



Self Evaluation Report

**Submitted to the Higher Education and
Training Award Council**

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Introduction

American College Dublin (ACD) was founded in May 1993 by Lynn University, Boca Raton, Florida. The initial rationale for the foundation was that it would serve as a study abroad teaching site. Following the emergence of significant local interest, it was decided to offer some of Lynn University's degree programs to non-Lynn students based in Ireland; the first class commenced in October 1993. On 29 January 1994 American College Dublin was established as a separate institution. Although Lynn University and American College Dublin shared the same president, Dr Donald E. Ross, had an articulation agreement for the transfer of credit and cooperated on study abroad exchanges, from this time forward they had entirely separate governing boards and were completely independent of one another in all aspects of planning and policy. The institutions henceforward remained committed to an active relationship, in terms of study abroad and faculty exchanges, research projects and programmatic partnerships, but from the perspective of cooperative arrangements between independent entities. Dr Ross retired from the position of president of Lynn University in 2006, but continued to serve as president of American College Dublin.

American College Dublin was not included in Lynn University's grant of accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, nor subsequently did the institution independently seek or receive accreditation by the Southern Association. Instead, the College pursued accreditation with the relevant Irish accreditation bodies: Irish state approval to operate as institution of higher education was granted by the Department of Education and Science on 11 November 1994; accreditation of the institution's academic programs was granted during the course of 1996 by the state accreditation agency, the National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA; the name of this body changed in 1999 to the Higher Education Training and Awards Council, or HETAC). In 2002 the College's executive management discussed the possibility of seeking accreditation for ACD with an American accrediting agency. The executives believed that American accreditation would benefit the institutional development of ACD, provide an appropriate emphasis of the College's American connection and allow the College to market its programs more effectively in the United States and internationally. As a first step, it was decided to seek accreditation with the US national accreditation agency, the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS). The College received its initial grant of accreditation from ACICS in May 2004; this grant was renewed in 2008 and is scheduled to run to 31 December 2011.

In 2001 American College Dublin began moves to establish a recruitment office in the state of Delaware. This was the beginning of a process that would lead to the development of a branch campus for the institution in Delaware. In September 2003 American College Delaware admitted its first group of students, studying for a two-year Diploma in Hospitality Management, accredited by the Educational Institute of America. In 2005 American College Delaware began the process of applying for inclusion as a branch campus within American College Dublin's current grant of accreditation with ACICS; this process was completed in 2006. At the end of the 2006 the institution received approval from the Department of Education of the State of Delaware to operate as an institution of higher education. This state approval cleared the way for American College

Dublin to begin the process of applying for accreditation with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education; a formal application, including American College Delaware as the branch campus, was submitted in 2007. During 2006, American College Dublin also began considering the matter of applying to its Irish accreditation agency, HETAC, to offer some of the College's degree-level programs at the Delaware branch. After the submission of an application and two site visits to the branch, HETAC granted approval to offer two of its programmes at the branch in March 2008. Further detail on the institution's programmes delivered in Delaware and its Middle States accreditation is provided below in the section, Institution-specific objectives.

A major development for American College Dublin was a change in its corporate status: as of 1 January 2009, American College Dublin became a constituent college of Irish American University (the other constituent college is American College Delaware). This name was registered with the Irish state in 1993 and was approved by the Department of Education of the State of Delaware in a letter dated 3 November 2008. As a matter of organizational relevance, HETAC was notified of the intention to introduce this measure in a letter by President Ross to Chief Executive Gearoid dated 20 October 2008; Mr O was provided with fuller detail on the matter in a visit to meet with President Ross at the College on – December 2008. It should be noted that the name has no bearing on American College Dublin's relationship with HETAC: awards issuing from HETAC to graduates of the institution will continue to be named and applied only with respect to American College Dublin.

Since its foundation in 1993 American College Dublin has grown at a considerable rate. Student numbers have increased from the initial intake of sixteen degree students to a current total student population of 650. Physically, the College has grown from a single house on Merrion Square to one which occupies three adjacent properties, two to either side of the original site. The College also had three houses on the western side of Merrion Square until August 2008. The College is actively engaged on a search for additional properties, and hopes to have secured these before September 2009. The support facilities have expanded to include an enhanced library, two computer laboratories, a psychology experimental laboratory, a cafeteria and student lounges and recreation areas. Yet, amid the changes, some things have remained constant. The College retains its commitment to delivering an excellent postsecondary education; one that is rigorous, challenging, interesting and useful. It remains committed to teaching in small classes; to teaching which is responsive to the needs of students of varying abilities and backgrounds; and to teaching which actively involves the student in the learning process. It continues to encourage and project an international outlook, through its student recruitment (70% of the total student body comes from outside the Republic of Ireland), through the content of many of its courses and through its fostering of links with the international community in Ireland. Finally, the College continues to promote its American connection, most obviously through its name, but in substance also: through its branch campus in Claymont, Delaware, its licensure in Delaware, its pursuit of accreditation with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, its links with the institution which founded it, Lynn University, and the study abroad programme it offers to university students in America.

Objective 1: To enhance public confidence in the quality of education and training provided by the institution and the standards of the awards made

This objective is to enhance public confidence in the quality of education and training provided by the Institution and the standards of the awards made. This is an overarching objective which covers all areas of the Institution's activity. The quality of the institutional review process itself is a critical part of this as is the internal self study, the publication of the Self Evaluation Report and panel report. The information provided by the Institution to the public falls within this objective.

Disclosure

The principal vehicle for disseminating information about the College's academic offerings, regulations and appeal procedures for students is the Catalogue, a new edition of which is provided at the beginning of each academic year. A copy of the current catalogue is provided in hardcopy form to students and in the library and is available in softcopy format on the College intranet.

The chief means by which the College community is informed about the institution's policies and procedures is the Quality Assurance Manual. This document is also updated each year; a hardcopy is made provided to administrative and academic departments, the library and is available on the College intranet.

Faculty members and staff are provided with a contract at initial hiring. This document provides the employee with the normal protections afforded by Irish and European law. The employee handbook also provides a full statement of the institution's disciplinary, grievance, bullying and harassment, and information technology policies.

