



QUALITY ASSURANCE MANUAL

2010-11

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Preamble

American College Dublin is a third-level educational institution established in 1993 as a non-profit educational trust by Lynn University, Boca Raton, Florida. In January 2009 American College Dublin became a constituent college of the Irish American University, which is composed of the American College Dublin and the American College Delaware.

The College's commitment to quality education encompasses all aspects of the academic, personal, and professional development of its students and staff, with particular emphasis on excellence, competence, knowledge and communication skills. The College's objective is to provide quality international education for students from all over the world by combining the excellent traditions of the American and Irish educational systems.

The College is currently running the following HETAC-degree programmes:

- Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in International Business (level 8)
- Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Accounting and Finance (level 8)
- Master of Business in International Business (level 9)

The College is also planning to introduce a level-8 Bachelor of Arts degree programme in Liberal Arts, to be submitted for accreditation to HETAC in November 2010.

Under its candidate accreditation with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), the College offers the following programmes:

- Diploma in Hospitality Management
- Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management

Introduction

Quality assurance as part of an academic accreditation process started in the American College Dublin in 2003 in the context of the institution's self-study report submitted to HETAC in January 2002. Following the review the first Quality Assurance Manual was submitted to HETAC in November 2004 and granted approval in April 2005. The Quality Assurance Committee was established in October 2005 to oversee the maintenance and update of the Quality Assurance Manual and procedures, and to monitor the implementation of quality assurance policies.

In February 2009 the Quality Assurance Committee was reconstituted with enlarged membership including Head of General Education as Chair, the Registrar, Dean of Enrolment, academic departments nominees, support departments nominees (Student Affairs, IT, Library), and student representatives. Since then the Quality Assurance Committee has met twice yearly to discuss updates and improvements to the Quality Assurance Manual, to ensure that it reflects the institutional effectiveness and functioning of the College, and helps maintain the quality of education the College provides. In September 2010 the functions of the Quality Assurance Committee were incorporated into the working of the Academic Council.

The procedures for internal quality assurance established by the College follow the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (Helsinki 2009, 3rd edition, pages 16-19). The document identifies "seven elements" of internal quality assurance within higher education institutions, which include the following:

- Standard 1: *Policy and procedures for quality assurance*
- Standard 2: *Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards*
- Standard 3: *Assessment of students*
- Standard 4: *Quality assurance of teaching staff*
- Standard 5: *Learning resources and student support*
- Standard 6: *Information systems*
- Standard 7: *Public information*

The extent to which the above standards and guidelines for quality assurance define the operational areas of the American College Dublin is discussed in detail in the following chapters of the present document.

1. Policy and procedures for quality assurance

1.1 Overview

The chief policy of the American College Dublin is to ensure a high level of quality in all areas of its operation, including programme content and development, student assessment, student retention and placement, student relations, student-lecturer relations, staff management, administrative procedures, and facilities management. In each of these areas the College has established procedures for quality of delivery and processes to allow for assessment of the outcomes of those procedures. In this way the College seeks to monitor and ensure quality for its chief stakeholders: its academic, administrative, and technical staff, its students and the community.

American College Dublin is committed to the development of the quality of its operations and procedures, implicitly in the day-to-day running of the institution, and explicitly by the monitoring of its procedures via the Academic Council, which regularly publishes the updated policies, rules, and procedures to reflect and enhance the quality of the institution's operations. The chief working document that reflects these rules and procedures is the Quality Assurance Manual, available in hardcopy in the College Library and electronically on the College's website (www.amcd.ie). The Manual is continually updated following the feedback from all of its stakeholders.

1.2 Mission and vision

The institution takes the time-honoured American tradition of the moderately-sized, not-for-profit liberal arts college and places it in an international context, with campuses on both sides of the Atlantic rim: in Dublin, Ireland, and Claymont, Delaware. The mission of the institution is to offer the best characteristics of Irish and American higher education in an intimate environment underpinned by the holistic liberal arts model of learning, enabling students to realize their potential and participate successfully in the world.

Vision

American College Dublin will provide a high-quality undergraduate and postgraduate education: one that is rigorous, stimulating and valuable. The institution will emphasize the core values of academic excellence, innovation, ethical integrity and multiculturalism. The institutional ethos and programmes of study will inculcate and reflect the best of the Irish and American higher education traditions, engaging the student in an educational experience that is active, participative and challenging. American College Dublin will uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct in all its activities, including support for academic freedom, appropriate disclosure of information to the institution's stakeholders, equality of access and opportunity. The College will strive to instil a passion for education that advances the development of the individual's talents and a process of lifelong learning.

1.3 Organizational structures

1.3.1 Governing body

At the foundation of the American College Dublin in 1993, a Board of Trustees was appointed to control and manage the strategic affairs of the College. Dr. Donald E. Ross, President and CEO of Lynn University in Boca Raton, Florida, was appointed President and CEO of the American College Dublin. The Board of Trustees consisted of the President and seven Board members, of which three were Irish and four were American. Six members of the Board of Trustees also served on the Board of Lynn University.

In 2007 the Board of Trustees was replaced by an enlarged governing body, henceforth called the Board of Overseers. Dr Ross remained President of the College, reporting to the Board of Overseers. The past decisions of the Board of Trustees remained in force, as did the practice of holding two scheduled meetings each year, one in spring and one in autumn. At these meetings the members of the Board discuss ongoing and prospective College development. The members of the Executive Management Committee each provide the Board with a written (and orally presented) report on their respective areas of responsibility; the members of the Board ask questions and discuss the reports as appropriate. As with the earlier Board of Trustees, the members of the Board of Overseers receive no compensation for their service to American College Dublin.

The Board of Overseers is charged with overseeing the policy development, academic quality, financial integrity, strategic direction and institutional management of the College. The Board provides the President with advice and counsel regarding the operation and development of the institution.

When the President is required to be absent from Dublin for attendance at conferences, meetings and the like, the following managerial powers apply:

- All matters except those in the paragraph below report to the Academic Dean; the Academic Dean reports these responsibilities directly to the President;
- Matters reporting to the Office of the President and the Business Office (finance and accounts) report to the Executive Assistant to the President; the Executive Assistant to the President reports these responsibilities directly to the President.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Minutes of Board of Overseers meeting	

1.3.2 Executive Management Committee

The College’s operational management is directed by the Executive Management Committee. Its functions include:

- To ensure the efficient performance of the College in all its operations;
- To develop educational plans for the College;

- To ensure that the physical resources of the College are properly maintained;
- To make recommendations on the allocation of resources within the discretion of the College.

The Executive Management Committee consists of the College's President as Chair, the Vice-President of International Operations, Academic Dean, Director of Student Affairs, and Executive Assistant to the President. In the case of the President's absence the meetings are chaired by his nominee.

The Committee meets once a month or whenever otherwise necessary, and the required quorum is four members. At a meeting each member presents matters of relevance to the Committee. After the matters presented are discussed a decision is taken on such actions as are deemed necessary. Each meeting is recorded in minutes, which are subsequently circulated to all those in attendance. A file with the minutes of all meetings that have taken place is held in the President's Office.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Minutes of meetings	
b/ Follow-up on decisions for action by minuted reporting back at next meeting	

1.3.3 Academic Council

The Academic Council is responsible for academic quality and standards and is the governing body of the academic affairs of the College. The Council consists of Academic Dean, Director of Student Affairs, Registrar, Heads of Departments, representatives of the Faculty, Librarian, and student representatives. Members of the Executive Management Committee are ex officio members of the Academic Council. The Director of Student Affairs also meets regularly with members of the Student Union and reports on issues raised by class representatives through the Student Union. The Director of Student Affairs reports the outcome of these meetings to the Academic Council.

The functions of the Academic Council include:

- Monitoring compliance and ensuring the update and maintenance of quality assurance procedures and the Quality Assurance Manual;
- Monitoring and maintaining accreditation compliance;
- Establishing working groups and committees for special tasks as they arise and monitoring the progress of the same;
- Establishing and monitoring academic policies and academic standards concerning teaching, learning and assessment, student admission and progression, staff development, and academic resources;
- Approval of new programmes and amendments to existing programmes, of academic regulations, staff appointments, academic quality and standards;
- To be responsible, subject to the approval of HETAC, MSCHE and other regulatory bodies, for making the academic regulations of the College;

- To make recommendations to the President for the selection, admission, retention and dismissal of students;
- To make recommendations to the President for the award of scholarships, prizes and other awards;
- To make general arrangements for tutorial and other academic counselling;
- To assist in implementing any regulations which may be made by the President on any of the aforesaid issues.

The Academic Council meets at least four times each year. A report on its decisions is sent to the President and is also circulated to, and considered by, the Executive Management Committee, which reserves the right of final approval for all decisions taken by the Council and by all bodies and committees that report directly or indirectly to it.

Before each meeting an agenda is prepared by the Chair and circulated to all members of the Academic Council. Each item is introduced by the Chair and offered for discussion. Any resolutions arising are recorded in the minutes. Standing items on the agenda include Any Other Business and Course Boards. The latter normally includes a summary of the Course Board minutes, provided by the Course Board Chair. At the end of the academic year the head of the course also makes a short presentation on the delivery of the course.

The required quorum for the Academic Council is six, and if the quorum for a meeting is not met, the meeting will be adjourned by the Chair until a suitable date. Decisions are taken according to a majority vote. A formal count is only taken in cases of a close division; in the event of an exact division the Chair has the casting vote. If a member of the meeting wishes to have his or her dissent from a decision recorded, it will be so noted in the minutes.

At each meeting the minutes of the previous meeting are circulated to those who attended. If there are amendments to the minutes, these are either advised informally in advance and noted at the meeting or raised formally at the meeting, discussed and amended accordingly. Items that have not been notified to the Chair in advance may, at the discretion of the Chair, be introduced at the conclusion of the meeting.

Minutes are taken for each meeting and circulated to all those in attendance. A file with the minutes of all meetings that have taken place is held in the office of the Academic Dean.

The Academic Council, with the approval of the President, may establish working groups or committees as it thinks proper to assist the Council in the discharge of its duties. At present the committees of the Academic Council include Course Boards, Internal Examination Board and External Examination Board.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Maintenance of minutes of meetings	
b/ Follow-up on decisions for action by minuted reporting back at next meeting	

1.3.4 Course Boards

The Course Boards are responsible for the management of the degree programmes offered by the College. These currently include:

- Course Board for BA in International Business, BA in Accounting and Finance and for MBS in International Business (“Business” Course Board);
- Course Board for Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management and for Diploma in Hospitality Management (“Hospitality” Course Board).
- Course Board for Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts (“Liberal Arts” Course Board).

The functions of the Course Boards are as follows:

- To monitor the implementation of academic policy, maintenance of standards, and administration of the course, including selection, teaching, academic counselling and internship placement (where relevant);
- To review progress of students and make appropriate recommendations;
- To review annually the operation of the programme and consider proposals for its enhancement;
- To consider the need to revise, develop or alter courses in the light of prevailing circumstances, and to prepare appropriate proposals;
- To prepare annually a report on the courses for the consideration of the Academic Council.

The Course Boards consist of the Academic Dean, Registrar, Head of the relevant Department as Chair, external examiner, full-time faculty members or nominees from full-time faculty, and student representatives. The required quorum is four. The Boards meet twice each semester, or whenever otherwise necessary. Before each meeting an agenda is prepared by the Chair and circulated to all members of the Course Board. Standing items on the agenda are Matters Arising and Any Other Business. Minutes are taken for each meeting and circulated to all those in attendance. A file with the minutes of all meetings that have taken place is held in the office of the Chair.

