

# **National Report on Ireland (March 2003)**

## **Quality Enhancement in Language Studies.**

### **1.1 General Introduction - languages spoken in Ireland**

Ireland has two official languages, English, the mother tongue of the majority and Irish, the first language of a small percentage of the population. Recent surveys indicate that the children of native speakers living in the Gaeltacht (area where the mother tongue is Irish) now frequently use English, outside of school and the home. However, the number of all Irish schools continues to grow, in cities as well as more rural areas. The Department of Education and Science (DES) states that this indicates an increasing use of Irish at school and in the community.

The Education Act, 1998, provides for strong support for the maintenance of Irish, as the primary community language in the Gaeltacht, and for the realisation of national policy and objectives in relation to bilingualism in Irish society. The continued focus on promoting and further developing policies on bilingualism, and related support measures for the Irish language, are often cited as the reason why there is little public debate in Ireland on the role of foreign languages, or even on other aspects of a European dimension in education. Language policy is normally understood as policy on the Irish language.

A number of state bodies play a role in the maintenance of and support for Irish. There have been many projects and special initiatives over the years. Recently, a small group of teachers was seconded to develop special materials for the teaching of Irish in Gaeltacht areas (as opposed to the rest of the country, where English is the first language). New materials are being prepared for Irish in the Primary Schools. So, even at a time where there is no curricular review of languages, there is concern to update materials, to modernise and try new approaches in the teaching of Irish. In the past, there has been almost no shared discussion or planning among educators in FLs and Irish – or English, the mother tongue of the majority. In 2002, a special council was set up with a range of functions relating to Irish and education through Irish, including research relating to Irish medium education. Its role includes support services for Irish (textbooks and materials development for learning and teaching through Irish.) A new National Education Centre for Irish is to be built in the Gaeltacht. Various organisations and bodies are responsible for a multitude of initiatives and developments concerning the Irish language, but links have not been established to the other languages in the school curriculum. This issue was often raised in discussions during the European Year of Languages.

During the last five years, immigrants and refugees have had a considerable impact on the linguistic situation in primary and secondary schools. The Department of Education and Science (DES) estimates that one hundred and sixty ethnic groups are now represented in Irish schools. School policy and language policy have not been adapted to meet the needs of the newly arrived children. The Irish language continues to receive more time in the primary curriculum than English, and no other language is an official part of the primary curriculum. The status of ‘community languages’ has not yet been raised or debated. Two recent DES language initiatives (see below) may focus the educational debate on foreign language learning and the issues of multi- and plurilingualism.

The population of Ireland had been decreasing for many years. However, in the last few years, returning Irish emigrants, immigration and a very reduced emigration, due to a stronger economy, have resulted in the largest (and most diverse) population, since the 1840s (4 million). This is creating new problems for schools and for teacher training. These developments have brought new issues into public debate and it is likely that languages too, will have to be addressed in a broad and more global manner.

## 1.2 Modern languages in Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Education

Primary and secondary schools are the direct responsibility of the DES. There was no state control over pre-primary education or care (crèches, playschools and, kindergartens) until the Department of Justice, Law Reform and Equality set up a committee to examine the current situation of unregulated childcare and early years' education in Ireland, and draw up a framework of qualifications for those working with pre-school children. The Department organised a national consultation process (2000-2002) to ensure that all those working with children would be involved in developing a quality system. An interesting development was the network of Irish speaking parents who had set up their own 'naonrai' around the country, playschools, where all the activities take place through the Irish language. These have been highly successful and acclaimed as an excellent model of quality early years education. For linguists, the naonrai demonstrate how willingly even English speaking children espouse a new language, if the environment is right. The naonrai were recently awarded the European Label for innovation. This has created some public interest in language teaching to young children.

Children commence primary schooling at four or five years, although the age set by the government is six years. Although compulsory schooling ceases at 16 years, the majority of young people now remain at school until Leaving Certificate level. The average school-leaving age for many years was 17 years, as a result of parents sending their four and five year olds to primary school. The freedom of parents to decide the right starting age for their children, creates difficulties for the teaching of various skills, including reading and writing. A transition year was introduced between junior and senior cycles, thus extending secondary schooling from five to six years. The majority of pupils now complete the Leaving Certificate examination at 18 years. The Transition Year Programme is designed to allow pupils to explore, get work experience and take time to decide the subjects they will take in senior cycle. Schools have freedom in relation to the content, but most give pupils some opportunity to experience new languages, usually in short 'taster' modules. There may however be no opportunity to continue the chosen foreign language.

Most secondary schools are private and many of them have their own junior school also. The majority of children attend state primary schools, some go on to a fee-paying secondary school. Fee paying alternatives to state primary school can be popular, especially in cities ( Montessori or Froebel, for example). There is often less emphasis on the second language, Irish, than in primary schools, but there may be an introduction to a continental language. Irish and English are taught in state primary schools, but not a foreign language, except where it is requested and paid for, as an optional extra, by parents. One foreign language, usually French, is taught in secondary schools. Where a second language is offered, it is usually German. In the few years, Spanish has increased considerably. A few larger secondary schools teach all three, and pupils have a choice. Latin is taught in a very small number of private fee-paying schools only. Some schools are participating in two voluntary government initiatives, which promote lesser-taught foreign languages. These are described under language projects. The dominance of French in the secondary system is indicated by the following figures: nearly 37,000 pupils sat French, just under 11,000 German and just over 200 Italian.

If the trend in population growth continues, there will be a shortage in the number of teachers being trained for primary and perhaps, for post- primary schools. The government commitment to reduce class sizes in primary education (some of the largest in Europe) may be reviewed. Policy in recent years was based on the belief that the population is decreasing and some teacher training colleges have already been closed. A postgraduate conversion course has been reinstated to maintain the supply of primary schools

The figures published by the Central Applications Office in 2003, indicate a steep rise in applications for teacher training (primary and secondary). Primary is up by 6% and secondary by 30% on last years figures. The situation is not good for languages. There is a large rise in the number of science graduates offered training places, but the number of language graduates accepted for the HDEd in 2002-2003 is very small. This may mean that there will be an insufficient number of secondary language teachers to meet requirements in schools diversifying their language teaching.

### 1.3 The Higher Education System in Ireland

Higher Education in Ireland is provided mainly by the Universities, Institutes of Technology (ITs) and Colleges of Education. Some specialist institutions provide HE courses in music, art, agriculture and medicine. Private colleges specialise mainly in the provision business studies programmes. These attract increasing numbers of foreign students. Some of the more popular business courses are franchised to or organised in certain Asian countries, such as Pakistan. Some courses are franchised by the IT sector also, to Czechoslovakia, Cyprus or to Asian countries, for example. The accrediting body is HETAC.

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) was established in 1971, as the planning and development body for higher education in Ireland. It has a broad range of functions, including the funding of universities and designated institutions and the development of teaching and research in higher education. It liaises between government and the universities. Under the Universities' Act, 1997, the HEA was given additional responsibilities, including the review of university quality assurance procedures, their strategic development plans and equal opportunity policies. The Institutes of Technology are soon to come within its remit. They have been funded directly by the DES up until the present.

HE has developed and extended considerably in recent years. Two new ITs were set up and the universities were encouraged to expand the number of student places, especially in areas such as information technology, to meet the requirements of high-tech companies, which had set up in Ireland. Initially, private colleges were founded to meet the high demand for courses in business studies. However, the private sector is now expanding into popular areas of the humanities (psychology, for example), where the points required for entry to university courses are very high. A Central Applications Office now processes all applications for courses at universities, the ITs, the Colleges of Education and designated courses in private colleges

There are eight universities in Ireland, four of which were colleges of the National University of Ireland (NUI), until their reconstitution as universities, arising from the Universities Act, 1997. They are in Dublin, Cork, Galway and Maynooth. Along with the University of Dublin (Trinity College), the two newer universities: Dublin City University and the University of Limerick, and the Pontifical University, they compose the university sector and educate just over 56% of all students in HE. The NUI also has five recognised colleges. These are the Royal College of Surgeons, the National College of Art and Design, St. Angela's College of Education (for secondary teachers of home economics), the Shannon College of Hotel Management and the Institute of Public Administration (for employees of the civil and the public service).

The Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) was formally established under the 1992 Dublin Institute of Technology Act. It was constituted from five existing colleges, some a hundred years old. It offers a broad range of courses from apprentice to doctoral degree level and is the validating body for its own awards. The Regional Technical Colleges, were created in the late seventies and became Institutes of Technology (ITs) in 1994, under an amendment to the original RTC Act. There are thirteen ITs located throughout the country. They represent a major development in education, giving access in regional areas to mainly technical, technological and business education. Though founded to promote technology, business courses are now the most popular ones at the institutes. Recently introduced courses in the humanities are quite successful. Initially the majority of students studied for certificates and diplomas, but in line with a general trend in Ireland, the ITs have been upgrading courses to degree level and higher.

Recent government legislation has established a number of new bodies with responsibility for various areas of HE. Whilst there is some similarity with the British structures, most Irish institutions maintain greater autonomy. These new bodies are described under the Background to Quality Assurance.

Primary teachers are still educated in training colleges, but each is attached to a university, which awards the BEd degree. The training colleges have large departments of Irish and English. This is not the case for foreign languages. Two colleges now offer French, and one German up to degree level. Staff numbers are smaller for continental languages. New government initiatives in the area of primary languages have shown the need for the introduction of more foreign languages in these colleges. There are eight Colleges of Education. Four offer degree courses leading to a qualification as teachers at primary level. The others offer specialist qualifications, for secondary teachers of home economics, for example. There is a strong demand for places and the points required are high. A high level of Irish is required, but there is no foreign language requirement. In order to enable all students studying a foreign language to spend a period abroad, Mary Immaculate Training College in Limerick introduced a teacher training course in English as a Foreign Language, which allows students to work abroad as teachers.

Business schools and departments in the ITs now attract the largest number of students and are therefore vital to the financial success of the institutions. The ITs, professional institutes, some schools of art and music and a range of private colleges submit their programmes for accreditation to the Higher Education and Training Authority (HETAC), which was created in 2001, as was the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC). The two bodies responsible up to 2001 for the accreditation of courses were the NCEA and NCVA. These were dissolved in that year, with a number of issues unresolved. One of the initial tasks of the NQAI was to have been the definition of what constitutes further and higher education.

All the Institutes of Technology teach foreign languages, and sometimes Irish, either as a major component of a course or as a 'service' activity. Only two departments of languages were created over the years. These have now been renamed 'departments of humanities'. This loss of status is one indication of the rapid decline in languages in the IT sector, over a small number of years. The language activity has traditionally been placed in the school of business studies. At DIT, there are two language departments within the school of languages. Six years ago, in one college alone, over 2,000 students were obliged to take a foreign language as a fully integrated part of their course in science, engineering or technology. The decline has been rapid. Strongly promoted in the eighties for vocational and professional purposes, uptake in languages at third level is now declining rapidly. This applies in a less extreme way to the university sector also.