A copy of the *1940 Statement of principles on academic freedom and tenure, with 1970 interpretive comments* of the American Association of University Professors is maintained in the library and in the office of the Academic Dean. The College's endorsement of these principles is contained in the following statement, which is provided in the employee handbook:

1. Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution.
2. Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject. Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated in writing at the time of the appointment.

3. College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.

The College is also committed to providing its accreditation agencies with regular and appropriate information concerning its ongoing activities and material changes in programs, policies and procedures. As part of this commitment, the College provides for public access such accreditation documentation as it and its accreditation partners agree is appropriate for dissemination

The process of institutional review was overseen by the Accreditation and Compliance Committee. The committee (comprising the Academic Dean, Registrar, Director of Institutional Research, Head of Department of Business, Head of Department of Psychology), prepared a draft of the present document, which was then passed to the members of the College community for comment, criticism and changes. A new document was prepared, taking account of the views expressed by stakeholders in the consultation process. This revised document was circulated again to the College community and a final version was prepared by the Accreditation and Compliance Committee. The final version was approved by the Executive Management Committee on 7 October 2009 and delivered to the HETAC office by hand the same day.

Objective 2: To contribute to coherent strategic planning and governance in the institution

This objective is to contribute to coherent strategic planning and governance in the institution. The review may address the coherence of institutional mission, vision and values and overall institutional strategic planning. For recognised institutions with delegated authority this objective also includes the Operation and Management criterion of the review of delegated authority (governance, management, administration, planning and evaluation) and the Objects of the Qualifications Act criterion relating to national contributions etc.

2.1. Strategic Vision

Change at ACD has accelerated during the last academic year and nowhere has this been more evident than in the area of strategic planning and institutional self-awareness. The Strategic Planning Committee was reformed in January 2009 with the dual objectives of producing a Strategic Plan and acting in an advisory capacity to the Executive Management Committee.

The creation of a renewed Strategic Plan is not yet complete, but its formulation is well advanced and the Institution movement into the future is well aligned and confident. The overall vision is that a Strategic Plan is not a predictive or ultimate outcome, but rather a road map into the future; it is seen as retaining sufficient flexibility to survive unexpected shocks and unpredictable events. Recent history has reaffirmed the importance of comprehensive, but subtle forward planning – planning based on forethought rather than forecasting.

The composition of the Strategic Planning Committee indicates the central place it occupies in the structure of ACD – hierarchically it links the Board of Overseers and the Executive Committee to the operational and academic elements of the College.¹ Functionally the SPC is the guardian of the Mission of ACD, ensuring that it pervades every aspect of College life and ensuring that it is a true statement of our scholarly intention. This involves, consequently and essentially, that the SPC should orientate the various strands and entities at ACD so that they work in harmony and cooperatively.

The Strategic Planning Committee is pursuing the project by way of the development and dissemination to the institution's community of a draft mission statement and the concurrent fashioning of an institutional vision and institutional assessment document; it is intended that these moves will culminate in the presentation of a strategic plan (incorporating the finalized new mission statement and goals) by the Strategic Planning Committee to the Spring 2010 meeting of the Board of Overseers. This will not be an apotheosis, but a staging post on a permanent journey. It will be followed by an analysis of the efficacy of the strategic planning process and the initiation of a new process to be concluded five years hence. Moreover, the continuing work of the Strategic

¹ The Composition of the SPC: Academic Dean (chair), Dean of Enrollment, Registrar, Heads of Psychology and Business, Director of Finance and Director of Institutional Research and Assessment.

Planning Committee will be buttressed by the ongoing assessment, planning and decision-making labours of the network of College committees producing information and recommendations that structure, document, feed and guide the process of effective planning, resource allocation and institutional renewal.

2.2. Mission

American College Dublin's mission has undergone a number of revisions, mirroring the institution's growth and developing understanding of its identity and role. The College's original mission statement was formulated at the institution's foundation in 1993. It was developed in close consultation with the executive management of the institution's founder, Lynn University, Boca Raton, Florida. The mission statement was as follows:

The purpose of the American College Dublin, a third-level college of the American University of Ireland, is to promote development of the intellectual capabilities and social, emotional, and moral values of its students. Recognizing that abilities differ and that past performance may not be a true indicator of student capability and potential, the College accepts students of varying academic proficiency. The College, in helping students develop academically, is committed to meeting individual needs. In keeping with this purpose, it will be small by design, with a faculty and staff dedicated to personal interaction with students and to maintaining an environment conducive to personal growth.

The College is seeking NCEA designation for the College of Arts and the College of Business. Each college offers Bachelor degree programs; the Bachelor of Arts in Behavioural Science, the Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts, the Bachelor of Science in International Business and the Bachelor of Arts in Hospitality Management. All degrees are structured to meet the needs of a changing society in a world that has become global in concept.

The choice of Ireland as the country in which to locate was based on a variety of factors including English language as the spoken tongue, Ireland's role in the new European Community of Nations, the historic and cultural background of the country, which brings additional dimensions to the formal education provided within the classroom, and the availability of outstanding educators to teach the academic courses.

Recognizing the fact that today's college graduates should be aware of the specialized knowledge needed to perform effectively in their careers, as well as general knowledge and appreciation of humankind so necessary to attain a fulfilling life, the degree program's curriculum includes a Liberal Arts core. The core curriculum and specialized courses required in the degree programs each contributes to the professional and personal growth and development of students.

The College welcomes the traditional college-age student as well as the mature learner. The degree programs will be offered both during the day and in the evening to meet the needs of this diverse population.

As the College evolved, it became necessary to revisit the mission statement. In 1999 discussions began on formulating a new mission statement. This mission

statement, together with a set of mission objectives (goals) was adopted in 2001. The current mission statement and objectives are as follows:

2.2.1 Mission Statement 2001

American College Dublin is dedicated to the development of each student's intellectual and social capabilities. The College strives to maintain a positive environment in which staff are dedicated to the academic success and personal growth of each student. The College seeks to inculcate an international perspective, which prepares graduates to meet the challenges of a multicultural environment.

The College's mission embraces the need to develop in each student an understanding and respect for individuals of diverse cultures. This multicultural environment contributes to an enhanced academic experience. The education provided by the College offers a sound foundation for those students who wish to pursue further studies.

American College at all times endeavours to implement policies governing equal access and equal opportunity, subject to certain limitations.

Mission objectives

To enable students to progress in accordance with their potential through their chosen course of study, from admission to graduation.