At the end of each academic year the Course Boards present their annual findings to the Academic Council. The Course Boards also report feedback from students (past and present) concerning curriculum development, academic developments in their fields, suggestions from the business community (internship placements are particularly useful for generating this information), and the changing requirements for admission to post-graduate programmes, which provide the primary justification for alteration to existing modules or introduction of entirely new modules.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Maintenance of minutes of meetings	
b/ Follow-up on decisions for action by minuted reporting back at next meeting	

c/ External examiner reports and College responses	
d/ Student feedback forms and commentary by Course Board	
e/ Faculty feedback forms and commentary by Course Board	
f/ Course Board Report Form for each academic year (see below, Appendix 9.2)	
g/ Statistical data analysis of pass/fail rates, progression rates, completion rates, GPA rates per module	

1.3.5 Academic Standards Committee

The functions of the Academic Standards Committee are as follows:

- To establish and update regulations for the conduct of examinations;
- To oversee the grade review process;
- To oversee and decide on issues relating to academic dishonesty;
- To review appeals of grade review outcomes;
- To report to the Academic Council on its findings and operations.

The Academic Standards Committee consists of the Academic Dean, the Registrar as Chair, and representatives of the Faculty. The required quorum is three. The Committee meets once every semester, or whenever necessary, to review incidents of academic dishonesty and appeals of grade reviews.

The order of the Committee's business includes an agenda prepared by the Chair and circulated to all members of the Committee. There is a discussion of all items on the agenda. Standing items on the agenda are Matters Arising and Any Other Business.

Minutes are taken for each meeting and circulated to all those in attendance. A file with the minutes of all meetings that have taken place is held in the office of the Academic Dean.

The Academic Standards Committee has two boards which report to it: the Internal Examination Board and the External Examination Board.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Maintenance of minutes of meetings	
b/ Follow-up on decisions for action by minuted reporting back at next meeting	

1.3.6 Internal Examination Board

The functions of the Internal Examination Board are the following:

- To establish and update regulations for the conduct of examinations;
- To oversee the grade review process;
- To review grades from the most recent final examination session;

- To review award levels of graduating students;
- To oversee and decide on issues relating to academic dishonesty;
- To monitor student progress and recommend interventions where appropriate;
- To report to the Academic Council on its findings and operations.

The Internal Examination Board consists of Registrar as Chair, and of internal examiners. The Board meets as soon as possible after each semester when final grades have been received by the Academic Office and before the summer External Examination Board takes place; and as soon as possible after all August repeat session final grades have been received by the Academic Office and before the autumn External Examination Board takes place.

During a meeting the Registrar reads through the grade lists for each of the modules offered. There is a discussion of all “A”, “F” and “NP” grades, as well as of any borderline grades or results that warrant attention. For final awards, all firsts and borderline results are considered, together with any adjustments that might be proposed. Minutes are taken for each meeting. A file with the minutes of all meetings that have taken place is held in the office of the Registrar.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Maintenance of minutes of meetings	
b/ Follow-up on decisions for action by minuted reporting back at next meeting	
c/ Note of review and sign-off on each module’s grade sheet	

1.3.7 External Examination Board

The functions of the External Examination Board are the following:

- To review and confirm grades from the most recent final examination session;
- To review and confirm award levels of graduating students;
- To monitor student progress and recommend interventions where appropriate;
- To report to the Academic Council on its findings and operations.

The External Examination Board consists of Registrar as Chair, Academic Dean, internal examiners and external examiners. The required quorum is five, including at least one external examiner. The Board meets as soon as possible after the semester two Internal Examination Board has met. The autumn meeting takes place as soon as possible after the August repeat session Internal Examination has met.

During a meeting the Registrar reads through the HETAC broadsheets the grade lists for each of the modules offered. At the conclusion of the reading for each stage the broadsheets are circulated to the meeting for signing by the relevant internal examiners and external examiners. There is a discussion of any grades or awards that are signalled for consideration by those attending the meeting.

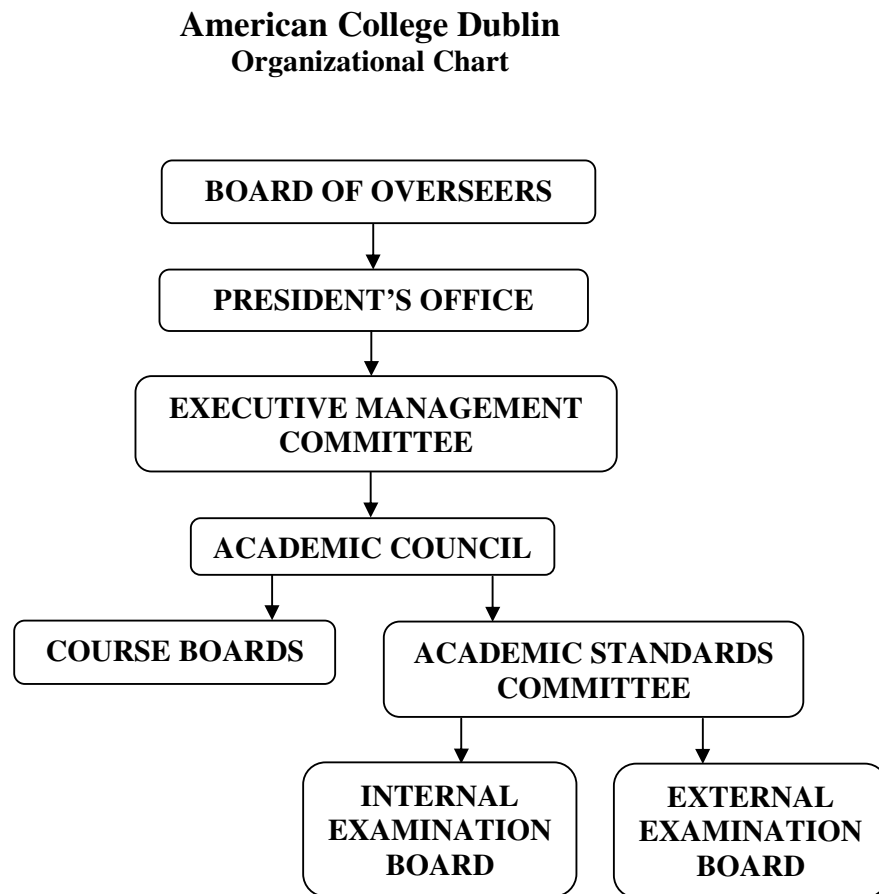
Minutes are taken for each meeting. A file with the minutes of all meetings that have taken place is held in the office of the Registrar. A copy of the signed broadsheets is

held in the Academic Office, while the original broadsheets are forwarded to HETAC immediately for processing.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Maintenance of minutes of meetings	
b/ Signed broadsheets and covering correspondence to HETAC	

1.3.8 Organisational chart

The College’s administrative structure, effective from September 2010, is set out in the following chart:



1.4 Quality assurance and institutional review

All of the institution’s planning and operational functions take place within a quality assurance paradigm. Quality assurance procedures and overarching institutional functioning are themselves subject to an ongoing monitoring process.

1.4.1 Quality assurance monitoring

Quality assurance procedures and compliance are the responsibility of the Academic Council, which nominates from within its number each year a Quality Assurance Officer, with responsibility for ensuring internal QA compliance. The procedures are recorded in the present document, called the Quality Assurance Manual (QAM). The QAM is subject to external approval by HETAC. The QAM is reviewed internally on an ongoing basis. The key documentation to verify QA procedures is reviewed using the “QA documentation” boxes in the QAM; at the end of each academic year the document trails are checked for completeness and follow-up and their status recorded in the QAM. The QA documentation check is conducted through a Summary Check List (see Appendix 9.4). On the basis of the document check and other feedback, at the end of each academic year revisions are proposed to the Academic Council; any of these which are accepted are submitted to HETAC for approval. As part of the HETAC institutional review (see 1.4.2 below), the institution’s quality assurance procedures and policies are subject to a comprehensive review and revalidation procedure.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Academic Council minutes on proposed amendments to QAM	
b/ Current and preceding versions of QAM	
c/ HETAC correspondence and approvals of changes and updates to QAM	
d/ QAM documentation checklist reviewed and signed off by Academic Council at the end of each academic year	

1.4.2 Institutional review

The institution is subject to comprehensive institutional reviews by its Irish and American accreditation agencies, HETAC and MSCHE. The HETAC institutional review is conducted according to the procedures set out in the HETAC publication, *Policy on Institutional Review of Providers of Higher Education and Training* (December 2007), and in relevant supplemental guidelines. The MSCHE institutional review activities follow those currently required by the institution’s candidate for accreditation status with MSCHE, set out in the MSCHE publication, *Becoming Accredited: Handbook for Applicants and Candidates for Accreditation* (2009).

QA documentation	Status
a/ Course Board, Academic Council and EMC meetings minutes	
b/ HETAC institutional review SER and supporting documentation	
c/ HETAC institutional review panel report and institution’s response	
d/ Quality Improvement Plan and supporting documentation	
e/ Correspondence with HETAC	
f/ MSCHE accreditation reports and responses	

2. Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards

2.1 Overview

The commitment of the American College Dublin to academic development is reflected in the work of its departments, offices and committees, whose joint task is to ensure that programmes are well designed, regularly monitored, and periodically reviewed. These departments include:

- Department of Business
- Department of Liberal Arts

American College Dublin recognises and supports the need to design and deliver programmes (in an efficient and flexible manner) that anticipate the changing needs of society and the world, in line with national and international requirements, the national qualifications framework, and stakeholder requirements. The College strives to cultivate initiative which supports the best practice in modern programme development, to keep American College Dublin a stimulating and attractive educational institution.

The programmes provided by the American College Dublin lead to awards by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) (in accordance with Section 25 of the Qualifications [Education and Training] Act, 1999), or (in the case of MSCHE-accredited programmes) by Irish American University. The application of academic quality principles requires that the College satisfy itself and its accrediting bodies that a learner may attain knowledge, skills and competence for the purpose of an award, to ensure that programmes offered by the College have academic and intellectual currency and standards comparable to similar awards offered anywhere in the world.

The College's portfolio of academic programmes is constantly developing through an extensive process of designing and validating new programmes and revising and updating the existing ones. The stages of the process involve groups and committees both from within the College and in consultation with external academics and accrediting bodies, including Heads of Departments, teaching staff, Academic Dean, Course Boards, and HETAC.

2.2 Design and approval of new programmes and modules

2.2.1 New modules and major modifications to existing ones

Modifications to existing modules or the submission of entirely new modules which in themselves do not alter the essential structures or learning aims of the programme constitute curriculum development that falls within the responsibility of the Academic Council and the Course Boards appointed to monitor each programme.

At the end of each academic year the Course Boards consider (as a standing item on the agenda for the final Course Board of the year) feedback from students (past and present), academic developments in the field, suggestions from the business community (internship placements are particularly useful for generating this information) and the changing requirements for admission to post-graduate programmes of study—these provide the primary justification for proposals to alter existing modules or introduce entirely new modules. If the Course Board agrees to accept the changes, these are presented as part of the Course Board’s annual report to the Academic Council. Once the Academic Council has given its approval, the appropriate changes are proposed to the course schedule, which is submitted to HETAC for approval (or indications of additional submissions and actions in order to attain approval). Following a successful validation a new syllabus is entered in the College’s annual in-house catalogue of modules, together with module outlines.

Minor modifications to existing modules (updating of reading lists and stylistic revisions or correction of errors of fact that do not have an effect on the substance of the module) need only be notified and noted in the final Course Board of the academic year.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Relevant Course Board documentation as noted above at 1.3.4	

2.2.2 New programmes and major modifications to existing ones

The process of introducing new award programmes develops through a number of stages, incorporating both internal and external activity. Typically, identification of opportunities for new programme development comes both through market research and from consultation with the academic community within and outside the College, followed by programme quality assurance and associated self-evaluation processes. The strategic and logistical reasons for introducing a new programme are considered, to make sure that the proposed programme falls within the existing fields of competence within the College, and that there exists an identifiable market demand for a new programme as well as employment opportunities for prospective graduates.