Continental languages were seen by industry to have strong vocational use in the eighties. Many needs analysis were carried in cooperation with academic institutions and chambers of commerce. Many companies introduced in-house language programmes. There was considerable public discussion on the role and importance of languages. An LSP orientation was therefore generally adopted for languages in colleges and ITs. Universities introduced some business modules on traditional philological degree courses. Languages were also promoted as important to EU membership. In the late 90s, there was a move from the European outlook. Ireland's Industrial Development Authority was no longer attracting small continental companies, instead it attracted multi-national/American IT companies. The public in general, and students in HE, now often consider English sufficient for career purposes.

Lecturers in German, and sometimes in French are retraining to provide for the English language needs of the thousands of Chinese students and other international students, enrolling at the ITs especially. Enterprise Ireland promotes international education as an industry and EFL also. University and other language centres are teaching more English and less other languages.

All stakeholders in education are concerned at recent trends in high failure and drop-out rates in HE. Research indicates the major reason to be the combination of a dropping points requirement for HE, low attendance rates at courses, and a high number of hours spent in paid employment (to fund students' expensive lifestyle). Measures to be taken include more career counselling in secondary school to insure more informed choices of studies, better induction of first year students, more introductory modules on all courses and the introduction of a tutorial system (or smaller tutorial groups) early on in college studies. Optional subjects, increasingly the status of languages in HE, do not fare well in this climate.

## 1.4 Two-cycle structure and the Bologna Process

There is no unified policy in Ireland in relation to course length in HE. When a new undergraduate course goes for validation in the IT sector, the course team may make the case for a three- or four-year programme, depending on how they perceive employers requirements and likely student demand. Universities have a strong level of autonomy and various structures are in place, which permit course length to vary. As higher education has a similar structure to the British one, BA and BSc courses are of 3-4 years' duration at present and the MA or MSc lasts an additional 1-2 years.

The HEA convened a national conference in summer 2001, in order to inform the educational institutions of European developments and the implications of the Bologna Declaration for a possible restructuring of HE in Ireland. Pilot projects were presented as models, including one on the European Diploma Supplement. As a follow up to the conference, the HE institutions are currently examining the structure of their own courses and considering the adoption of a common European approach. The main debate is focussed on a possible conversion of all diplomas (3 years) into pass degrees. Existing degree programmes would remain honours ones. These are usually of four years' duration in Trinity College, the newer universities, the ITs and at DIT, (due to the ladder system of awards). At the national universities, arts degrees usually last three and most other degrees, four years

The ladder system is threatened by the possible restructuring. The government on the one hand, wants more opportunities to be available for transfer between institutions and levels, and more opportunities for upgrading qualifications. Traditionally students holding weak Leaving Certificate results, could enter a certificate or diploma course and eventually transfer to a degree course, if they performed well. A new structure, in line with Bologna, may reduce the number of students obtaining a HE qualification, as certificates and diplomas may disappear, leaving those with lower points unable to obtain a place in HE.

The freedom to create courses with similar titles, but different content has created certain problems in HE. One example is the transfer system, which has presented difficulties for DIT and some ITs, in relation to language requirements. Students transferring to courses on which a language is obligatory – previously the case on many business and technical or science courses at DIT and other colleges – found that, although they had obtained a certificate or diploma with the same title as the degree they wished to obtain, they could not make up the deficit in the FL. The European Credit Transfer System, on the other hand, has been widely adopted in the extra-university sector and universities are applying it to all new courses and course reviews.

The national university offer three-year BA programmes in the Arts and Humanities; and four-year bachelor programmes in other fields and five-year, bachelor programmes in engineering, physiotherapy and other professionally oriented disciplines. If they wish to unify their structure, they will have to negotiate extensively with the professional bodies concerned.

The successor body to the NCEA, HETAC, also promotes a ladder system of certificates, diplomas and degrees, which are awarded after 2, 3 and 4 years respectively. Despite the strong support for this structure, the Department of Education and Science has permitted HETAC to award degrees after 3 years (mainly in business studies). In considering the advantages of a fully unified system, it has to be remembered that students with a low points score may enter a certificate course and through application, may succeed in moving via a diploma, to a degree programme. This system has enabled greater numbers of students to obtain an undergraduate degree. There is also a general fear that many of the planned changes will erode academic standards.

In the case of degree courses, which are shortened to three years, there are a number of repercussions for the whole curriculum. Previously, it was considered desirable to give as broad an education as possible. In shortened programmes, non core subjects are dropped, or given optional status. This has already contributed to a significant drop in students taking languages in the IT sector. Languages, along with mathematics, are often seen as the failing subjects. Frequently, the specialist department is therefore keen to drop subjects perceived to be non-essential 'service' courses.

Each sector has engaged in intense debate on the implications of the Bologna declaration for the existing structures in H E. The professional bodies (the Institute of Electrical Engineers, for example) have indicated that they could accept a re-structuring of the 5-year programmes into a 3 plus 2 structure as have the ITs, but university departments of precisely these professional areas, have expressed the strongest reservations. At present, all engineering programmes in DIT and ITs are submitted to the IEI for professional accreditation after internal validation, or the IEI is represented on the validation panel for a new course, so as to ensure full professional recognition of the qualification. This partnership approach is also adopted by the extra-university sector, when seeking recognition for business courses, for example, from other professional bodies. This rarely works to the advantage of languages, as business and professional organisations are surprised to find a foreign language included in the curriculum, believing English to be sufficient in a country, where industry is mainly owned by American companies and most tourists also came from the States.

Many engineering courses, especially in the IT sector, had a foreign language component. However, as these courses come up for review, new subjects or aspects of technical areas often replace the language or are placed as options against it. Students now rarely take extra optional subjects. It is usual for them to work a high number of hours per week in part-time jobs. This has had a severe impact on overall language uptake in the ITs, over the last two to three years.

Restructuring and shortening of four-year BA programmes may also have an adverse effect on the uptake of Erasmus exchange programmes and work placements abroad. Initially, these opportunities were only introduced on four-year programmes. The year abroad, now well established in many higher education programmes, complicates the issue of restructuring in a number of ways. Students will opt for shorter courses, especially if fees are reintroduced. The NUI three-year BA is awarded on the basis of three years spent at university in Ireland. Four-year programmes, such as the BA at Trinity College, recognise the year or semester abroad as an integral part of the course and accepts the credits obtained at an institution abroad. Effectively, students may have studied for the same number of years in the home institution. In some programmes, all students are obliged to go abroad. Normally no lectures are organised in the home institution, and therefore it is not possible for a student who stays at home to obtain the requisite credits to progress to the next stage.

## **1.5. Background to Quality Assurance**

In Irish university circles, the quality assurance procedures adopted in Great Britain, have been closely followed and much discussed. Academics generally consider that the level of external control exercised there is unnecessary. It was believed that the system of external examiners, common to all Irish institutions, represented sufficient control. Quality assurance and assessment have now become important issues, due to newly enacted legislation. Certain institutions and bodies (DIT and HETAC) had, over the years, developed systems and procedures based on peer review and assessment. The universities relied on the external examiner system but began to initiate various pilot QA projects and to develop QA procedures some years ago, in line with CHIU proposals. However, the impetus for rapid change at national level came with new legislation, falling student numbers and the increasing competition for students.

In 1995, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) undertook a major study of higher education and published, in that year, the Report of the Steering Committee on the Future Development of Higher Education. The committee projected student figures for the period up to 2015, and made recommendations for greatly increased funding, to allow for higher participation rates. It also recommended to the government much increased funding for facilities and equipment, and also underlined the need for an allocation of resources, which would allow institutions to develop effective systems of quality assurance. It linked the requirement for the introduction of QA measures in Ireland to the government decision to significantly increase participation rates in further and higher education.

The Steering Committee considered in detail a possible Q.A. system for Irish higher education and studied a number of systems abroad. It recommended the adoption of a flexible approach, which would be supported by peer review and quality audits, and would incorporate consultation with students, as well as staff. Accountability and transparency were stressed as central to the process. Some institutions feared a loss of autonomy.

In the same year, the government published a White Paper on Education (1995). This addressed in greater detail the need for quality assurance in higher education and suggested that the existing autonomy of institutions could be maintained, but accompanied by accountability. The Paper stressed the responsibility of institutions to develop their own Q.A. procedures, in the context of a quality culture, and with peer review, transparency and accountability to the public. It suggested that the HEA would develop auditing systems, which would incorporate national and international peer review and publication of findings of evaluation. The provision of a programme for the improvement of teaching skills and staff development in higher education (HE) was seen as central to the future development of QA systems.

The NQAI, established in 2001, as mentioned previously, has an overseeing role in relation to the full range of quality assurance. HETAC and FETAC come under this body, and DIT must seek approval for the QA procedures it puts in place. Under the Universities Act of 1997 however, the universities were obliged to set up their own QA systems and all have now special units for this purpose. In the first two years of its existence, the NQAI has focused its work on the creation of a framework to include all qualifications, and all levels of higher and further education. As the universities are not participating, it will be difficult to defend it as a 'national' framework. The descriptors, so far, are very general and do not have particular relevance to language qualifications. It is very likely that the Council of Europe Levels and Scales will be adopted for foreign languages, as the NQAI does not have subject specialists.

### **1.5.1. Accreditation of New Programmes and Higher Education Institutions**

The Universities Act (1997) and the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act (1999) both focused on issues of quality, transparency, transfer and progression and how to achieve these. The full implementation of these acts will ensure a systematic introduction of QA procedures and auditing systems in the coming years in Irish higher education. The accreditation of programmes and institutions is not directly dealt with in legislation. Prior to the new legislation, institutions, other than DIT and universities, had to be designated institutions before they could submit a programme for validation. Now it is no longer necessary to have this status. Any provider is entitled to seek approval for any course. Small private institutes will no doubt benefit from this change in legislation. Once validated by HETAC, all IT courses are submitted to the Colleges Section of the DES for approval. This ensures the necessary funding is made available.

In 1991, the DES established a Committee on Credit Transfer, Modularisation and Semesterisation under the auspices of the HEA. Representatives from the ITs, the universities, the professional bodies and from all accrediting bodies participated in the work of the Committee. At the end of 1992, an interim report recommended that all institutions in higher education should adopt the ECTS credit system. The other issues were debated over the following years and in 1994 the HEA decided to present the various points of view in a discussion document. It strongly urged the adoption of modularisation for higher education "to come in line with European practise" and to promote mobility. It recommended the implementation of semesterisation along with modularisation. During the following years, most institutions considered the introduction of a semester system and some piloted the new system in one or more courses. Unexpected problems arose, the most significant being a much increased student failure rate in first year, a curtailment of extra-curricular activities and a great deal of student protest! Some departments, and even some institutions, reversed the decision to introduce the changes quickly.

By 2003, about half the institutions have introduced some form of semesterisation and modularisation. New programmes have to be modular and semesterised. The modules have to have ECTS credits and clearly defined learning outcomes. Previously, there had been no obligation to define course content in detail. Until recently, most universities provided only brief course outlines, as university staff had a high degree of autonomy in relation to the course content. Under recent QA procedures learning outcomes must be defined, the overall student workload estimated and credits attributed. Various initiatives have been adopted, on account of high student drop-out and failure rates. Most colleges now organise induction courses for first year students. These may include study skills and an introduction to useful aspects of IT. Department of Education and Science concern over failure rates has led institutions to attempt to develop flexible student-friendly approaches to help students to adapt to college life.

