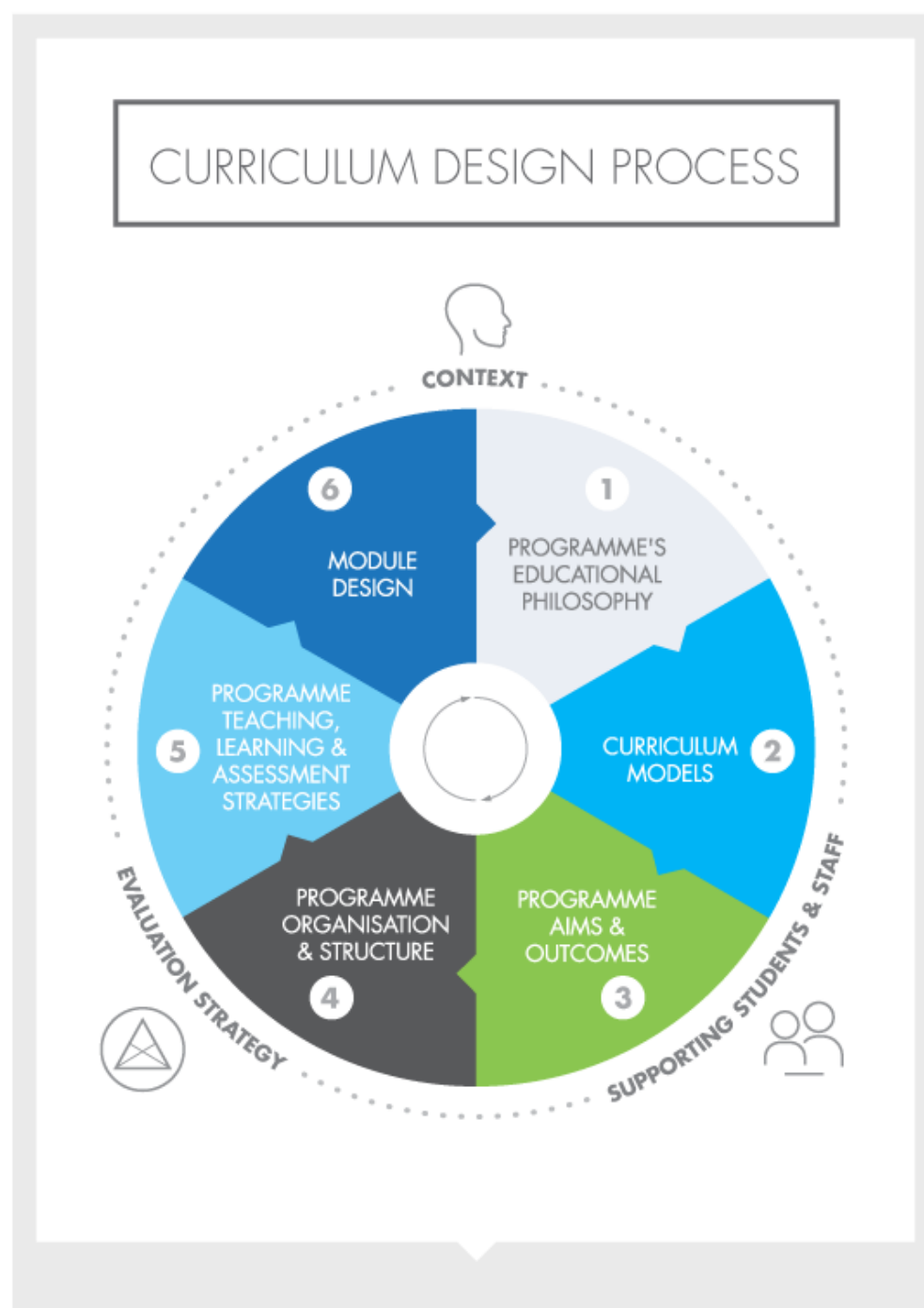


Curriculum Design in Higher Education: Theory to Practice



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Author contact details

Dr. Geraldine O'Neill,
UCD Teaching & Learning,
Room F311, Newman Building, University College Dublin, Belfield, Dublin, 4. Ireland.
geraldine.m.oneill@ucd.ie , twitter: @gmoneill2

Biography

Dr. Geraldine O'Neill is Senior Lecturer in Educational Development. She joined the UCD Teaching & Learning in September 2001. She has been involved in the strategic development of teaching and learning in University College Dublin (UCD) and has supported many institutional teaching and learning projects. Recently, she has been involved in institutional projects in the areas of programme design, assessment and blended learning. For teaching interests and research publications, see
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Geraldine_Oneill