The task of proposing, preparing, and revising degree programmes lies within the remit of the relevant Course Board (see section 1.3.4). Introduction of a new degree programme involves the following stages:

- A proposal to introduce a new programme is tabled, normally at the initiative of either a Course Board or the Executive Management Committee;
- An outline plan is presented to the Course Board for evaluation: the strengths and weakness of the proposal are then discussed;
- An approval to conduct a feasibility study is made, notified to the next Academic Council (although the Council’s endorsement is not required for the study to proceed).
- The feasibility study includes a description of the initial consultative process, an assessment of intellectual content and coherence, market research on

- probable demand for the programme, evaluation of human and other resource requirements, and an outline costing for delivery of the programme;
- Submission of results of the feasibility study to the Academic Council, followed by provision of approval to make a preliminary programme submission to the Council;
 - Consideration of the preliminary programme submission by the Academic Council, followed by the Council's recommendations and provision of approval to make a full programme submission;
 - Full programme submission to the Academic Council: if conditional approval is granted the programme is re-submitted to the next Academic Council; if unconditional approval is granted the submission is put forward for final approval by the Executive Management Committee;
 - Final approval granted or declined by the Executive Management Committee;
 - Submission of proposal to external accreditation bodies; the process followed hereafter is determined by the relevant external accreditation bodies.

In the case of American College Dublin, the principal external body concerned with the accreditation of new programmes is HETAC, which stipulates the satisfying of set programme validation criteria as a requirement for the programme to be validated for the purpose of leading to a HETAC award. For such programme submissions, the College follows the procedures and produces the documentation as set out in the HETAC publication, *General Programme Validation Manual, 2010* (Reference code: E.2.4. Version: 1.1. Date of issue: 5 July 2010).

QA documentation	Status
a/ Maintenance of minutes of Course Board, Academic Council and EMC meetings	
b/ Outline plan of proposed programme	
c/ Feasibility study	
d/ Programme submission	
e/ HETAC programme validation submission	

2.2.3 Programme reviews

American College Dublin has established quality assurance procedures for obtaining feedback from internal and external sources for the purpose of further improving and maintaining the quality of education it provides. These procedures enable the College to monitor, review, and develop the quality of current and proposed programmes of study.

Programmes are routinely monitored throughout the academic year and are also reviewed at the end of each academic year to ensure that

- The programme and its modules are progressing satisfactorily, both administratively and academically;
- Module teaching schemes are appropriate to facilitate the achievement of the learning outcomes of the module;

- Assessment methods are appropriate to determine the achievement of learning outcomes for the different modules and are distributed appropriately throughout the academic year;
- Academic procedures are being adequately followed;
- Current student progression is encouraged and the programme can appeal to prospective students;
- The existing programmes are suitable to meet the current and future needs of students.

Responsibility for the implementation of ongoing review of programmes rests primarily with the Head of relevant department, the relevant Course Board, and the Academic Dean. Ultimate responsibility for ensuring that QA procedures for programmatic review are followed, here as elsewhere, rests with the QA Officer. Information obtained through the monitoring activities may ultimately result in modifications and improvements to delivery and assessment of programme modules. The review process thus enhances the programme academic quality and the student experience within the boundaries of the formal programme structure.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Relevant Course Board documentation as noted above at 1.3.4	

2.2.4 External programmatic evaluation

The College's programmes are subject to a full internal and external evaluation once every five years or less. For non-HETAC awards the programmatic review takes place by the following means:

- Research by the College on the programmes under review;
- Feedback from students involved in the reviewed programme;
- Preparation of a Self-Evaluation Report (SER);
- Peer review by way of a paper-based consideration of the SER and a comprehensive site evaluation; peer review findings submitted in a written report;
- College response to the peer review group's report and preparation of a response to its findings and an implementation plan; application by the College's Academic Council to the College EMC for revalidation or otherwise of the programmes;

For HETAC awards, the programme evaluation follows the procedures set out in the HETAC publication, *Provider Monitoring and Procedures, 2010* (Reference code: F.1.2. Version: 1.2. Date of issue: 16 July 2010). In accordance with these procedures, the programmatic review takes place by the following means:

- Research by the College on the programmes under review;
- Feedback from students involved in the reviewed programme;
- Preparation of a Self-Evaluation Report (SER);

- Peer review by way of a paper-based consideration of the SER and a comprehensive site evaluation; peer review findings submitted in a written report;
- College response to the peer review group's report and preparation of a response to its findings and an implementation plan; application by the College's Academic Council to HETAC for revalidation or otherwise of the programmes;
- Implementation of HETAC recommendations following revalidation;
- Ongoing review within the processes set out in section 2.2.3, above.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Relevant minutes of working group, course board, Academic Council and EMC meetings	
b/ Research materials for programme evaluation	
c/ Self-Evaluation Report	
d/ Peer Review Group Report	
e/ College response	
f/ Application by Academic Council to HETAC or EMC for revalidation of programmes	
g/ Response by HETAC or EMC	
h/ Implementation of HETAC recommendations	

3. Assessment of students

3.1 Overview

Matters relating to the assessment of students' performance are overseen by the lecturers, relevant Course Boards, the Internal and External Examination Boards, Academic Standards Committee and by the Academic Council, whose joint task is to ensure the adherence of the assessment procedures used in the College with the marks and standards as set out in the HETAC publication *Assessments and Standards* (December 2009).

The broad objective of the learner assessment process in the College is to establish the extent to which each student has achieved the intended learning outcomes of the modules they have undertaken and of their overall programme. Assessment can be defined as any process that appraises an individual's knowledge, understanding, abilities or skills. The College's assessment regulations govern written examinations and continuous assessment in the form of coursework assignments, projects, reports, oral presentations, reviews, theses, dissertations, and such other forms of assessment as may have been approved or prescribed in any programme or course of study. Assessment procedures are based on clearly expressed intended learning outcomes.

Assessments are set by the lecturer responsible for delivering the module. They typically involve continuous assessment (term papers, reports, presentations, practical exercises, research projects) and final examinations. Draft examination papers are sent to external examiners for approval. Final examinations are conducted in strict observance of regulations, including publication of examination timetables, registration of students, invigilation of examinations, and academic discipline during examinations. After examination papers are marked, sample scripts are sent to external examiners for approval. The final grades are then calculated, discussed, and approved by the Internal Examination Board. The results are finally approved at the Summer and Autumn External Examination Boards.

3.2 Assessment policy

In the American College Dublin students are assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures applied fairly and consistently (as stipulated by the guidelines set out in *Assessment and Standards* published by HETAC in December 2009). In particular, the College is committed to ensuring that

- Learners have the opportunity to demonstrate their learning achievement;
- Assessment opportunities support standards based on learning outcomes;
- Assessment opportunities promote effective learning and teaching;
- Type of assessment (whether diagnostic, formative, or summative) is explicitly stated;
- Assessment procedures are fair, valid and reliable;
- Assessment methods are monitored and reviewed to fit evolving requirements;

- Assessment requirements are explicit and accessible to learners.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Statement of programme assessment strategy in programme validation documentation	
b/ Statement of module assessment strategy in each module's syllabus	
c/ External examiner feedback and College responses	

3.3 Assessment objectives

The College has endorsed and implemented the following underlying principles for the assessment practice:

- Assessment is an integral part of the course design process, and is constructively aligned with the programme/module intended learning outcomes;
- There are clear and consistent assessment criteria prepared by the examiner, which are provided to the learner at the time of assignment;
- Assessment is transparent, valid, reliable and free from bias;
- The assessment framework facilitates student learning and supports student progression;
- Learners are provided with feedback on assessment that is timely, promotes learning and facilitates improvement;
- The management of assessment is efficient both with regard to the amount and timing of assessment and to staff and student workload;
- Assessment standards are maintained consistently and appropriately to the award;
- Assessment standards are comparable across programmes and across other third-level institutions in the country.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Statement of programme assessment strategy in programme validation documentation	
b/ Statement of module assessment strategy in each module's syllabus	
c/ External examiner feedback and College responses	
d/ Course Board minutes	

3.4 Internal examiners

Assessments are set by the lecturer responsible for delivering the module. Draft examination papers are required by the Academic Office by the end of week seven of each semester, so as to allow adequate time for the materials to be seen by the External Examiners and for such changes that are necessary to be made. In particular, the role of the Internal Examiner is to

- Prepare assessment in line with the approved module description format;
- Submit on the appointed time draft examination papers and marking schemes to the Academic Office;
- Take account of suggestions and recommendations proposed by the External Examiner;
- Mark the assessment, submit the mark sheets and originals of assessments to the Academic Office on the appointed time;
- Receive feedback from the External Examiner and agree to revise if necessary the grades proposed to be awarded to each student, at the latest during the Internal Examination Board;
- Attend meetings of the Examination Boards to verify marks and contribute to the discussion of grades and awards.

After examination papers are marked, final grades calculated and approval of sample scripts from external examiners received, there is an Internal Examination Board, at which each module under examination is reviewed, with a discussion of all “A” grades, fails and borderline cases. In semester one, results are made available to students as soon as practicable following the Internal Examination Board (these results are subject to final approval at the Summer and/or Autumn External Examination Board). In semester two, results are made available to students as soon as practicable following the Internal Examination Board (these results are subject to final approval by the Summer and/or Autumn External Examination Board. In the repeat examination session results are made available to students as soon as practicable following the Internal Examination Board (these results are subject to final approval following the Autumn External Examination Board).

QA documentation	Status
a/ Module syllabi	
b/ Examination papers and marking schemes	
c/ Examination scripts	
d/ Grade sheets	
e/ External examiner comments	
f/ Internal Examination Board meeting minutes	

3.5 External examiners

The role of the External Examiner is defined by the HETAC document *Effective Practice Guideline for External Examining*, published in March 2010. This document is made available to the External Examiner upon appointment by the College. Accordingly, the External Examiner is an independent expert who is a member of the broader community of practice within the programme’s field of learning, and whose accomplishments attest to his/her likelihood of having the authority necessary to fulfil the responsibility of the role.

External Examiners are appointed to a particular programme or module. Their role is to provide independent quality assurance for the assessment process and to ensure that

standards appropriate to the award level are consistent with national standards and comparable to other institutions. In particular, the role of the External Examiner is to

- Review the appropriateness of the minimum intended programme learning outcomes and other programme objectives;
- Probe the actual attainment by learners of actual programme learning outcomes using information agreed with and supplied by the College;
- Compare and contrast both the minimum intended programme learning outcomes and the actual attainment of learners with the relevant awards standards, with the National Framework of Qualifications, and with corresponding data from other programmes in the same discipline in other higher education institutions in Ireland and abroad;
- Determine whether or not the applied procedures for assessment are valid, reliable, fair and consistent;
- Review the appropriateness of the programme assessment strategy and the assessment procedures, and consider subsidiary module assessment strategies;
- Review key assessment tasks prior to their assignment in light of the programme and module assessment strategies and learners' prior learning;
- Report findings and recommendations regarding the assessment process to the College.

An External Examiner is proposed by the Course Board after making sure that the proposed person has no existing relationship with the College or key personnel; in other words, that there is no conflict of interest between the proposed person and the College. The proposed name is then put to the Academic Council for approval. If the nomination is approved the Academic Dean or the Registrar contacts the nominee with the request to serve as an External Examiner and with an explanation of the position's duties. The criteria for appointing an External Examiner include the following:

- An External Examiner should be a person with considerable third-level academic experience and standing in the field for which he or she is responsible;
- The External Examiner should hold a qualification in the appropriate discipline that is at a higher level than the course for which he or she is responsible;
- An External Examiner is appointed for a maximum period of three years; he or she may be reappointed after a minimum of three years has elapsed.

