

**Report of the Delegated Authority
Evaluation Group
on the
Application for Delegated Authority to
Make Awards
by
Institute of Technology, Tallaght**

March 2006

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CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

The Evaluation Group for the Delegation of Authority to Make Awards was appointed by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council to examine the application made by the Institute of Technology, Tallaght for delegated authority to make awards for taught programmes up to and including level 9 of the National Framework of Qualifications.

The Evaluation Group membership comprised national and international members with a wide range of expertise and experience. I wish to record my thanks to them for having accepted the task and for their generous and professional commitment to the evaluation. The Evaluation Group felt privileged to be given the opportunity to consider the application and participate in this pioneering project.

The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999, provides for the delegation of authority to make awards to recognised institutions and the Council has indicated that it has a strategic aim of promoting optimum delegation to institutions, subject to their capacity to meet the legislative requirements. Thus, the implementation of this policy of delegation of authority is an important milestone in the development of Irish higher education. The achievement of delegated status is, in essence, recognition of an institute as a provider of quality assured third level education and training programmes. The quality of that provision is best assured when there is an appropriate balance of responsibilities between the institution and the Council. The Council's development and implementation of its policy for delegation of authority is one way in which that balance can be achieved, i.e., the realisation of increased autonomy for the institute with increased public accountability.

The Evaluation Group undertook its task in a rigorous yet fair manner, which demanded considerable effort and participation from both the members of the Evaluation Group and the Institute alike. Those whom the Evaluation Group met expressed their views with candour and courtesy and the members appreciated the straightforward way in which all their questions were addressed. The Institute is undoubtedly held in high regard by its staff, students and its wider stakeholders.

My colleagues and I would like to thank Mr. Sean Ashe of the Governing Body, the Director of the Institute, Dr. Tim Creedon, the Registrar, Mr. John Vickery and all whom we met for their kindness and hospitality. We would also like to thank the staff of the Council who did so much to ensure that the visit went smoothly.

John Hayden
CHAIRMAN

March 2006

1. Introduction

The Higher Education and Training Awards Council (“the Council”) was established on 11 June 2001, under the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999. The Council is the national qualifications awarding body for higher education and training outside the university sector in Ireland, other than the Dublin Institute of Technology. The Council’s role and functions include the setting of standards for named awards, the validation of programmes, the agreement of providers’ quality assurance procedures and the review of the implementation and effectiveness of those procedures. The Council may also, as part of its function, delegate authority to make awards to recognised institutions.

The Council welcomes the delegation of authority to make awards to recognised institutions and will facilitate optimum delegation of that authority i.e., the Council will delegate authority for as wide a range of awards as possible subject to rigorous criteria and procedures and consistent with the requirements of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999. As such, this approach takes account of the maturation of the recognised institutions and the extent to which they have developed the capacity and processes to develop, quality assure and self-validate programmes of higher education and training leading to awards whose standards have been set by the Council. It also recognises that self-regulation and self-validation for established higher education and training institutions, such as the Institutes of Technology, which allows these institutions to take appropriate responsibility for their own processes, subject to regular review, is in line with best international practice.

The Evaluation Group hopes that its report will advance this process.

2. Findings of the Evaluation Group – Executive Summary

The Evaluation Group examined the application from Institute of Technology, Tallaght (the Institute) against the criteria determined by the Council and agreed with the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (“the Qualifications Authority”) in accordance with Section 29 of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999. The following is an executive summary of its findings:

- the Institute meets and has the capacity to meet the criteria for the delegation of authority to make awards that relate to, Operations and Management, Council Conditions Attached to Delegated Authority and the Objects of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999;
- the Institute meets and has the capacity to meet those criteria that relate to the development, validation, implementation and continuous improvement of its existing taught higher education and training programmes at level 6 to 9 inclusive of the National Framework of Qualifications.

3. Background to the application from Institute of Technology, Tallaght for delegation of authority to make awards

The Institute's decision to apply for delegated authority goes back to the development of the current Strategic Plan, a key objective of which was to seek from HETAC delegated authority to make its own awards. As a prerequisite for delegated authority, a copy of the Institute's Quality Assurance Manual was submitted to HETAC and was approved in 2004.

In compliance with Sections 29 of the Qualifications Act, which requires that a recognised institution consult with other providers in relation to its application for delegation of authority, senior management initiated a process of consultation. Between September and November 2004, a series of communication meetings were organised at which the Registrar outlined the process involved in seeking delegated authority and the implications of delegated authority for the Institute.

In February 2005, a Project Manager was assigned to co-ordinate the preparation of the Institution's application to HETAC for delegated authority up to level 9 (taught Masters). A second Project Manager was appointed to co-ordinate the preparation of the Institute's application to maintain a research register and subsequently to apply for delegated authority up to level 10 in specific areas for research programmes. In the event, the Institute decided to leave the postgraduate registration application until after the delegated authority application for taught programmes had been processed.

An Institute-wide self-evaluation process was initiated in November 2004. Each of the Institute's three Schools was asked to review its activities. The different functional areas within the Institute (including the Registrar's Office, Finance, Student Services, the Development Office, Computer Services, Human Resources, and the Library) were also asked to conduct a self-study.

The self-studies encompassed an evaluation of the Institute's management, operations and governance; the management and academic structures governing programmes of education and training; and a detailed examination of the service provision supporting the Institute's programmes of study. In the case of the Schools of Engineering and the Business Departments in the School of Business and Humanities, programmatic review dates coincided with the delegated authority self-evaluation process and these reviews formed the mechanism for the self-evaluation in these Schools. The self-evaluation process resulted in the identification of strengths and weaknesses and the production of practical recommendations for improvement. Some of these improvements have been implemented, and the Institute plans to implement the remaining recommendations over the course of the Institute Strategic Plan (2005-2008.)

To obtain feedback from stakeholders and review the effectiveness of Institute activities in different areas, a number of surveys were also carried out. They surveyed all staff within the Institute, graduates, career guidance counsellors and school principals, and first year students. A structured process was also developed to inform all relevant internal and external stakeholders about the delegated authority process. The Institute also produced a Newsletter in September 2005 for staff, students and external stakeholders.