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Chapter	Table of Contents	Page numbers
1	Introduction to the eBook	3-8
2	Context of Higher Education	9-15
3	Needs Analysis and Educational Philosophy	16-24
4	Curriculum Models	25-38
5	Programme Aims and Outcomes	39-46
6	Programme Organisation and Structure	47-57
7	Programme Teaching and Learning Strategies	58-71
8	Programme Assessment and Feedback Strategies	72-82
9	Blended Module Design	83-99
10	Monitoring and Evaluation	100-119
11	Supporting Students and Staff	120-128
	References	129-160
	Appendices	161-184
	Acknowledgements	xxvii

1. Introduction to the eBook

This chapter sets out the purpose, focus and structure of the eBook. It is also clarifies some of the confusing terms around curriculum design.

Welcome from author (Geraldine O'Neill).



UCD Teaching & Learning,
University College Dublin

Click [here](#) for link to YouTube video.

Purpose of the eBook

The purpose of this eBook was to collate and share many of the resources that I had written in the last few years on programme design, in particular the practical issues in planning and implementing a programme (course) design. There has been a wealth of web and literature resources on module (unit) design, but I had found a gap in the more complex task of programme design and how theory and models of curriculum apply in practice.

The materials in this eBook have been drawn from my experience in Ireland as:

a Lecturer and Head of School of an occupational therapy programme in Trinity College Dublin, and more recently, as

an educational developer supporting academic staff in [UCD Teaching and Learning, University College Dublin](#), working in collaboration with a range of disciplines in undergraduate and postgraduate face-to-face, blended and online programmes.

Figure 1.1 - University College Dublin



Focus of the eBook

This eBook, therefore:

- Focuses on curriculum design at the programme (not module) level,
- Incorporates face-to-face, blended and online curricula,

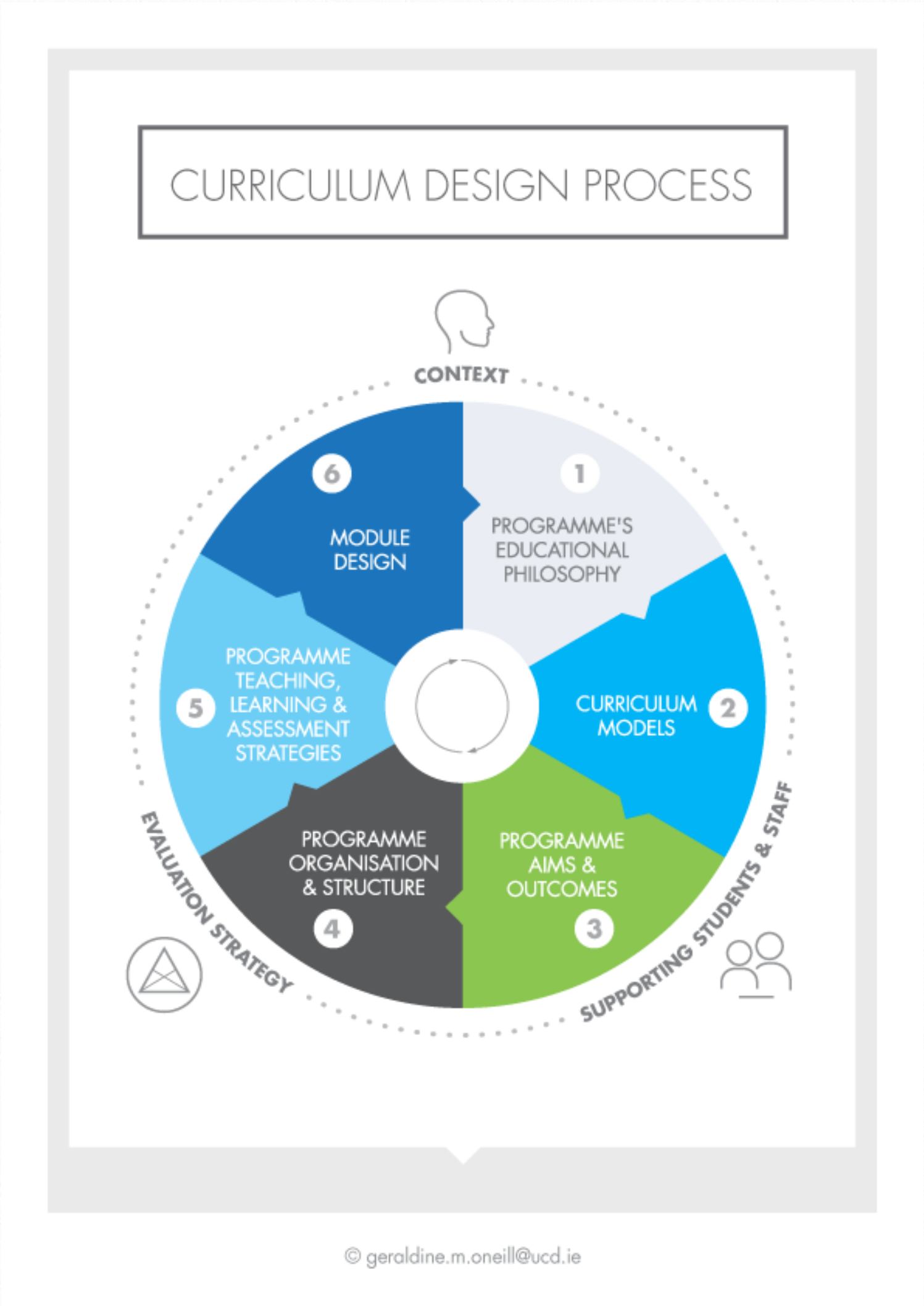
- Attempts to link theory to practice by giving some practical resources and/or exercises,
- Draws the author's experiences of working and researching into curriculum design in the Irish higher education sector,
- Is aimed at staff involved in curriculum design, including academic staff (faculty), institutional managers, educational developers and technologists, support staff, library staff and curriculum researchers,
- Is primarily drawn from literature and experiences in the higher education sector, however those in adult and further education may also find it useful.