The specific duties of the External Examiner are the following:

- To become acquainted with the recommendations regarding the duties of the External Examiner as specified by the HETAC document *Effective Practice Guideline for External Examining* (March 2010);
- To read the module outlines of the modules for which the External Examiner is responsible and to be aware of their academic content and learning outcomes;

- To read the draft version of final examination papers and marking schemes; the External Examiner has the right to make amendments or alterations to the examination materials as deemed appropriate;
- To review a representative sample of examination scripts, including all “A” grades, fails and borderline cases;
- To be available for consultation with Internal Examiners on suggested changes to module content, final examination content or grades. In matters where there is a difference of opinion between the Internal and External Examiners there should be a common effort to achieve a mutually agreeable resolution;
- To attend the summer and autumn Examination Boards and to approve the process and award levels of the grades and final awards under consideration;
- To complete at the conclusion of the academic year and submit to the Academic Dean/Registrar a report on the administration and academic quality of the examinations and the comparability of the standards to other third-level institutions (see the *External Examiner’s Report Form* in Appendix 9.1). This report is passed on to the relevant Course Board. Any comments or necessary responses or actions are discussed at the final Course Board meeting of the academic year. The External Examiner is subsequently informed of any responses to his or her comments.

QA documentation	Status
a/ External Examiner Report forms, including College responses to extern feedback	
b/ College-extern correspondence	
c/ Correspondence with HETAC on extern appointments and provision of report copies	
d/ Course Board minutes	

3.6 Continuous assessment

All academic programmes offered by the College use some elements of continuous assessment. This form of assessment provides insight into the students’ knowledge, skills and competences in areas not normally assessed in final written examinations. Different forms of continuous assessment and the specific learning outcomes they address include the following:

- *Research using primary and secondary sources*, which aims at developing the students’ ability to conduct original scholarly work, to critically assess professional literature, and to present the research results in a professionally acceptable format;
- *Literature review*, which assesses the students’ ability to find relevant professional sources, both printed and in electronic format, and to critically evaluate their contents;
- *Critical review of a published text*, which should display the students’ ability to display understanding of professional literature and its critical evaluation in the form of a written review;

- *Term essays and reports*, which should display both the students' familiarity and understanding of a specific field of knowledge relating to course material, and their ability to conduct independent critical research within the field covered by the course;
- *Practical project work*, which aims at developing the students' ability to apply academic knowledge to specific practical problems encountered in social experience;
- *Oral presentations*, which should display the students' skill to share their academic knowledge with others in the context of direct social interaction and public debate;
- *Class test and quizzes*, which assess the degree of the students' familiarity with and comprehension of specific issues relating to currently discussed course material;
- *Group work and team projects*, which assess the students' ability to work collaboratively, to display team spirit, and to share responsibility in a joint endeavour.

Continuous assessment can provide formative and summative evaluation to support learning by offering an opportunity to provide feedback to students on their understanding of the module material prior to the final examination. The weighting of elements of continuous assessment varies depending on the nature of the module, and is determined at the time of module design by the lecturer delivering the module. Examiners are required to ensure that they are fully aware of the weightings attached to the continuous assessment elements in each module they deliver.

Students repeating a module who have failed the continuous assessment must not only re-sit the final examination but also submit new versions of the prescribed continuous assessment at least one week before the repeat final examination. As in-class attendance is necessary for the achievement of intended learning outcomes in all College modules, this option to resubmit continuous assessment for those who have failed it is as part of the repeat is only available to students who have attended at least 75% of the classes. Students with insufficient attendance will have to repeat the module in its entirety. In modules assessed entirely by continuous assessment copies of continuous assessment projects are sent to the external examiners for evaluation.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Course Board documentation as at 1.3.4	

3.7 Final examination regulations

The regulations and procedures for administering final examinations in the College include the following:

- All candidates are automatically entered for final examinations for those modules which have a final examination component. It is the responsibility of the candidate to register for repeat examinations;
- It is the responsibility of the candidate to make himself/herself aware of the dates, locations and times of examinations. Copies of examinations timetable are posted to students and are available from the Academic Office;

- If a candidate is absent from an examination an explanation must be advised to the Academic Office or Registrar immediately. Such documentation as is appropriate (for example, a doctor's certificate in the case of an illness) must be delivered to the Academic Office or Registrar within five working days of the examination. If the candidate has submitted an acceptable explanation within five working days of the examination an "I" (incomplete) will be awarded. (An "I" indicates an excused non-completion of the module and if the final examination is the missing component it does not count as an attempt.) If an acceptable explanation is not submitted to the Academic Office within five working days the candidate will be awarded an "NP" (not present). (An "NP" indicates that the candidate did not have a valid explanation for non-attendance at the final examination and the examination is counted as an attempt.) In the case of an award stage module, the awarding of an "NP" would mean that the candidate can only graduate with a pass degree;
- Candidates should assemble at the examination room ten minutes before the examination is scheduled to commence;
- Upon entering the examination room the candidate becomes subject to the authority of the invigilators and must follow their instructions;
- Candidates should seat themselves according to the instructions of the invigilators;
- Strict silence must be observed at all times in the examination room; no form of communication is permitted between candidates in the examination room;
- Candidates will not be admitted to an examination room once another candidate for the same module has left the examination. If a candidate finishes the examination in less than the time allowed, it is permissible to submit the papers and leave the examination room. However, no candidate may leave within thirty minutes of the commencement of an examination or within fifteen minutes of the end of an examination;
- Answers must be written in blue or black ink. The candidate should write on both sides of the sheets in the answer book. Rough work should only be written in the answer book, with a clear indication provided that it is rough work;
- No paper, pencil cases, books or bags may be brought to the candidate's desk; the candidate will be advised by the invigilators where bags and other materials not permitted to be brought to the desk should be deposited;
- No mobile phones are allowed on the candidate's person or at the desk. All phones in bags and jackets should be turned off. If a phone in a jacket or bag rings, the offending article will be removed from the room by an invigilator until the noise has ceased;
- In examinations for which use of a calculator is approved, only a model up to the scientific calculator level may be used;
- No writing may take place until the examination begins. The candidate should read the instructions on the examination answer book, fill out his/her details on the cover of the examination answer book, and read the entire paper before attempting the questions;
- If for some reason the examination does not start at the time scheduled, the appropriate extra time is provided at the end;

- A candidate who arrives late for an examination finishes at the same time as the other candidates (that is, no additional time is provided to make up for the amount of time lost up to the commencing of the examination);
- All students must initial on the components marks sheet in order to verify their attendance at the examination;
- Candidates must not get up from their seats without the permission of an invigilator once the exam has commenced except to hand in their papers and leave. Candidates who have a question of any sort should raise their hands and wait for an invigilator to come to them;
- Candidates who need to go to the toilet should raise their hands and wait for an invigilator to come to them. Only one candidate may go to the toilet at a time. The candidate must be escorted by an invigilator. The use of the toilet should not take longer than two minutes;
- Candidates are not allowed to take examination answer booklets (used or unused) away or have any access to them except for writing their answers during the examination;
- In the event that a candidate is noticed copying from another student's paper, requesting assistance from another student, having unauthorized materials with him/her, making an unauthorized departure from the room, or acting in a disturbing manner, the candidate will be directed by the invigilator immediately to desist from the offending behaviour, while the name of the candidate and the circumstances will be noted on the invigilator's report. The candidate will be allowed to complete the examination, but advised upon handing up the paper to report as soon as possible to the Academic Dean or Registrar in order to discuss the matter. The invigilator should attempt to inform the Academic Dean or Registrar or Academic Office immediately of the matter. In the event of repeated instances of the behaviours mentioned above by a single candidate, the invigilator should contact the Academic Dean or Registrar or Academic Office immediately. Any such incidents will be reported to the Academic Dean as examination irregularities; they will be investigated and a decision on them taken at the next meeting of the Academic Standards Committee, normally to take place within two weeks of the end of final examinations;
- Any other digression by a candidate from examination procedures will be noted on the invigilator's report and considered by the Academic Council.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Current examination regulations	
b/ Invigilator reports	
c/ Final mark sheets	
d/ Academic Office correspondence with students	

3.7.1 Guidelines for invigilators

The guidelines for examinations invigilators include the following:

- Invigilators should ensure that they have a copy of and are familiar with the College's current final examination regulations;
- Before candidates are admitted to the exam room, check the following:
 1. There are sufficient examination papers and booklets for the examinations taking place in the room, and that they are arranged so as to facilitate their being distributed in an efficient manner;
 2. That the desks are arranged in rows and that the room is in good order (no notes, papers or other materials should be on the desks or floors);
 3. That the whiteboard clearly displays the module code, title and exam duration for the papers being attempted in the room.
- Ensure that all candidates leave bags, jackets, coats and books at the top of the examination room. Each student is allowed pens, pencils, rulers and a scientific calculator at their desks. No pencil cases are allowed at the desks. No notes or paper of any sort are allowed to be brought to the student's desk; if a student wishes to produce rough work, it should be entered in the examination book, with an indication to show that it is not part of a final answer;
- Before the examination commences, announce the following:
 1. The module code and title of the examinations being attempted and the duration of the examinations;
 2. Candidates may not leave their seats without the permission of the invigilator. If candidates have a question or wish to be allowed to go to the toilet they should raise their hands and wait for the invigilator to come to them;
 3. Candidates are not allowed to have mobile telephones on them once the exam has begun. All telephones in bags and jackets should be turned off; if a telephone in a jacket or bag rings, the offending article will be removed from the room by an invigilator until the noise has ceased;
 4. Candidates may only go to the bathroom one at a time. Candidates will be accompanied by an invigilator. The bathroom break should be taken as quickly as possible; any absence of unusual duration will be noted in the invigilator's log sheet;
 5. Candidates may not leave the examination room within the first 30 minutes of the commencement of the exam or within fifteen minutes at the end of exam;
 6. Ask students to read the examination paper carefully before starting to write; explain that lecturers will be at the exam for the first twenty minutes to answer any questions the candidates may have;
 7. If the examination does not start on time, explain that the appropriate extra time will be added at the end.
- When handing out the examination papers, place them face down on the desks. Instruct candidates not to turn exams over until directed: all candidates must commence the exam together;
- If a candidate arrives late and no other candidate has left the examination in the meantime the candidate may be allowed into the examination. However, no extra time is given to the candidate;
- Once the examination is in progress, ensure that all candidates initial on the components marks sheet (beside their name only and not in the boxes as this

sheet is used by the lecturer to record the examination results). This is necessary in order for the College to have an independent record of whether a candidate was present or not present at the exam;

- It is important that the invigilators walk and look around the room at regular intervals. Candidates should be aware that the exam is supervised and monitored to a high standard;
- In the event that a candidate is noticed copying from another candidate's paper, requesting assistance from another candidate, holding unauthorized materials, making an unauthorized departure from the room, or acting in a disturbing manner, the candidate should be advised immediately to desist from the offending behaviour; the name of the candidate and the circumstances should be noted on the invigilator's report. The candidate should be allowed to complete the examination, but advised upon handing up the paper to report as soon as possible to the Academic Dean or Registrar in order to discuss the matter. The invigilator should attempt to inform the Academic Dean or Registrar or Academic Office immediately of the matter;
- In the event of repeated instances of the behaviours mentioned above, the invigilator should contact the Academic Dean or Registrar or Academic Office immediately;
- Any other digression by a candidate from examination procedures should be noted on the invigilator's report;
- At the conclusion of the examination, ensure that completed examination scripts together with the components mark sheet and any examination papers left over are put back into the envelopes supplied and returned to the Academic Office at 2 Merrion Square. Also check the number of candidates attending against the number of papers submitted for each examination;
- Ensure that the invigilator's report sheet is filled out and returned to the Academic Office with each packet;
- Ensure that the examination room is locked at the conclusion of each examination;
- Ensure that that all examination answer booklets are kept securely; candidates are not allowed to take answer booklets away or have any access to them except for writing their answers during the examination;
- Lecturers can collect the examination scripts only from the Academic Office.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Current invigilator guidelines	
b/ Invigilator reports	

3.7.2 Grade reviews

Students have the right to request a review of final grades for any module they have attempted, providing the appeal for a grade review is lodged within ten working days of the examination results being posted. The review procedure includes the following steps:

1. The student making the appeal fills out a grade review form and returns it to the Academic Office (within ten working days of the examination results being posted);
2. The Academic Office checks the examination transcript and results broadsheet for any arithmetical errors and to verify that the lecturer's handwritten grades were correctly inputted on the system;
3. The relevant department meets to consider any grades under review. Any previously unknown circumstances are considered and the final examination paper is reviewed. The department agrees on whether there should be any changes made to the grade;
4. The department presents its findings to the departmental Course Board. A decision is taken on each grade review;
5. The relevant departmental Course Board's findings are presented to the Academic Standards Committee. If the Committee accepts these findings, it is resolved to communicate the outcome to each student immediately;
6. The student is sent a letter indicating the result of the review by the Registrar.