One aspect of course accreditation is, as mentioned, the recognition of a course for professional purposes. The Teachers' Registration Council of the DES defines the regulations governing secondary teaching. In order to register as a secondary teacher, an applicant is required to have a degree, in which at least one subject is an approved subject at secondary school, and to have obtained the one-year postgraduate diploma, the HDEd offered by university education departments. Once appointed to a school, teachers are not restricted to teaching only the subject(s) taken in the degree. Teacher associations and other bodies are not happy with this. Language specialists especially believe it to be detrimental to their subject.

The Teachers Registration Council examines all applications for approval of programmes for secondary teaching. Public and private institutions may submit courses for approval. In recent years, the Council has approved individual subjects from a variety of IT and private college programmes. Approval has been sought mainly for business courses or business subjects on combined programmes and also for the language component (mainly French or German) of two subject degree programmes, such as International Marketing and a Language or Computer Studies with a Language. In the case of the approved subject, the course content, the learning outcomes and the vocational bias of the courses tend to be quite different to the university curriculum. Secondary teachers may increasingly have quite different backgrounds in language, literary studies and linguistics (little literature, for example), depending on whether they attended a university or another institution.

## 1.6 Quality Assessment/Evaluation (Assurance Procedures and Practice)

Quality and evaluation procedures and practices have been agreed for the HE area in a number of European countries and in the United States for many years. In Ireland, there is still no single body or piece of legislation, which governs this area. The Universities Act of 1997 required that quality assurance measures be put in place in the universities. As they are autonomous, they have sole responsibility for the development of their own QA procedures. Section 23 of the Act requires each university to review the quality of all faculties and departments over a ten-year period. In anticipation of this development, the Conference of the Heads of Irish Universities (CHIU) published a proposal "A Process of Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement", which was quickly adopted by the universities as a pilot project. This has insured a similar process being adopted across the university system. Departments participated on a voluntary basis in the pilot project. Language departments did not participate (with one exception), so in general, language departments are coming late to the process and have less experience of it.

The universities began to formalise their QA practice, to set up Q.A. units (with various titles) and to appoint staff to these units during 1998/99. From late 2001, senior posts were created, and in 2003, directors have been appointed to most university QA units. University College Dublin, published a range of guidelines and manuals of practice and procedures to ensure even practice across departments and a well-informed staff. It decided to adopt the title 'Quality Assurance and Improvement', for the unit, to indicate a commitment to achieving more than is required in legislation. As recommended in the various Acts and White Papers, staff development initiatives and training courses are being put in place in tandem with these developments. These activities include seminars on models of good practice from abroad, and have for the most part, been funded by the government under the National Development Plan. So far, none of the models offered, or case studies undertaken, has been in the area of languages. Technical areas have been the main focus. For this reason, there has not yet been much debate on QA among linguists. Some school reviews have been undertaken in DIT and in ITs. The school review looks at a suite of courses within a school with the main focus on relevance to the marketplace, the need for updating of courses, creation of new courses and dropping of those which no longer attract students. Language departments have not been among the first to volunteer for pilot reviews, so QA issues, specific to the language area, have not been part of the national debate.

The approach adopted by the Irish universities is based on peer review (using staff from the same discipline in other institutions in Ireland and abroad). Reviews undertaken to date have been voluntary pilot reviews, so, unlike the UK, no audits or evaluation reports have been made available to the public. The external examiner system is well established in all institutions and will undoubtedly also be maintained as a peer control system. The Freedom of Information Act was introduced in 2000 in Ireland, and this could permit publication of reviews and findings. No league tables are published officially or unofficially, at present. At the end of 2002, however, the Sunday Times published the first such study of Irish HE institutions. The views of Student Unions on various aspects of academic life in Irish colleges were included. At least one Irish newspaper reported the findings.

Different bodies and institutions in Ireland have developed a variety of approaches to Q.A. There are some attempts to unify these. CHIU, which represents all universities and promotes the development of university education and research by formulating and pursuing collective policies and programmes, established a new section in August 2002 - *The Irish Universities Quality Board*. The objective is to encourage the continuing development of a common approach in the university sector to all issues of Q.A. CHIU wishes the work of the various faculties and any reviews and assessments of departments to be available to the public. It wants students to assess staff and courses. It is currently endeavouring to assist the universities to reach agreement on a variety of issues relating to the Bologna Declaration, via a series of workshops, conferences and publications.

### **1.6.1 Bodies Responsible**

The other major sector providing HE, must seek accreditation for programmes from The Higher Education and Training Authority (HETAC). This body took over the role of the National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA) in April 2001, when the latter body was dissolved. Also under the 1999 Qualifications Act, the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) was created and opened in 2001, taking over the functions of the National Council for Vocational Awards (i.e. responsible in the area of FE). The remit of HETAC is broad, covering accreditation of courses, not just at the ITs, private colleges and specialist institutions, but also those offered by training bodies and institutions and the Garda (police) College and Army Training School.

HETAC, FETAC and the DIT come under the aegis of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), which was set up in June 2001. It was established to develop a framework of qualifications (vocational and academic), based on defined standards of knowledge, skills or competence to be acquired by learners. It has the role of promoting and facilitating access, transfer and progression via the national framework. The universities will not come under this body. This means that there is a certain lack of cohesion and coherence in the concept of a national framework and that transfer to institutions, not within the NQAI remit, may not be facilitated. The NQAI had announced it would have a national framework of qualifications in place by the end of 2002, but this work is still ongoing.

### **1.6.2 Teaching versus Research**

University lecturers are appointed on the basis of their qualifications and research record. Industrial or business experience and research record may be valued more than teaching experience. Applicants for senior lectureships in science, engineering and technology especially, are expected to prove their ability and commitment to attracting research funding. Lecturers, and some professors who have held their positions for many years, may not carry out research, but the significance of a strong research profile is clear in new appointments to the top posts at universities, especially the President's post. Recent press releases from President's offices focus on the new appointee's success in attracting large-scale funding, not on their views on education. Even in the IT sector of education, where research has not been a requirement for appointment, there is a new trend. Though not a stated requirement, the research activity of the applicant is a major focus at interviews for all posts, even in the humanities. The teaching load (16 hours per week) is heavier at ITs than in universities. The trade union, which represents the majority of IT lecturers, has therefore refused to accept research activity as a requirement of a lecturer's position.

The government created a new body in 2002, Science Foundation Ireland, in an attempt to foster high-level links between companies and academic institutions. The body is to receive the largest state funding ever given for scientific research. Based on an American model and with a director from the US, it will aim also to gain support from multi-national industrial partners. The fairly exclusive focus on research, development and industrialisation linked to the US and multinationals, has undoubtedly weakened the motivation of young people to learn a foreign language. English is perceived as the language linked to advancement and participation in global development.

To redress the imbalance somewhat and to encourage the development of good teaching practice, all universities and the DIT, have now introduced Teaching Excellence Awards – a high profile scheme, with the press invited to the presentation of awards. The award title varies from institution to institution. The President of University College, Galway, admitted that it is easy to identify excellence in research, but difficult in teaching. Nonetheless, the universities are now very committed to promoting best practice in teaching. The excellence award has not yet been given to a language specialist. Some universities and DIT have introduced a 'partner' award – a student excellence award. Students in language studies have been among the first recipients.

The most significant development has been the introduction of Learning and Teaching Units in all universities and most other institutions (see above). These are well established in British universities, and in Ireland focus strongly on providing help to lecturers starting out in their careers.

### **1.6.3 Categories Guiding Assessment of Teaching**

Traditionally, there has been no assessment of a lecturer's teaching performance at university or in ITs. In recent years inspection or assessment of secondary school teachers' performance by DES inspectors has also become rare. In HE, newly introduced QA procedures generally require student evaluation (by questionnaire) and most, but not all, lecturers carry out the procedure. Each lecturer is responsible for collecting the questionnaires and collating the student comments. A summary report is then given to the course coordinator. The student questionnaires are read only by the lecturer concerned, and the summary only by the course leader. This information is not generally available to other staff. In some systems, the Head of Department receives it and may discuss the lecturer's performance, suggesting, if necessary, some retraining or course attendance.

The categories provided for student comment in most institutions are the organisation and content of the course, the quality of available resources, the lecturer's presentation and the standard of delivery and the quality of tutorials and practical work. In some institutions, students comment on the lecturers' punctuality, the effectiveness of the teaching methods chosen, and of the visuals used (such as handouts).

### **1.6.4 Benchmark Statements**

The NQAI gave a commitment to put a framework of qualifications in place by the end of 2002. It has undertaken extensive consultation with all the stakeholders in education over a period of two years and has organised national information and consultation seminars. It has canvassed the views of business, industry and the professional bodies. It is responsible for the development of subject benchmarking statements. As the framework has not been completed, the benchmark statements are still outstanding.

Discipline reviews carried out in the past by the NCEA effectively provided benchmarks for courses in a specific area, such as social studies. The successor body, HETAC intends to continue this process. Only one such review has however taken place in the last few years. The last review of modern languages (and resulting report) was in the late eighties. The recommendations issued by the working party for the extra-university sector are therefore very out-of-date. Discipline reviews in other areas have been considered more urgent and a review of languages may not be undertaken for a few years, unless campaigned for.

### **1.6.5 Ranking of Departments or Programmes**

As mentioned above, there is neither official nor unofficial ranking of departments in Ireland. There is no external assessment of departments or programmes, other than at the course validation event. These are considered internal matters and no information is in the public domain. The public may be able to access information under the recently introduced Freedom of Information Act. A British newspaper, as mentioned above, did publish information obtained under the Act. At the time of writing, the Information Commissioner has announced that the Commission will release school inspection reports (whole school review, as opposed to teacher performance). The teacher unions oppose publication of any reports and the Minister for Education has announced that the FOI Act does not necessarily permit it.

## **1.7 Funding of Higher Education Institutions and Funding Criteria**

The University of Dublin (Trinity College), the four colleges of the National University of Ireland and the two new universities (Limerick and Dublin City University) are funded through the Higher Education Authority, as mentioned above. The 13 Institutes of Technology and the DIT are funded directly by the Department of Education and Science. The latter institutions are soon to be incorporated into the remit of the HEA. At present, different funding criteria apply to the different institutions. Research activity is essential to continued HEA support for the universities. Lecturers at ITs have a heavier teaching load (16 hours per week compared to 6 or 8 hours in universities). Research activity is not a requirement for an IT post. The situation is changing, however. The institutes are now enrolling students at MA and PhD level and therefore seek staff, who are active researchers. For the ITs, and even for the private business colleges, the ability to attract funding (research or otherwise) is an important criterion for appointment.

Government funding is no longer sufficient and universities have become increasingly dependant on attracting financial support from industry. This may fund a professorship, which then carries the name of the company which funded the post, a new building, often named after the funding person, or the funding may be granted to encourage research in a specialist area – normally relevant to the business or industry. University presidents may be elected or appointed. A central criterion is now the ability to attract research or other funding. The role requires the president to spend a large part of their time on funding missions, especially in the USA. All universities and some other colleges have created very active alumni associations, with branches around the world. Graduates are encouraged to network and to attend fund-raising events, which are held around the world.