The final version of the Institute Self-Evaluation Report was submitted to HETAC in January 2006 with a formal application for delegation of authority to make awards in respect of the Institute's taught programmes at levels 6 to 9 inclusive of the National Framework of Qualifications.

The Council, having satisfied itself that the self-evaluation report addressed the criteria for delegated authority, then sought and received the agreement of the Qualifications Authority in January 2006 to conduct a subsequent evaluation of the Institute.

The Council appointed a Delegation of Authority Evaluation Group (the Evaluation Group) consisting of persons with particular knowledge and experience of higher education and training and quality assurance systems in higher education and training (ref. Appendix A). It appointed as Chairman, Mr John Hayden, former Secretary/Chief Executive of the Higher Education Authority and arranged for a pre-evaluation meeting with the Institute by the Chairperson, accompanied by Mr. Des Carolan, Head of Delegated Authority, HETAC. This was undertaken on the 16th of January 2006. The meeting afforded the opportunity to clarify issues, discuss arrangements and agree the dates and the agenda for the on-site evaluation visit

4. Evaluation visit - Introduction

The Evaluation Group visited the Institute on the 28th of February and the 1st of March 2006. The visit offered the opportunity for the Evaluation Group to determine the readiness and capacity of the Institute to meet the criteria for the purposes of delegated authority to make awards at levels 6 to 9 of the National Framework of Qualifications, for its existing taught programmes.

The criteria for the delegation of authority have been determined by the Council and agreed with the Qualifications Authority. They are set out under four headings: Operation and Management; Education and Training Programmes; Council Conditions Attached to the Delegation of Authority; and the Objects of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999 (see extract from the Criteria and Procedures for the Delegation and Review of Delegation of Authority to Make Awards (Appendix F)).

The Evaluation Group was welcomed by Mr. Sean Ashe of the Governing Body, and Dr. Tim Creedon Director of the Institute. Some discussion followed about the Institute's Strategic Plan which, it was noted, is the first such plan for the Institute. The Director explained that delegation of authority is a key objective of the Strategic Plan and that its attainment would be of great benefit and support to the Institute in achieving its other stated objectives of expanding its academic provision, increasing its access and progression opportunities and implementing a comprehensive teaching and learning strategy. He stated that while the Institute had a record and policy of reaching out to its community and stakeholders generally, it saw a need to maximise its accessibility by considering new options, such as the development of outreach centres and non-standard teaching methodologies. These options would be most relevant to certain parts of its catchment area from which travel was a difficulty and to the growing demand for the Institute to provide for learners currently in the workplace. The Director outlined the profile of the Dublin South County, which he explained is the fastest growing local authority region in Dublin and the most industrialised. As such this places particular challenges on the Institute in its efforts to fulfil its stated strategic aims in relation to provision to industry and its wider stakeholders.

Thereafter, the visit was conducted, with minor deviation, in accordance with the agreed agenda (Appendix C), the format of which comprised a mixture of question and answer sessions and audit-trails. This enabled the Evaluation Group to examine the operation and management of the Institute and the programmes provided at both overview and detailed operational levels. The findings of the Evaluation Group and the processes employed are set out in more detail in Sections 5 to 10 of this report.

5. Meetings of the Group with the Institute in relation to the Council's criteria for the delegation of authority to make awards

5.1 - Operation and Management

The Evaluation Group met with the Director, Registrar, the Secretary/Financial Controller, Head of Development, Heads of Schools, Librarian, Human Resources Manager, Finance Manager, Academic Administration and Student Affairs Manager, Estates Manager, Computer Services Manager and the two Delegated Authority Project Officers to discuss and examine the structures and processes for its operation and management under the following headings: institutional mission and purposes, governance, organisation and administration, planning and evaluation, academic and other staff policies, library and information resources, physical resources, learner services, public responsibility and integrity, and financial resources and management.

The Chairman of the Evaluation Group commenced the meeting by seeking a background outline to the application for delegated authority. This was presented by the Delegated Authority Project Leader and is detailed in Section 3 of this report.

The Evaluation Group then explored the Institute's current Mission and its strategy to achieve it. The Group heard that the Institute, following wide consultation, has developed a clear Mission Statement, which is articulated in its current Strategic Plan 2005-2008. The Strategic Plan includes a statement of the core values of the Institute and Critical Success Factors and Strategic Goals. Each Strategic Goal has been assigned specific project actions and completion dates over the period of the plan and the Strategic Plan also includes a medium term review process.

The Evaluation Group then proceeded to examine the Institute's governance and management arrangements. It heard that the Institute's legal basis is the Regional Technical Colleges Act, 1992 and the Regional Technical Colleges (Amendment) Act, 1994. The Institute is a body corporate and was formally designated an Institute of Technology by order of the Minister of Education and Science in 1992. Its main campus is at Tallaght in South Dublin County and it caters for a student population of approximately 2,300 full-time and 1,200 part-time students, offering programmes that lead to awards from level 6 to 10 of the National Framework of Qualifications.

The Institute has a Governing Body which is a statutory body appointed in accordance with Section 4 of the Regional Technical Colleges (Amendment) Act 1994. The Governing Body focuses on the overall direction and strategic management of the Institute. In this regard, it considers proposals presented to it by the Director and senior Institute officers. It ensures that the Institute is fulfilling its strategic purposes, behaving in accordance with its statutory obligations and that appropriate reporting systems are in place to support it in meeting its responsibilities. The Governing Body established an internal audit subcommittee in 2002. This sub-committee has a review and oversight function and advises the Governing Body on issues that relate to internal control, corporate governance and any matters that the Governing Body deems appropriate to refer to it.

The key executive position is that of Director, who is the Chief Officer of the Institute, with the authority and responsibility for day to day management and who is answerable to the Governing Body for setting and meeting objectives consistent with the Institute's mission and strategy. The Director is supported by a Senior Management Team (SMT) which comprises the Director, Registrar, Heads of Schools, Secretary/Financial Controller and the Head of Development. The SMT is responsible for executive decisions in relation to strategy and policy implementation. It also has responsibility for budgetary decisions and normally meets every two weeks.