Structure of the eBook: A curriculum design process

The structure of this book is based on a curriculum design process that I have developed as part of my experience and research on curriculum design (for example, O'Neill et al, 2014; Galvin & O'Neill, 2014; O'Neill & McMahon, 2012; O'Neill, 2010; O'Neill & Hung, 2010; Keenan & O'Neill, 2008). Figure 1.2 represents my interpretation of the curriculum design process, more recently influenced by online curriculum literature and practices. The components of this curriculum design process are not mutually exclusive and they directly influence each other. Although there is some level of sequencing in how they are addressed, as noted in my study on practices of educational developers (O'Neill, 2010), they are not strictly linear and in practice staff often dip in and out of aspects of the overall design. The process is circular and dynamic.

The chapters in this eBook are based on the curriculum design process components in this Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2 - Overall Curriculum Design Process.



Language of curriculum

Use of the terms 'course, programme, module, unit'

'Programme' is regularly used to describe a completed series of learning units that leads to a qualification or award. However, this can often be described, by students and in some contexts, as the 'course'. To add to the confusion, 'course' can also be used where 'module' is used in the modular system, as a 'unit' of credit-bearing study that is part of a programme. Therefore, when communicating to a wider audience, it is important to clarify how these terms are used in your context.

Definition of the term 'curriculum'

The term 'programme' and 'curriculum' are also used interchangeably, where curriculum is often used to describe a wider conceptual process and context. In the UK, Fraser and Bosanquet (2006) highlighted that staff working in higher education have very different understandings of the term 'curriculum, as various as:

- The structure and content of a unit (subject)
- The structure and content of a programme of study
- The students' experience of learning
- A dynamic and interactive process of teaching and learning

(Fraser & Bosanquet, 2006).

In the USA, Lattuca and Stark (2009) in their extensive work on curriculum, highlighted that staff used similar breakdowns of this term.

This lack of a shared understanding of the term 'curriculum' can be problematic when staff gather together to do shared curriculum design activity. Therefore, Lattuca and Stark (2009) advocate that a useful framework for all curriculum stakeholders is the use of the concept of an 'Academic Plan', which focuses on the planning process. This includes eight elements, 1)Purposes, 2)Content, 3)Sequence, 4)Learners, 5)Instructional Processes, 6)Instructional Resources, 7.)Evaluation, 8)Adjustment. They highlight that the plan is done in the sociocultural context. Therefore their model is titled *Academic Plans in Sociocultural Context* (Lattuca and Stark , 2009, p29). The ele-

ments in Lattuca and Stark's model has strong similarities to the components of the curriculum I have laid out in Figure 1.2.