The Institutes of Technology are directly funded by the DES and rarely raise funds in the way the universities do. Local industry and business often support and fund small- scale research at the ITs, in recognition of their regional and developmental role. They frequently sponsor student prizes and awards also.

The government promotes and funds scientific research on a much larger scale, since the creation of The Irish Science Research Council. The creation of an equivalent Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences in 1999, was a major development. For the first time major grants allow staff in the humanities to take sabbatical leave to complete research, by funding a replacement staff member.

Universities were mostly not able to fund more than three or six month leave for staff in humanities. In science and technology, sabbatical leave was longer, as it could be funded from sources such as research grants. The Councils, under the HEA, were created to oversee the awards. A major aim is to encourage collaborative work and involvement in international research. Projects submitted for support are subject to peer assessment, by a panel composed of local and international subject specialists. Panels have been created for each discipline. This has worked to the advantage of language and literature specialists. Previously, they had great difficulty in receiving equal consideration for any large-scale grants.

## 1.8 Admission of students

Students are admitted to HE courses solely on the basis of a points system, based on the results obtained in the school Leaving Certificate Examination (LC). Institutions are no longer permitted to use interviews as part of a selection process. Pupils take six to eight subjects at this examination on average. The points required for a course vary from institution to institution. Specific subject requirements are in force for certain courses, such as medicine or languages, where a minimum points level obtains. The Central Applications System (CAO) has been in operation for some years. This has simplified the application procedure for students. The CAO deals with all applications for degree courses in universities and ITs. Degree courses in private colleges, which are accredited by HETAC, are included, as are the certificate and diploma courses at the ITs. Some private colleges recruit directly to degree courses, which are accredited by British universities or professional bodies. These are frequently in areas such as law or business studies. Courses with similar titles may require different points for entry to different universities and colleges.

Mature students (over 23 years) are not required to hold the Leaving Certificate Examination and may be offered places in certain disciplines, on the basis of experience and/or alternative qualifications. With student numbers falling rapidly, and the school-leaving cohort likely to drop by another 35% by 2012, the government is keen to promote the life-long learning agenda and increase the percentage of mature students. Most institutions too, have more flexible approaches to non-standard students. Formal arrangements have been agreed between HE institutions and FETAC to reserve a certain number of places for students who have 'topped up' their points by taking further education courses. The ITs first accepted these students, now universities are asked to consider vocational qualification as making up the deficit in points. Most HE institutions have recently developed one-year Foundation or Access Certificates, designed to enable adults wishing to take up HE studies, to take a one year preparatory course, which includes study and communication skills. Most institutions have, at present, below a 10% intake of mature students. The Government objective is that this should reach 20% by 2005.

The government has created a task force to study how best to address the falling numbers taking science or engineering subjects at second and third level. Promotional measures are being developed to encourage pupils to study science subjects at school. Universities and colleges now often offer an introduction to science and engineering on the foundation courses for mature students. Languages, however are not usually available.

A special requirement of the universities of the National University of Ireland, is that students must have passed at least one foreign language (i.e. not English or Irish) in the L.C. examination, in order to matriculate. This requirement is, however, being debated at present by the NUI universities. One has already abolished it for entry to engineering courses. Research carried out by Maynooth University, showed that local secondary schools, especially boy's schools, tend to encourage greater uptake of science subjects at the expense of languages, on the basis that higher points can be obtained in these subjects. It has therefore abolished the matriculation requirement for a foreign language. Linguists and educators see this development as a major threat to the role and position of foreign languages in secondary education. They argue that fewer pupils would take a foreign language in upper secondary school, if it ceased to be obligatory for university matriculation. Issues relating to the value of a broad education at secondary level would have to be addressed.

Admission to language studies at university or ITs is normally based on the points and level achieved at the L.C. examination, with a particular minimum number of points required in the language concerned. However, in order to encourage a greater uptake of languages, not frequently taught in secondary school, this requirement does not apply to Italian, Russian, Japanese, and sometimes not to Spanish. These may be studied *ab initio*. The number of pupils learning Spanish in secondary school is increasing steadily, while German numbers are decreasing even more rapidly. However French still dominates the school programme. Universities are now making less provision for beginners and there are less initiatives to boost intake numbers.

## **1.9 Student fees and Student Support**

Student fees were abolished in 1996 for students who entered HE directly from school. Some means-tested funding is available to certain students, but the majority do not qualify for this support. Grants are modest, and the schemes are administered by local authorities. There is a residency criterion based on the catchment area of the family home. All grants are means tested (based on parental income). 39% of Irish students in further or higher education are in receipt of a grant. Students in receipt of a grant generally also need other income to cover their living expenses. New grant schemes such as 'Back to Education' are being introduced for those who have been working for some years. These grants are not portable and do not cover study abroad or attendance at language courses. Few adults have the necessary foundation to gain direct entry to language courses.

In 1999, registration, rather than tuition fees were introduced, although fees had been abolished only a few years earlier, in 1996. In 2002, the government proposed a substantial rise in this fee. The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) claimed this to be effectively a re-introduction of fees and believes that it will reduce even further the participation of students from lower social-economic backgrounds, a group very underrepresented in Irish education. The Minister of Education has responded with the decision to commission a review of the current system. The universities, meanwhile, published a schedule of fees for the coming academic year. In March 2003, the Minister of Education suggested that fees will have to be reintroduced, but proposes that a loan system based on the Australian model might be adopted as a possible alternate system.

Tuition fees must be paid where students pursue a second undergraduate course (except where there is direct progression from a certificate to a diploma to a degree course, the usual ladder system at ITs. Fees have to be paid in repeat years of study, and where a student returns to college to study for a higher degree (e.g. MSc or PhD) after a break. Similarly, employees attending part-time courses, or taking an evening degree programme have always to pay full fees. Non EU students pay full fees and these are many times higher than the fees for Irish students. Students registered on degree programmes in a range of private institutions, where the degree award is made by HETAC, benefit from the free-fee scheme also.

## **1.10 Departments / Units Responsible for Language Programmes**

Most Irish universities and one IT now have language centres. The role and status of the language centre varies from institution to institution. Frequently, the traditional modern language departments maintain full control of the language instruction for students on their literary based degree courses, even when the tuition is delivered in the language centre. Language centres are responsible for language modules and options, where these are not an integrated part of a programme. Some co-ordinate all institution wide language programmes. They usually organise the EFL courses and short course provision in modern languages, including evening general language courses for adults. They may share responsibility with language departments, for the fully integrated (LSP) language modules on new cross-curricular or interdisciplinary courses, such as Law and a Language. However, some specialist departments, business or law, for example, may decide to recruit their own linguists and thus maintain control of the modules of legal French or business German, for example.

Among the new degree programmes recently developed are a number of combined or joint programmes, such as Law and a Language or Information Technology and a Language. These programmes are always jointly administered. The language departments maintain full control over the language modules.

In the IT sector, language sections (only one now has a department) are responsible for all the language activity of an IT. Where there is a language department, it is usually part of a School of Business Studies, which is therefore in charge of all language provision. A new development is the increasing need to provide English as a foreign language (EFL) on account of the number of international students coming to the ITs. These students are a major source of income for an IT. The majority of international, as opposed to EU students, are Chinese. Whereas the demand for continental languages is declining rapidly in all areas, especially in the IT sector, there is great growth in EFL). At ITs and universities, the main demand is for English for academic purposes (EAP), to prepare the students for successful study of a specialist subject. EFL is provided in universities at the language centres. At ITs, existing language staff are taking TEFL courses, in order to 'convert' to teaching English.

The programmes, which have been developed recently to meet the needs of the international students are one-year Foundation Certificates and four to six week pre-sessional courses in academic English. EAP courses are usually offered throughout the academic year to accompany the main study area.

## **2.0 Description and Analysis of quality measures in the design and definition of courses and programmes in the area of languages**

### **2.1 Procedures for defining learning outcomes in language programmes**

As each institution may adopt individual approaches to this general statements are not possible at a time when Most universities are still developing their quality assurance practice and procedures. Approaches vary and whilst learning outcomes would certainly be listed in a course document for a new programme, they probably have not been defined for existing programmes, for example. University programmes in the humanities were not reviewed regularly in the past.

HETAC and the DIT (in a Handbook) have procedures, which require a course or programme to be submitted for validation in a specific format. General aims and objectives have to be supplied for the course, based on a statement of a rationale for the new course. A set of learning outcomes has to be defined for each module. The aims and learning outcomes are normally linked to a market analysis, which indicates a need for such a course. This might be a need experienced by local industry or business, the tourist trade, or a need for further training experienced by a specific professional group. Supporting documentation from industry is required. This could be letters from one or more companies, indicating their support for the course, on the basis that it is designed to meet contemporary industrial needs, The equivalent for courses in the humanities, might be letters of support from an arts council or, for a course in psychology, for example, support from a professional body, such as the Psychology Society of Ireland. The requirements are the same for courses in languages.

The approach is very similar for new courses and for course reviews. Departments / institutions are required to review their courses after a full cycle of delivery. Degree courses have therefore to be reviewed every four or five years (DIT and HETAC). The universities have only run pilot schemes so far. In the other institutions, a validation panel visits the institution on the same basis, as for a new course. Linguists are only appointed to the validation panel where the programme has a language in the title (sometimes not). Assessors include senior academics from other institutions and normally, at least one from abroad. However, in the case of combined or joint courses, such as International Marketing and a language, a linguist from another IT acts as assessor as the main focus is rarely the language/s. In the past the language was not as thoroughly assessed. It was often considered that learning outcomes are not possible in languages. The Council of Europe Scales and Levels is a valuable development and ensures respect for the aims of language teaching. Assessors interact with language lecturers during the validation visit, but frequently ask only general questions. Usually they enter into dialogue on the usefulness or role of a foreign language in a business, tourism or science programme and rarely review the learning outcomes or assessment procedures or subject content

In the past, only general aims or objectives were defined for language degree programmes. Increasingly accreditation bodies and course assessors require defined learning outcomes for each subject and each module or year of the programme.

### **2.2 Quality and Language Studies**

In the QA systems universities are putting in place, there is at least initially, no role for discipline reviews. University reviews are subject-based. It is therefore unlikely that a national, or cross-institutional, approach to modern language course provision and design will be developed in the immediate future. The discipline review can be an opportunity to develop cooperative approaches and also is a form of benchmarking.

All institutions, other than the universities, are accredited by HETAC (except DIT) and discipline reviews are a component of the system. However, the last discipline review undertaken in languages was in the mid-eighties, despite external examiners pointing out the need for a new review. There has been no national debate on languages to correspond to the debates on the position and role of science and engineering in society and in the school curriculum, and no government task forces, as have been created for the sciences. The Royal Irish Academy Committee on Modern Languages provides a forum for university language departments. Otherwise, lecturers meet in subject specific associations. These associations usually represent the profession in GB and Ireland. This means that all departments are well informed of QA developments in language studies in Britain. The NQAI has a role in setting benchmarks, and when the initial framework of qualifications is in place, it may initiate subject specific reflection and actions. It is very unlikely that language studies will be one of the first areas to be considered. Priority areas are likely to be engineering and the sciences. In any case, the universities do not come within its remit, and with numbers in the IT sector decreasing, they are the major providers.