The Institute also has a Total Management Team (TMT) and an Academic Management Team (AMT). The TMT comprises the SMT and the Heads of Department and the Central Services Managers. The main function of this team is to inform and advise the SMT on issues that require decisions and to ensure that Governing Body decisions are understood and implemented across

the Institute. The TMT meets at least twice a semester. The AMT comprises the SMT and the Heads of Department. It meets at least five times per semester and its role is to advise on academic issues such as academic strategy, assessment, teaching and learning, research development, industry links and operational aspects of policy which includes the implementation of quality assurance. When asked by the Evaluation Group whether the current structure was unwieldy, the Director replied that he believed it was working effectively and that although each of the executive teams had separate terms of reference, it was the case that issues addressed would regularly have inter-team aspects. This afforded the ability to focus on specific areas of the Institute's operation with the benefit of facilitating a broader appreciation of wider activity. It was also the case that all of the issues addressed by the various executive teams were subject to the oversight and approval of the Governing Body. With respect to the wider governance issue he stated that the Institute was aware of the need to develop tighter performance indicators and that a recent risk analysis conducted by an outside agency had highlighted its in-company provision as requiring a more structured management approach. He believed that the implementation of the new Management Information System would address this issue in particular.

The Institute also has a statutorily defined Academic Council appointed by the Governing Body. The Academic Council's role is to assist the planning, coordination, development and overseeing of the academic work of the Institute. It protects, maintains and develops the academic standards of the courses and activities of the Institute. The Director, Registrar, Heads of Schools, Head of Development, Heads of Department and Librarian are ex officio members of the Academic Council. The remaining members are elected and include pre-determined numbers of representatives from the academic staff of the various schools, technicians and library staff, the Institute's students and the other staff generally. The Director is Chairperson and the Registrar is Secretary to the Council. The Academic Council has seven sub-committees dealing with issues related to the constitution of the Academic Council, admissions, progression and learning support, marks and standards, postgraduate research, ethics in research and research and development. The Council also has a standing committee, which deals with any urgent issues that may have to be dealt with between meetings of the full Academic Council.

The Registrar has an Institute-wide responsibility for academic affairs through the Academic Council. The Registrar works directly with the Heads of School (and other staff members) in promoting the quality, relevance and development of the Institute's programme and delivery modes. Within his purview is the more long-term planning of courses and the work of the Academic Council subcommittees.

The Evaluation Group examined the Institute's arrangements for staff development both in terms of measures in force to enable academic staff to enhance their levels of qualifications and training programmes for staff designed to improve organisational performance. The Institute explained that the process of managing staff training and development has changed over the past two years. In previous years, the planning and provision of training and staff development was organised on a decentralised basis across the different schools and functional units. However, the development of the *Institute Strategic Plan* highlighted the need for a broad-based, cross-collegiate approach as well as a functional focus. In December 2004, a *Staff Development Committee* was established to inform the *Institute Strategic Plan 2005-2008*. The Committee's functions include overseeing the development of a training strategy, training plan and training needs analysis and the implementation of the various initiatives identified. The Institute has instigated a Training Needs Analysis on a departmental and functional area basis to cover the period up to December 2005. Based on the information obtained from the different departments/functional areas within the Institute, the Human Resources Section produced a report entitled, *Cross Collegiate Training & Development Activities for 2004/2006*. A budget of €177,500 was allocated to staff development for the period January to December 2005, €100,000 of which was allocated to the cross-collegiate development plan. The Institute also funds individual training development by means of full or partial funding for programmes, expenses incurred, and leave entitlement where appropriate. The Institute also provides for sabbatical leave. However, sabbatical leave is considered extremely resource intensive and decisions regarding such leave are made prudently, with value for money and fairness to other staff seeking development the major considerations.

The Institute operates a modest financial support for staff undertaking post-graduate studies who are entitled to claim a contribution towards the cost of any approved studies provided.

The Institute is also installing the national Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) which has commenced operation with the Library and Department of Computing staff and is planned for full institute wide implementation by the end of 2006.

The Institute's current staff training and development spend is around 1.42% of total pay budget. In-house training and development is also provided but the cost of such training is not currently captured in the training and development percentage.

The Evaluation Group then explored the range of student support services operated by the Institute. The Academic and Student Affairs Manager explained that the Registrar, in conjunction with the Academic Administration and Student Affairs Manager, co-ordinates a wide range of student services. These currently encompass: Access Office and Disability Support Service, Student Counselling Service, Health Services, Chaplaincy, Sports and Recreation Service, Careers and Appointments Service and an Alumni Association. The Institute also has a Student Services Committee which promotes and oversees the various student services. It comprises representatives of the student services staff and representatives of the Student Union.

The Institute operates an induction programme for all students which is coordinated by the Student Support and Academic Services office. The programme is designed to provide information on the various services available. In addition students are informed of library services in the initial induction period followed by further inputs later, as and where it is deemed appropriate. Learners also receive training on basic PC usage, email, Microsoft Word, the Institute's IT policy and shared networking. Lastly, the Institute outlined its system of student profiling, designed to identify students that might need additional assistance or support. These diagnostic tests are carried out on all first year engineering students and the Institute believes that there is a high correlation between this profiling, subsequent provision of support and increased success rates. The School of Science has adopted and modified this system with particular focus on attendance patterns. Lecturers now electronically record attendance in each class. Students are written to at the end of each semester in respect of their attendance and the Institute claims the pass rate has improved as a result of the implementation of this system.

The Evaluation Group sought information on how the Institute managed its Life Long Learning policy and what support mechanisms the Institute had in place with respect to the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) which was considered to be of particular relevance to mature and part-time students. The Registrar explained that Life Long Learning was the responsibility of the Head of Development but that academic responsibility was the responsibility of the Schools. In that respect therefore, The Head of Development's role was to act as a coordinator, facilitator and enabler when issues of life long learning were being addressed. With regard to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), the Institute can grant admission on to a programme or up to 50% exemption from a programme to students by means of an RPL assessment. Responsibility for conducting RPL assessments rests at School level.

With regard to public responsibility and integrity, the Evaluation Group was aware that being a public body and largely funded by the state, the Institute has a specific obligation to ensure it addresses the needs of society. The Institute's financial statements are prepared for and audited by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General. Once signed off by the Comptroller and Auditor General the statements are lodged with the Department of Education and Science and are available publicly. Internal Audit services are currently provided by contracted auditors (Deloitte and Touche). Internal audits do not focus solely on financial matters. They also report on key areas of the Institute's activities and include risk identification. Actions recommended by the internal audit are examined and scheduled for action as appropriate through the Institute's governance and management arrangements.