To provide an education that allows graduates to progress to further studies or to appropriate vocational placements.

To enhance effective teaching and service delivery on the part of the institution's academic and administrative staff.

To promote a sensitive and constructive educational engagement with people of diverse cultures, citizenship, socioeconomic groups and academic levels.

This mission statement remains in force, though the Strategic Planning Committee is presently considering a revision. As part of the College's quality assurance procedures (set out in the Quality Assurance Manual, 2008) there is a procedure for reconsideration and readoption or revision of the mission statement at least once every five years. The revised mission statement will appear in 2009. The most recent version of the proposed new mission statement and institutional goals are as follows:

2.2.2. Mission Statement 2009 – Draft

American College Dublin provides a high-quality undergraduate and postgraduate education: one that is rigorous, stimulating and valuable. The core values of the institution are academic excellence, innovation, ethical integrity and multiculturalism. The institutional ethos and programs of study inculcate and reflect the best of the Irish and American higher education traditions. The faculty engage the student in an educational experience that is active, participative and challenging. American College Dublin maintains the highest standards of ethical conduct in all its activities, including support for academic freedom, appropriate disclosure of information to the institution's stakeholders, and equality of access and opportunity. The university is committed to developing the knowledge, skills and competencies of its students.

Primarily, it aims to instil a passion for education that will advance the development of the individual's talents and a process of lifelong learning.

Institutional goals - draft

To enable students to progress in accordance with their potential through their chosen course of study, from admission to graduation.

To provide an education that allows graduates to progress to further studies or to appropriate vocational placements.

To enhance effective teaching and service delivery on the part of the institution's academic and administrative staff.

To uphold the highest standards of ethical probity among the institution's academic and administrative staff and its students.

To promote a sensitive and constructive educational engagement with people of diverse cultures, citizenship, socioeconomic groups and academic levels.

2.3. Leadership

American College Dublin has well developed systems through which its academic and administrative staff are able to exercise decision-making and planning functions. Nevertheless, these structures are only as effective as the staff who administer them. Fortunately, American College Dublin has a team of experienced and well-qualified administrators, headed by President Ross. Dr Ross and his Office, report to and are in consultation with the Board of Overseers, and work with an executive management team that is responsible for the main three branches of the institution's operation: academic affairs, enrolment and finance.² The executive and senior management administers the institution through an organizational structure based on Appendix 2

2.4. Governance

At the foundation of American College Dublin in 1993, a Board of Trustees was appointed to control and manage the affairs of the College. Dr Donald E. Ross, President and CEO of Lynn University, was appointed President and CEO of American College Dublin.

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

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

² For a profile of the principal figures responsible for the executive and senior management of the institution follow see Appendix 2.

2.4.1. Executive Management

The College's operational management is directed by the Executive Management Committee. See Appendix 3.

2.4.2. Initiating and Communicating Change

The issue of how change needs to be communicated was dealt with in the First Interim Report based on Institutional Research at ACD during the period February – April 2009. The Report was formulated from notes taken during various committee meetings held over a three month period, as well as interviews carried out amongst various stakeholders at the College. It is not a definitive Report, but rather a discussion paper aimed at all participants with an interest in the topic and reflects comments which have been made by a variety of students, non-academic staff and faculty.

In the first place it suggested that there is a prevailing view amongst Faculty Students and Staff that, prior to 2008, ACD was run in a manner, whether by intention or accident, that precluded opinion from a variety of stakeholders. In a small institution this is often inevitable, and maybe even desirable, but as ACD grew it became necessary to widen the forum.

Over the last year, there has been a wide-spread sense that this is changing. Participants have given a number of reasons for this: student newsletters, management briefing all students on matters of institutional significance, and the Middle States application, and, crucially, the development of committees dealing with essential elements of college life.

Following a process of research into these areas, it became clear that whilst some comments were poorly expressed, inaccurate or narrowly partisan, several major suggestions were made and needed to be aired. For the sake of clarity, they have been arranged in categories even though this was not necessarily the order in which they were expressed.

2.4.2.1. Students

The information coming from a body as large and diverse as the "Students" can be complex and even contradictory. However, there are some recurring themes. The most persistent of these is that, by students' own admission, printed information sheets and even posters are not actually read by students! Whether this is a linguistic issue is not certain, but as the majority of our students do not have first language English, it is something not to be ignored. A quick survey indicated that the majority of students would read an on-line forum, especially if it contained links to the HETAC and MSCHE sites for example! Students have indicated that this idea could be extended to include both an academic forum – with news, class cancellations, room changes, exam timetable etc – and a social forum. They say that this would be most welcome and would improve communications. Although this is not a total solution, it would certainly improve the lines of communication within the College. Other proposals of a more traditional kind include the provision of suggestion boxes around the campus and more copies of the student newsletter being made available. One thing that is apparent is that if all students had an ACD email address, faculty-student communications would also be more efficient.

2.4.2.2. Faculty

With the proliferation of committees, a new issue has arisen. Unless committees communicate their findings and deliberations *horizontally* as well as vertically there is the possibility of work being duplicated, or work

being wasted because of poor communications. As with the students, Faculty could profit from a News Forum where committee minutes, accreditation issues, information from MSCHE and HETAC, and INSET provisions could be posted.

Objective 3: To assess the effectiveness of the quality assurance arrangements operated by the institution

This objective is to assess the effectiveness of the quality assurance arrangements operated by the institution. This will be based on Part One of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. By including this in the institutional review process the statutory requirement for review of QA is met. How the Institution manages its QA for the “seven elements” of Part One of the European Standards and Guidelines should be explicitly addressed by the review process including : Policy and procedures for quality assurance; Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards; Assessment of students; Quality assurance of teaching staff; Learning resources and support; Information systems; Public information.

3.1. Quality Assurance Manual

The document which records the means by which the institution's quality assurance policies and procedures operate and may be evaluated is the Quality Assurance Manual. This document was approved by HETAC in October 2005. The College body responsible for the accuracy, maintenance and development of the Quality Assurance Manual is the Quality Assurance Committee. For detail on this committee see Appendix 5. The committee's membership is composed so that all sections of the College community are represented, including administration, academic departments and students. The members circulate the current Quality Assurance Manual to their constituencies and report back to the committee requests for changes. The structure of the document is not open for revision, for it is necessary to ensure that the internal sections contain content that addresses the seven elements of Part One of the European Standards and Guidelines. However, changes within these structures are open to revision and development in line with experience, an increasing understanding of the requirements of quality assurance and changing circumstances. These changes are incorporated into a draft revision which is circulated among the College community and returned for finalization. The final version is offered to the Faculty Board for approval and, following any further changes, to the Executive Management Committee for adoption as the Quality Assurance Manual for the next year.