The grade review process applies to individual modules only. The College does not provide for appeals of GPA or final award levels; these are objectively based on the grade point values for modules attempted and are not subject to interpretation. A copy of the *Grade Review Form* is included in Appendix 9.3.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Completed grade review forms	
b/ Course Board and Academic Council minutes	
c/ Examination scripts and mark sheets	
d/ Student-College correspondence	
e/ College-HETAC correspondence, when necessary	

3.8 Academic discipline

The College imposes penalties for infringements of academic discipline. These provisions may be invoked in combination with, and do not exclude, the disciplinary procedures set out in the College's publication, *Catalogue, 2010-2011*, in the section entitled "Student Affairs and Facilities," (pp. 90-1). Matters which fall within the range of academic discipline include, but are not limited to, the following:

- *Cheating*, that is, intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorised materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise;
- *Fabrication*, that is, intentional and unauthorised invention or falsification of any information or citation in an academic exercise;
- *Facilitating academic dishonesty*, that is, intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty;
- *Plagiarism*, that is, intentionally or unintentionally representing the words or ideas of another as one's own in an academic exercise;
- *Internet plagiarism*, that is, intentionally or unintentionally representing the

words or ideas of another as one's own in an academic exercise. As with books and journals, information from the Internet must be acknowledged in footnotes and bibliography. The correct form for citations is available in the library;

- *Falsification*, that is, intentionally or unintentionally falsifying academic records;
- *Unacceptable conduct in the academic environment*, that is, disruptive or otherwise unacceptable behaviour in class, on the College premises, or towards any of the College's employees or students;
- *Vandalism and theft*, that is, defacement or theft of library material or other College resources.

The College's procedures for occurrences of academic indiscipline relating to examination infringements and plagiarism are set out below in sections 3.8.1 and 3.8.2. In the event of infringements of academic discipline that lie outside the range of provisions of these areas, the following procedures apply:

The lecturer, invigilator or other relevant member of College staff informs the Academic Dean or the Registrar, and the student. If considered appropriate, there may be an initial meeting of the student with the Academic Dean and/or relevant departmental Head and Faculty in order to achieve a resolution. If this meeting does not produce a satisfactory resolution, the matter may be referred to a formal process, in which the case is presented to the Academic Council. In such a case, the Council hears the evidence of the teacher, student and any other relevant parties. If the student is unable or unwilling to attend, the matter is heard in his or her absence. The student is permitted to have a student representative present at the hearing. The Academic Council discusses and decides on the case once the student has been heard and excused from the meeting. A letter is sent by the Dean, written and signed by the Chair, informing the student of the outcome of the process.

A student found to have infringed academic discipline is subject to the following maximum penalties:

First Offence: An 'F' grade for the module in which the infringement occurred and/or—in the cases of multiple infringements, unacceptable conduct, vandalism and theft—withdrawal from a module or number of modules, withdrawal from a semester or dismissal from the College.

Second Offence: Dismissal from the College.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Intra-College correspondence	
b/ Material evidence of academic irregularity or dishonesty	
c/ Minutes of student-College meetings	
d/ Student-College correspondence	

3.8.1 Plagiarism

American College Dublin seeks to develop a culture of academic integrity among faculty, staff and students. Honesty, fairness and trust are essential characteristics of integrity. Thus, in an academic community, academic honesty is a key principle. Acknowledging original sources of information and having respect for the rights of intellectual property are, therefore, fundamental.

Plagiarism is an act of academic dishonesty. To plagiarise and fail to appropriately acknowledge the sources that have been used is the antithesis of academic integrity. A form of intellectual theft, plagiarism is viewed as a serious offence committed against academic staff, fellow-students, the college and the wider academic community. It involves reproducing another person's or group of persons' ideas or work, either in whole or in part, and deliberately misrepresenting this material as one's own.

Plagiarism can take many forms, including, but not limited to:

- Presenting work authored by a third party (e.g. other students, friends, family members, individuals paid to complete work on one's behalf) as one's own;
- Presenting work that is copied directly or copied with only minor textual modifications from another source (e.g. journal articles, book chapters, websites, internet blogs, transcribed interviews, TV or radio programmes etc.);
- Paraphrasing a third party's work in whole or in part without acknowledging the source material.

Please note that referring to common knowledge or established facts (for example, "Barack Obama is the current President of the U.S.A.") cannot be categorised above and does not constitute plagiarism.

Any submitted work which is an assessed component within a programme of study must include proper acknowledgement of all original sources through citation and referencing. Plagiarism is defined by the act and the end product. Therefore, to claim that the act was unintended cannot be accepted as a justification or defence in cases of alleged plagiarism. The College's plagiarism statement will be disseminated as widely as possible to all staff and students. All students are expected to familiarise themselves with this. All assessed coursework must be submitted with a completed and signed plagiarism declaration form, which reads as follows:

"We certify that:

I/We have read and understood the College statement on plagiarism.

I/We understand that the College reserves the right to use detection technology to uncover cases of plagiarism.

I/We understand that submitting plagiarised work will result in disciplinary procedures being invoked, up to and including, dismissal from College.

I/We certify that this work is my/our own, and all sources have been acknowledged appropriately.

Signed:”

QA documentation	Status
a/ Minutes of meetings	
b/ Signed plagiarism statements	
c/ Intra-College correspondence	
d/ College-student correspondence	

3.8.2 Disciplinary procedures (plagiarism)

American College Dublin regards plagiarism as serious offence. Accordingly, if plagiarism is established, the student will be subject to the College’s disciplinary procedures. These will consist of the following stages:

- In instances where a first offence has been established, the student’s work will be downgraded. The scale of downgrading will be at the discretion of the member of academic staff to whom the work has been submitted, in consultation with the Head of Department, but will be proportional to the scale of the offence. In instances of appeal requests, the submitted work will be reviewed by the Head of Department. As part of the appeal process, the student may also be required to attend an interview with the academic staff member and the Head of Department;
- If a further instance of plagiarism has been established, the student will be issued with a letter from the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) informing the student that s/he will be called before a hearing of the ASC to examine the instance of plagiarism. The student will be entitled to nominate one other person to accompany him or her at the hearing. However, the Registrar should be notified of such a nomination in advance of the hearing.

If an offence has been clearly established, the outcome will be the award of grade F for the entire module for which the plagiarised work was submitted. The student will be issued with a formal written warning, a copy of which will be placed in the student’s file.

In the case of multiple instances of plagiarism being committed in the same semester, the student may be subject to the following penalties: dismissal from a module or number of modules, dismissal from the College for a specified time;

- Following the issue of a first formal written warning from the ASC, in the event of a further instance of plagiarism being established, the student will be issued with a letter calling the student to a hearing of the ASC (following the same procedures as outlined in 2. above). The student will face further penalties such as, dismissal from a module or number of modules, dismissal for a semester, dismissal from the College. If dismissal from the College does not ensue, the student will be issued with a final written warning, a copy of

which will be placed in the student's file advising him/her that any further offences will lead to dismissal from the College.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Intra-College correspondence	
b/ Material evidence of academic irregularity or dishonesty	
c/ Minutes of student-College meetings	
d/ Student-College correspondence	

3.8.3 Academic indiscipline in examinations

Infringements of academic indiscipline in examinations can take many forms including, but not limited to:

- Using unauthorised notes in any form e.g. on pieces of paper, paper dictionaries, body parts, stationery etc;
- Copying, or attempting to copy, in whole or in part, from another candidate's script;
- Requesting or receiving assistance from another candidate;
- Providing assistance to another candidate;
- Using or holding books, calculators, mobile phones, or electronic devices that are unauthorised. Please note that candidates are wholly responsible for any materials in their possession;
- Making an unauthorised departure from the exam hall;
- Obtaining, giving, or receiving the answers to or a copy of an exam paper prior to its administration;
- Completing an exam for another candidate or allowing another candidate to represent you in an exam.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Minutes of meetings	
b/ Intra-College correspondence	
c/ College-student correspondence	

3.8.4 Disciplinary procedures (academic indiscipline in examinations)

In an identified instance of academic indiscipline at examination the candidate will be directed by the invigilator to immediately desist from the offending behaviour. Unauthorised notes or materials that the student is using will be confiscated. If notes are written on body parts, the student will be escorted to the toilets by an invigilator and asked to remove the offending material. The name of the candidate and the circumstances of academic indiscipline will be noted on the invigilator's report. The candidate will be allowed to complete the examination, but on handing up the paper will be advised to report as soon as possible to the Registrar to discuss the matter.

The invigilator will report the instance of academic indiscipline to the Registrar immediately after the examination.

If the Registrar, in consultation with the Academic Dean, deems an infringement has occurred, the student will be issued with a letter from the Registrar. This letter will serve to inform the student that he/she will be called before a hearing of the Academic Standards Committee, which will determine the instance of academic indiscipline as an examination irregularity. The meeting will normally take place within two weeks of the end of final/repeat examinations. The student will be entitled to nominate one other person to accompany him/her at the hearing. However, the Registrar should be notified of such a nomination in advance of the hearing. If an offence of academic indiscipline is established, the outcome will be the award of grade F for the exam. The student will be issued with a formal warning, a copy of which will be placed in the student's file. The student will be required to repeat the module in which the offence of academic indiscipline occurred in its entirety, and will not be permitted to repeat the examination component separately.

In the case of multiple instances of academic indiscipline being committed in the same semester, the student may be subject to such further penalties as dismissal from the College for a specified time, or permanent dismissal from the College.

Following the issue of the first formal written warning from the Academic Dean, in the event of a further instance of academic indiscipline being established, the student will be issued with a letter from the Registrar calling the student to a hearing (as described above). The student will face further penalties including dismissal for a semester, or dismissal from the College. If dismissal from the College does not ensue, the student will be issued with a final written warning, a copy of which will be placed in the student's file advising him/her that any further offences will lead to dismissal from the College.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Intra-College correspondence	
b/ Material evidence of academic irregularity or dishonesty	
c/ Minutes of student-College meetings	
d/ Student-College correspondence	

3.8.5 Appeals procedure

The College allows for appeals for students who have been sanctioned for infringements of academic discipline or have not been satisfied by the outcome of the grade review process. The student is required to write to the Academic Dean within fourteen days of being notified of the result of the academic indiscipline or grade review process. The Academic Dean and the Registrar review the salient facts and seek to determine if there was evidence that was not taken into account or a questionable judgement made at the previous process. If the determination is that there is no new evidence or anything to suggest a questionable judgement, the appeal

is dismissed and the student, the Academic Dean and the Registrar are so informed immediately.

If the determination is that the matter warrants further investigation, or if the student is unhappy with the outcome of the process, the Academic Dean and the Registrar refer the matter to the Academic Standards Committee for a final decision. The result of this is passed immediately to the student, the Academic Dean and the Registrar. The decision of the Academic Standards Committee represents the end stage of the College's appeals procedure.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Written appeal by student	
b/ Intra-College correspondence	
c/ Material evidence of grounds for appeal	
d/ Minutes of student-College meetings	
e/ Minutes of EMC meetings	
f/ Student-College correspondence	

4. Quality assurance of teaching staff

4.1 Recruitment and induction

American College Dublin has developed recruitment and selection procedures which ensure that appropriately qualified teaching staff are employed to meet academic and professional requirements.