The Chairman of the Evaluation Group noted that there was to be a visit to the library and information resource centre later in the day but requested the Librarian to give an outline of the library and information resources available to students. The Librarian explained that the library has a book stock of 30,000 titles. The library also subscribes to over 200 print journals and a variety of online subscription databases. Since January 2005 the PC's in the Open Access Lab have been replaced, with an additional 20 PC's located on the mezzanine. In September 2005 wireless connectivity was made available in the library for laptop use.

Lastly, the Evaluation Group sought an update on the Institute's infrastructural plans. The Estates Manager stated that the Institute has a Masterplan covering the period 2003 to 2009, which focuses on the physical development of the Institute required to support the growth of student numbers to over 5,000 in 2009. In 2003 the Institute made a submission to the HEA Capital Review and Prioritisation working Group which recommended an expenditure of €45.96 million between 2004 and 2008. The capital spend is scheduled over the period 2004 to 2008 and includes the provision of enabling infrastructure, a catering and tourism building, an engineering building and a multi-purpose centre. In addition, the construction of an Incubation Centre, designed to generate and develop technology based enterprises, commenced in 2005 and is expected to be completed by September 2006. The Institute has sufficient space to undertake the expansion programme (45 acres) most of which it will be possible to undertake without undue disruption to the operation of the Institute because of its location at the rear of the Institute. At present the development plan is running behind schedule but the Institute is hopeful that the planned construction can be commenced shortly under a Private, Public Partnership arrangement.

5.2 - Education and Training Programmes

The Evaluation Group met with the Registrar, Head of Development, Heads of Schools, Representatives of the Heads of Departments, Secretary/Financial Controller, Human Resources Manager, Academic Administration and Student Affairs Manager, Computer Service Manager and the two Delegated Authority Project Leaders to discuss the arrangements in place for the development, provision, quality assurance and review of its education and training programmes.

The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999, (Section 28), sets out the statutory obligations of the institute in respect of quality assurance. It requires that institutes must "*establish procedures for quality assurance for the purpose of further improving and maintaining the quality of education and training ... and shall agree those procedures with the Council.*"

The Evaluation Group noted that the Institute's quality assurance procedures had been agreed with Council in August 2004.

The Evaluation Group also noted that the Institute, as part of the HETAC transition process in 2004, reviewed all of its programmes, including course content, methods of delivery and progression criteria, to ensure that they met the standards defined in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Programmes were examined by expert external peer review groups and were validated for the new awards.

The Evaluation Group commenced by seeking examples of how the Institute's quality assurance system was working with particular reference to the closure of issues identified. The Registrar spoke of the system of Programme Boards and how their operational processes were formalised some 18 months ago. He explained that Programme Board reports address a wide range of issues including entry requirement, external examiners reports, comments from students and pass rates for example. The reports are sent to the appropriate Head of School who produces an executive summary for the Academic Council which considers the report and decides on actions to be undertaken as appropriate. In this way, the deliberations of Programme Boards are formally considered and reported on as part of the academic decision making process.

The Registrar then outlined the Institute's academic quality assurance procedures and structures for the development, validation, provision, monitoring and continuous quality improvement of its education and training programmes which comprises a two phased process of internal development and examination. All new programmes that are presented to HETAC for validation undergo the internal approval process. Programmes that successfully negotiate the internal development process are formally approved by the Institute's Academic Council and submitted to HETAC for accreditation. The Registrar outlined how, with delegation of authority, the Institute would undertake the final accreditation step in line with the current HETAC procedures and that the final accreditation and issue of certificates of accreditation would be handled by the Academic Council and the Registrar's office. The Registrar also outlined the process operated by the Institute to review programmes. This process also results in a final submission to HETAC for re-validation/accreditation and, as with new programme development, would be handled by the Institute's Academic Council in the event of delegated authority. The Registrar explained that a programmatic review had just been completed for the School of Engineering and that self-studies had been completed, as part of the delegation of authority process, for Business Departments within the School of Business and Humanities. The Department of Humanities and the School of Science are scheduled for review in 2006.

The Registrar also confirmed that the quality assurance procedures in place currently reflect the HETAC 'Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures in Higher Education and Training 2002'. The Institute has approved procedures for programme, design and approval, ongoing programme monitoring, assessment of learners, appointment and development of staff, and the evaluation of premises and services. The Institute also has a procedure for the evaluation of the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures.

The Evaluation Group sought information on the involvement of students in the quality assurance process. It was informed that the Institute operates a system of Programme Boards (as referred to above) which enable student views and concerns to be fed into the quality assurance process. In addition, students are represented on the Institute's Governing Body and the Academic Council and its various sub-committees.

With so much information in circulation, the Evaluation Group was interested to hear whether the Institute considered that its communications system was effective. The Institute is aware that there is a lot of communication and that it needs to be evaluated and managed. There was also a recognition that email may have been and continues to be an overused form of communication. The Institute is currently developing a communications strategy with a view, amongst other things, to increasing contact with staff and reducing the reliance on email.

Although aware that the Institute had not applied for delegation of authority for awards attained through research programmes, the Chairman sought a brief summary of the research activity in the Institute and in particular, the connection between research and taught provision. The Head of Development explained that the Institute is fully committed to Research and Development as a core activity of the Institute. With respect to research programmes, the Institute currently has 56 students registered on research programmes, 45 on Masters programmes and 11 on PhD programmes. Eighty five percent of whole time staff have postgraduate degree qualifications of whom about a quarter have PhDs. The Institute has quality assurance procedures in place to cover the admissions, monitoring and assessment of students which were developed by the Postgraduate Policy Committee of the Academic Council and the Institute operates Research Degree Programme Boards as part of its quality assurance processes. He also explained that the Institute had established Research Centres on campus which had helped in attracting funding, raising the profile of research and the development of collaborative projects. Linkages between research activity and undergraduate teaching, is considered an integral part of research development but the Institute is aware that its research activity does not extend to all areas. While the present application for delegated authority did not include research programmes, the Institute intends seeking HETAC accreditation to hold postgraduate registers in confined areas later in 2006 and thereafter to apply for delegation of authority in these areas.

