



**Academic Council:
Terms of Reference, Code of
Practice, Composition and
Regulations**

Approved by Board of Governors
on 21 June 2010

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1. Roles and Responsibilities

The Academic Council is appointed by the Board of Governors of the School to assist it in the planning (including the strategic planning), co-ordination, development and overseeing of the educational work of the School and to protect, maintain and develop the academic standards of the programmes delivered by the School.

1.1 The functions of the Academic Council shall include:

- a) encouraging excellence in research and scholarship;
- b) promoting the highest standards of teaching and learning;
- c) advising the Board of Governors on academic matters and proposing to the Board of Governors the form and content of statutes to be made relating to the academic affairs of the School including the conduct of examinations, the determination of examination results, the procedures for appeals by students relating to results of such examinations and the evaluation of academic progress;
- d) ensure that students receive equality of treatment and service in terms of programme provision and that this is maintained to the highest possible standards;
- e) advising the Board of Governors in relation to academic appointments;
- f) encourage innovation in programme development and design, approve the design of new programmes of study, develop programmes of study in the light of regional and national need and demand, and make recommendations to the Governing Body for the establishment of appropriate structures to implement such programmes, and to monitor their implementation;
- g) making recommendations relating to the selection, admission, retention and exclusion of students generally;
- h) determining the results of examinations and authorising the awarding of degrees and other awards;
- i) ensure that external examiners' reports are received and formally considered and that appropriate action is taken in relation to comments and suggestions contained in those reports;

- j) making recommendations for the awarding of scholarships and prizes;
- k) see that procedures regarding appeals procedures are dealt with in a fair and transparent manner and that adequate communication concerning such is maintained between all staff and students and reviewing the procedures for considering appeals by students relating to the results of an examination;
- l) agree upon procedures for dealing with matters of general misconduct, misbehaviour and academic misdemeanours;
- m) act as a final committee of arbitration, or establish a Special Hearings Committee in cases of dispute between staff and participants and to hear disciplinary matters brought before it under set procedures;
- n) advising the Board of Governors on procedures for quality assurance aimed at improving the quality of education and related services provided by the School;
- o) implementing any statutes and regulations made by the Board of Governors relating to any of the matters referred to in this constitution;
- p) such other functions as the Board of Governors or the Academic Council, with the approval of the Board of Governors, may determine by regulation.

The Programme Coordinator has overall responsibility for co-ordinating these processes and reporting to Academic Council and the Board of Governors on progress and implementation. The Coordinator provides administrative and secretarial support and is responsible for the preparation and circulation of documents for meetings of the Academic Council and its committees.

2. Ordinary meetings of the Academic Council shall be held at such times as the Academic Council shall determine by regulation, provided that at least four Ordinary Meetings of the Academic Council shall be held during each session. A Special Meeting may be called by the Director of the School under such conditions as the Academic Council may determine by regulation.

3. The Academic Council may delegate any function ascribed to it by the constitution to a committee established in accordance with this Constitution. Currently, as a small institution, the Academic Council monitors the effectiveness by which responsibilities are discharged through the consideration of minutes and reports of the Programme Board and the Quality Assurance Committee. As the School grows, subcommittees will be

formed to oversee individual areas such as:

Teaching, Learning and Assessment.
Facilities and Resource
Marketing and Communications

4. The Academic Council may determine by regulation procedures for the convening and conduct of its meetings or the conduct of its functions, provided that any regulation which relates to membership of the Academic Council shall have the approval of the Board of Governors.

2. Composition

2.1 The Academic Council will be made of the following interests as recommended by the HETAC publication on Assessment and Standards (December 2009):

- Chairperson (Director of the School) (1)
- Programme Coordinator (Management) (1)
- Academic Members of Staff (5)
- External Representatives (2)
- Student Representative (2)

An outline of the election procedures and a note on Academic Council membership appear in Appendix C below.

As indicated in Appendix C, appointment to the Academic Council will be for a period of three years. Each elected member may serve a maximum of two consecutive terms.

3. Support for Members and Committees

To enhance the effectiveness of Academic Council and its committees, the following supports are available to members:

3.1 Handbook for Members

The Academic Council publishes a handbook for members of Council that outlines, amongst other things, the expectations of the roles members play on Council and its committees, as well as general information on the GSA, the place of Council within the GSA's structures, codes of conduct within Council, and other information.

3.2. Training

The Academic Council provides short training programmes for members on how to function effectively as a member, how to act as a representative, how to engage most effectively with the work of the Council, including critiquing papers and otherwise contributing to ongoing debates. This training is co-ordinated by the Programme Coordinator.