This idea of a planning activity is emphasised in the commonly used term 'curriculum design' and this is:

is generally understood as a high-level process defining the learning to take place within a specific programme of study, leading to specific unit(s) of credit or qualification. (JISC 2014, p2)

Curriculum design has often been used interchangeably with the term curriculum development. Ornstein and Hunkins (1998, p17) describe that:

Curriculum development encompasses how a curriculum is planned, implemented, and evaluated.

Summary

This eBook attempts to provide a balance between the theory and practice in the design of higher education curriculum. It presents a visual overview that may be useful in understanding the curriculum design process. This visual overview maps out the chapters in this book. The language of curriculum design can be confusing and care is needed when working in different contexts and with different stakeholders.

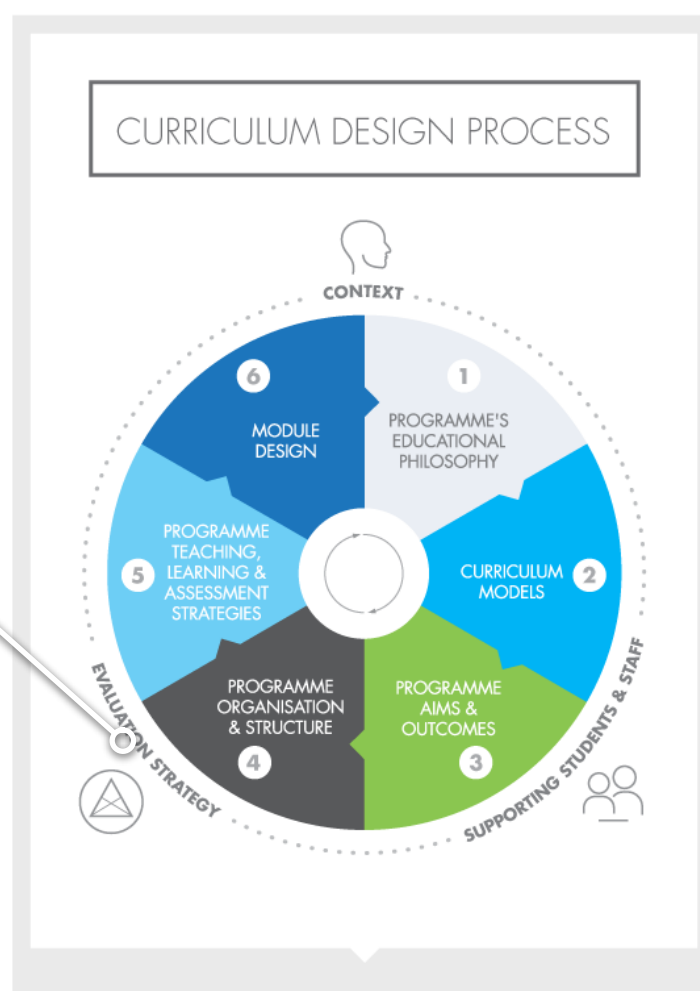
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Monitoring and Evaluation

A programme requires an evaluation strategy that assists in the design, implementation and post implementation stages. It also requires that different stakeholders, internal and external to the institution, are involved in this process. This chapter presents some options to consider and includes evaluations that can be used for face-to-face, blended and online programmes.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation



Chapter 10: Monitoring and Evaluation

At various points in time programmes need to be monitored and evaluated formally by both internal and external colleagues/peers/students/alumni. In addition, programme teams may have their own professional or other programme monitoring processes.

An evaluation strategy

Programme evaluation should occur:

- throughout the programme;
- using multiple methods; and
- By multiple stakeholders.

Many informal processes for monitoring programme success, such as informal student feedback, are very valuable but rarely captured in documentation. These can give a valuable contribution to the monitoring process if evidenced more accurately. Lyons, as early as 1998, suggested that programme teams can gather such evidence into a course narration/reflection or summary.

Evaluation at programme (or stage level) does not necessarily equal the sum of the module evaluations and requires some special attention in order to gain the full picture, i.e. assessment overload across the full programme. In addition, although student evaluation is very common at module level, programme evaluation also requires the views of those who have done the full programme, such as recent graduate students and of those who have an invested interest in the outcomes of the programme. These could include staff/faculty, employers, professional bodies, librarians, educational technologists, etc.

There are broader considerations for evaluation at Institutional level, for example: institutional costs and investment in the programme; technology; staff time; choice of technology; staff training needs; student access and inclusion; ethical issues; pedagogical models; copyright, etc...