The Evaluation Group then sought information on how the Institute ensured quality for its provision of in-company programmes. The Registrar stated that all in-company programmes were subject to the same quality processes as those operated at its main campus and were in fact, main campus programmes. They are programmes which have been validated by HETAC and the Institute is at pains to ensure that companies availing of them understand that they are not bespoke and that students must attain the required standards of knowledge, skill and competence in order to attain the related award.

The Evaluation Group then sought information as to how the Institute was implementing the procedures for access, transfer and progression as determined by the Qualifications Authority. The Registrar explained that the Institute operated a wide range of access or entry routes and support mechanisms including, access for specific PLC student, foundation studies, a linkage scheme with the Further Education and Training Awards Council, an arrangement based on an agreed memorandum of understanding with Fáiite Ireland, mature student and students with disabilities arrangements and non standard applications. The Institute operates a ladder system for transfer and progression purposes which facilitates direct entry onto a programme year other than the first year of the programme.

The Evaluation Group noted that the Institute stated that it was in compliance with the various aspects of the Objects of the Qualifications (Education and Training) act 1999 and that it would have no difficulty in complying also with the Council's standard Conditions Attached to Delegation of Authority to Make Awards.

Lastly, the Registrar confirmed that the Institute's assessment/examination processes are in line with the Examination Marks and Standards laid down by the National Council for Educational Awards and subsequently adopted and amended by HETAC. The Examination Marks and Standards currently in operation have been adopted and approved by the Institute's Academic Council.

6. Audit Trail

For parts 3A and 3B of the agenda (Appendix C), the Evaluation Group formed a number of subgroups to conduct an audit trail of taught and research programmes and issues related to operations and management. Approximately half the time of the site visit programme was dedicated to this task which was facilitated with generous co-operation by the Institute by making available all staff and information sought.

Education and Training programmes

A number of programmes were selected by the Chairman of the Evaluation Group for detailed analysis and programmatic review reports since 2001 and with a summary detailing the implementation status of recommendations made. The Chairperson requested, prior to the visit, that specified detailed information relating to the selected programmes be made available to the Evaluation Group. He also requested that the Institute make arrangements for access to and facilities to copy all or sections of the documents which the Evaluation Group might wish to source for verification purposes. The examination of these programmes and the programmatic review processes took the form of an audit trail that included analysis of related documentation, minutes of the Academic Council and its subcommittees, minutes of the various Schools and Programme Boards and external examiner reports. The purpose was to track the implementation and gauge the effectiveness of the Institute's processes for the design, validation, monitoring and improvement of its programmes. Subgroups were established by the Chairman for this purpose and were assigned the responsibility of examining allocated programmes. The examination involved the inspection of programmes' records, from initial development proposals, through internal approval, external review, formal approval, programme monitoring and alterations suggested and or implemented. In all cases, the individuals of the subgroup also met with relevant management and academic staff of the Institute to verify the information reviewed and to follow up on any matter that appeared unclear or inconclusive.

Overall, the Evaluation Group found that the Institute has been substantially operating processes for the development, implementation, monitoring and continuous improvement of its taught programmes. There were however, instances of incomplete paper work and apparent lack of completion/closure. In most cases these issues were satisfactorily explained during meetings with the relevant management and academic staff but the Evaluation Group felt that a comprehensive implementation of the agreed quality assurance procedures was not yet in place. The Evaluation Group believed that this was recognised by the Institute and that there was a realistic awareness of this shortcoming. The Group believed that there was a determination and focus within the management of the Institute to address this issue.

The Evaluation Group also formed subgroups to audit specific areas of the Institute's activities other than its academic programmes. These audits took the form of meetings on particular subjects with relevant members of the Institute's management, staff and learners.

Staff Development

A subgroup met with the Head of School of Business and Humanities, the Human Resources Manager and the Secretary/Financial Controller to follow up on issues relating to staff development policy and procedures. The subgroup verified that the Institute has completed an identification of training needs analysis and that it is in the process of rolling out the national Performance Management and Development System. A process of developing individual training plans is about to commence. The Institute was able to furnish staff training and development records back to 1993 but the subgroup felt that, until recently, staff development was operated on a somewhat ad hoc basis, with little to show by way of evaluation of its effectiveness. However, the subgroup did report that there is evidence that the Institute has altered its approach to addressing staff development needs and it now reflects a clearer link to the strategic needs of the Institute, its Schools and Departments and its various functional areas.

Student Services

A subgroup held two separate meetings; one with the Students' Union President, Welfare Officer and Education Officer and another with the Careers Officer, Access Officer, Academic Administration and Student Affairs Manager and a representative from the Education and Learning Support Unit.

In general, the subgroup reported satisfaction with the services available and the involvement of students in their provision. Some concern was raised by the student representative regarding the training or lack of training of newly recruited lecturers which was considered an issue that the Institute needs to address. Student representatives did however express strong support for the Institute and its application for delegated authority and there appears to be a good relationship between the student body and the Institute staff and management.

The subgroup was very impressed with the staff of the Institute who provide the various services. They have an undoubted commitment and dedication to their function.

Internal Communications

A subgroup met with the Registrar, Heads of Schools of Engineering and Science and the Head of Department of Marketing, to follow up on the issue of communications which had been discussed at the Operations and Management meeting the previous day. In particular, the subgroup was interested to find out more about the Institute's proposed communications strategy. The Evaluation Group had felt that communications were of a formal nature and that there wasn't a process in place, which might address or improve the richness of that communication. The Institute agreed, that while there is evidence of a lot of interaction, it may be reasonable to question the quality of communication. The management felt that this was not just an issue for the Institute but a problem faced by most organisations of a reasonable size. The Institute is aware of this issue and will be investigating ways of improving the effectiveness of its internal communications. It is accepted that a lesser reliance on the use of email might be desirable. While convenient, email may be an easy option and as a consequence not always appropriate. The subgroup accepted that communication was a difficult situation for any organisation but felt that the Director's own commitment to inclusive and open communication will see that the issue is addressed effectively.