The public debates on national skills needs and the role of engineering and science, along with various government and university task forces has initiated considerable consultation with stakeholders, much debate on overall objectives of programmes, the need for enhancing college programmes and increasing their relevance to business and industry. There has been considerable support for improved cooperation and more interfacing between all levels in education (primary, secondary and higher). The need for similar action is at least as great in languages. Many point to the need for a debate on balance in education, through a broad curriculum (a viewpoint supported by the HEA initiatives, mentioned elsewhere, and by the TCD Broad Curriculum project), and the role languages could play. A further step called for by various associations and bodies, is the development of a national language policy, to include the first, second and foreign languages, which would examine the contribution they can make at each level of education.

### **2.3 Learning Outcomes in relation to Issues of Employment**

When approval is sought for a new course or when an existing course is reviewed, a panel of assessors is established. At least one assessor is appointed to represent the views of business and industry. This assessor considers the relevance of the overall course objectives and rationale, and the specific learning outcomes defined for each module. In the past, language curricula were not defined in detail. It is probable that the newly established QA units in universities will require language departments to provide modules in the same format as for technical and scientific subjects. Traditional literary/philological degree courses may perhaps define outcomes in relation to teaching, in order to provide statements of outcomes related to employment

Under HETAC, on the other hand, linguists in ITs and private colleges have always been obliged to carry out market surveys and to provide a rationale for each new course or part of a course in the same way as all other subject specialists. The requirement is to show how it can meet the needs of employers and to provide learning outcomes based on the needs, which have been identified.

### **2.4 Learning Outcomes and Specific Professional Profiles**

The learning outcomes provided previously for each subject were frequently very general. However the requirement to have at least one representative of business or industry on the panel of assessors for each course insures that they are more specific and closely to the course rationale and defined market needs. The new universities offer mainly applied programmes in language studies, as does DIT and the ITs. The language departments therefore accept the need to adopt this approach to course development. They also offer other languages, not offered previously in Irish Universities (Japanese for example). University language departments on the other hand, in common with other humanities disciplines, argue that universities offer a broad education, not training. However, in course documentation and publicity material they do indicate the wide range of careers possible and often provide information on the exact number of their graduates obtaining employment in the different professions.

All university departments, including languages, and most sections in its and private colleges now organise open days for school pupils on a regular basis. These events are meant to give a taste of university life but also require reflection on a range of issues important to school leavers. Lecturers have to be able to show professional relevance and, where possible, to indicate specific career opportunities. In preparation for these events, each department has to collect information on the first destination of their graduates and the range of careers taken up. Course providers are influenced by the motivation to take their courses, especially at a time of decreasing student numbers. When existing programmes are due for review under the Q.A. Systems being put in place, the issue of professional relevance will undoubtedly play a role in the review process

## **2.5 Learning Outcomes and Personal Development and Citizenship**

The inclusion of elements, which contribute to personal development is well established on courses organised in adult education departments, and in access or foundation courses for mature students, but is relatively new on other courses. Communication skills have been included on IT courses in the past (with vocational or professional goals) with varying success. This was frequently included in the first year of, for example, engineering programmes. Students failed to see the relevance. Final year students have very heavy programmes, so it could not be included here. These modules are now often expanded to include other aspects of personal development. Citizenship, on the other hand, has not as yet been included. It is generally considered that this area (and personal development also) has been successfully included in the new post-primary school curriculum. Whilst language lecturers usually believe the FL contributes in these areas, explicit statements have not been included in course programmes the past. In public debate, at conferences etc, the case for languages has been made almost exclusively on the grounds of relevance to business and industry. Increasingly linguists are arguing for a broader role for languages. However, attainment is never as high as is the case with English taught in continental countries and non- linguists are therefore sceptical.

## **2.6 Learning Outcomes and Defined Levels of Proficiency, such as the Common European Framework**

There have been a number of pilot projects aimed at adapting the Framework to the Irish context. One intended for use in the secondary schools, received the award of the European Label. The language teacher associations have all held information sessions and are promoting it as a way to ensure common approaches. The senior cycle curriculum is being adapted and there is open consultation at present. It is probable that there will be an attempt to incorporate at least some aspects into the new curriculum.

As university departments of French or Spanish, for example, organise studies mainly around literature and philology, there has been little debate on there on defined levels of language proficiency. Language centres have no real control of the degree programmes or modules, but are usually considered as service providers. A more unified approach to the delivery of the language element on courses would be required to promote such an approach in a comprehensive overall approach.

A number of IT language sections are endeavouring to adopt defined levels, such as the Council of Europe Framework, for new programmes, in order to ensure the levels of attainment are defined in a way easily understandable in other countries and therefore to strengthen their argument of "usefulness" of language studies, in relation to mobility and recognition of attainment abroad.

## **2.7 Admission Requirements to Programmes**

In Ireland, there are general admission requirements for higher education courses, as mentioned in 1.8. Specific requirements for entry to language or combined study programmes frequently set a basic minimum grade of to be attained in the relevant language at L.C. The exact points required vary from course to course, and from college to college, and usually, from year to year.

Higher education institutions usually offer Italian, Japanese, Dutch and sometimes, Spanish *ab initio*, as mentioned before. In this case, general attainment in languages is usually the basis for selection. Lesser-taught languages are not usually offered at first year level, but more often as part of post-graduate courses.

## **2.8 New Course Content Relating to Newly Defined Learning Outcomes**

Most language departments have, in the last few years, provided students with some optional short courses in vocational language (mainly business related) in order to satisfy the demand for professional relevance.

## **2.9 New Forms of Assessment based on Newly Defined Learning Outcomes**

At present, there is little change in this area in universities. However, the adoption of modularisation will ensure that all aspects of programmes will be reviewed and adapted. Projects and group-work have been introduced to encourage more independent and reflective learning. Various forms of journals are incorporated, based on the stay abroad.

## **3. Description of Quality Measures Relating to the Process of Teaching and Learning**

Ireland's National Technology Centre normally supports technology-driven projects. In 2000 it funded a project designed to increase familiarity and use of IT in language teaching and learning, through training teachers. This was organised in cooperation with the Linguistics Institute of Ireland (ITE) and with the involvement of language teacher associations. This project - Oilte was extended in autumn 2002 to include lecturers in higher as well as further education. It was delivered in teacher centres and in universities around Ireland and enjoyed enormous success, indicating language teachers' desire to learn new skills and keep abreast of new technology developments for language instruction.

There is therefore, a range of opportunities for language lecturers to upgrade skills in IT and CALL areas, but little opportunity, other than via presentations at conferences to reflect on and debate with peers new course content, new assessment and other quality enhancement approaches and issues.

HETAC and DIT require all programmes submitted for validation to contain some market analysis and some interaction with industry, which indicates the need for a new course. If a language is a major course component (i.e. mentioned in the title, such as Computer Studies and German or Business Studies and French) the needs analysis must include the language. Otherwise, the text may contain only a few general statements on the usefulness of a foreign language. Whilst no Q.A. system has been in place in universities in the past, science and technology departments usually attempted to prove, or indicate relevance of courses. Closer links were forged with industry and universities are now happy to take on industrial research projects from private companies.

All universities and the DIT (the largest H.E. institution in the state) have Teaching and Learning Units. Attendance at courses is encouraged and sometimes obligatory for newly appointed staff. Courses offered range from new assessment methods, or problem-based learning, for example, to various computer skills courses and stress management. Where a larger staff is in place, these units attempt to tailor courses to a department's needs and to encourage departments to apply for funding to bring in specialists to teach courses.

Student evaluation by questionnaires is a recent measure increasingly introduced at department level. The results of such evaluation should ensure more H.E. staff enrol in courses on teaching methods or innovative assessment techniques.

Linguists often consider the general methodology not very relevant to language teaching. The organisation of conferences and seminars and regular attendance at these, along with interaction with second-level teachers at their conferences and workshops are normally the way language teachers and lecturers keep abreast of change and development.

### **3.1.a Pilot Language Programmes**

The Minister for Education introduced a pilot programme to introduce foreign languages (French, German, Italian and Spanish) into primary schools in 1999. Prior to that, parents sometimes funded the provision of a foreign language outside school hours. The pilot scheme has grown and gained strong support, although a number of areas need to be addressed. Languages were, for example, introduced in primary schools without regard for the need for continuity (the chosen language may not be available at local secondary schools). A good support system for the teachers has been developed, in cooperation with the educational sections of the relevant embassies. Contemporary materials and methodologies are regularly presented at in-service workshops often organised in conjunction with the relevant embassies or cultural services. Some language teachers (often native speakers, but without a formal qualification) may already provide voluntary courses at some primary schools. These teachers, along with primary teachers keen to introduce a foreign language, are being enabled to qualify through attendance at special diploma courses delivered in evenings at ITs around Ireland. Both pilot programmes are part funded from European social funding and from the National Development Plan. As with other I.T. courses accreditation, is through from HETAC accreditation.

In order to encourage diversity in the foreign languages taught in secondary schools, and as a contribution to the European Year of Languages, a new secondary school initiative, offering Japanese, Russian, Italian or Spanish has been launched at post primary level. There has been a large response to the scheme. Over 250 secondary schools have joined the project to date. The participant schools receive special funding for materials and resources and an allocation of supplementary teaching hours. The teachers have the backup of a national coordination office and specially developed materials are made available to teachers on an ongoing basis.

As part of this scheme, graduates of other languages and occasionally teachers of other subjects, are the opportunity to qualify as teachers of initiative languages. A two-year post-graduate diploma course has been developed and validated at DIT for Italian and Spanish in 2003 and is delivered as an accelerated evening course. As with the special primary courses, it will also be offered at various centres around the country, as demand arises.

There is strong support from linguists and language departments and a wish to co-operate in schemes, which encourage teaching and learning of lesser-taught languages. However, some believe that those who qualify to teach on such projects, may not be adequately qualified for all the levels at which they might later be expected to teach the language in a secondary school. In the late 80s there was an expansion in the teaching of German in schools and special evening diploma courses were provided at two universities. Some of the content of these courses was considered by various groups not to be equivalent to a full degree course and there was concern that teachers did not have adequate language proficiency.

### **3.1b New Methods Facilitating Quality Language Learning**

Among the new approaches adopted in HE there is strong support for autonomous or independent learning, allied to greater use of ICT as a delivery method., at least in principle. This is especially the case in government statements and publications, relating to the promotion of lifelong learning. An example of the introduction of such an approach to suit the learning needs of an adult group, is the one-year diploma course in translation at DIT. The evening course leads to an external qualification: the Diploma in Translation of the London Institute of Linguists. Linguists working as translators, but without a formal qualification, used the opportunity to obtain a recognised professional qualification.

In order to facilitate students, who had difficulties in attending the night course, an on-line version was developed, using WebCT. Students can access the course from home or work. They receive individual attention from the tutor on-line at designated times. They can consult with each other at other times, in specially designated chat-rooms and also communicate via e-mail in between sessions. Some issues remain to be resolved in relation to the technology, but mature students find that this approach suits their life-style and has actually increased the amount of student-student interaction on linguistic issues.