3.3. Briefing Sessions

The Academic Council provides briefing sessions on current and upcoming issues to be discussed by Council. These sessions are co-ordinated by the Programme Coordinator.

4. Structures

4.1 Academic Council Committees

The Academic Council with the approval of the Board of Governors may establish committees to assist with the performance of its functions.

Currently, as a small institution, the Academic Council monitors the effectiveness by which such responsibilities are discharged through the consideration of minutes and reports of the Programme Board and the Quality Assurance Committee.

As the School grows, subcommittees will be formed to oversee individual areas such as:

- Teaching, Learning and Assessment.
- Facilities and Resources
- Marketing and Communications

4.2. Guidelines for Committees

The Academic Council will normally delegate responsibility for detailed consideration, analysis and drafting of policies, procedures and other matters to its Committees. Reports from Committees or working parties on such matters will be referred to Council for plenary consideration. Council may adopt or reject such reports or refer them back to Committee stage.

Normally, the Chairpersons of each committee meet with the Chairperson and Secretary of Council towards the end of the academic year to discuss and agree a committee work plan for the next year. This is to ensure an efficient and appropriate distribution of work across committees, to identify areas of common interest where co-operation between committees is required, and eliminate duplication of effort.

4.3 Terms of Reference

The following are the terms of reference and the membership details of the committees of Academic Council. Where there is unavoidable overlap between the work of committees, it is the responsibility of the Chairpersons to liaise with the each other and to ensure positions are clear before the outcome is reported to Academic Council.

The Director of the School shall be an *ex officio* member of each committee listed below. The committee will nominate a Convenor from among the membership. The committee may invite other persons from the School or otherwise to attend as required, either as full members or in an advisory capacity.

4.3.1 Programme Board

The Programme Board is appointed by the Director of the School with approval from the Academic Council. The Programme Board, through the Chairperson, will report to the Academic Council. The Programme Board has overriding responsibility for developing and managing the course.

The terms of reference for the Programme Board is as follows.

The Programme Board is expected to:

- Monitor and manage the course on an ongoing basis
- Ensure that the course is maintained and kept up to date and relevant, and that the curriculum content and assessment is suitable for the learning outcomes
- Compile and submit an Annual Monitoring Report to the Academic Council and implement action plans identified in the report
- Submit a self-evaluation report for the periodic evaluation of the courses to the Academic Council and implement action plans identified in the process
- Identify and share good practice between members of staff
- To develop strategies and policies for all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment at GSA
- To receive and digest reports from external examiners and other external authorities ensuring that the appropriate responses are made to such reports
- To appoint an assessment review board where necessary and carry out the review process
- To appoint an appeals board where necessary; conduct the appeals process and report findings to the learner in question

The Programme Board is comprised of the following interests:

Director of the School (1)

Teaching staff (4)

Member of the School administration (1)

Student representative (2)

The Programme Board meets at least twice a term. The proceedings of programme board meetings are recorded. The minutes are circulated to Board members and are available to other stakeholders on request. Where the Programme Board is unable to reach a decision on a matter that matter is referred to the Academic Council. The decision of the Council is final.

4.3.2 Quality Assurance Committee

The Quality Assurance Committee is a sub-committee of the Academic Council. Membership is determined through approved nomination of experienced staff and approved by the Academic Council.

The terms of reference of the Quality Assurance Committee is as follows. The Quality Assurance Committee is expected to:

- Report and advise the Academic Council on the effectiveness of GSA's quality control procedures
- Audit the effectiveness by which departments fulfil the School's quality assurance procedures
- Review the plan for internal audit, approve the plan, and monitor results as presented in the internal audit's annual report
- Monitor and evaluate resources so that quality assurance procedures are satisfactorily implemented
- Monitor and review all procedures for annual monitoring
- Oversee periodic programme review and co-ordinate necessary actions arising from it.

This committee is comprised of: Director of the School, General Manager, Heads of Department (2) and a GSA appointed external Quality Assurance official.

The Quality Assurance Committee meets once every two months.

4.3.2.1 Audit Team

An Audit Team is appointed by the Quality Assurance Committee and is directly responsible to the Chair of the Academic Council (Director of the School) for the discharge of their duties. At least one member of the GSA will be part of the three person Audit Team. At least two members will be experienced senior staff, from other accredited third level Irish institutions, with direct knowledge and practice in coordinating school quality assurance strategies.

The purpose of the Audit Team is to:

- Independently check and verify that a department is fully discharging its responsibility for quality and standards

- Ensure that self-evaluation at all levels is systematic and rigorous, and supported with reliable evidence
- Identify areas for improvement by stimulating self-critical reflection
- Present written reports to the Quality Assurance Committee on its findings and recommendations.