Industry

A meeting was held with the Head of Development, Industrial Liaison Manager, Head of Department of Science and Head of Department of Mechanical Engineering to discuss the Institute's provision of programmes for and in conjunction with industry. The Subgroup heard that in-company delivery plays a significant role in the provision of part-time programmes within the Institute's three Schools: the term in-company meaning delivery to company employees either in the Institute or in the company. It was explained that the provision of programmes such as these is an example of the Institute's strategic objective to address the developmental requirement of industry in its catchment area. To date, the main provision has been focused on engineering, ICT, pharmaceutical and bio-technology companies. The delivery of in-company programmes has required tailoring of provision to suit industry timeframes and constraints, such as shift arrangements and staff availability. Management and co-ordination of these part-time programmes is handled between Development and External Services in conjunction with the relevant academic School and the Office of the Registrar. Programmes delivered on an in-company basis are subject to the quality assurance procedures that the Institute operates for its 'main campus' delivery – they are in fact the same programmes.

As mentioned earlier in this report, in-company provision has been identified as an area of risk for the Institute with a particular requirement to address costing, pricing and invoicing of such provision. In general however, the subgroup reported that the Institute's arrangements were satisfactory for the quality assurance of such programmes but, as in other cases, the Institute needs to address the issue of improving the thoroughness of its documentation.

7. Tour of the Institute

The Evaluation Group undertook a tour of the Institute's Library and IT support facilities on the afternoon of 28 February. The library is accommodated on two floors. In 2000, the mezzanine level of the library was opened and includes group study rooms, a silent study area, an open access computer lab, an assistive technology room and additional study carrels. The Evaluation Group then split into three subgroups to conduct a visit of the facilities available for student's involved in Science, Engineering, and Audio Visual and Computing programmes. The Evaluation Group was satisfied with the facilities visited.

8. Meeting with the Institute's stakeholders

The Evaluation Group met with a representative range of the Institute's stakeholders (Appendix E) to seek their views on the Institute's operations and programmes, its liaison with partner providers and other interested parties and their general perceptions and understanding of delegation of authority, its relevance and its desirability. The Evaluation Group was impressed with the level of positive support expressed at the meeting and concluded that the Institute is highly regarded within the region, that it has a reputation for responsiveness and sensitivity to regional, community, and individual needs and that it has solid and wide support for its application for delegated authority which is seen as necessary to boost the status of the Institute and support the development of regional employment opportunities.

9. Meeting with students of the Institute

The Evaluation Group also met with full-time and part-time students from a wide range of programmes (Appendix E). The students indicated that they were well informed of the application for delegated authority and of its implications. The receipt of an Institute of Technology, Tallaght parchment instead of a HETAC one was not considered to be problematic and in fact students expressed strong loyalty to the Institute and believed that its reputation as a provider of recognised quality programmes would underpin the issue of an Institute parchment. The students were generally supportive of the Institute and indicated that they have an active role within the Institute and felt confident that their views were taken into account. They believed that the achievement of delegated authority would be a significant development for the Institute and one which would have positive implications for it in the future.

10. Meeting with representatives of the Institute's staff

The Evaluation Group met with a broad cross-section of the Institute's staff to hear their views on the application for delegated authority. It was clear that staff had been consulted regarding the application and involved in its preparation. The Evaluation Group found strong support for the delegation of authority which was perceived as acknowledgement of the Institute's maturity as a provider of quality higher education and training programmes. Staff believed that delegation would enable the Institute to act more responsively and with greater flexibility to the needs of its stakeholders and the wider community, but also recognised that increased autonomy brings with it increased public accountability.

11. Final Comments and Findings

The Institute has established and is implementing the agreed quality assurance processes for its education and training programmes. The Group felt however that the quality processes still

required some establishment and that issues relating to the recording of closure in particular need to be addressed by the Institute.

The effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures has also yet to be tested. While the Evaluation Group did not consider that this issue should prevent it from finding positively in respect of the Institute's application for delegation of authority, it would like to bring it to the attention of the Council. The Council may wish to consider some form of structured monitoring of progress on this issue by the Institute at a time or times in the future to be set by the Council.

The Evaluation Group was impressed with the energy, enthusiasm and commitment of the Institute's Governing Body, management, staff, learners and stakeholders and with the level of communication between staff and students. The Evaluation Group also felt that there was a good degree of understanding of institutional issues at all levels throughout the Institute and that there was a sense of belonging and commitment to the Institute. Members of the Evaluation Group were impressed by the positive manner in which students and stakeholders expressed their support for the Institute's application for delegated authority. There was an almost universal view that delegated authority would greatly enhance the status of the Institute. There was also a strong belief that delegated authority would be an affirmation of the Institute's maturity and quality as a provider of a broad range of higher education and training programmes and that it would enable it to provide its programmes with greater flexibility, efficiency and effectiveness.

In summary the Evaluation Group is of the view that the Institute meets and has the capacity to meet the Council's criteria for delegation of authority including those criteria that relate to operations and management, Council conditions attached to delegation of authority, the objects of the Act and the development, validation, monitoring and continuous improvement of its existing taught higher education and training programmes up to and including level 9 of the National Framework of Qualifications.

APPENDIX A

HETAC Delegated Authority Evaluation Group

Institute of Technology, Tallaght – February 28 and March 1

Mr. John Hayden

Former Secretary/Chief Executive,
Higher Education Authority

Professor Eithne Guilfoyle

Executive Dean
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Dublin City University

Dr. Jürgen Kohler

Director
The Accreditation Council
Germany

Dr. Sarah Moore

Dean of Teaching and Learning
University of Limerick

Ms. Judy Nix

EU Projects Manager
Ericsson

Mr. Kieran O'Malley

Students' Union President
GMIT Students Union

Professor Henry Rice

Department of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering
and Director of Postgraduate Education, Engineering
University of Dublin
Trinity College

Dr. Richard Thorn

Director
Institute of Technology, Sligo

Dr. Debra Willison

Academic Co-ordinator and Head of Teaching
Department of Pure and Applied Chemistry, University of Strathclyde

APPENDIX B

Terms of Reference of the Delegated Authority Evaluation Group

In conducting its review of the application for delegated authority from Institute of Technology, Tallaght, the Evaluation Group was required to:

- Review an application from the Institute, including the consultation conducted by the institution for the purposes of Section 29(2) of the Act.
- Conduct a site-visit to the Institute to evaluate, against the criteria determined by the Council under Section 29(3) of the Act, the institution's operation of delegated authority to date and its capacity to continue to operate and extend its delegated authority to make awards.
- Contribute to the formulation of a report to the Council, of the findings of the Evaluation Group, against the criteria determined by the Council under Section 29(3) of the Act, regarding the institution's capacity to operate delegated authority.