Some core principles /procedures of programme evaluation

There are some common core principles when considering evaluation of face-to-face, blended or online programmes:

- The programme should be evaluated as far as possible by multiple methods, i.e. student questionnaires, group discussions, interviews, peers (colleagues) evaluation, self-evaluation and self-reflection. This increases the reliability and validity of the process
- Evaluation should be on-going and the iterative nature of the evaluation should make the process more efficient as the feedback is used to continuously improve the process
- Cross comparisons across programmes are often less useful, than comparisons from year to year of the same programme
- Examples of changes made to the programme from the previous year's process should be highlighted to students
- Care should be taken not to overload students or staff with questionnaires/interviews/focus groups in the same week/day.

Evaluating online or blended programmes

Many of the frameworks used to evaluate face-to-face programmes can be used with online or blended programmes. However, some frameworks and tools have been designed with these types of programmes in mind and I present a few of these in this section. They can be used in conjunction with many of the other methods. Some of the tools have been adapted for online use, for example, there is an online version of the [nominal group technique](#).

[\(Pappas, 2012\)](#).outlines that evaluation of online programme enables us: to determine the quality, effectiveness and continuous improvement of eLearning; understand the pros and cons of the eLearning modules or programmes; and make improvements (Pappas, 2012).

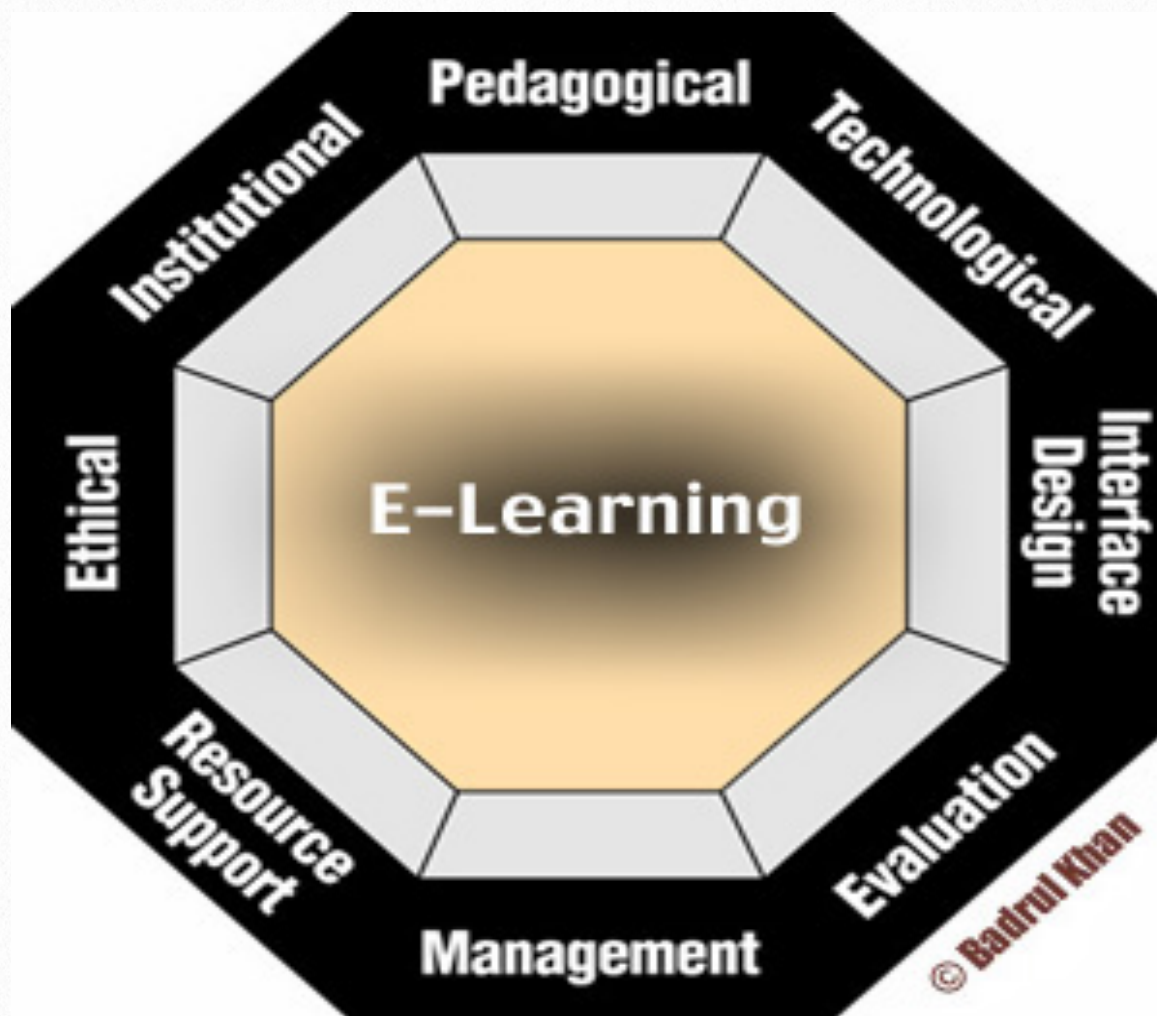
He also reinforces that it can should happen