5. Operational Arrangements

It is important that all meetings of Committees be conducted effectively, efficiently and fairly; that they foster the sharing of knowledge and ideas; enable informed, free and open discussion for all members of committees, and assist in the dissemination of the work of the committees to the membership of the School. It is not intended that the standing orders relating to the conduct of meetings should be unduly prescriptive or constrain the discretion of the Chair of any Committee to conduct a meeting in the most appropriate way. They should serve as guidelines in most circumstances, being invoked formally only in exceptional situations.

5.1. Chair and Secretary

The Director of the School shall be chairperson of the Academic Council, where the Director is unable to chair a meeting of the Council, he/she shall nominate a member of the Council to chair the meeting.

The Programme Coordinator shall be secretary to the Academic Council and shall be responsible for keeping the record of attendance and the minutes of meetings of the Academic Council. Other committees may appoint a Secretary from the membership.

5.2. Quorum

The quorum for a meeting shall be half of the membership plus one. If a quorum is not present, no business shall be carried out. A meeting that has not achieved a quorum 15 minutes later than the published starting time shall be abandoned.

5.3. Voting Rights

All members shall be entitled to vote on matters coming before the Council.

Committees will normally decide matters by consensus but any voting member may request that a decision be put to a vote. Unless otherwise stated in these standing orders, votes shall be determined by a majority of the members of the committee present and voting. Voting shall be by show of hands unless any member requests a secret ballot.

The name of any member voting for or against the motion or amendment or abstaining from voting shall, on the request of that member, be recorded in the minutes.

There shall be no vote, and no decision reached, on any substantial item, unless such item has appeared on the circulated agenda or has been accepted by the Chair as urgent business.

5.4. Casting Vote

In the event of an equality of votes, the Chair shall have in addition to an original vote a second or casting vote. This casting vote may be used whether or not the Chair has used his or her original vote. A member of the Academic Council nominated to act as Chairperson by the Director shall not have a casting vote.

5.5. Schedule of Meetings

Ordinary Meetings of the Academic Council shall be convened by the Programme Coordinator, on the instruction of the Director of the School, at least four times in each academic calendar year. Normally, one such meeting shall be held in each semester. Provisional dates for such meetings shall be published by the Programme Coordinator no later than the second working day of the first semester of the academic year. Other Committees will publish their schedules of meetings in the first week of the first semester of the academic year. Along with these schedules, a workplan for Council and its Committees will also be agreed and published.

5.6. Notice of Meetings

The Programme Coordinator shall notify each member of the Academic Council of the date, time and venue of each meeting of Academic Council at least seven working days in advance of the meeting. Notification of each meeting shall normally accompany the minutes of the previous meeting.

5.7. Composition of the Agenda

The agenda for each meeting of the Academic Council shall be prepared by the Programme Coordinator under the direction of the Director of the School, and shall be communicated to each member of the Academic Council at least one week in advance of the meeting.

Standard items for the agenda of all Committees shall be:

- Apologies;
- Minutes;
- Matters arising;
- Green papers (discussion documents) (if any)
- White papers (documents for which a vote is required) (if any)

Minutes and reports from Committees and working parties (if any).

Any member of a committee may propose items for the agenda by sending them in writing to the secretary of the committee. Notice of matters originating from other bodies or persons must be received by the secretary of the committee concerned, in writing, no fewer than ten working days before the meeting at which they are to be discussed, so that they may be included on the agenda paper.

Papers for discussion at committee meetings shall be confined to those circulated by the Chair or Secretary. Papers will be presented in the agreed format (see template in Appendix B of this document).

The Programme Coordinator shall include on the agenda for each meeting any item referred to the Academic Council by the Board of Governors. The Programme Coordinator shall also include on the agenda for each meeting any item requested by twenty members of the Academic Council, provided that, in the opinion of the Director of the School, such item relates to a function of the Academic Council.

The agenda for each meeting of the Academic Council shall distinguish between items for noting, for formal approval, for decision and for discussion by the Academic Council.

5.8. Circulation of Documents

The agendas and all documentation relating to a meeting shall be circulated to members in time to reach them no fewer than seven working days before the meeting.

5.9. Confidentiality

All agenda, reports and other documents, and all proceedings of and discussion at committees shall be treated as confidential unless and until disclosed in the legitimate programme of business.

5.10. Special Meetings

All meetings other than those listed in the schedule of meetings shall be called Special Meetings and may be convened by the Chair at any time and shall be convened on the request of not less than one-fifth of the members of the committee concerned or three, whichever is the greater.