Full-time academic staff employed in the College are recruited through advertising in Irish newspapers and relevant academic journals. Part-time academic staff are recruited by similar means, although employment agencies and professional contacts by existing academic staff are also used. Only candidates that satisfy the minimum criteria specified are considered for appointment. The minimum qualification for a lecturing position in the College is a Master's degree in the relevant academic discipline. The College is proud to acknowledge that fifty per cent of its full-time teaching staff boast doctoral degrees and maintain high research and publishing profiles. Applications are screened by the relevant Head of Department and a short list of qualified candidates is drawn up. Those on the short list are invited to present for interview. An appropriate interview panel is constituted, normally chaired by the Head of Department.

Each candidate is required to provide an up-to-date professional curriculum vitae and the names of two referees. These are followed up prior to a decision to recruit a candidate is confirmed or an offer made. On acceptance, a contract of employment is provided to successful candidates.

New appointees are provided with an induction programme, overseen by the relevant Head of Department, which provides a valuable information reference and guide for lecturing staff new to the College. The induction introduces the new lecturer to the College's background, ethos and culture, its structure and organisation, its development strategies and plans. The new lecturer is also introduced to his/her roles and responsibilities, including the teaching and assessment strategies followed by the College. The staff induction also includes academic and administrative procedures and regulations, general terms and conditions of employment, and human resource policies and regulations. During the induction period a new lecturer also enjoys the benefit of informal mentoring both from the Head of Department and senior colleagues.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Employee files, including curriculum vitae, academic transcripts, references	
b/ Contract of employment and employment policies	
c/ Employee development forms	

4.2 Equal opportunities

American College Dublin is committed to working towards equality of opportunity for staff and students in all aspects of its operations. Equality of opportunity is the right of all persons to receive fair, equal, and non-discriminatory consideration in access to and the processes of education and employment, as outlined in various equality and anti-discrimination legislation. American College Dublin believes that commitment to principles of fairness and respect for all helps create a climate that is favourable to the free and open exchange of ideas, and to the welfare of staff and students. American College Dublin endeavours to ensure that all of its activities are governed by principles of equality and opportunity, and that all staff and students are encouraged to achieve their full potential.

In its commitment to promoting equal opportunities in education and employment the College recognises the principles of equity and social justice in conformity with equality and anti-discrimination legislation. This involves recognising the rights of individuals and groups to be free from discrimination and harassment on the grounds of marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, nationality or social group. American College Dublin affirms the right of all staff and students to work and study in an environment that is free from harassment and bullying. The College does not tolerate discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment or victimisation of students and employees. Behaviour of this kind may lead to disciplinary action and other sanctions at the discretion of the College.

The College's vision statement includes a commitment to "uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct in all its activities, including support for academic freedom, appropriate disclosure of information to the institution's stakeholders, equality of access and opportunity." The institution has a conflict of interest statement for its Board of Overseers and executive management.

American College Dublin adheres to the principles of academic freedom articulated in the joint statement from the Association of American Colleges and the American Association of University Professors, the *1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, with 1970 Interpretive Comments*. The institution undertakes to disclose information about academic policies and procedures through its annual catalogue and its Quality Assurance Manual, both available to the College community and wider public in hardcopy and electronic formats, and to accept the spirit and letter of the Freedom of Information Acts (1997, 2003), whereby in the post-secondary educational sector students and other institutional stakeholders are entitled to appropriate disclosure of information and explanation as to status, performance and progression.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Current catalogue	
b/ Current QAM	

4.3 Staff development

American College Dublin is committed to ensuring the calibre and competence of the teaching staff by encouraging continuing enhancement of staff development. The College provides in service training on a regular basis. Recent activities have included workshops on information technology use in teaching, and the new policies regarding assessment and standards that have been introduced by HETAC under the requirements of the national Framework of Qualifications. The College's small size also allows for considerable staff development to take place through informal mentoring and peer skills and knowledge sharing. The staff policy of the College is to ensure that academic staff involved in designing, delivering and assessing programmes and modules are capable and competent to do so.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Contract of employment and employment policies	
b/ Employee development forms	

4.3.1 Staff evaluation

Academic competence to teach is evaluated at the recruitment stage on the basis of the candidate's prior professional experience as recorded on their CV and of the testimonies of the referees. During the initial period of employment in the College a lecturer's teaching competence is regularly assessed by performance reviews, initially after three months' employment, then after six months, and thereafter on an annual basis. The performance reviews involve student evaluations, grading profiles, and interactions with academic colleagues and administrative staff.

Lecturers are also encouraged to attend workshops and to undertake courses and attend conferences which help their professional development and broaden the portfolio of subjects they could teach. At the end of each academic year lecturers complete Faculty Development Forms which record their current non-teaching academic activities and planned activities and projects for the year ahead.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Contract of employment and employment policies	
b/ Employee development forms	

4.3.2 Student evaluations

The effectiveness of teaching is also assessed by student evaluation forms distributed to each class in the final weeks of the semester. The completed forms are read by the relevant Heads of Department and by the Academic Dean. Once final grades have been posted the findings of the student evaluation forms are discussed with the Faculty member in question. The final Course Board of the academic year discusses the main findings of the student evaluation forms and recommends actions for the following academic year as appropriate.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Student evaluation forms and covering form recording discussion with teacher and conclusions	
b/ Course minutes	

5. Learning resources and student support

5.1 Student admission

American College Dublin welcomes all applicants and operates a fair and transparent admissions process. Applicants are selected on the basis of merit, ability and potential. The College supports the application of access, transfer and progression policies as defined by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI, 2003).

The admissions procedures include all activities to attract, select, admit and register students to the College programmes. The fair and consistent implementation of these policies and procedures is the ultimate responsibility of the Admissions Office, supported by the Academic Office.

All applicants seeking admission to a first year of a HETAC undergraduate programme apply directly to the Central Applications Office (CAO) as outlined in the CAO handbook (www.cao.ie) for the year of admission. All applicants other than those seeking admission to a first year of a HETAC programme must apply directly to the American College Dublin. In both cases applicants must satisfy the minimum entry requirements for the relevant programme, and must also use the appropriate Application Form, available in paper or online format. Admission to all programmes is subject to availability and space.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Current Admissions Policies and Procedures Handbook	
b/ Current catalogue	
c/ Current QAM	
d/ Student applicant files	

5.1.1 Applicants with recognised prior learning

Recognition of prior learning is a process that allows students to gain admission to a programme of study or to gain exemptions/credit from some parts of a programme, based on demonstrated learning achieved prior to admission. The process is governed by rules and recommendations as defined by *Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Further and Higher Education and Training*, published by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (July 2006). The document stresses the importance to recognise all learning achievements by supporting the development of alternative pathways to qualifications or awards, and by facilitating the recognition of prior learning.

Applicants may be given credit for prior learning against specific elements of a programme (such as a module) if their prior learning is judged to be equivalent to the learning outcomes of the proposed programme of study. In such cases the student

may be exempted from taking the elements of the programme for which credit has been given. Possible exemptions are judged prior to taking the programme of study, and cannot be granted after admission to a programme.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Current Admissions Policies and Procedures Handbook	
b/ Current catalogue	
c/ Current QAM	
d/ Student applicant files	

5.1.2 International applicants

With regard to the admission of international students the College strives to adhere to the Code of Practice regarding marketing, recruitment, enrolment, orientation and induction of new students, as recommended by the *Provision of Education to International Students*, published by the Irish Higher Education Quality Network (September 2009).

The marketing of programmes to non-EU countries and admission of students from such countries is the responsibility of the Admissions Office and the Academic Office upon recommendations of the Executive management Committee. In addition to satisfying academic requirements, applicants who are non-EU nationals are required to produce proof of residency in the Republic of Ireland outlining their reasons to remain in the state.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Current Admissions Policies and Procedures Handbook	
b/ Current catalogue	
c/ Current QAM	
d/ Student applicant files	

5.1.3 English language requirements

Regardless of the mode of admission all English language requirements agreed at programme validation must be verified and adhered to. Where applicants do not have a formal English language qualification, they must provide evidence of equivalent competence through other examinations, or achievement of a minimum standard in recognised tests of English.

International applicants satisfy the College's English language requirements by holding relevant score taken within the last two years in the following English language tests: IELTS, TOEFL, Cambridge Certificate, and when they have been educated through English on an internationally recognised, accredited programme of at least one in duration in an English speaking country.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Current Admissions Policies and Procedures Handbook	
b/ Current catalogue	
c/ Current QAM	
d/ Student applicant files	

5.1.4 Applicants with disabilities

Students with disabilities can enrol in the College via the standard procedures used by all students. Students with disability applying via the CAO are encouraged to disclose their disability by writing “Medical Condition/Disability” on their CAO application form. In this way the College is alerted to the particular needs of the student, so that appropriate preparations can be made to provide the necessary supports and arrangements. In the case of direct applications, candidates with disabilities can explain their particular circumstances on the direct application form. They are then invited to the College to view the facilities.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Current Admissions Policies and Procedures Handbook	
b/ Current catalogue	
c/ Current QAM	
d/ Student applicant files	

5.1.5 Fraudulent applications

All applicants must produce the original copies of supporting documentation, such as identification, transcripts, at the admission stage. Applicants need also to declare any personal information that may affect their performance in the course of study. The College reserves the right to refuse admission (or cancel registration) to any applicant (or student) whose application details are found to be false.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Current Admissions Policies and Procedures Handbook	
b/ Current catalogue	
c/ Current QAM	
d/ Student applicant files	

5.2 Learning support

The College’s learning support builds on practical advancements and experience within the College, within Lynn University as the College’s founding institutions, on Irish and international developments in higher education over recent years. The College’s mission is to offer student-centred learning supported through excellence in

teaching that produces graduates who are equipped to lead successful lives and to contribute effectively to society.

Learning in the College is designed to build a repertoire of effective learning strategies in a way that assists learners in functioning as self-motivated individuals. The strong focus is on enabling and empowering students to achieve the learning outcomes of their programmes and modules while recognising diversity in individual learning styles. The College promotes active student engagement with material in a meaningful and genuine way that supports the linking of new knowledge to previous understanding gained in formal and informal learning experiences.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Programme learning and assessment strategies in Programme Handbook	
b/ Module learning and assessment strategies in each syllabus	
c/ Course Board documentation as in 1.3.4, above	

5.2.1 Learning and teaching methods

In the College teaching is seen as a multidimensional activity that promotes quality learning through a student-centred interaction between the teacher, learner and the curriculum. The teaching methods are designed to help the learner to understand how to use study resources to facilitate their educational experience and to achieve the learning outcomes of their programmes and modules. Learning and teaching methods are intended to facilitate students taking ownership of, and responsibility for, their own learning in partnership with the academic faculty. The methods adopted provide students with varied learning opportunities and experiences, and include conventional lecturers, tutoring, mentoring, case studies, e-learning, workshops, project supervision, research supervision, and student observation.

In essence, learning and teaching strategy of the College is based on a set of key principles and sets of specific goals and objectives for learning, teaching and assessment. Among the main goals of this strategy is academic achievement and progression, assessment as a learning experience, flexibility of learning and teaching methods, holistic approach to curriculum design, continuous student support, professional development and employability.

As students progress from year to year the subject matter of their studies becomes increasingly complex and challenging. The focus of learning moves from acquisition of knowledge and understanding to critical analysis and application of conceptual knowledge to practical situations. In the final year in particular students learn to critically evaluate and apply knowledge and skills through earlier years of study. Ultimately, students are brought to a position where they can demonstrate, through a variety of assessment processes, that they have achieved the learning outcomes of their programmes.

The adoption of the E-learning system *Moodle* has provided lecturers and students with a virtual learning environment to complement and enrich the more traditional

learning process. This has made it possible for lecturers to create new learning opportunities for students. Adapting this technology as an integral part of teaching methodology has enabled lecturers to provide course material in a variety of media formats outside the classroom, thus fostering effective self-learning techniques.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Programme learning and assessment strategies in Programme Handbook	
b/ Module learning and assessment strategies in each syllabus	
c/ Course Board documentation as in 1.3.4, above	

5.2.2 Learning support mechanisms

The College's policy is to provide tangible learning support to students throughout their studies. At the commencement of the academic year each student is issued with information designed to guide them through their studies, including detailed module descriptions, continuous assessment schedule, reference to the College plagiarism policy (see the *Plagiarism Statement* in Appendix 9.4), past examination papers, and reading lists. Library and computer service staff members participate in the induction of new students, providing information on the library service and the use of IT resources. The induction is complemented by library tours given to groups or to individuals upon request.

