

SECTION A3

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PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING QA PROCEDURES AND FRAMEWORK FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

1. Guiding Principles

A quality ethos underpins all the Institute's activities. This ethos is reflected in the Institute's vision statement which states, that all programmes of study delivered by the Institute are of the highest quality standards and bear the hallmark of excellence. The pursuit of excellence is central to our mission and is a cornerstone of the Institute's strategic plan. This plan has as one of its aims:

*To develop and implement a total quality culture
to assure excellence in all the Institute's operations*

The Quality Assurance procedures developed by the Institute have evolved from the experience gained from 30 years in higher education. The main factors influencing these procedures are:

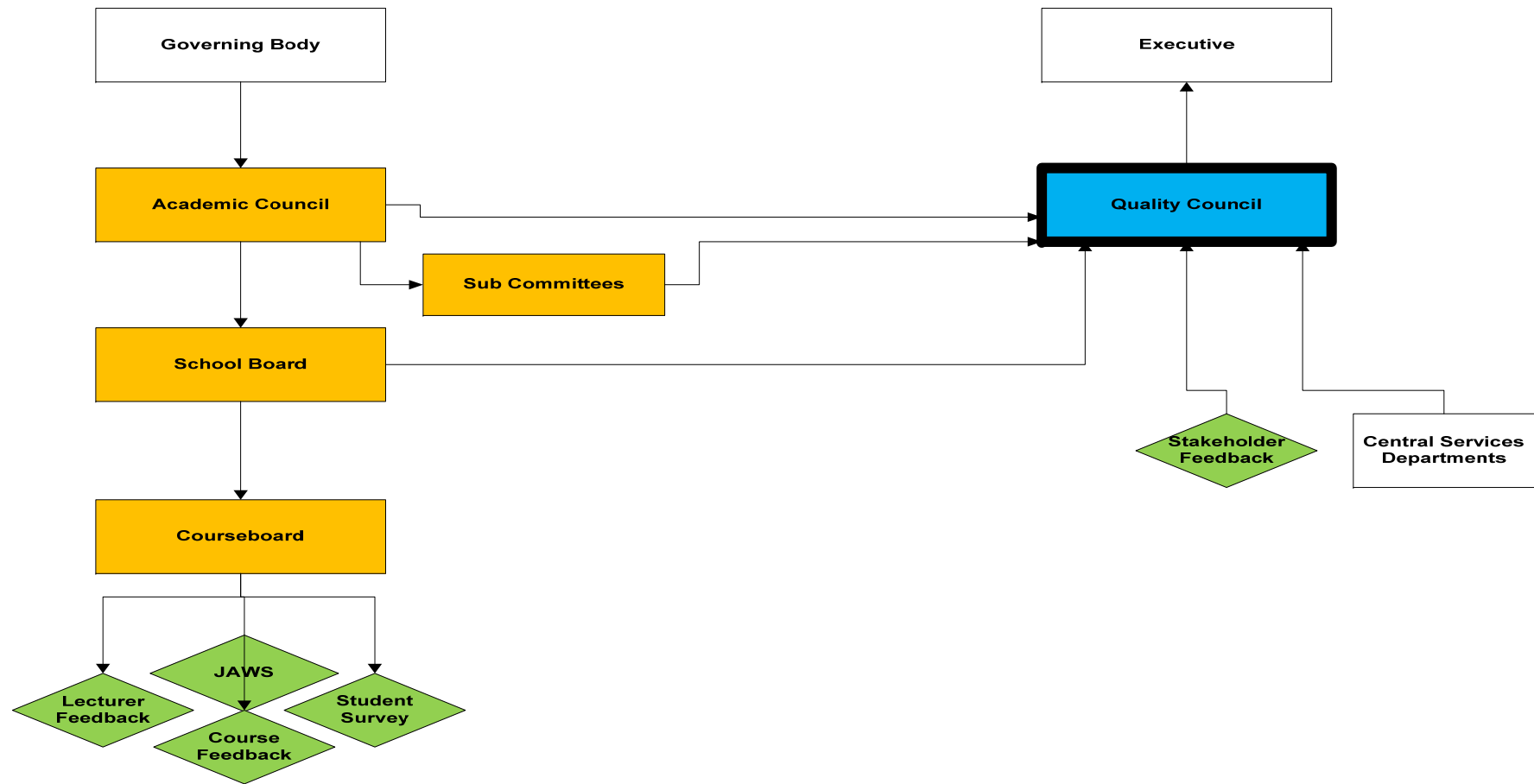
- The HETAC quality assurance procedures which were based on three fundamental pillars of self-evaluation, peer review and stakeholder feedback. These principles pioneered by HETAC are now widely accepted internationally as the pre-requisites for any quality assurance procedure in a learning environment.
- Influences from our involvement with sister third level institutes/colleges, both nationally and internationally. Through our network of EU partners and our strong links with other Institutes of Technologies we have been exposed to best practice internationally. In particular the Institute has gained considerable knowledge from academic staff through the Socrates Programme.
- Influences from our strong links with local industry/enterprises, particularly those enterprises with ISO quality standards.
- Government legislation particularly the National Qualifications Act (1999) requires *us 'to establish procedures for quality assurance for the purpose of improving and maintaining the quality of education and training'*.

2. Framework for Continuous Improvement

In order to facilitate the best quality processes/procedures for both the academic and administrative areas, the Institute has established the framework for continuous improvement. Quality initiatives in both areas have evolved from different starting points with different mandates. The strategic plan identified the need to integrate these by means of an over-arching quality framework. The framework for continuous improvement was developed which in essence established an analogous structure to the course boards/school boards for the administrative areas and established the quality council to facilitate the exchange of ideas between the academic and administrative areas. The communication flows between all components in the process are high-lighted in the following diagram.

3. Communications Processes – Quality Council

Framework for Continuous Improvement at IT Tralee
Communication Process Chart



4. Quality Council – Terms of Reference

- Promotion and facilitation of quality improvements across all Institute operations in support of our strategic goal and objectives for Quality
- Planning & evaluation of continuous improvement initiatives
- Planning and evaluation of the Stakeholder feedback processes (e.g. Student feedback surveys etc)
- Facilitation of communication between academic and central services departments
- Identification of Institute training needs in relation to quality

Membership

Chair: Registrar

Secretary: To be elected by group on a bi-annual basis

- Four Academic representatives
 - Two Academic managers (Head of School/Head of Departments)
 - Two Academic staff representatives
- Four Central Services representatives from the following areas (Office of the Registrar, Office of the Secretary/Financial Controller, Development Office)
 - Two Heads of Function/Central Services managers
 - One Administrative/Students Services staff member
 - One technical support staff member
- Two Students' Union representatives

Note: The President and Registrar are ex-officio members of all the committees outlined above.