Notice of Special Meetings shall be given to all members not less than seven working days after receipt of the request by the Secretary of the committee and such meetings shall be held within ten working days after the issue of such notice.

5.11. Declaration of Interest

Any member of the Academic Council who has an interest in any business being considered shall disclose to the Council the fact of the interest, an its nature and shall, if Council so decides, take no part in the deliberation or decision of the Council relating to that business.

5.12. Attendance at Meetings

Attendance at meetings shall be recorded and an elected member's failure to attend three consecutive meetings without reasonable excuse shall result in that member's disqualification. The member shall be informed accordingly in writing and will be replaced in accordance with election procedures. Other staff may not attend committee meetings in place of the member appointed to the Committee unless specifically agreed. Persons may be invited by the Chairperson or Secretary to attend on a temporary basis to assist the Council: such persons will not have voting rights.

5.13. Duration of Meetings

The normal duration of a Committee meeting shall not exceed two hours.

5.14. Variation or Revocation of Standing Orders

These Standing Orders shall not be amended, added to or rescinded unless notice shall first have been given to the Council as a substantive item on the agenda paper for its meeting and such notice shall state the terms of any proposed variation or revocation of these Standing Orders, and Council may take such action as it deems appropriate.

Appendix A

Membership of the Academic Council

1. The Academic Council will be made of the following interests as recommended by the HETAC publication on Assessment and Standards (December 2009):

- Chairperson (Director of the School) (1)
- Programme Coordinator (Management) (1)
- Academic Members of Staff (5)
- External Representatives (2)
- Student Representative (2)

2. The majority of members shall be holders of academic appointments within the school and at least one shall be a registered student of the School. There will be two external representatives drawn from experts in the field of academia and theatre.

3. The members appointed to the academic council shall hold office for a period of three years and shall be eligible for reappointment. Each elected member may serve a maximum of two consecutive terms

4. The Academic Council meets four times per academic year.

5. The procedures to be used by School for the election of members of the Academic Council shall be specified by regulation.

6. Nomination of Student Representatives

6.1 All registered students of each programme are eligible to be nominated to the Academic Council.

6.2 The term of office of student representatives nominated to Academic Council shall be appointed for one calendar year.

6.3 Students appointed to the Academic Council shall cease to be members of the Academic Council if they cease to be registered students or for reasons of death, disqualification or resignation.

6.4 The procedures by which students will be appointed to Academic Council shall be as follows:

- (i) Students registered for the Bachelor of Acting degree shall be represented by one such student, nominated by the students body.
- (ii) The student body for each programme shall nominate, from among the students in each programme, for appointment to Academic Council.
 - (iii) Where the student body is unable to appoint a student member to Academic Council from each programme an election will be held within that programme to elect a member.

7. Election of Members of Staff

- 7.1 All permanent members of staff teaching on the full time actor training programme with contracts of two years or longer at the time of election are eligible to vote in and stand for election.
- 7.2 Eligibility to stand for and be elected to the Academic Council does not confer any particular status or rights in regard to employment position held in the School where such status or rights did not previously exist.
- 7.3 The term of office of members of staff elected to Academic Council shall be for a period of three years unless they cease to be members of Academic Council for the reasons set out in Section 9 below.
- 7.4 In the case where elected staff members no longer fulfil the conditions under which they were elected to the Academic Council, they will immediately cease to be elected members of the Academic Council.
- 7.5 In the event elected members of staff to Academic Council resign or for whatever reason cease to be members of staff of the School, they shall immediately cease to be members of the Academic Council.
- 7.6 The Academic Council shall arrange for the filling of the casual vacancy as soon as practicable. Arrangements shall be put in place by the Programme Coordinator's office for the election of a replacement to the Academic Council for the remainder of that Academic Council's term of office. The election process shall be in accordance with the regulations that prevail at that time.

8. Election of External Representatives

- 8.1 The Gaiety School of Acting invites organisations to put forward names of suitable individuals (who can then be invited to apply) or to encourage their members to apply directly to the GSA.

- 8.2 The Gaiety School of Acting will invite Culture Ireland and the Department of Education and Skills to do so as they are representative of the interests and services of the School.
- 8.3 The following criteria are to be taken into account in considering the nomination or renewal of nomination to an external role on behalf of The Gaiety School of Acting. A nominee is not required to satisfy all criteria, but must to an extent sufficient to support their nomination to the Academic Council.