The current Quality Assurance Manual is available in hardcopy in the College's library and for public access through the College intranet. A copy is included with this submission.

3.2. European Standards and Guidelines

ACD has no hesitation in endorsing the European Standards and Guidelines for Higher Education in exactly the same way as we would accept National Qualifications Authority of Ireland. Given our European/American structure and the large international student body, there is nothing in either quality assurance

body with which we find issue. In fact the European Standards and Guidelines are quoted in research papers on a frequent basis.

3.3. Assessment of Student Learning

3.3.1. Student learning outcomes: grades

The College has a five level system for the monitoring of grades:

All course work and the final exam are marked, collated and given a final grade by the faculty member who teaches the course.

The relevant department meets to discuss the final grades, consider any borderline individual grades, unusual individual grades or grade profiles across a class group and decide if any remedial action is necessary.

The Internal Examination Board meets. This meeting is attended by all faculty who have submitted grades for the semester. The meeting is chaired by the Registrar. The code, title and teacher of each class is read out; all F and A grades are discussed, along with any other particular cases that warrant discussion. Any alterations to grades are minuted.

The External Examiner considers the grades. Each class has an extern who is responsible for independent monitoring of grades. The extern is an expert in the field of study who has no institutional connection with the College; the extern is paid by the College, but is completely independent of the College in making recommendations. The extern is sent the grades broadsheet, all F and A grade final examination papers and a sample of papers from across the grade profile.

External Examination Board meets. This meeting is attended by all the external examiners and all faculty who have submitted grades for the semester. The meeting is chaired by the Registrar. The code, title and teacher of each class are read out; all F and A grades are discussed, along with any other particular cases that warrant discussion. Any alterations to grades are recorded.

Once final grades are approved, the student is notified by way of an updated grade transcript, which is mailed to the student's home address. After receipt of the transcript, the student has ten working days in which to lodge a grade appeal with the Academic Office, by filling out a grade review form. Once the grade review form is received by the Academic Office, the grade appeal process is as follows:

Academic Office checks the examination transcript and results broadsheet for any arithmetical errors and to verify that the lecturer's handwritten grades were correctly inputted on the system.

The relevant department meets to consider the grade under review. Any previously unknown circumstances are considered and the final examination paper is reviewed. The department agrees on whether there should be any changes made to the grade.

The Academic Standards Committee meets. The relevant department presents its findings. If the Academic Standards Committee accepts these findings, they are communicated by the department to the student immediately. If the appeal is still unresolved, the case is referred to the extern for advice. The Academic Standards Committee meets again and considers the extern's comments; the case is then decided by a majority vote. If still unresolved, the case is referred to the Quality Assurance Committee for a decision; if still unresolved, the case is referred to the Executive Management Committee for a final decision.

3.3.2. Student learning outcomes: grade point averages

GPA is a key student learning outcome criterion; it is monitored largely through the satisfactory academic progress (SAP) process. It operates thus:

A student's cumulative GPA should always be above 2.0. A student whose cumulative GPA drops below 2.0 is required to meet the Director of Academic Affairs and be advised that he or she has been placed on academic probation. Academic probation is defined by the College as a status connoting the possibility of academic dismissal without further warning if academic performance does not improve appropriately; during such time as a student is on academic probation, he or she is prohibited from engaging in any extracurricular College activities. If the student's GPA is less than 2.0 for two consecutive semesters the student is automatically dismissed, unless pressing mitigating circumstances can be presented to the Academic Standards Committee. In such circumstances, the student may have the period of probation extended, providing the student agrees in writing to meet such performance standards as the Academic Standards Committee stipulates. (At present the College is not approved for financial aid; once financial aid becomes available, students who fail to achieve SAP will lose their financial aid and will not be able to avail of a probationary period due to mitigating circumstances with regard to this aid.)

3.3.3. Student learning outcomes: course completion ratio (CCR)

Students are required to complete their course within 150% of the applicable time frame. This is calculated for each student by dividing the total number of modules attempted (this number excludes repeat examinations and modules for which an "I" was awarded) by the number of modules completed and multiplying the number which results by 100. Thus, a student who has attempted 15 modules and completed 12 has a CCR of 125% (15 divided by 12 equals 1.25; 1.25 multiplied by 100 equals 125) and is achieving satisfactory academic progress; a student who has attempted 15 modules and completed 9 has a CCR of 166% (15 divided by 9 equals 1.66; 1.66 multiplied by 100 equals 166) and is not achieving satisfactory academic progress. A student whose CCR exceeds 150% is ineligible to graduate; if the CCR reaches a level at which it cannot be brought below 150%, even if all remaining modules are completed at the first attempt, the student will be advised by the Academic Standards Committee that his or her enrolment is to be terminated

In order to ensure that a registered student has a realistic chance of completing the programme within 150% of the applicable time frame, the College requires that a student fails (F) or is not present (NP) in no more than 40% of the modules taken in any academic year (modules which receive an F or NP in the regular semester but are passed in repeat examinations during the same academic year are not included in this calculation) up to the graduating year. A student who receives a fail (F) or not present (NP) grade in more than 40% of the modules attempted in one academic year will be required to meet the Director of Academic Affairs and be advised that he or she has been placed on academic probation; if the student receives a fail (F) or not present (NP) grade in more than 40% of the modules attempted in any further academic year (modules which receive an F or NP in the regular semester but are passed in repeat examinations during the same academic year are not included in this calculation), he or she will be automatically dismissed, unless pressing mitigating circumstances can be presented to the Academic Standards Committee. In such circumstances, the student may have the period of probation extended, providing the student agrees in writing to meet such performance standards as the Academic Standards Committee stipulates. (At present the College is not approved for

financial aid; once financial aid becomes available, students who fail to achieve SAP will lose their financial aid and will not be able to avail of a probationary period due to mitigating circumstances with regard to this aid.).