- Before the eLearning (needs assessment) to plan eLearning
- During the eLearning (formative evaluation) to make improvements, and
- After the eLearning (summative evaluation) to determine outcomes ([Pappas, 2012](#)).

There are many dimensions to eLearning that can be evaluated, for example, Khan's (2005, 2013) [Eight Dimensional Elearning Framework](#) gives a comprehensive representation of the key areas for evaluation.

Figure 10.1 - Khan 's Eight Dimensional Framework (2005) .

[Khan \(2013\) with permission](#)



When looking at the bigger picture, some of the following give a wider perspective on eLearning for evaluation /quality assurance purposes:

- Ten Principles for Successful eLearning, International Association for Distance Learning;
- Shelton (2011) did a recent review of some of these frameworks;
- EADTU (2012): From a European perspective, E-excellent provides a new manual setting some benchmarks for quality of eLearning at institutional level;
- Lorillard and Ljubojevic (2013) have written extensively around the evaluation of eLearning designs;
- A very comprehensive web-page on evaluating eLearning can be seen on the University of Warwick website. This website addresses many research methodologies that might be suited to different questions.

As mentioned earlier, when evaluating a face-to-face, blended or fully online programme, the views and data from a wider group of stakeholders and approaches are needed across the timelines of the programme.

Table 10.1 highlights some key approaches at different points in times and this chapter will be structured by these timelines, i.e. end of programme, end of year/stage, module and on-going approaches.

Table 10.1 -Overview of a Programme Evaluation Strategy (examples of data)

	End of Programme	End of year/ Stage	Module	Ongoing throughout program
Students	Standardised student evaluations, i.e. ISSE, NSSE, Alumni feedback,	Stage evaluation	Standardised student evaluations, mid-unit feedback	Student-staff committees, student representatives, Student union
	Focus groups, nominal group technique, interviews.			
Peer/Self staff	Peer for self review questionnaires, Programme boards.	End stage questionnaires	Peer for self review questionnaires	External examiner reports, staff meetings, informal conversation, employer feedback
Other data (i.e. grades, data analytics)	Grades, GPA, employment data,	Grades, retention rates, etc	VLE engagement data	Pass rates, etc.

End of Programme Evaluation

Student Standardised Programme Evaluations

NSSE and AUSSE

The [National Survey of Student Engagement \(NSSE\)](#) has been in use in the US and other countries since 2000. Whereas in Australia and New Zealand, the tool that is extensively used since 2007 is the [Australasian Survey of Student Engagement \(AUSSE\)](#). This tool was based on the NSSE. Both surveys are based on the idea of evaluating the student engagement at College/University, including the curriculum and extra-curricula activities. The [AUSSE website](#) defines student engagement as:

students' involvement in activities and conditions that are linked with high-quality learning. A key assumption is that learning outcomes are influenced by how an individual participates in educationally purposeful activities. While students are seen to be responsible for constructing their own knowledge, learning is also seen to depend on institutions and staff generating conditions that stimulate student involvement. (AUSSE, 2015)

The findings from these surveys are reported back to the institutions and have been used, for example: to measure quality; provide information on the learning process; attract and retain students; change student engagement; and assist in the management of resources.

Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE)

The key student programme evaluation in Ireland is now the [Irish Survey of Student Engagement \(ISSE, 2014\)](#). This is an Irish tool, based on the AUSSE, that is pitched at evaluating a programme. It draws on students' views on engagement in their programme. It is completed at end of 1st year, final year undergraduate and at the end of postgraduate study. It was devised for developmental purposes, not for benchmarking. The score can be compared to similar disciplines but the results are anonymous. More than 27,000 students from 30 Irish higher education institutions took part during February – March 2015.