The relatively small size of the College is conducive to the development of close and frequent direct interactions between lecturers and individual students, who often enjoy the benefits of their lecturers' attention and guidance outside teaching hours. The academic support thus obtained involves familiarising students with standard research methods and conventions, developing students' ability to critically evaluate research and critical material, encouraging students to think independently and critically, assisting students in revising for and answering examination questions effectively.

All students attend a mandatory course in Academic Communication, in which they learn how to improve their skills in clear and effective writing, how to conduct research and to present its results, how to give an oral presentation in front of an audience in a professional manner.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Programme learning and assessment strategies in Programme Handbook	
b/ Module learning and assessment strategies in each syllabus	
c/ Course Board documentation as in 1.3.4, above	

5.2.3 Physical resources

American College Dublin is committed to providing high-quality resources to assist students in their study. The physical resources include the Rooney Library, computer

rooms, a student lounge, quiet study rooms, a games room and a café. The Rooney Library provides a full range of books, periodicals and newspapers relevant to all programmes offered by the College. It also benefits from electronic links with Lynn University Library (the founder of the College), from a subscription to the British Library Document Supply Centre, and from its access to a vast number of electronic databases.

At the start of every academic year the Library is provided with reading lists for each of the academic programmes and modules, along with approximate class numbers. All lists are updated on an annual basis. The Library consistently strives to maintain an equitable book-to-student ratio. Emphasis is also placed on providing the most current and up-to-date information available, including the latest editions of all textbooks.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Executive Management Committee minutes and papers	
b/ Librarian reports	

5.2.4 Student Services Office

The Student Services Office provides facilities for the Students' Union to organise social activities, sports events, and special interest groups. There also exists an active Business Society responsible for planning both educational and social events throughout the year. Students' human support also includes regular and relatively unimpeded direct access to lecturers and high-level College management. Additional support is provided by the Director of Student Affairs, special needs tutors, counselling service, accommodation service and internships co-ordinator.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Minutes showing student participation on all committees below EMC	
b/ Student Union administrative records	
c/ Director of Student Services records	

5.2.5 Evaluating premises, equipment and facilities

The Executive Management Committee is responsible for overseeing ongoing evaluation of the College's physical plant and equipment, and for taking such actions as are necessary maintain and develop these.

The Executive Assistant meets on a daily basis with the College's Facilities Manager and associated staff. At the end of each academic year the Executive Assistant provides a report to the Executive Management Committee on the physical plant on the basis of these meetings. The report sets out the current condition of the facilities and provides recommendations for the year ahead.

The Academic Dean provides a report at the end of each year on the recommendations of the Course Boards with regard to the condition of equipment and requirements for the next academic year. The Executive Management Committee considers the reports and decides on the appropriate improvements and procurements for premises, equipment and facilities for the next academic year.

The College's support services report to the Executive Management Committee. The members of the Committee meet regularly with the relevant managerial staff in the library, information technology, business office and academic office. At the end of each academic year a report is provided by the Executive Management Committee on the condition of these services and the requirements for the year ahead. The Committee considers the recommendations and decides on the appropriate actions in order to meet them.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Executive Management Committee minutes and papers	

6. Information systems

Institutional self-knowledge is the starting point for effective quality assurance designed to improve the daily functioning of the College in all its areas of operation. In fact, in the modern world it is impossible for an institution to operate without computerised systems for collecting, accessing, analysing and utilising information about its own activities.

The College appreciates the paramount importance of collecting and analysing relevant information for the effective management of its degree programmes and administrative activities. The quality-related information systems used by the College include *Prestige* academic management software (supported by hard copy back-up files) to document registration of students, course allocation, contact details, academic results. All these areas are managed by the Academic Office. Apart from comprehensive records retained for each individual student, the electronic information on student cohort progression, pass / fail rates, and course completion is made available to the course boards and forms a part of the ongoing and periodic monitoring of programmes (see above, sections 1.3.4, 2.2.3 and 2.2.4).

Information relating to the College's alumni is collected by the President's Office.

The management of College finances is the responsibility of the Director of Finance and Accounts with the help of the *Pegasus Opera II* business software.

The daily flow of professional information between staff is facilitated by *Microsoft Outlook*, while *Moodle* software is used by students to access lecture notes and interact with their lecturers and other students. The materials posted on *Moodle* can be accessed both locally and remotely, thus facilitating students who prefer to study at home rather than in the Library's reading room. Students who have missed classes for whatever reason can use the facility to catch up on missed material. This on-line facility is seen as a valuable addition to the more traditional, direct and personal learning resources.

QA documentation	Status
a/ Academic reports generated by information systems	
b/ Financial reports generated by information systems	
c/ College intranet content	

7. Public information

Like all third-level educational institutions in the modern world American College Dublin regularly publishes up-to-date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes and awards it offers.

The College's main publication of record is its annual Catalogue, available both in printed and electronic format. This is not a marketing document but an objective record of the institution's current academic offerings, policies and procedures. The Catalogue contains up-to-date information about the College's mission, accreditation and awarding bodies, the degree programmes it offers, application methods, student life and internships, academic policies and procedures. The Catalogue is updated at the end of each academic year and, following approval by the Academic Council, is issued each September.

The College website (www.amcd.ie) provides both impartial information of the sort to be found in the College Catalogue (a link to the Catalogue is provided in the website, as is a link to the current QA Manual), as well as current news and events and marketing information for potential applicants to the institution. The update and monitoring of accuracy of the website is the joint responsibility of the Director of Information Technology and the Academic Dean.

Through its regulatory activities with HETAC, the institution makes available to the public (through both HETAC's and its own website) a range of information, including the current QA manual, the institutional review self-evaluation report, HETAC panel report, College response and follow-up report.

The College's marketing materials, which include brochures, pamphlets and media advertisements, provide a range of information about the College. Given its nature, the tenor of the material is promotional and lays a strong stress on the positive features of the institution, but the Admissions Department is responsible to the Academic Council for the accuracy and integrity of the information conveyed. The College is keen to keep the wider public informed, both in Ireland and internationally, about its educational services, by organising several Open Days during the year, by participating in numerous educational fairs in Ireland and abroad, and by social networking through a number of Internet sites such as *Facebook*. Since its inception in 1993 the College has maintained an extremely valuable if unrecorded extensive informal and personal network of communication with students, alumni, their families, wider academic community, as well as local and international community.

QA documentation	Status
a/ College hardcopy publications	
b/ College website	
c/ College marketing materials	

8. Concluding remarks

American College Dublin is committed to the philosophy and practice of quality assurance as a means of providing the optimal service to students and staff. This document sets out the policies and procedures which underpin the College's practice of quality assurance. The Quality Assurance Manual is the definitive source of all academic and quality policies and procedures used in the American College Dublin, both as part of the compliance with the legislation and requirements of our awarding bodies, and as a useful internal reference source to ensure the smooth daily running of the College.

Many of the quality policies, regulations and procedures described in this manual have been in place in the College since its inception in 1993, and they still underpin the design, delivery and assessment of all academic programmes delivered by the College. Formal and comprehensive documentation of these arrangements provides the definitive reference for the College staff, and it also provides evidence that the College continues to meet the external requirements and standards for the quality provision of its programmes.

The Quality Assurance Manual is prepared by the College's Quality Assurance Officer, reporting to the Academic Council, and is updated annually. Feedback from all stakeholders in the College is welcomed in the process of updating and improving the document. The Manual is designed to be comprehensive, accessible, and easy to use to ensure that the academic standards of the College are adhered to.

Quality procedures and arrangements are kept under continuous review by the College management, following feedback and consultations with staff and students. Periodic and regular review and general improvement of structures, regulations and procedures is essential for continued effective development, delivery and assessment of the College's educational programmes. The student learning experience is affected not just by direct teaching, learning and assessment processes, but is also strongly influenced by many related factors, such as the physical environment, the learning support provided, and the students' engagement with College life.


The philosophy underlying the Quality Assurance Manual is to guarantee academic quality and standards for students and to meet student requirements and the mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing such quality. American College Dublin has always taken pride in maintaining a close relationship with its students, to enable them not only to acquire formal education but also to grow and develop as valuable persons and members of the community. The Quality Assurance Manual offers an important statement as to the College's intent to continue to prioritise student needs and requirements in a way that strives for the highest quality and standards of student care.

It is the College's conviction that the Quality Assurance Manual must be more than a mere accreditation compliance exercise: it is much more satisfactory to explore the

full potential of a quality assurance system in improving institutional effectiveness and functioning of the institution. In this sense the Quality Assurance Manual is a living document, which the College will continue updating and revising in the light of feedback continuously provided from all areas of its operation. The present latest version of the Quality Assurance Manual is therefore an important part in the process of institutional learning and improvement.

9. Appendices

9.1 External Examiner's Report Form

 <p style="text-align: center;">External Examiner's Report 2010</p> <p style="text-align: center;">American College Dublin</p>					
Date					
Programme Details	Programme Reference ¹				
	Award Title:				
	Area Of Specialisation (ISCED CODE):				
	Main Modes of Delivery Offered:				
	Stage (1,2,3,4,..., or Award Stage):				
	Semester (if applicable indicate whether first or Second):				
Classification Distribution and Trend		Current Year	Previous Year	Previous Year	Previous Year
	% H1/D				
	% H21/M1				
	% H22/M2				
	% P				
Completion Rate Data	Number who started the programme				
	Number who started the stage				
	Number who completed the stage (i.e. attempted final stage examinations)				

¹ The provider should complete the factual parts of the cover sheet before forwarding the template to the external examiner.

External Examiner Details	Name	
	Main Employment	
	Email address	
	Other contact details	
Please consult HETAC's Effective Practice Guideline for External Examining 2009 and Assessment and Standards 2009 for more detailed information concerning expectations.		
In presenting opinions under the following headings the external examiner should make national and international comparisons.		

The text in red italics is explanatory material and may be deleted by the external examiner when completing the report.

The Evidence Considered

The purpose of this section is to indicate how well informed the external examiner is about the provider, the programme and its context. Summarise the documentary evidence considered (see HETAC's Effective Practice Guideline for External Examining 2009) and any visits, meetings and interviews with learners and academic staff and others.

Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes

The purpose of this section is to comment on the educational objectives including their explicitness, appropriateness and consistency standards with the relevant awards standards and the National Framework of Qualifications. If there are gaps these should be identified. If the standard is too low this must be stated explicitly so that it can be addressed.

Actual Attainment of Learners

This section should present external examiner's informed perception of the actual attainment of learners (knowledge, skill and competence). This is the most important finding of the external examining process. This should be based on consideration of:

- The provider's assessment instruments (e.g. assessment strategies, examination papers, marking schemes), procedures and findings*
- Representative samples of learner responses to assessment tasks (e.g. examination scripts, dissertations, etc.)*
- Interviews with learners*
- Benchmarking data prepared by the provider*
- Any other appropriate evidence*

In presenting those perceptions the external examiner should make national and international comparisons. Opinions (e.g. satisfaction with the actual attainment) should be explained (e.g. by outlining the rationale and criteria).

The Programme

Often external examiners' experience of the programme might lead to suggestions about particular aspects of the programme. This might involve the curriculum or the

approach to teaching and learning. This section should identify some notable strengths and areas for improvement. It is not intended that the external examiner would attempt to systematically review the programme.

Assessment Procedures

The external examiner plays a vital role in the ongoing quality assurance and enhancement of assessment. This section should address:

- The quality of the assessment instruments (programme and module strategies, examination papers, dissertation guidelines, etc.) and scoring rubrics/schemes etc.*
- The fairness, consistency and fitness for purpose (valid, reliable, authentic, robust) of assessment procedures.*
- The reliability of the provider's benchmarking of its assessment procedures.*

Trends

Evidence concerning the extent to which teaching, learning and assessment arrangements have changed in response to the feedback provided by previous external examiner reports; and

Progress on recommendations in recent external examiner and other relevant reports on the programme.