3.3.4. Assessing Goals, Objectives and Outcomes

Learning Assessment is the topic most paved with good intentions. This is understandable in that most academics have a view of their rôle based on their own experience and this is often a rôle which was decidedly teacher-based. As a result large institutions which wish to implement the Learning Assessment developments of the last two decades, could find that the forces of inertia and even obstructionism may be very powerful and influential. The advantage for ACD is that, historically, such forces do not have a hold, and as with Institutional Assessment, the College is in an ideal position to integrate best practice within the framework of its growth. With this in mind, ACD has produced a document, PRELIMINARY PAPER ON LEARNING ASSESSMENT, July, 2008 with the purpose of formulating College policy in this area, introducing more sophisticated Learning Assessment procedures with current staff, and inculcating best practice with staff appointed in the future. Inevitably, assessment of student learning is symbiotically linked to assessment of Institutional Effectiveness and many of the future developments there will have an impact on Learning Assessment.

In this context ACD takes Learning Assessment to be the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning.

To ensure that these assessment criteria are met, the College has created the following:

A totally new Assessment Committee with the specific task of ensuring that there is a coordinated assessment policy that will reinforce present assessment structures, and forge new means of ensuring the effectiveness of the College.

A more detailed Assessment Plan laying out the relationship between curricular development, student experience, and effective institutional responses. This Plan will enhance present structures where they are effective and propose remedies where they are either ineffectual or absent. In particular the Pilot Scheme will focus on Indirect Learning under the following headings:

Surveys

Interviews

Focus Groups

Of course this is not exhaustive, but it is meant to be controllable to enable ACD to produce useful, limited results.

ACD has appointed a Director of Institutional Research and Assessment to coordinate the Assessment Plan and to help the Assessment Committee to function.

The ACD Plan sees as its target the satisfaction of the requirements of HETAC as well as Middle States in the following key areas:

1. Usefulness
2. Cost-effectiveness
3. To be reasonably accurate and truthful, planned, organized, systematized, and sustained

3.3.4.1. Useful for the Student.

Students who wish to develop competence in an area of inquiry, students must acquire factual knowledge, understand the conceptual framework that permeates those facts, and be able to organize their knowledge to retrieve information and apply it in a concrete situation.

3.3.4.2. Useful for the Teacher.

Without assessment, teachers find themselves isolated from their students; working in a tunnel-world where administrators are seen as the enemy, and students a tolerated nuisance. Introducing assessment only gets in the way of their proper work – research. This becomes a self-denying coda.

Throughout this discussion ACD is not prepared to sacrifice academic excellence; only redefine how it is achieved within the institution. Again we come back to teacher assessment as enhancing the outcomes, objectives, goals and mission statement of the College.

3.3.4.3. Cost Effective.

As with Institutional Assessment, cost will be low initially, rising as the College expands. If student assessment is to be accurate, truthful, planned, organized, systematized, and sustained it will have to be grounded in an effective Assessment Plan. However, the Assessment Plan is not a tablet from the mountain. Any plan will be faulty, inadequate to cover a growing situation, and open to debate. But like other plans at ACD it is meant to be based on foreknowledge not forecasting. The process is constantly on-going with limited trials in part of the institution followed by Assessment Committee discussion, new proposals, and then more trials ad infinitum. We do not envisage a quick solution, but we do take these issues very seriously. Assessment will only be worthwhile as it is professionally conducted, staff receive adequate education, the system is efficient and with documented results that have meaning all in an atmosphere of good-will bred of good practice.

Objective 4: To confirm the extent that the institution has implemented the national framework of qualifications and procedures for access, transfer and progression

This objective is to confirm the extent that the institution has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications and procedures for access, transfer and progression. The National Qualifications Authority has produced guidelines in relation to this. For example this includes issues such as credit, transfer and progression routes between levels and award types, entry arrangements and information provision. As part of this objective, HEA-funded Institutions should be mindful of the goals of the HEA's National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (2008-2013) and pay particular attention to the objectives relevant to Higher Education Institutions.

The College fully commits itself to, and implements the National Framework of Qualifications and procedures for access, transfer and progression, on its HETAC programmes (all of which are at level 8 or 9 on the National Framework). The procedures for the College's access, transfer and progression are detailed for individual programmes in the validation submissions made to HETAC for the programme in question. They are provided below for the College's level-8 and level-9 HETAC programmes.

4.1 Access

4.1.1. Level 8 Entry Arrangements

Irish and EU students

For Leaving Certificate students, the minimum Leaving Certificate entry requirements for degree programmes are two higher-level C3's and four passes at either higher or ordinary level. Students must pass mathematics and a language, (i.e. English, Irish or a European language). FETAC qualifications are accepted as entry criteria providing the qualification is at level five or higher of the National Framework of Qualifications, the applicant achieved a merit or distinction award and the qualification is for entry into a cognate academic discipline. For EU students, secondary school results will be assessed for their equivalency to the Irish Leaving Certificate.

Students with qualifications from accredited institutions at levels 6 (Advanced Certificate; Higher Certificate) or 7 (Ordinary Bachelor degree) are admitted providing they achieve an award-stage GPA of at least 2.5.

Non-EU students

All non-EU students are required to provide documentation of completion of secondary school. Results are assessed at an equivalent level to the minimum requirements for the Irish Leaving Certificate. Students should contact the College directly to ascertain specific entry requirements.

In addition to secondary school results, non-native English speaking students must fulfil minimum English language requirements outlined below.

Mature Students

Mature students are those who have reached the age of 23 by 1 January of the year of application. Mature students are also known as ability-to-benefit students. Mature students do not need to fulfil minimum academic requirements, but do need to provide a CV and referees and make an appointment to be interviewed by an admissions counsellor. Mature students should demonstrate through their work, academic experience, and / or personal ambition their suitability for their chosen programme. All mature students who do not meet the minimum academic requirements will need to complete an interview with an admissions staff member and satisfactorily complete the Wonderlic Basic Skills Test. (the required minimum standard on this test is a verbal score of 200+ and a quantitative score of 210+). Applications from mature students should be made directly to the College.