The survey ‘is managed as a collaborative partnership. It is co-sponsored by the Higher Education Authority (HEA), institutions’ representative bodies (Institutes of Technology Ireland, IOTI, and the Irish Universities Association, IUA) and the Union of Students in Ireland (USI)’ <http://studentsurvey.ie/wordpress/about-the-survey/>

Its purpose is to assist institutions and their students to improve their programmes based on the views of the students. It is divided into engagement and outcomes categories, or indices (See Table 10.2). The results are made available to institutions and a general annual national report is available online.

Table 10.2 - The Indices in the ISSE

Engagement Indices	Outcomes Indices
Academic Challenge	Higher Order Thinking
Active Learning	General Learning Outcomes
Student-staff Interactions	General Development Outcomes
Enriching Educational Experiences	Career Readiness
Supportive Learning Environment	Overall Satisfaction
Work Integrated Learning	

The Course Experience Questionnaire (Ramsden, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c; Wilson et al, 1997)

This questionnaire is used internationally. It was designed and is frequently used in Australia and the UK. It measures graduates’ views on the entire programme. It contains the following scales: Good Teaching Scale; Clear Goals and Standards; Appropriate Assessment Scale; Appropriate Workload Scale. Other versions also included, for example, a Generic Skills Scale; Intellectual Motivation Scale; Student Support Scale.

The theoretical construction and the practical application of the CEQ are not without their critics. Some argue that the focus of the CEQ is too narrow as measure of the entirety of the student experience. Since its original development as a proxy measure of quality of student learning, the CEQ has been used for a range of purposes, some very different than for what it was in-

tended, i.e. for determining institutional funding and use by third parties to construct league tables (Niland, 1999). There is some evidence that aspects of the CEQ may not be well suited to 'unconventional' teaching and learning environments, such as problem-based learning (Lyon & Hendry, 2002). Nevertheless, the CEQ remains a widely used measure of student quality of learning (see <http://www.deakin.edu.au/itl/pd/tl-modules/scholarly/setu-ceq/setu-ceq-05.php>)

There are various versions of the questionnaire. In addition to a likert scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree, it usually has some open ended questions. Wilson et al. (1997) describe that the tool is best used for: intermittent planned use; as a programme evaluation; for summative purposes; and cautious contextualised comparisons across programmes and institutions.

Student Focus Groups and Nominal Group Techniques

To balance the more quantitative data gathered by standardised student evaluations, it is useful to use more qualitative approaches. Two very common qualitative approaches to gather student feedback at the end of a programme are the *student focus group* and the *nominal group technique*. Both of these methods strengthen the student voice in the programme feedback process and can allow for a more detailed understanding of the strengths and weakness of the programme. In a recent article on these two approaches, the focus group is described as a '*a face-to-face small-group technique in order to explore perceptions of given topics*' whereas the nominal group technique is a structured face-to-face group method for achieving group consensus (Varga-Atkins, McIsaac & Willis, 2015, p2). Whereas the focus group can give rich data, the nominal group technique provides consensus and a useful ranking of issues, which can then be actioned.

The steps in carrying out a nominal group technique are as follows:

- Students are presented with a question. This can be general or specific. Alternatively, participants can be asked to state the problem or issue they feel is most important.
- Each individual member of the group is asked to write down their own response to the set question. If they have more than one response then they should be asked to rank them in order of importance. Discussion is not permitted at this stage - which should last for about 10 minutes.
- Participants form groups of 6 - 10 and elect a leader. Alternatively, a leader may be chosen by the teacher and may be an 'outsider'. These groups pool their responses to form a composite list. At this stage there is still no discussion and responses must not be criticised or edited in any way. Individuals may make additional responses but this must not be allowed to develop into a discussion. The aim is to compile as large a list if possible. This stage is likely to take at least 45 minutes.
- In the same groups, the leader takes the group through its list of responses making sure that everyone understands what they all mean. Again, no discussion is allowed but the list may be altered for the sake of clarity.
- In the same groups, each participant ranks the top five problems or issues by assigning 5 points to their most important perceived problem and 1 point the least important of their top five.
- In the same groups, the results are tallied by adding the points for each problem or issue. The problem or issue with the highest number is the most important one for that group.
- The same groups discuss the results and generate a final ranked list of five responses which will be reported to plenary.
- In plenary, the groups come together and the ranked lists of responses are pooled. Overlapping items can be combined or composited. A second 5 point voting system is operated. The outcome is an overall ranking of issues / responses which reflects the concerns of the whole group.
- Participants are asked to brainstorm possible future actions (e.g. changes in the course) that should follow. These are recorded.