### **3.2 Learning Environments Facilitating Quality Language Learning**

Almost all language departments in colleges and universities have adopted at least some new approaches to language teaching, alongside the lecture. Projects and case studies are increasingly incorporated into assessment systems, along with other forms of continuous assessment. This replaces the once-off, end of year examination as the unique test of performance and it influences how the students learn also. Increasingly language departments try to provide some self-access facilities to enable students to practice skills, or listen to foreign radio and television broadcasts at times which suit their time-tables

The CLCS, at the University of Dublin has adopted a non-directive approach to the delivery of LSP modules to first year students, within the framework of the new 'broad education' initiative recently adopted. Students work with a group of peers on a series of foreign language projects. Each lasts for four weeks. They can form a new workgroup after each project. This approach encourages peer learning in a relaxed atmosphere, and the development of good teamwork and communication skills

### **3.3 Delivery of Programmes in a Foreign or Second Language**

No programmes are delivered entirely in a foreign language in HE. Usually all the literature content is delivered in the mother tongue at traditional university departments. Courses at the newer universities and ITs are applied, and have more language and culture modules, which are always taught through the foreign language. There have been very few experiments, at second level or in HE, in the teaching of a content subject through a foreign language, as takes place in other countries. There is one German secondary school and a recently established French one, where all subjects are taught through the foreign language. Irish medium schools, on the other hand, are actually increasing in popularity. New ones are established, as a result of strong parental demand. Many of the parents are not themselves native speakers, and Irish is not the language of the home. Nevertheless, no English is spoken in these gael scoileanna, but the pupils cope well, indicating the potential for a much higher attainment in foreign language learning also. The schools are quite academic, the staff is highly motivated and pupils' performance in state examinations tends to be above average.

On the western seaboard, in or near Irish speaking areas, the ITs deliver some programmes, mainly business studies, through Irish, the second language. Many of Galway university's programmes are offered through Irish. Most students applying for these courses are native speakers or have been educated through Irish.

In Dublin, A recently developed course Fionntar (accountancy) at DCU, is taught entirely through Irish, and continues to be a popular course for school leavers. This indicates once more the interest and potential for learning through a second or foreign language. The development of the course was resource intensive as the university had to appoint a specialist to develop the necessary terminology in Irish, in advance of setting up the course. Where there is a strong commitment and vision, it has been possible to gain administrative and management support new ventures, which at first do not seem in keeping with global developments.

#### **3.4.1 Quality and Student Mobility**

Irish institutions do not usually make study abroad an obligatory element of courses, as few students are in receipt of grants and therefore, at least in theory, may not be able to afford to live abroad. Some funding is available under the Erasmus programme, but rarely sufficient to cover a whole class group. HE education is still based on a year intake, with each group or class, following a course together, much as at secondary school, and graduating together. A period abroad is an integral part of some courses. In that case the whole class go abroad, with no courses being provided, while the group is abroad. This is the case at most ITs. However some universities and other institutions prefer to offer a few places abroad, on an optional and competitive basis. This may mean an extra year's study, if students do not return and pass the end of year examination. The difficulties linked to spending a period abroad mean that there is a large imbalance between the numbers of students wishing to come to Ireland on an exchange and those willing to go abroad.

Various institutions may monitor the quality and success of exchange programmes, but usually only where full class groups are participating. The quality will become of greater concern as university QA systems come into force in all areas of department work. A study period is built into many university and IT programmes, where a foreign language is a core component (i.e. usually 50% of the course). Where study abroad is an obligatory part of a language course, it is normally thoroughly monitored.

#### **3.4.2 Linguistic and Intercultural Preparation and Support**

Many students go abroad with little or no special preparation and are often expected, with rusty school French or German, for example, to follow university lectures in a foreign language. UL set up appropriate pre-departure training, not just in LSP, but also in some of the necessary note-taking and other skills. These modules were taught through the foreign language and were evaluated.

### **3.4.3 Recognition of Mobility and Certification of Study**

The Higher Education Authority is responsible for funding mobility under Erasmus and generally for promoting the scheme. HEA support has ensured a high level of recognition among educational institutions of study periods abroad, where these are an integral part of a course. In Ireland financial support is not available for free movers and, in general, students could not use credits gained while studying independently abroad. This is because most study programmes are tightly organised, as in secondary school, and based on one year's study, followed by a written examination (and perhaps an oral). No alternative results, even ECTS credits, would normally be considered.

When new forms of assessment (such as projects) are better established, individuals should be able to choose to study abroad and to carry out equivalent assignments, thus getting recognition and certification for the period abroad. In the academic year 2000-2002, for example, 1,707 Irish students participated in an Erasmus exchange. There were 3,231 incoming EU students, almost double the outgoing number. The imbalance between incoming and outgoing students, is at least partly explained by the fact that foreign students are receive full recognition for their study in Ireland.

### **3.5 Further Development of the Skills acquired**

Once students have passed the necessary examinations and registered the credits obtained while studying abroad, there is usually little follow up in terms of a thorough analysis of language attainment and any and lacunae still to be considered in the higher years of study. Some small-scale research has been carried out, but there has little follow through in defining content for succeeding years of study on the basis of the information gathered.

### **3.6 Organisational Structures facilitating Quality Delivery of Languages**

As mentioned in 5.0, the organisation of course committees, student support structures, course leaders for each year of a course and the shared responsibility for various aspects of a course ensure an efficient team approach and better delivery of languages. The introduction of student evaluation and of regular course reviews are at an early stage still and will have a positive impact on the quality of programmes in the coming years.

### **3.7 Languages of Communication in Language Departments**

On the whole, English is the language used on a daily basis in university departments. In the new universities and the ITs, all foreign languages are in the one school or section, so it is usual to use English, the language spoken by all staff.

### **3.8 New Methods in Language Teacher Education**

Language teacher education for secondary schools has changed little over the years. The training offered is in a one-year postgraduate course, the Higher Diploma in Education. The new quality assurance procedures are being applied initially to undergraduate courses, so teacher training has not yet been reviewed. A wide variety of subjects, such as the history and philosophy of education, are obligatory, and the specialist subject (languages, for example) receives, on average, two to three hours per week, in lectures and workshops. Mornings are spent teaching in schools. As students have to find their own school, the demands of the school and type of teaching vary considerably. Class observation is carried out by supervisors (usually practising teachers, not the special methods lecturer). The training is not highly integrated. In most universities, the special methods lecturers in languages are also part-time. Working full-time in a secondary school, they may not have much time for innovation or research. In the case of subjects such as Irish or mathematics, which are studied by large numbers of pupils, the special methods lecturer may be employed full-time. Students are encouraged to go abroad as teaching assistants, following on the HDEd course. In UCD, a one-year TEFL training course is available alongside the HDEd. This ensures that students, who do not get an assistantship, can still teach abroad for a year. Accommodating the students in this way, is relatively new, and intended to ensure all spend a year abroad, before taking up a teaching post.

### **3.9 New methods in the Training of Translators and Interpreters**

Employment prospects for linguists are limited in Ireland. The market for professional translators is also small. The IT industry is central to Ireland's recent industrial development and large numbers of translators and linguists are employed in the localisation of computer software products. However, the products are for all the countries of Europe and linguists work into their mother tongue only. Consequently, the large number of translators employed in companies such as Microsoft, are foreign, and have qualified in a country other than Ireland. Reflecting the limited market perhaps, there are now no courses at undergraduate level which have 'translation' in their title. However, the BA in Applied Languages at DCU offers training in various aspects of translation and some interpreting and is considered a professional qualification. No full training in interpreting is offered. Students have the opportunity to spend a year abroad at a college or department of translation. The course has evolved over the years, and students either specialise in translation or in intercultural studies. Japanese is offered, as well as the traditional French, German and Spanish. Other institutions, such as DIT offer evening courses leading to an examination for a professional qualification of the London Institute of Linguists. DIT is experimenting with a WebCt delivery of the course, thus making it available online around the country.

Otherwise, there is a range of translation courses at MA level. These could be considered conversion courses, as they accept a variety of graduates. DCU offers a Graduate Diploma/MA in Translation Studies, which provides advanced training in translation. This course accepts other subject specialists, as well as linguists. A second Graduate Diploma/MA in Conference Interpreting offers practical training to language graduates. At postgraduate level, the MA in UL also aims to offer professional skills in one-year. An innovation there is the MA in Technical Communication, training that is more usual in American universities. More recently, two other universities introduced MAs in translation for traditional language graduates. These focus on literary translation skills. Where the course outcome is defined as training in professional skills, the departments have received funding from skills initiative schemes (EU/government funds). A QA assessment has not been carried out on translation training to date. With the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers, among other foreigners, there is a need to review the range of languages taught. There are no Irish translators or interpreters available for court interpreting in many European and non-European languages. Especially at MA level, the languages taught are usually French, German and Spanish

### **3.10 Preparation for Lifelong Learning**

Schemes such as the 'Back to Education' allowance are available to small numbers of people, wishing to return to education. The government is extending the various schemes, in line with the commitment given in the white paper *Learning for Life*. Support for learning opportunities for adults on a continuing basis, is also a central theme in the *National Employment Action Plan*, also published in 2000. Each encourages the concept of a 'learning organisation' – learning and work continuing in parallel and other flexible work options being made available to workers, to facilitate a return to learning. Given the small size of the majority of Irish companies, paid educational leave may not always be an option. However, the Civil Service does provide employees with this facility, as does the army and the police force. The latter also offer some in-house language training, usually confined to the more widely taught foreign languages. Some exchange of personnel within Europe takes place on a regular basis, and the opportunity to a join UN mission abroad also motivates personnel to learn a language. The Civil Service Training Unit offers a range of in-house education, including an extensive programme of languages, offered at a variety of levels.

Business and industry may be slow to realise the government objective, but universities and the ITS are already espousing it. They aim to create the opportunity for further learning and personal development for all staff, on a permanent basis (as mentioned under course accreditation, departments, seeking validation for a new course, are obliged to provide information on staff development policies).

#### Upgrading qualifications in HE

The government introduced a national programme to upgrade staff qualifications in ITs in the early 90s. The scheme, entitled the *Training of Trainers Programme*, was designed to upgrade the skills of staff, in technical areas especially. This centralised approach has now been dropped and ITs can provide for their retraining or in-service needs through in-house delivery, or by funding outside courses. Staff in language sections, as well as other areas, have undertaken or at present involved in doctoral study, supported by their institution. Just as taught MA programmes are enjoying great success, so too the newly introduced professional doctorates are attracting students who feel that they have not the time for a purely research degree. Some Irish universities have introduced these degrees, but despite the relatively high fees, the most popular programmes are well established British DEd. degrees, now often delivered in Ireland. Staff and institutional concern to upgrade qualifications is undoubtedly related to the increased intake of postgraduate students and, especially in the ITs, to the campaign for university status.

While it was conceived as a technical skills programme, linguists working in ITs, who were keen to introduce new technology in their teaching, or at least to gain a better understanding of it, participated in modules on CALL included on the MA in Multimedia. The Training of Trainers was initiated solely for IT staff, but the universities later participated, offering technical expertise in the development of short courses in new technology. Over a period of five or six years, there has been a very considerable drop in the number of adults attending general and business language courses in the cultural institutes and other centres. Spanish is an exception - learner numbers are increasing. In-company provision has been reduced also, partly on account of reduced interest among employees.