Applicants with disabilities or special requirements

Disabled students may apply through open competition with the CAO, without seeking special assistance. Disabled students are advised to apply directly through the college and must meet the minimum Leaving Certificate entry requirements, but are exempted from meeting point requirements. Documentation relating to the disability must accompany the application and the student will be requested to attend an interview to determine the level of assistance needed and the viability of participation in the programme.

Language requirements

In the case of all students applying to the American College Dublin whose first language is not English, either through the CAO or directly to the College, evidence of English Language competency must be provided. Listed below are the minimum standards in English language that must be met. In certain situations, results in examinations other than those set out below may be accepted as proof of competence, but only if the results obtained in such other examinations indicate competency to one of the standards outlined below:

Students whose first language is not English must have:

A TOEFL score of no less than 500 (paper based) or 173 (computer based)
OR

An IELTS score of 6.0, First Certificate of Cambridge English Examination OR

Certificate and/or letter from accredited Irish English Language School with proof of Upper Intermediate, Advanced Level, or above OR

Verification that applicant completed his/her second or third level education through the medium of English OR

Admissions interview with ACD personnel on site and Oxford placement test administered OR

Admissions interview with ACD personnel and Oxford placement test administered at authorised agency sites OR

For students from India or Pakistan, a score of 55% on the Grade 12 (Higher Secondary Certificate) English subject.

4.1.2 Level Nine Entry Arrangements

The chief criteria for entry to the College's level-9 programme are:

A second class honours, second division award in business (2:2 honours with an award-stage grade point average of 2.5 or more) at level 7 or 8 on

the National Framework of Qualifications (or equivalent, for non-EU qualifications).

An award at level 9 or 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications (or equivalent, for non-EU qualifications).

Language requirements

Applicants whose first language is not English with entry qualifications that were delivered and assessed in English are not required to demonstrate their English ability. Applicants whose first language is not English and who do not have entry qualifications delivered and assessed in English must provide evidence of English language competency. In such cases, the College requires that the applicant have an IELTS score of 6.5 (or equivalent).

Applicants with Disabilities or Special Requirements

Disabled students must meet the minimum entry requirements set out above. Documentation relating to the disability must accompany the application and the student will be requested to attend an interview to determine the level of assistance needed and the viability of participation in the programme.

4.2. Transfer and Progression

4.2.1. Progression routes into the College's programmes:

Transfer students are required to submit the same documentation as a first-time applicant: an application form, secondary school results and, where applicable, proof of English language competency. Transfer students are assessed for the purposes of entry in the same way as first-time applicants, but with consideration of their third-level academic progress. The College provides for transfer of credit into the programme in accordance with the following arrangements:

Credit is available for students who have previously completed work at an accredited third-level institution that is substantially similar to a module or modules offered in the programme. Module exemptions for such students are decided in consultation with the Director of Enrolment Management, the Academic Dean and the Head of Department of the relevant academic department. Students seeking exemptions for previously accredited third-level study are required to send original copies of their examination transcripts and copies of their course descriptions to the College when making an application.

American College Dublin may grant credit for modules completed at other third-level institutions under the following conditions:

- Credit is granted only for those modules in which a 'C' grade or higher was achieved.
- Credit is not granted for award-stage modules.
- Credit is not granted with respect to grades; the credit value of a module previously completed elsewhere may be granted, but the grade achieved previously does not have any influence on the student's grade point average at American College Dublin.
- Credit applies only to complete modules; partial exemptions from the requirements of a given module on the basis of previously completed work at an accredited third-level institution are not possible.
- A minimum of 40 lecture hours or 120 hours of total student participation completed is required per module.

- The learning outcomes achieved in the previously completed module must be substantially the same as those offered in the module for which credit is sought.
- Pre-requisite subjects at lower levels on your chosen programme must be completed or exempted, before a higher-level exemption can be approved.
- Exemptions are awarded on a module-by-module basis, not on a stage-by-stage basis. For example, if the student is entitled to credit for 10 modules, this may not necessarily mean that the student is exempt from a full academic year as the modules may not all be first year subjects, but could include some second year subjects. Should this be the case, then the student would be required to complete the outstanding subjects in first year in order to progress fully to second year.
- Credit for modules taken at institutions not accredited by HETAC is evaluated only after a student has submitted a catalogue and a syllabus for each module under consideration.

4.2.2. Progression Routes from the College's level-8 programmes

The College's policy on transfer and progression outwards from the programme is that the College expects that credit will be accepted for completed modules that are substantially the same on baccalaureate programmes (levels seven and eight) and higher diploma programmes (level 8) at other accredited institutions, subject to the receiving institution's policies on credit (minimum grade requirements, exclusion of award stage modules from transfer arrangements, and the like). The College expects that completion of the programme will allow for transfer to higher diploma or progression to masters, post-graduate diploma, or doctoral programmes at other institutions, though acceptance on such programmes may be subject to the receiving institution's policies on minimum award levels and selection procedures arising out of limited availability of places.

4.2.3. Progression routes from the College's level-9 programme

The College's policy on transfer and progression outwards from the programme is that the College expects that credit will be accepted for completed modules that are substantially the same on master's and post-graduate diploma programmes (level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications) at other accredited institutions, subject to the receiving institution's policies on credit transfer. The College expects that completion of the programme will allow for transfer to master's and post-graduate diploma programmes (level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications) and progression to doctoral programmes at other institutions, though acceptance on such programmes may be subject to the receiving institution's policies on minimum award levels and selection procedures arising out of limited availability of places.

Provision of Information to Learners

The College's policy on information provision is to provide in its Catalogue (updated and re-published at the beginning of each academic year) a comprehensive account of its administrative and academic policies and

procedures, including all the information protocols required of providers under the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999.

Objective 5: To evaluate the operation and management of delegated authority where it has been granted

American College Dublin does not have a grant of delegated authority; this objective is not applicable to the institution.

Objective 6: To provide recommendations for the enhancement of the education and training provided by the institution

This objective is to provide recommendations for the enhancement of the education and training provided by the institution. This will include both the recommendations arising from the external peer review process and recommendations arising from the internal self study process.

