This is an overarching objective which covers all areas of the institution's activity. The quality of the institutional review process itself is a critical part of this as is the internal self study, the publication of the Self Evaluation Report and panel report. The information provided by the institution to the public falls within this objective.

### **Objective 2: To contribute to coherent strategic planning and governance in the institution**

This objective is to contribute to coherent strategic planning and governance in the institution. The review may address the coherence of institutional mission, vision and values and overall institutional strategic planning. For recognised institutions with delegated authority this objective also includes the Operation and Management criterion of the review of delegated authority (governance, management, administration, planning and evaluation) and the Objects of the Qualifications Act criterion relating to national contributions *etc.*

*Special considerations for GMIT*

#### **1. Strategy**

The Institute's approach towards implementation of the Strategic Plan is to:

- (a) align the organisation structure with the key pillars set out in the Strategic Development Plan 2010–2015: Learning and Teaching; Student Environment; Research and Innovation; Community Engagement and Internationalisation, and
- (b) to encourage an innovative interdisciplinary approach to teaching, learning, assessment and research.

### **Objective 3: To assess the effectiveness of the quality assurance arrangements operated by the institution**

This objective is to assess the effectiveness of the quality assurance arrangements operated by the institution. This will be based on Part One of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance<sup>1</sup>. By including this in the institutional review process the statutory requirement for review of QA is met. How the institution manages its QA for the “**seven elements**” of Part One of the European Standards and Guidelines should be explicitly addressed by the review process including : Policy and procedures for quality assurance; Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards; Assessment of students; Quality assurance of teaching staff; Learning resources and support; Information systems; Public information.

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<sup>1</sup> “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area”. European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 2007, Helsinki, 2nd edition.

*Special considerations for GMIT*

**1. Out-Centre provision**

The institutional review should consider the quality assurance arrangements in place for out-centre provision in centres other than the main campus at:

- The Castlebar Campus in Co. Mayo
- The Letterfrack Campus, Co. Galway
- Mountbellew College
- The School of Arts and Design in Cluain Mhuire, Galway City.
- Other once-off, extra-mural courses were provided in Belmullet, Co. Mayo, Ennis, Co. Clare and on Sherkin Island in Co. Cork.

**2. Student Engagement**

GMIT is actively involved in the enhancement of overall student engagement with a view to refocusing the learning experience and changing the learning culture in order to ensure that students become more active participants and not mere passive recipients of information and training. The Institute requests the panel to advise it on any further measures to be taken to enhance student engagement.

**Objective 4: To confirm the extent that the institution has implemented the national framework of qualifications and procedures for access, transfer and progression**

This objective is to confirm the extent that the institution has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications and procedures for access, transfer and progression. The National Qualifications Authority has produced guidelines in relation to this<sup>2</sup>. For example this includes issues such as credit, transfer and progression routes between levels and award types, entry arrangements and information provision. As part of this objective, HEA-funded institutions should be mindful of the goals of the HEA's National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (2008-2013) and pay particular attention to the objectives relevant to higher education institutions.

**Objective 5: To evaluate the operation and management of delegated authority where it has been granted**

This objective is to evaluate the operation and management of delegated authority (where applicable) for both taught and research programmes. The institutional review process will satisfy the statutory requirement for the review of delegated authority for recognised institutions, once Objective 5 of the institutional review process is included in the Terms of Reference. The majority of the delegated authority criteria are covered under the objectives of institutional review. Additional criteria which relate specifically to the operation of delegated authority are included in the Supplementary Guidelines and should be addressed in the institution's submission. Institutional review will cover all areas for which GMIT has Delegated Authority (both taught and research).

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<sup>2</sup> *Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression*". National Qualifications Authority of Ireland. 2003. [www.nqai.ie](http://www.nqai.ie).

GMIT has Delegated Authority at:

- Levels 6,7, 8, 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications for all taught programmes;
- Level 9 Master degree level for research in two disciplines- Aquatic Science and Mechanical Engineering;
- Level 10 - degree of Doctor of Philosophy for research in two disciplines- Aquatic Science and Mechanical Engineering.

*Special consideration for GMIT*

1. The Institutional review panel is requested to consider the Institute validation policy and procedures for the validation of Minor and Special Purpose awards.

### **Objective 6: To provide recommendations for the enhancement of the education and training provided by the institution**

This objective is to provide recommendations for the enhancement of the education and training provided by the institution. This will include both the recommendations arising from the external peer review process and recommendations arising from the internal self study process.

## **Section 5. Institution-specific objectives**

In addition to the prescribed HETAC objectives and the special considerations noted in relation to them, there is an option to include additional objectives to maximise the benefits of the review process. These might include for example:-

- the management of significant organisational change (organisational re-structuring, *etc.*);
- accommodating joint review with other statutory or non-statutory bodies from Ireland/overseas;
- using the process to progress a priority policy area or strategic objective (e.g. research management, internationalisation).

*Additional Institutional Objectives*

None

## Section 6. Schedule for Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology

As outlined in the Institutional Review policy, the process consists of six phases

1. HETAC sets terms of reference following consultation with institution;
2. Self-study by the institution;
3. Visit by expert panel appointed by HETAC and written panel report;
4. Institutional response including implementation plan;
5. Panel report and response published;
6. Follow-up report submitted by the institution.

The major milestones in the timeframe for the institutional review of Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology are outlined below. This should be read in conjunction with the supplementary guidelines for institutional review.

| Relative timeframe                              | Actual Date                 | Milestone   |
|---|-----------------------------|---|
| At least 6 months before panel visit            |                             | Institution indicates timeframe for institutional review as per overall HETAC schedule of reviews   |
| Approx. 6 months before panel visit             | April 2010                  | Terms of Reference set following consultation with institution and post on HETAC website  |
| 3 to 6 months before panel visit                |                             | Institution undertakes self study process and produces self evaluation report (SER)   |
| Approx. 8 weeks before site visit               | 1 July 2010*                | Submission of Self Evaluation Report and other documentation  |
| 1 week after this                               | 9 July 2010                 | HETAC Desk based review of SER and feedback to institution  |
| Approx. 3 weeks before site visit               | 3 September 2010            | Advance Meeting between Chair, Secretary and institution  |
| <b>Panel Visit</b>                              | <b>28-30 September 2010</b> | Site Visit by external peer review panel (3 days approximately as determined by TOR)<br>Preliminary (oral) feedback on findings                       |
| Approx 12 weeks after site visit                | 10 January 2011             | Draft report on findings of panel sent by HETAC to institution for factual accuracy   |
| 4 days following this                           | 14 January 2011             | Final report on findings of panel sent by HETAC to institution  |
| 6 weeks following receipt of final report       | 25 February 2011            | Response by institution to HETAC including plan with timeframe for implementation of any changes  |
| Next available HETAC Academic Committee meeting | March/April 2011**          | Consideration of report and institutional response by HETAC Academic Committee<br><br>Publication of report, response and SER on website once adopted |
| 12 months after adoption                        | April 2012                  | Follow-up report by institution to HETAC on implementation of recommendations   |

\* Setting of dates takes into account the Summer break

\*\* Please note a revised schedule will be issued when HETAC Committee dates have been set for 2011