### **3.11 Identification and Validation/Certification of Learning acquired outside a given Institution**

As mentioned under mobility, there is no recognition for study abroad, unless it is an integrated part of a course. Similarly, there is no recognition in the university sector at present for learning outside a course, except in the case of mature students seeking entry to HE courses. This will change when modularisation is introduced and the module, as opposed to the course is the unit. Within the HETAC system, certain recognition is available for courses and modules taken elsewhere, especially when required for transfer within colleges of the system, or when seeking entry to an advanced year of a course.

### **3.12 New Learning Culture in Language Programmes and Provision**

The various schemes or ideas for ways of encouraging greater learner autonomy and more independent work in HE are still at a developmental stage, as are some other initiatives. However the introduction of interactive multi-media and various web –based material, which allows the students to work in their own time, combined with the increasing use of projects and group work should help to make students more active learners and more responsible for their own learning.

#### **4. Description and Analysis of Quality Measures in the Training of Higher Education Teachers and Trainers Working in the area of Languages**

Traditionally, the distinction made between teachers and lecturers implied that, at first and second level, pupils had to be taught, i.e. the teacher had to master relevant pedagogy and methodology and ensure that learning took place. A lecturer, on the other hand, lectures, and it is up to students to ensure they understand and learn. Students ‘read for their degree’ in this system. Lecturers often inform students that not all topics in the syllabus will be covered and that they have to research some themselves. At present in Ireland there is no obligation to hold a teaching qualification when applying for a position in a HE institution. However, recently, institutions probably require some proof of an interest in teaching from all academics, applying for positions, as they are trying to combat high drop-out and failure rates. New QA measures being introduced afford students the opportunity to comment on the quality of lectures and to appeal results on the basis of teaching received.

Lecturers appointed to language positions in HE institutions, especially in ITs, often hold the HDEd, a required teaching qualification for teachers in secondary schools. There is no equivalent HE qualification. Many language lecturers will have worked or studied in the TL country and may hold a TEFL qualification. It is generally accepted that the training in methodology and applied linguistics on such courses may often be more extensive than on HDEd courses. On account of their background the linguist is often considered to be more competent in pedagogical skills than lecturers in other areas.

Traditional university language departments, are diversifying at postgraduate level and offering not just translation courses, but also taught MA programmes in DAF or FLE, aimed at teachers and lecturers. The programmes are fairly theoretical often offer some language improvement, applied linguistics and a study of language acquisition, for example. Lecturers at ITs and some secondary teachers often take these part-time courses, in order to advance their careers. Language centres may offer staff some opportunities for further development, but in general, this has not been a concern of departments in the past. The most popular course among both secondary teachers and lecturers in ITs is the MPhil in Applied Linguistics run by the CLCS of Trinity College. Participants have ample opportunity to reflect on their teaching and can base most assignments on their teaching.

The Registration Council examines all applications for approval of courses for teaching purposes. Public and private institutions may submit courses for approval. In recent years, the Council has also approved individual subjects from a variety of private college programmes. Approval has been granted, for example, for French or German components of two subject degree programmes, such as International Marketing and a Language or Computer Studies with a Language. In the case of the approved subject, the course content, the learning outcomes and the vocational bias of the courses make them very different to university programmes. This means that secondary teachers may have quite different backgrounds in language, literary studies and linguistics (little literature training, for example)

## **4.1 Entry Qualifications and Measures relating to updating Qualifications of Language Staff in Higher Education**

Most staff at universities are recruited on the basis of a PhD to departments which offer degree programmes. The lowest junior lecturer grade is intended as a level, which allows time for obtaining the PhD. Language Centres and departments employing language 'service' staff usually require a basic degree and a specialist M.A, for example in an area of LSP. Applicants are rarely holders of a PhD, but are likely to try and obtain one while in employment.

The qualifications required of staff at ITs are determined by the DES. The only formal stipulation is a 1<sup>st</sup> or upper second class undergraduate degree along with a minimum of 3 years' teaching experience. However, the institutes themselves usually stipulate that applicants must have an MA and usually look for residence and experience gained abroad. As mentioned under 1.10, a variety of centres, schools or departments control the language activities in ITs. There is no shared policy or standardised approach to recruitment. Great value is placed on relevant teaching experience, stays or study abroad, and sometimes, training in methodology. In the case of appointments made to a specific course (for example, French for engineers) the engineering department, may place less value on language teaching experience, and favour a PhD holder, although the qualification may be in literature. The applicant may not have taught language and certainly not LSP before. No training is offered at present in universities or ITs in relation to teaching skills. However, the ITs encourage attendance at courses or seminars abroad and are generous in financial support. As mentioned elsewhere, lecturers in ITs are active in teacher associations and in their own associations (e.g. Association of Lecturers in Applied French) and contribute to, and attend in-service-training, which is primarily aimed at secondary and further education teachers.

Teaching and learning units in universities and DIT do not normally organise language related activities. In general. Support for all staff undertaking courses, degree or shorter, is strong, and attendance at seminars and conferences encouraged and supported financially. The first seminar for language lecturers organised by a Learning and Teaching unit was in UCD. Other colleges may soon follow suit. An example of a short training course, is the recent seminar on problem-based learning. Each department was encouraged to attend separately, and to try and adapt the ideas presented to the requirements of the specialist subject and the specific needs of the students of that subject.

Most ITs have developed active programmes of support, to encourage all staff to undertake further study and achieve higher qualifications. Increasing numbers of language teacher as have undertaken various MA or MPhil programmes. The CLCS at Trinity College offers taught programmes in applied linguistics and pedagogy. Other taught MA programmes are very specific, such as DAF, or FLE, and thus incorporate some language improvement elements. Taught MA in Translation programmes are aimed at a broad range of students, including teachers, and not just at the professional group. Similarly, the MA in French at UL, which has mainly literary components, does offer teachers the opportunity to base their dissertation on their teaching activity. It also attracts lecturers from ITs. An increasing number of lecturers are undertaking PhD studies, often supported by their college. Other taught programmes in, for example, German departments may offer options. Students may choose specialisms in either language methodology or literature in this case.

A national scheme, the Training of Trainers Programme, designed to update skills of technical staff and staff qualifications in general, at ITs was introduced in 1992. Modular, taught part-time, four-year MA programmes were offered, mainly in technological areas, but also in education. The education programmes were designed to introduce staff to reflection on teaching and learning activities, change management and to improve quality of course delivery. In the multimedia area some modules were available relating to the introduction of CALL. A large number of IT language staff took relevant modules from these courses. Staff attended intensive one-week courses over a number of years, which were fully funded and run in universities and ITs, which offered suitable technical facilities. The accreditation came under the aegis of the NCEA.

Various short training courses are organised by university language departments and some ITs each year, in cooperation with the cultural services of the embassies. These usually focus on pedagogy, methodology and the use of technology. The language lecturer associations, such as the Applied French Association or the Lecturers in German organise, also frequently with the financial support of the embassies, similar seminars and workshops. Issues such as student mobility, oral language skills, the teaching of grammar, have frequently been addressed. Quality issues more closely linked to the new QA evaluation system have not been addressed. There is strong teacher support in Ireland for voluntary activities and a strong membership of professional bodies among linguists. These bodies and associations offer language staff a forum for reflection on the many issues touching on their work, including quality measures.

#### **4.2 Status, Career Prospects and Contracts of University Language Teachers**

Traditionally, the language instruction activity, as opposed to lecturing in literature, at most universities has been carried out by part-time staff. Fairly recently, (and somewhat later than in the IT sector) the universities introduced contracts for part-time staff, in line with EU Law. Since 2001, HE institutions have been reducing the number of contractual and part-time staff. This has particularly affected the language area, as a higher percentage of the activity is based on part-time staff. Various scales of pay apply to part-time staff at universities, but the system in the ITs is unified. Part-time language instructors receive the same per hour fee as a computer scientist, for example. The full-time lecturers in all institutions are all paid on the same salary scales. The teacher union, of which most IT lecturers are members, campaigned for many years and ensured that a high percentage of language staff were made permanent. However, it was not equally active on all campuses and with declining numbers in languages many language teachers and lecturers are likely to be unemployed in the next academic year.

#### **4.3 New qualifications required as a Result of New Quality Measures**

As indicated in Section 1, QA policies and measures have been introduced only very recently in Ireland (other than some pilot schemes in the 1990s) Recruitment to posts in HE does not yet fully reflect the new policies and procedures which have been developed.

#### **4.4 Programmes and Courses for Training University Teachers of Languages**

As already outlined, the units recently established (Learning and Teaching Centres) at universities and other colleges are intended to offer induction courses to all newly recruited staff in a range of short courses. These cover areas such as new methods of teaching and assessment, project and case study approaches and the use of learning journals, for example. Sometimes, subject specific courses are offered, though not language related. UCD, however, did organise a day of reflection on *Key Aspects of Teaching Languages*. The QA unit offers courses in relation to QA requirements, usually for specific groups, such as heads of departments, in order to assist them to carry out self- assessments and reviews, or for lecturers in the use of student evaluations. These are the only courses universities or colleges plan in staff training at present. It is likely that language departments will request specific teaching development courses from the Learning and Teaching units in the future.

#### **4.5 Staff Development - peer observation**

As mentioned in the lifelong learning and QA sections, staff development is now seen as central (1.5 and 3.10) to the improvement of quality and an important entitlement of all workers in the longer term. The government promotes lifelong learning mainly for the contribution it can make to the maintenance of a flexible and highly skilled workforce. Universities and colleges have received government funding to create Learning and Teaching Units. The rationale and the courses provided in these units are considered below.

At department level, more specific subject-related development is expected. The documentation presented to assessors by a school or department seeking validation of a new or existing course, or even for the review of an existing course, must include an analysis of the resources available to the course and existing and future plans for staff development. At present, this is encouraged in the form of conference and seminar attendance, running colloquia, attending courses etc.

The adoption of a system of peer observation would present many problems. It has to be noted, that there is very little observation of secondary teachers' classes by inspectors and probably none by headmasters. The DES now carries out 'whole school assessments', every four or five years. Lecturers in HE, expecting greater autonomy, would in general, not accept such a system. The value of peer observation in language teaching is evidenced by its central role in EFL training. It is an integral, though usually small, element in the training of teachers on the HDEd course in all universities.

#### **4.6 Human Resource Management**

In most institutions, the number of language lecturers on part-time, or short-term contracts, is higher than for most other disciplines. The personnel section of each institution is however, responsible for all staff. It draws up the contracts and ensures payment of the lecturers. Part-time staff are recruited directly and managed on a day-to-day basis by the department head.

#### **4.7 Measures to Promote Development of University Language Teachers**

The HEA, as mentioned above, funded a large number of language initiatives in the mid 90s, intended to encourage the development of new approaches to language teaching in the university sector. These were not intended to promote staff development, but a number of lecturers developing specialised language modules did participate in LSP training. The universities have recently put in place schemes to promote personal and professional staff development. Teaching and Learning Units aim primarily to develop and improve lecturing and teaching styles. Both of these measures are likely to have more impact on language lecturers' work in the future.