Conclusions and Recommendations

External examiners' signature, date

9.2 Course Board Report Form

Course Board Report, 2010/11

Programme:

Academic content:

Student performance:

Student satisfaction:

Resources:

External examiner comments:

Recommendations:

9.3 Grade Review Form

American College Dublin
GRADE REVIEW FORM

SECTION A – TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT AND BUSINESS OFFICE

Student Name: _____ **Student Number:** _____

Module under review (only one module should be entered):

(code & subject title)

Address to which correspondence on the review should be sent: _____

Student’s signature: _____

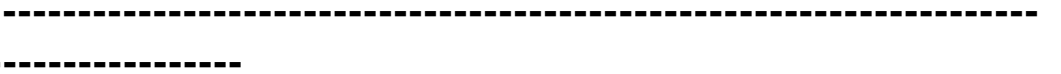
Type of review requested **Technical grade review (€10.00):** _____

(See note 1 below; tick one): **Full grade review (€50.00):** _____

State briefly why you want your grade reviewed (this need only be entered in the case of a full grade review): _____

Signature from Business Office confirming receipt of review fee: _____

(See note 2 below)



SECTION B – TO BE COMPLETED BY INTERNAL EXAMINER AND HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Outcome of review (see note 3 below; for internal College use only):
The original grade stands for the following reason(s): _____

The grade has been adjusted for the following reason(s): _____

1. There are two types of grade review: a technical review involves a check of the arithmetic in calculating the grade and a check of the inputting of the grade on the College's records system; a full review involves a complete reassessment of the final examination paper (including a check for technical errors) and any other relevant circumstances cited by the student. The charge for a technical review is €10.00 per module; the charge for a full review is €50.00 per module. In either case, if the grade review results in the grade being raised the money paid is refunded in full to the student.
2. The College can only accept a grade review that is presented to the Academic Office with this form and the appropriate fee paid within ten working days of the posting of final results. The Academic Office can only accept the grade review form if the Business Office has signed to indicate that it has received the required payment.
3. Once the grade review request has been considered by the Internal Examiner and the Head of Department, they reports on their findings to the Academic Standards Committee; this committee discusses the findings and makes a final decision on the outcome of the grade review. The chairperson of the Academic Standards Committee then writes to the student to inform him or her of the outcome of the grade review.
4. Appeals of grade review outcomes must be submitted in writing within 14 days of receipt of formal notification of the grade review outcome.

Internal Examiner: _____	Head of Department: _____
Signed: _____	Signed: _____
Date: _____	Date: _____

9.4 Summary Check List

Summary Check List

Date:

1.3.1 Governing body

QA documentation	Status
a/ Minutes of Board of Overseers meeting	

1.3.2 Executive Management Committee

QA documentation	Status
a/ Minutes of meetings	
b/ Follow-up on decisions for action by minuted reporting back at next meeting	

1.3.3 Academic Council

QA documentation	Status
a/ Maintenance of minutes of meetings	
b/ Follow-up on decisions for action by minuted reporting back at next meeting	

1.3.4 Course Boards

QA documentation	Status
a/ Maintenance of minutes of meetings	
b/ Follow-up on decisions for action by minuted reporting back at next meeting	
c/ External examiner reports and College responses	
d/ Student feedback forms and commentary by Course Board	
e/ Faculty feedback forms and commentary by Course Board	
f/ Course Board Report Form for each academic year (see below, Appendix 9.2)	
g/ Statistical data analysis of pass/fail rates, progression rates, completion rates, GPA rates per module	

1.3.5 Academic Standards Committee

QA documentation	Status
a/ Maintenance of minutes of meetings	
b/ Follow-up on decisions for action by minuted reporting back at next meeting	

1.3.6 Internal Examination Board

QA documentation	Status
a/ Maintenance of minutes of meetings	
b/ Follow-up on decisions for action by minuted reporting back at next meeting	
c/ Note of review and sign-off on each module's grade sheet	

1.3.7 External Examination Board

QA documentation	Status
a/ Maintenance of minutes of meetings	
b/ Signed broadsheets and covering correspondence to HETAC	

1.4.1 Quality assurance monitoring

QA documentation	Status
a/ Academic Council minutes on proposed amendments to QAM	
b/ Current and preceding versions of QAM	
c/ HETAC correspondence and approvals of changes and updates to QAM	
d/ QAM documentation checklist reviewed and signed off by Academic Council at the end of each academic year	

1.4.2 Institutional review

QA documentation	Status
a/ Course Board, Academic Council and EMC meetings minutes	
b/ HETAC institutional review SER and supporting documentation	
c/ HETAC institutional review panel report and institution's response	
d/ Quality Improvement Plan and supporting documentation	
e/ Correspondence with HETAC	
f/ MSCHE accreditation reports and responses	

2.2.1 New modules and major modifications to existing ones

QA documentation	Status
a/ Relevant Course Board documentation as noted above at 1.3.4	

2.2.2 New programmes and major modifications to existing ones

QA documentation	Status
a/ Maintenance of minutes of Course Board, Academic Council and EMC meetings	
b/ Outline plan of proposed programme	
c/ Feasibility study	
d/ Programme submission	
e/ HETAC programme validation submission	

2.2.3 Programme reviews

QA documentation	Status
a/ Relevant Course Board documentation as noted above at 1.3.4	

2.2.4 External programmatic evaluation

QA documentation	Status
a/ Relevant minutes of working group, course board, Academic Council and EMC meetings	
b/ Research materials for programme evaluation	
c/ Self-Evaluation Report	
d/ Peer Review Group Report	
e/ College response	
f/ Application by Academic Council to HETAC or EMC for revalidation of programmes	
g/ Response by HETAC or EMC	

3.2 Assessment policy

QA documentation	Status
a/ Statement of programme assessment strategy in programme validation documentation	
b/ Statement of module assessment strategy in each module's syllabus	
c/ External examiner feedback and College responses	

3.3 Assessment objectives

QA documentation	Status
a/ Statement of programme assessment strategy in programme validation documentation	
b/ Statement of module assessment strategy in each module's syllabus	
c/ External examiner feedback and College responses	
d/ Course Board minutes	

3.4 Internal examiners

QA documentation	Status
a/ Module syllabi	
b/ Examination papers and marking schemes	
c/ Examination scripts	
d/ Grade sheets	
e/ External examiner comments	
f/ Internal Examination Board meeting minutes	

3.5 External examiners

QA documentation	Status
a/ External Examiner Report forms, including College responses to extern feedback	
b/ College-extern correspondence	
c/ Correspondence with HETAC on extern appointments and provision of report copies	
d/ Course Board minutes	

3.6 Continuous assessment

QA documentation	Status
a/ Course Board documentation as at 1.3.4	

3.7 Final examination regulations

QA documentation	Status
a/ Current examination regulations	
b/ Invigilator reports	
c/ Final mark sheets	

d/ Academic Office correspondence with students	
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3.7.1 Guidelines for invigilators

QA documentation	Status
a/ Current invigilator guidelines	
b/ Invigilator reports	

3.7.2 Grade reviews

QA documentation	Status
a/ Completed grade review forms	
b/ Course Board and Academic Council minutes	
c/ Examination scripts and mark sheets	
d/ Student-College correspondence	
e/ College-HETAC correspondence, when necessary	

3.8 Academic discipline

QA documentation	Status
a/ Intra-College correspondence	
b/ Material evidence of academic irregularity or dishonesty	
c/ Minutes of student-College meetings	
d/ Student-College correspondence	

3.8.1 Plagiarism

QA documentation	Status
a/ Minutes of meetings	
b/ Signed plagiarism statements	
c/ Intra-College correspondence	
d/ College-student correspondence	

3.8.2 Disciplinary procedures (plagiarism)

QA documentation	Status
a/ Intra-College correspondence	
b/ Material evidence of academic irregularity or dishonesty	
c/ Minutes of student-College meetings	
d/ Student-College correspondence	

3.8.3 Academic indiscipline in examinations

QA documentation	Status
a/ Minutes of meetings	
b/ Intra-College correspondence	
c/ College-student correspondence	

3.8.4 Disciplinary procedures (academic indiscipline in examinations)

QA documentation	Status
a/ Intra-College correspondence	
b/ Material evidence of academic irregularity or dishonesty	
c/ Minutes of student-College meetings	
d/ Student-College correspondence	

3.8.5 Appeals procedure

QA documentation	Status
a/ Written appeal by student	
b/ Intra-College correspondence	
c/ Material evidence of grounds for appeal	
d/ Minutes of student-College meetings	
e/ Minutes of EMC meetings	
f/ Student-College correspondence	

4.1 Recruitment and induction

QA documentation	Status
a/ Employee files, including curriculum vitae, academic transcripts, references	
b/ Contract of employment and employment policies	
c/ Employee development forms	

4.2 Equal opportunities

QA documentation	Status
a/ Current catalogue	
b/ Current QAM	

4.3 Staff development

QA documentation	Status
a/ Contract of employment and employment policies	
b/ Employee development forms	

4.3.1 Staff evaluation

QA documentation	Status
a/ Contract of employment and employment policies	
b/ Employee development forms	

4.3.2 Student evaluations

QA documentation	Status
a/ Student evaluation forms and covering form recording discussion with teacher and conclusions	
b/ Course minutes	

5.1 Student admission

QA documentation	Status
a/ Current Admissions Policies and Procedures Handbook	
b/ Current catalogue	
c/ Current QAM	
d/ Student applicant files	

5.1.1 Applicants with recognised prior learning

QA documentation	Status
a/ Current Admissions Policies and Procedures Handbook	
b/ Current catalogue	
c/ Current QAM	
d/ Student applicant files	

5.1.2 International applicants

QA documentation	Status
a/ Current Admissions Policies and Procedures Handbook	
b/ Current catalogue	
c/ Current QAM	
d/ Student applicant files	

5.1.3 English language requirements

QA documentation	Status
a/ Current Admissions Policies and Procedures Handbook	
b/ Current catalogue	
c/ Current QAM	
d/ Student applicant files	

5.1.4 Applicants with disabilities

QA documentation	Status
a/ Current Admissions Policies and Procedures Handbook	
b/ Current catalogue	
c/ Current QAM	
d/ Student applicant files	

5.1.5 Fraudulent applications

QA documentation	Status
a/ Current Admissions Policies and Procedures Handbook	
b/ Current catalogue	
c/ Current QAM	
d/ Student applicant files	

5.2 Learning support

QA documentation	Status
a/ Programme learning and assessment strategies in Programme Handbook	
b/ Module learning and assessment strategies in each syllabus	
c/ Course Board documentation as in 1.3.4, above	

5.2.1 Learning and teaching methods

QA documentation	Status
a/ Programme learning and assessment strategies in Programme Handbook	
b/ Module learning and assessment strategies in each syllabus	
c/ Course Board documentation as in 1.3.4, above	

5.2.2 Learning support mechanisms

QA documentation	Status
a/ Programme learning and assessment strategies in Programme Handbook	
b/ Module learning and assessment strategies in each syllabus	
c/ Course Board documentation as in 1.3.4, above	

5.2.3 Physical resources

QA documentation	Status
a/ Executive Management Committee minutes and papers	
b/ Librarian reports	

5.2.4 Student Services Office

QA documentation	Status
a/ Minutes showing student participation on all committees below EMC	
b/ Student Union administrative records	
c/ Director of Student Services records	

5.2.5 Evaluating premises, equipment and facilities

QA documentation	Status
a/ Executive Management Committee minutes and papers	

6 Information systems

QA documentation	Status
a/ Academic reports generated by information systems	
b/ Financial reports generated by information systems	
c/ College intranet content	

7 Public information

QA documentation	Status
a/ College hardcopy publications	
b/ College website	
c/ College marketing materials	