APPENDIX C

Agenda for Delegated Authority Evaluation Visit

DAY 1- 28 FEBRUARY – INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY TALLAGHT

MORNING

0900 - Private meeting of the Evaluation Group at ITT

0930 – 1000 Introduction

Welcome and clarification of agenda/format and running order for the visit (Director, Chair of Governing Body).

1000- 1130 Part 1 - Organisation and Management

Meeting with Director, Representative of the Governing Body, Heads of Schools, Heads of Departments, Secretary/Financial Controller, HR Manager, Librarian and other relevant management and support staff.

Format: Question and answer/discussion.

Indicative Scope: Background to the delegation of authority application, the self-evaluation process, expectations from the evaluation, governance and management structure, strategic planning and evaluation, learner services, human resources policy/staff development arrangements, physical resources, public responsibility, financial resources management.

1130 – 1300 Part 2 - Education and Training Programmes – Overview

Meeting with the Registrar, Heads of Schools, Heads of Departments, Head of Development and other relevant academic support staff.

Format: Question and answer/discussion.

Indicative Scope: Overview of academic quality assurance procedures, Objects of the Act and Council conditions attached to delegated authority, access, transfer and progression arrangements.

AFTERNOON

1400 - Private Meeting of the Evaluation Group

1430 - 1600 Part 3A – Audit Trail

Initial selection and study of programmes from across the Schools of the Institute which reflect the levels of awards for which Delegated Authority is being sought in preparation for audit trail/evaluation of the Institute's quality assurance arrangements for programme development, validation, monitoring, evaluation and review. Selection of other areas for audit trail that relate to institutional operations and management.

1600 – Tour of Institute Library and other facilities (may involve sub-groupings of the panel)

1700 – 1800 Part 4 - Meeting with Stakeholders

DAY 2 – 1 MARCH - INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY TALLAGHT

MORNING

0900 - Private Meeting of the Evaluation Group

0930 - Part 3B – Audit Trail¹

Continuation of DAY 1 activity

1200- 1245 Part 5 – Meeting with representative group of the Institute’s students

1245- 1330 Part 6 – Meeting with a representative group of the Institute’s staff

AFTERNOON

1330 (onwards) Part 7 – Private Meeting of the Evaluation Group and Exit Meeting

¹ Audit trail will involve meetings with Institute staff. Taught programme audits will typically involve meetings with Heads of Department and Course/Programme Leaders. Other officers of the Institute may be requested to meet Evaluation Group members in relation to Operations and Management issues.

APPENDIX D

Institute of Technology, Tallaght

Additional information required for the Delegation Evaluation Group

Additional information requested of the Institute by the Chairman of the Delegation Evaluation Group for reference and examination during the evaluation process.

- 1) The following list of taught courses have been selected by the Chairperson of the Delegated Authority Evaluation Group for examination under Part 3 of the evaluation visit agenda:

HIGHER CERTIFICATE IN ENGINEERING in Mechanical Engineering
HIGHER CERTIFICATE IN ENGINEERING in Electronic Engineering
BACHELOR OF ENGINEERING (HONOURS) in Manufacturing Engineering

HIGHER CERTIFICATE BUSINESS in Accounting
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (Honours) in Technology Management
BACHELOR OF BUSINESS in Management.
BACHELOR OF BUSINESS in People Management
BACHELOR OF BUSINESS (Honours) in Marketing Management

HIGHER CERTIFICATE IN SCIENCE in Applied Chemistry
HIGHER CERTIFICATE IN SCIENCE in Computing
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE in Chemical Analysis
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE in Pharmaceutical Technology
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (Honours) in Bioanalytical Science
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (Honours) in Computing in Information Systems
MASTER OF SCIENCE in Pharmaceutical Production

HIGHER CERTIFICATE IN ARTS in Audio Visual Media
BACHELOR OF ARTS (Honours) in Applied Languages
BACHELOR OF ARTS (Honours) in European Studies
HIGHER DIPLOMA IN ARTS in Primary School Language Teaching with French

The evaluation group will require the following information in regard to the above programmes:

The Certificate of Course Approval issued by HETAC

- The HETAC Assessors' Report
- The current Course Schedule
- The Institute's current course document, including a list of personnel involved in the delivery of the programme
- A **summary** of alterations made to the course (if any), as a result of recommendations made by the original HETAC assessor panel and or recommendations made as a result of the application of the institute's quality assurance procedures.
- External examiner reports and Examinations Board broadsheets

2) The following additional information is requested by the Chairperson to be available on the days of the evaluation visit:

- Programmatic review reports since 2001 and implementation status of recommendations
- The current status of preparations for planned programmatic reviews
- Records of the Institute's evaluation of the effectiveness of its quality assurance processes and recommendations and actions undertaken
- The Institute's identification of training and development needs and a breakdown by school of participation numbers per training and development programmes
- Minutes of the Institute's primary Governance and Management bodies and their respective subcommittees
- Statistical information on student retention rates (if not included in the submission document)
- Internal audit reports in relation to, HR Development, Admissions, Quality, Mission Statement and Corporate Governance, Annual Reports.

3) The Chairman requests that the Institute makes arrangements for the Evaluation Group to have access to and facilities to copy, if required, all or sections of the documents listed above at 1) and 2).