The universities have introduced a new awards scheme, linked to the various developments intended to support their QA schemes, Teaching Excellence Awards. These awards are intended to encourage innovative approaches to university teaching and to answer the criticism that universities value only research activity. To date, a linguist has not received the award. Sabbatical leave is available to linguists on the same basis as in other disciplines. Language departments have adopted few measures to develop their language staff, but in the more competitive present environment, undoubtedly will. Various new schemes offer resources to support the professional development of staff.

Bodies such as the Royal Irish Academy were initially involved only in the promotion of university teaching of literature. Now however, their Committee on Modern Languages also runs colloquia on the teaching of languages and cultural studies. They are responsible for some scholarship schemes, such as those of the European Science Foundation and a number of European exchange schemes and these are now open to language lecturers, as are the Government of Ireland scholarships, a new and well-endowed scheme. More development opportunities for linguists are available than in the past. ITE, which undertakes has some of the roles that CILT has in GB, now concentrates on the first and second level and FE. It rarely organises events of specific interest to HE.

## **4.8 Staff Mobility Programmes**

Sabbatical leave is an established system of research leave for staff at universities. The leave is usually for six months, though larger departments sometimes grant a year. It may only be offered every five years, or more, depending on the finances of a particular department. Staff can usually extend it to a year, by taking over each other's lectures. Lecturers in language departments are obliged to spend the sabbatical period abroad. This system has not yet been introduced in the extra-university sector, although the staff trade unions have campaigned for an extension of the scheme to the ITs. Staff at ITs sometimes take unpaid career breaks instead. Under Socrates, many staff participate in short lecturing exchanges at continental colleges. The exchange of posts for a year in history, English and Irish studies is well established between US and Irish universities. This exchange of posts is rarely possible in the language field

## **4.9 In-service Courses**

Refresher or in-service courses in foreign languages and methodology have always been available to secondary teachers in the past, whilst not being obligatory. The DES organised the courses, usually in conjunction with the cultural services of the embassies and the language teacher associations. These were organised in university language departments, at DIT or occasionally in Teacher Centres, but were taught mainly by experts from abroad. Foreign language assistants taught some of the language and methodology. This was usually a very successful co-operative venture. Language teacher associations benefited from the contacts and continue to hold their seminars and conferences at the universities. The DES still funds in-service courses, but now 'outsources' the delivery. Usually, the teacher associations have taken on the organisation and running of such courses, with strong support from the French, German and Spanish embassies or cultural services. Teacher Centres are a usual venue. In-service in FLs for primary teachers is organised by support staff of the national initiative and by the cultural institutes, sometimes in cooperation with a department of a training college. Specialists are frequently brought from abroad and this attracts teacher trainers and language lecturers from training colleges. Contacts and cooperation between the various levels are a valuable aspect of these events. No specific in-service courses are organised for university or training college staff, as departments usually only have one or two language lecturers, the rest are literature specialists.

#### **4.10 Tailored Continuing Education**

Certified continuing professional development courses (CPD), have recently been created by the Learning and Teaching units of some institutions. Some units, such as the one at DIT, have introduced one-year, part-time certificates, diplomas and an MA programme in learning and teaching. Whilst no lectured course may be specific to languages, case-studies and projects are all based on a lecturer's own classroom experience and discipline area. As well as the regular one-day courses on teaching issues, the units fund specific short courses on request from departments. Previously CPD courses were run only for groups from business and industry, or for community groups. Language departments are likely to take greater advantage of the opportunities to organise continuing education in-house for their lecturers. As mentioned above, many language teachers working at all levels, take a taught MA course in applied linguistics or the foreign language, to update their skills. This serves in-service training. UCD and UL have introduced new postgraduate courses for practicing teachers of Irish. The MA in sociolinguistics in UL and the diploma for Irish teachers at UCD are taught through Irish.

#### **5. Description and Analysis of Quality Measures relating to the Organisation and Management of the Teaching and Learning Process**

Universities and colleges have maintained a traditional structure. A professor, or Chairperson heads up each language department or school and has overall responsibility. However, as there is increasing diversity in a department's activities and in the number and range of courses offered, especially in the postgraduate area, universities and colleges create specialist units within the department, such as a Centre for Irish Studies in the department of English. This is well established in many disciplines, and allows the different activities to be managed in smaller units, usually by a senior lecturer, who is a specialist in the area. Examples are the creation of a Centre for Translation Studies in the School of Applied Languages at DCU, or the Centre for Germanic-Irish Studies in UL. The lecturer in charge often carries the title of director, even where the units are very small. This development has ensured better coordination and smoother running of individual courses and associated research activity.

New approaches adopted, which also ensure better support for students are the establishment of course committees and the appointment of a course director or course leader, and a coordinator for each year or cohort of students. A tutor is usually appointed to smaller sub-groups of students, at least in the first year. This delegation of responsibility to many individual lecturers ensures greater involvement and a team approach. It has improved the overall organisation and management of the programmes. Every student now has a specific lecturer in each subject studied to consult, if necessary.

Double marking of examination papers and projects has been introduced and ensures more even levels of correcting. In other areas too, the team approach is frequently adopted. Students have gained new rights. They can view their examination papers (an entitlement since 2001, due to the Freedom of Information Act) and a comprehensive appeals systems is now in place in all institutions for those who are unhappy with results.

Universities and other colleges in Ireland have not fixed titles for the various sections. There is still a degree of experimentation in relation to the use of department, school, centre or other titles. As the Teachers' Union refused to accept a faculty structure, the DES did not recognise it either, and DIT had to wait some years before the DES allowed the introduction of faculties. Usually, however, institutions are free to restructure as they wish.

#### **5.1 Programmes, Courses and Modules and the Responsibility for Transparency and Comparability**

There was a high degree of uniformity in university courses at National University of Ireland colleges in the past. The syllabuses and examination papers were usually shared, at least in Arts. This meant that a

syllabus was a series of very general statements and a list of prescribed texts. Now with greater autonomy, as in the IT sector, courses may have the same title, but different content. There is no national agreed content for any course, which makes comparability difficult, except perhaps in the case of courses, which have received professional recognition. Bodies, such as the Institute of Engineers in Ireland, grant recognition to engineering qualifications, only if the course content meets their specifications. All universities and colleges seek this professional recognition.

Under the QA procedures of HETAC, course schedules have to be supplied in the course proposal for each new or revised course. When approved, the course document must be available to students in the library. HETAC, the awarding body, enters the course schedules in a database. These are later used as the basis for generating examination broadsheets centrally. This system means that subjects cannot be changed, and courses are delivered, as designed. It also permits comparability of subjects and student performance.

### **5.1 Calculation of Student Workload**

Only those programmes or modules, which have been recently designed or reviewed, supply a student workload, and this is usually linked to the use of ECTS credits. Universities initially introduced ECTS credits on courses, which included exchange programmes under the Erasmus schemes. Where the system of ECTS credits is used, a balance of 1 hour of private study for every taught hour is expected. Initially the regional technical colleges were obliged to ensure that all certificate and diploma courses had a minimum of 25 hours class contact per week, as courses were funded from schemes designed for vocational education. As the number of taught hours is being reduced in most courses, the student input expected is increasing. The workload calculation suggested is often 2 hours private study to 1 taught hour.

### **5.3 Introduction of Information Management Systems**

A shared network system - HEAnet links educational institutions and research bodies for research purposes. This body is funded by the HEA, but operates autonomously. There is no common or shared system for managing and accessing information in these institutions. The universities have a high degree of autonomy and have adopted individual MIS systems. However, the Council of Directors of the 13 institutes of technology agreed to adopt a common MIS system and all staff will be able to interact fully with it, within a few years. The Dublin Institute of Technology (with about 21,000 students, on 6 campuses) has its own central MIS system. All staff will have full access within a few years.

The introduction of new MIS systems is very significant. More information is available faster on the number of registered students on each course, their performance and the failure rates. The main funding bodies consider course completion as one of the most significant indicators of quality. On the basis of the up-to-date statistics available from all institutions on student registration, and examination entry and results, the DES estimates the failure rate to be 40%-50% in first year, on certain HE courses and the national drop-out rate, especially in ITs, to be high. The DES has requested all institutions to address these issues. All the stakeholders in education have recently co-operated in organising seminars to analyse the cause of high failure and non-completion rates and to take measures to combat them.

### **5.2 Division of Tasks among Staff Members on Specific Programmes**

In most HE institutions, the heads of department (in universities this is usually the professor of the relevant subject) and heads of schools in ITs, are usually appointed until retirement. In very few instances, it may be a rotating position. Recently, in universities, there is a trend to separate the running of the department from its academic leadership. This enables a professor to follow research interests, for example. It entails creating a new position of head of department, which has happened in some university departments after a QA review.

Under new QA approaches a course coordinator is chosen from the course team. The coordinator takes responsibility for a programme. Each subject area has to be represented on the course committee by a

lecturer. There has to be a student representative for each year of the course and a year coordinator from among the lecturers. This is mandatory in the IT system. When new courses are created in the universities, a similar structure is generally adopted. Thus tasks are now shared more equally among staff. A time allowance is given for the new responsibilities.

### **5.5. The Deans of Faculty**

In the university sector, the Deans of Faculty are usually elected by their peers. The appointment can be for a period of five or ten years, or occasionally, until retirement age is reached. As QA systems are recent, the Dean is usually central to the negotiations with staff on acceptable practice.

### **5.6 Systems for External and Internal Evaluation of Courses or Programmes**

As described earlier, the universities are at various stages in developing their own internal evaluation systems, but under CHIU will probably ensure very similar approaches. The ITs and other colleges are under HETAC and thus are externally evaluated. The higher body – the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, has not completed the National Framework, and has still to produce the benchmark statements for subjects.

### **5.7 Concluding Remarks**

A comprehensive policy on foreign languages is essential in the present context. Various bodies, national organisations and the organisers of the many conferences and seminars, which took place in the EYL, all called for the development of such a policy for Ireland. In the context of the promotion of multi-lingualism in the other member states of the EU, of the new language initiatives of the DES, the ongoing review of the senior cycle, coupled with the drop in numbers taking languages in HE and of the changing status in language requirements for university entry, this is now very urgent. Recently there has been discussion and support among Irish specialists for the promotion of trilingualism. This offers the opportunity, for the first time, to bring together representatives of all language interests, in an attempt to forge a comprehensive policy for Irish, English and foreign languages.

The role and status of foreign languages in Ireland are deeply influenced by the present globalisation of economies, of policies and especially of culture. In the context of a global culture and language, and of the very successful teaching of English abroad, pupils and students in Ireland often lack a strong motivation to learn a foreign language.

Government policy for some years has been focused on skills shortages, the need for more science and engineering and for the secondary curriculum to give a stronger preparation for these areas. There has been no public debate on the value of a broad curriculum and the importance of a European dimension in education to prepare young people for citizenship. Changes in the senior cycle curriculum will have a profound influence on languages in HE also. Recent public statements by the heads of some of Ireland's industrial and business bodies called for a review of all national educational policy, and the connection of the curriculum to the wider social and economic reality. This offers an opportunity to involve all stakeholders in the development of a language policy, which is broad and includes objectives such as the development of life and transferable skills

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