6.1. The Value of Asking Questions of Ourselves

It is difficult to rise above the commonplace here, but the greatest benefit from an Institutional Review is *doing* the Institutional Review. The very asking of questions and the discipline of framing answers pulls us out of the routine of doing a job and forces us to re-examine our work in terms of longer term criteria. This activity is its own justification. However, it is often a painful experience and one shouldered with reluctance, especially as it can be viewed by colleagues as burdensome. However, that is to miss the point of an Institutional Review. A good review is not accusatory: if it were it would have the opposite effect from that desired. Lining faculty, staff and management up for execution does not need an Institutional Review. To be effective, such a Review must accept that the Institution is fundamentally sound or else it would not be in a position to undertake a sensitive Self-Study! What is the second most beneficial outcome of an Institutional Review is the elucidation and articulation of dialogues which expose hopes, aspirations and disappointments. The ultimate benefit is to address these hopes, aspirations and disappointments.

As institutional review (as opposed to programmatic accreditation) is the standard feature of American accreditation, and American College Dublin's long experience of dealing with American accrediting agencies gives it some familiarity with this approach. Nevertheless, ACD see Institutional Assessment as a continuous and omnipresent activity.

The institutional review has been of great benefit to American College Dublin. It has provided the first opportunity to present the College's quality assurance policies and procedures for peer review since the original Quality Assurance Manual was submitted for approval to HETAC in 2005. The preparations for this have revealed areas in which the content of the manual, the ways in which input for its annual updating is collected and means by which compliance with its policies and procedures is ensured can be improved. The Quality Assurance Committee has taken note of these findings and, once the current update of the Quality Assurance Manual is finalized, will be preparing a revision of its procedures to take account of them. There are other findings and lessons likely to emerge as the present institutional review progresses, but as the College is still in the midst of preparations for the process, these have not yet reached a point of conclusion that would allow them constructively to be put into a plan for institutional improvement. Moreover, it is expected that many insights and recommendations will emerge from the College's on-site peer review evaluation. It is therefore the College's intention to provide a comprehensive account of recommendations for improvement once its assessment report from the peer-review team is received, as part of the response that will be provided to HETAC.

6.2. Strengths that can be improved upon.

6.2.1. Communications

As mentioned fully in the text above, developing a web of communication is progressing, and although perfect communication is probably never attainable, there are processes under review for avoiding overlap and communication fissures.

6.2.2. Student Support Services

The institution provides reasonable student support services necessary to enable all to achieve the institution's goals for students. However, as ACD grows, so it is expected that SSS will grow based on the principles and guidelines already established.

6.2.3. Student Assessment

To overcome the problems identified in the Assessment Plan and Assessment Timetable, ACD has been following a projected implementation. The first stage has been for selected faculty to "pioneer" the use of intended learning outcomes in their courses. This will be done with the active cooperation of their students who will be asked to comment on the usefulness or otherwise of the project.

Parallel with this will be a mandatory In-Service Education and Training (INSET) programme for both full-time and adjunct faculty introducing them to the Assessment Plan and detailing what was expected of them and how it would help them with their teaching.

This would lead on to semester 2 of the 2009-10 academic year with more faculty using the new system on a trial basis with a view to having all faculty ready for a full unrolling in 2010-11.

In addition to this, will be a fuller INSET programme in cooperating with Maynooth and Queen's Belfast.

6.2.4. Institutional Assessment

In January a Director of Institutional Research was appointed to develop the work which was already being done at ACD. The brief was to provide information for the Strategic Planning Committee and other bodies as required. The first outcome was the *Institutional Effectiveness for ACD* in February 2009 and this was followed by a series of Interim Papers on various issues and a full External Scan of the Institutional in July 2009.

6.2.5. Curricular Development

The ACD principles for curriculum development is to build on our strengths, be ready for changes in the external environment, respond to the demands of our students and be always prepared to find well-qualified and excellent teachers for anything we propose

Thoughtful Curricular Development enables us to retain those values expressed in the Mission Statement and reject any elements which are anathema to our goals. For example we have built in a tutorial approach into the proposed BA in Humanities.

We see curriculum development as essentially the creation of our product; however, if we cannot sell that product we have wasted time and money which, amongst other things, is demoralizing.

Therefore we argue that the Marketing section of curriculum development should be intrinsically linked to every stage of curriculum development. This would give marketing staff a deep knowledge of where curriculum development is going and offer them the tools to sell the new or adapted course. Their input would be positive and constructive.

It is important not to develop a new course using only specialists in that area. An interested outsider could contribute a perspective different from specialists and so to move forward in curriculum development an overseeing committee has been introduced:

Academic Dean
Dean of Enrollment
Heads of Department
Director of Assessment
Registrar
Director of Finance
Director of IT

This Curriculum Committee will suggest desirable courses, examine present courses, and review new courses proposed by Course Boards.

It is planned that any particular course development group should contain the following members:

Team Leader.
Most qualified expert(s) in the field
Other members of department as seem appropriate including one who can take the lead in assessment matters.
Representative of Enrollment Department – not needed for all meetings, but available to comment on progress as necessary.
Representative of a completely different discipline i.e. a business expert attends a course being developed in a behavioral science. Again, not an attendee at all meetings, but available to comment occasionally.

Curriculum Plan and Curricular Direction.

Curriculum development must proceed as part of a curriculum plan if it is not to fall into the dangerous habit of *ad hoc* and often “blind alley” development in the future. At present we have two essential academic areas: Business with Hospitality, and Psychology. The proposed development of a BA in Humanities is a welcome addition to the stable.

However, despite the work that has gone into the creation of this BA and also the MA in Contemporary Islam we are unable to forecast the way in which these new elements will interact with the present group of courses in Business and Psychology. It is quite conceivable that students will see relationships which we have not taken into account in our present planning and questions such as

Can I share some Humanities courses with Business?
Why doesn't ACD teach Industrial Psychology and Sociology?
I want to do a Humanities Degree but would like to study Statistics?

can be envisaged! To be certain that we are ahead of these questions and in order to create a new curriculum which will be flexible and attentive to changing student needs, a preliminary task of the Curriculum Committee will be to develop a Curricular Plan.

6.2.6. IT

1. The main areas of progress in this area have been:
 - a. The oversight of all IT and communications expenditure by one person/department. This has led to a lot of savings in areas where there was duplication or excess (There were four internet connections into the building, all used for different purposes

which have been streamlined to just two connections with a substantial monthly saving.)