APPENDIX E

Students and External Stakeholders met by the Evaluation Group

Meeting with the President, Education Officer and Welfare Officer of the Students' Union and Learner Representatives of the following courses:

Bachelor of Business (Honours) (Year 4 Marketing and Member of Governing Body)
Bachelor of Engineering (Year 3 Mechanical Engineering and Former SU President)
Higher Certificate in Science (Year 2 Computing and Former SU Officer)
Higher Certificate in Business (Year 1 Accountancy)
Bachelor of Arts (Year 4 Applied Languages)
Higher Certificate in Science (Year 1 Computing)
Higher Certificate in Engineering (Year 2 Electronic Engineering)
Higher Certificate in Science (Year 2 Applied Biology)
Bachelor of Business (Honours) (Year 4 Marketing Management)
Bachelor of Business (Honours) (Year 4 Accounting)
Bachelor of Business (Year 3 Management)
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) (Year 4 Audio Visual)
Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) (Year 5 Electronic Engineering)
Bachelor of Science (Year 4 Applied Chemistry)
Postgraduate PhD register
MSc Pharmaceutical Science
Bachelor of Arts (Year 4 Applied Languages)
Postgraduate MSc register (Research in Biology)
Higher Certificate in Engineering (Year 2 Electronics)
Bachelor of Arts (Technology Management)
Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) (Manufacturing Engineering)
Bachelor of Business (Year 3 Marketing Erasmus student)

The Evaluation Group met with representatives from the following external stakeholders of the Institute:

Meditec Medical Ltd
A:M Web Design
Intel
Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland
IBM
Cluesivity
Enterprise Ireland
South Dublin County Council
Collinstown Park Community, Rowlagh, Clondalkin, Dublin 22
Killinarden Community School, Killinarden, Tallaght
Coca Cola
Deloitte & Touche
Tallaght Hospital
Priory Institute
Engineers Ireland
Wyeth Biopharma
Institute of Project Management
Radio Telefis Eireann
Templeogue College
University College, Dublin
Failte Ireland

APPENDIX F

Extract from the Criteria and Procedures for the Delegation and Review of Delegation of Authority to Make Awards, 2004

Authority to make awards will be delegated to a recognised institution in accordance with the criteria set out below. The criteria will be used for both an initial application for delegation of authority and the review of delegation of authority. In the first instance, the criteria will be used to assess the capacity of a recognised institution to operate under delegated authority. To this end the Council will satisfy itself, based on the recognised institution's past, current and planned management processes, including those processes for the development, programme validation, implementation and review of its higher education and training programmes, that it is reasonable to award delegation of authority to make awards. In the case of a review of delegated authority, the criteria will serve to help the Council take a rounded view of how the recognised institution has operated delegation of authority in all its respects.

The Council will issue a guide to recognised institutions, which will elaborate the criteria and may be used for the preparation of documentation to be submitted to the Council and for the evaluation/review panel visit. The criteria are set out here under four headings: Operation and Management; Education and Training Programmes; Council Conditions attaching to delegation of authority; and Objects of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999.

1.1 Operation and Management

The Act clearly sets out that the Council and the Authority, in deciding whether to grant delegated authority, have to review and be satisfied with the operation and management of the recognised institution in relation to programmes of higher education and training that it provides, organises or procures. The Council intends that the evaluation of the operation and management of the recognised institution will be undertaken using the criteria listed below. The criteria are designed to assess, in relation to programmes of higher education and training provided, organised or procured, the efficiency and effectiveness of the recognised institution's:

- Governance, organisation and administration
- Planning and evaluation
- Academic and other staff policies
- Library and information resources
- Physical resources
- Learner services
- Public responsibility and integrity
- Financial resources and management

The Council notes that, in undertaking the review of the operation and management, some of the criteria are generally consistent with requirements of the Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992, under which, existing recognised institutions operate statutory obligations.²

² There may be a need for the evaluation/review to have regard to audits/reviews undertaken in relation to any of the above by other parties.

1.2 Educational and training programmes

The criteria set out here are intended to assist the examination of the recognised institution's processes for the development, validation, implementation and review of its higher education and training programmes. In reviewing the programmes, account will be taken of the effectiveness of processes operated by the recognised institution

- to develop and validate those programmes, and
- to maintain and continuously improve the quality of those programmes.

This is a prime criterion.

As appropriate for the delegation of authority, the Council shall also seek to establish that:

- The institution's quality assurance procedures have been agreed with the Council in accordance with the Council's 'Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures in Higher Education'.
- The institution has, or in the case of review can show evidence of the effective operation of, quality assurance procedures for:
 - the design and approval of new programmes, subjects and modules, including the assurance that the standards of knowledge, skill or competence, determined by the Council have been incorporated into outcomes to be associated with the successful completion of the programme
 - the regular evaluation or review of existing programmes, subjects and modules, including the assurance that the standards of knowledge, skill or competence, determined by the Council have been incorporated into outcomes to be associated with the successful completion of the programme
 - the fair and consistent assessment of learners
 - the on-going monitoring of programmes
 - the selection, appointment and development of staff who are providing programmes
 - the evaluation of premises, equipment and facilities in relation to programmes
 - the evaluation of the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures.

1.3 Conditions attached to Delegation of Authority

These criteria focus on the recognised institution's capacity to comply with or its record of compliance with the conditions determined by the Council for the purposes of the delegation of authority. Council conditions shall include:

- adherence to the agreed wording on parchments issued by the recognised institutions, as defined in the Order in Council granting Delegation of Authority
- co-operation and assistance to the Council, and the Authority where appropriate, in the performance of their functions

- establishment of procedures for the assessment of learners which are fair and consistent and for the purpose of compliance with standards determined by the Council under the Act
- implementation of procedures for access, transfer and progression determined by the Authority under the Act
- consultation with other providers as stipulated under Sections 28 and 29 of the Act
- provision of such information as the Council requires for the purposes of the performance of its functions, including information in respect of completion rates
- fulfilment of such other conditions as the Council may from time to time determine, in consultation with the recognised institution.

1.4 Objects of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999

The purpose of these criteria is to establish whether the recognised institution can show how its application of delegation of authority will be or has been supportive of the objects of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999. In addition to those objects of the Act that are specifically evaluated in the preceding criteria, the recognised institution should be able to demonstrate, through its policies and operational procedures, that it shall or has operated delegation of authority in a manner that:

- contributes to the provision of a system for the coordination and comparison of higher education and training awards;
- facilitates lifelong learning through the promotion of access and opportunity for all learners;
- promotes the recognition of knowledge, skill or competence acquired;
- contributes to the realisation of national education and training policies;
- promotes co-operation with other providers;
- promotes diversity within higher education and training and between higher education and training and further education and training;
- contributes to the realisation of national policy and objectives in relation to the extension of bi-lingualism in Irish society.