The nominee:

- is a person of good standing in the industry.
 - has the support of GSA executive management team.
 - continues to support the philosophy and objectives of GSA
 - has a continuing involvement in the theatre and/or film industry.
 - possesses knowledge of contemporary issues relevant to the position for which they are to be nominated.
 - is being considered for an appointment effective for a fixed term.
 - is willing to represent the interests of GSA to the extent allowed by the law.
- 8.4 The term of office of external representatives elected to Academic Council shall be for a period of three years unless they cease to be members of Academic Council for the reasons of death, disqualification or resignation.

9. Method of Election

- 9.1.1 Voting in the election of members of the Academic Council shall be by proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote and by secret postal ballot.
- 9.2 The relevant Director of the School or his/her nominee will be the Returning Officer for the election of members of staff to the Academic Council. The Programme Coordinator will be responsible for the investigation of any appeals based on alleged procedural irregularities. Based on the recommendations of the Programme Coordinator, the Director of the School will uphold or dismiss any such appeal.
- 9.3 The returning officer issues to each voter a list of the candidates nominated for the Academic Council, indicating the bodies or persons who made the nominations. On the day appointed by the Director of the School, the returning officer sends by registered post to each voter

five ballot papers (one for each membership on the Academic Council) showing the names of the candidates in alphabetical order, their addresses and descriptions, photographs, if any. The political affiliation, if any, of the candidates is not shown on the ballot papers. The voter marks on each paper the order of their choice of candidates and returns the ballot papers by registered post to the returning officer.

- 9.4 The ballot papers are sorted in accordance with the first preference shown on them. To facilitate counting each vote is given a value of 1,000. The appropriate value of his or her first preference votes is credited to each candidate. The quota is the minimum number of votes necessary to guarantee the election of a candidate. It is ascertained by dividing the total value of the valid votes by one more than the number of seats to be filled and adding one to the result.

If, for example, the total value of the votes cast in relation to a panel is 900,000 and there are 5 seats to be filled, the quota will be 150,001,

If the value of a candidate's votes equals or exceeds the quota, they are deemed elected. If a candidate receives more than a quota, the surplus is distributed to the remaining candidates in accordance with the next effective preference shown on the ballot papers. If no candidate has a surplus, the lowest candidate is excluded and his or her votes distributed at the value at which he or she received them. A candidate cannot, however, be excluded if his or her exclusion would make impossible the election of the minimum number of members.

Appendix B: Committee Report Pro-Forma

Report from _____ Committee Report to
Academic Council meeting on __ (date) __

1. Committee Membership
2. Number and dates of meetings since last meeting of Council
3. Progress Report on last Report, if necessary
 - (ii) Item --Action
 - (iii) Item --Action
 - (iv) Item - Action
4. Recommendations to Council and Actions Expected

Standard recommendations - external examiner appointments; approval of post-graduate registrations; approval of new programmes and modules, and so on

5. Green Paper items for Council's information and discussion

Brings forward preliminary discussion documents following previous discussion at Council and Council assigning the task to the committee

6. White Paper items for Presentation to Council for Discussion/Adoption and Action Expected

Final report from Committee to Council on a matter that has been referred to it by Council and discussed previously by Council.

7. Other Noteworthy Items

Definitions

Statute: A statute is a permanent rule made by a body or institution for the government of its internal affairs.

Regulation: A principle, rule, or law designed to control or govern conduct.

Constitution: The system of fundamental laws and principles that prescribes the nature, functions, and limits of an institution.

Ordinary Meeting: A Meeting which is held usually on a regular basis and conducts business for which no special notice needs to be given. Also known as a General Meeting.

Special Meeting: A meeting that is outside the regular timetable to discuss something important or unusual and has special rules and requirements as defined by our constitution. Also known as an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM).

PR/STV election process: The single transferable vote (STV) is a preferential voting system in which votes are initially allocated to an elector's most preferred candidate and then, after candidates have been either elected or eliminated, any surplus or unused votes are transferred according to the voters' stated preferences. The system minimizes "wasted" votes, provides proportional representation, and ensures that votes are explicitly cast for individual candidates.

Returning Officer: Is responsible for overseeing elections in accordance with the rules of the election process.

Quorum: The required minimum of number of members who must be present in person, by proxy and/or by ballot before the Academic Council may conduct business at a meeting.

Casting vote: A casting vote is a vote given to the Chairperson of the Academic Council to resolve a deadlock and which can be exercised *only* when such a deadlock exists.

Deliberative vote: A deliberative vote is a vote given to a person because they are a member of the group. The term is usually applied to people who chair the meeting to draw a distinction between the vote they get as a member, and the casting vote they may get as the presiding person.

Assent of the majority: mean that the majority of members concur with what has been proposed.

Co-opt a member: To elect as a fellow member of a group