- b. An effort to make all current systems available on a consistent basis (Moodle, the online learning management system, would go offline on a daily basis. We have made a concerted effort to eliminate this issue and therefore drive both students and lecturers to use it for all course notes etc)
 - c. Implementation of a campus wide printing and photocopying plan to ensure all staff (and students) have access to the essential services they require to deliver classes
 - d. Roll out a backup process for servers
2. Next Stage in the IT plan:
- a. We need to source new college management system within the next academic year to improve student records and reporting capabilities
 - b. Perform security audit on all system to ensure we are protected against possible intrusion and we are fully compliant with the Data Protection Act
 - c. Outsource services that should not be hosted on site and would be more cost efficient if managed externally
3. How we see IT enhancing learning at IAU/ACD:
Most importantly IT should improve communication between college administration and students utilising the Intranet and a new college management system

6.3. What Targets for Further Development are important at ACD?

Develop a well-balanced curriculum: this will partially restore the equilibrium within the college lost when Liberal Arts and Sociology disappeared. Already, progress made with the *BA in Humanities* and the *MA in Contemporary Islam* has begun to redress the balance.

To stress the European and American elements: here the unique position of the College of being both American and Irish means we need to articulate this relationship. In particular, the development of the connection with American College Delaware to provide a new dimension for our students will be crucial.

Increase student numbers and accommodation: this is seen as a progressive development flowing from the quality of education on offer.

Objective 7 – To confirm the status of American College Delaware as an Off- Campus of American College Dublin

At the time of agreeing to the terms of reference for the institutional review in May 2009, American College Dublin intended to act on the approval it had received from HETAC in March 2008 to deliver two of its programmes at its branch campus in Claymont, Delaware: the BA in International Business and the MBS in International Business. These programmes would commence in the 2009/10 academic year and would be delivered according to the quality assurance policies and procedures American College Dublin had agreed with HETAC.

During the summer of 2009, however, the College decided not to proceed with delivery of programmes in Delaware under its HETAC grant of accreditation. The institution's pursuit of accreditation with the American accrediting agency, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE – for further detail, see objective eight, below) had progressed to a grant of candidate accreditation, and this was regarded by the student applicant population, both American and non-American, as a sufficiently attractive accreditation status for higher education study in the United States. Moreover, in the light of the favourable progress of the accreditation application with MSCHE, it was considered that the bureaucratic and financial overheads associated with the delivery of HETAC programmes in the USA would be greater than the institution would find it worthwhile to bear.

Accordingly, American College Dublin rescinds the status of American College Delaware as an off-campus for the delivery of HETAC programmes. For the foreseeable future, American College Dublin intends only to offer HETAC-accredited programmes from its campus in Dublin, Ireland.

Objective 8: To clarify the relationship between American accreditation and HETAC accreditation in the quality assurance of provision at American College Dublin.

American College Dublin is in the process of seeking accreditation with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. Although this accreditation application process has no formal or other bearing on American College Dublin's accreditation with HETAC, it is one which is complementary and about which American College Dublin would like to keep its Irish accreditation partner appropriately informed.

Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education accredits postsecondary institutions on the eastern seaboard of the United States of America: the states of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Washington DC, and the state in which ACD's American state licensure and branch campus is located, Delaware. Founded in 1921, MSCHE is the oldest regional accrediting agency in the USA. It is also has a strong claim to being the most prestigious: of the top twenty-five higher-education institutions in the world, five are accredited by Middle States (Princeton University, Columbia University, University of Pennsylvania, Cornell University, John Hopkins University); Middle States also has more top-100 universities in the world than any other accreditation agency. For a summary of essential information about the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, see Appendix 6.

American College Dublin's application for accreditation with MSCHE

American College Dublin was granted state licensure in the state of Delaware in late 2006. Following this, the institution applied for a grant of accreditation with MSCHE. An initial application, including a document addressing the MSCHE eligibility requirements, was sent to Middle States in 2007. Following this, a vice president from the commission visited ACD in early 2008. Following this visit, ACD was raised to applicant status and invited to submit a document representing its position on the fourteen standards to the commission, with a view to seeking candidacy status. This document was submitted in December 2008 and on 22-24 February 2009 an evaluation team appointed by MSCHE came to Dublin to conduct an on-site assessment. The findings of the team and the institution's response were reviewed by the Commission at its 25 June meeting. The following day, the chair, Peter F. Burnham, wrote to Dr Ross to inform him that the Commission had acted to grant the institution Candidate for Accreditation status, effective June 2009.

In accordance with this status, the institution may describe itself in the following terms:

Irish American University is a Candidate for Accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, effective June 2009. Candidate for Accreditation is a status of affiliation with a regional accrediting commission which indicates that an institution has achieved recognition and is progressing toward, but is not assured of, accreditation. It has provided evidence of sound planning, seems to have the resources to implement the plans, and appears to have the potential for obtaining its goals within a reasonable time.

Middle States Commission on Higher Education
3624 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
United States of America
Telephone: 001-267-284-5000
Web: www.msche.org

Conclusion

As with all self-study exercises, it is easy to argue that it is the process itself which is most important, and it would be impossible to argue that a good self analysis can be done without the sort of reflection which is, itself, its own reward. Certainly this has proved the case at ACD. The need to focus on the institution and at the same time involve as many participants as possible is often a dialectic of conflict; and this self-study was no exception. What results can be a compromise, which itself is not necessarily bad, but excessive compromise negates the value of the Study. At every step we have tried to reflect on the College, not on the thoughts of any individual or group.

What this means is that we are attempting a cross-cut study, a static review of the way we are now; what is difficult to assess is the dynamic of a College's past and future. At this juncture, ACD is particularly vulnerable to the static review in view of the recent upsurge in so many areas of the College's life: the changes suggested by our external scan, new assessment regimes, curricular expansion and programmes to support our faculty. But this would be to ignore the true value of self-study: that it is an occasional *and* a constant process. This HETAC self-study is neither an end, nor a beginning, but a part of a constant analysis which we at ACD have already engaged with, and plan to re-enact on a fairly constant basis.

As such, the Self Study of October-December 2009 is a beneficial activity, but only if it is viewed as a stage of Institutional Research. The management of ACD is committed to the perpetual nature of self-examination.

Finally, the identification of strengths is as beneficial as the identification of weaknesses. The study has illustrations of both, but by far the most important feature that emerges is that for students, faculty and staff, ACD is a friendly, stimulating, happy place.