Varga-Atkins, McIsaac and Willis (2015) provide a useful visual overview of these two approaches and they describe how they combined the focus groups and nominal group techniques approaches. This, they believe, combined the advantages of the detailed fo-

cus group and the prioritised and quantitative ranking produced by the nominal group technique.

In addition, many staff are trying out nominal group techniques online, for example, [McIsaac & Varga-Atkins, at the University of Liverpool](#)

In order to strengthen the student group voice in a curriculum revision exercise, we also used a similar student participatory technique called *PRA (Participatory Research and Action)*. Our process used one method from the PRA approach method described as 'Pie charts'. We were also attempting to encourage student groups to negotiated the weighting of the issues and, based on these, to set actions with the staff on how to, where possible, to address them. Our technique is written up in [O'Neill & McMahon \(2012\)](#).



Figure 10.2 - An Example of a Negotiated Pie-chart by One Student Group.

Staff Peer and Self Assessment of the Programme

It is from the eLearning literature that you can come across many guidelines or tools that assist staff to self or peer monitor their programmes. These activities can be done either in the design phase or when revising a programme. When exploring tools that assist staff to monitor the quality of the online or blended program, we came across some international tools that assisted staff in this process (O'Neill & Cashman, 2015a, 2015b). There are many common themes across these tools, which map to the key area of programme design as laid out in this eBook, i.e. context, philosophy and models (Table 10.3).

Table 10.3 - Common Themes and Tools to Assist Staff in Peer and Self Reviewing Programmes (O'Neill & Cashman, 2015a)

Themes O'Neill & Cashman, 2015	Programme: Common components	References (cited in Sheldon, 2010)
Context	Institution support for programme ^{4, 6} ; technology support for programme (including VLE); institutional policies for on-line; diverse student group; scale and cost effectiveness ³ ; funding ⁸	1. OLC Quality Scorecard 2. Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (2001)
Philosophy and Models	transparent values; appropriate curriculum models;	3. Bate's ACTIONS Model of Quality (2000)
Outcomes	higher order ¹³ , career readiness; research information retrieval skills; aligned with teaching and learning activities;	4. Frydenberg's quality standards in e-learning, (2002)
Organisation and Structure	sequence; coherence; development of digital literacy skills; interface design ¹⁰	5. Sloan consortium's 5 pillar of quality, (2002)
Teaching and Learning Strategies	active learning across the programme; interactivity ⁵ ; access and inclusion strategies across the programme	6. Lee and Dziuban's Quality Assurance Strategy, (2002)
Assessment & Feedback Strategies	clear assessment policies; assessment criteria; feedback policies; authentic assessment; timely feedback; self-monitoring;	7. Lockhart and Lacy's Assessment Model, (2002)
Support and Documentation	Staff training in technologies ⁶ ; staff support; student support for digital literacy; student orientation; student handbook; clear documentation, access to the learning materials ⁵	8. CHEA's accreditation and quality assurance study (2002)
Evaluation	Student and faculty satisfaction ⁵ ; evaluation process in situ; retention rates ⁷ ;	9. Osika's concentric model (2004)
		10. Khan's eight dimensions of e-learning framework
		11. Haroff and Valentine's six-factor solution, 2006
		12. Chaney Eddy Droman Glessner Green Lara Alecios Quality Indicators, 2009
		13. ISSE

One example of these tools is the OLC Quality Score card, see [O'Neill & Cashman, 2015a](#) for more examples.

The OLC Quality Score Card.

The US *Institute for Higher Education Policy* study, titled *Quality on the Line: Benchmarks for Success in Internet-Based Distance Education (2000)*, was used as a starting point for this tool. Building on this work, Shelton (2010) carried out a six round Delphi study, using 43 administrators of online education programmes from a variety of institutions in higher education. She developed 70 quality indicators. Each quality indicator has a potential range of 0-3 points, with a perfect score on the scorecard resulting in 210 points. The sections in this tool are divided up into:

- Institutional Support
- Technology Support
- Course Development / Instructional Design
- Course Structure
- Teaching & Learning
- Social and Student Engagement
- Faculty Support
- Student Support
- Evaluations & Assessment

It is available to be used, at a cost, from the OLC ([Online Learning Consortium](#)).

O'Neill and Cashman (2015b) are devising a similar tool for use in the Irish context for development purposes; the initial finding on this were presented at ITLA conference in 2015 (O'Neill and Cashman, 2015b).

Other data gathered at the end of a programme.

There has been a growing use of data analytics to inform the programme team. This data can assist with understanding, for example, students engagement with the programme. In addition, the views of graduates, alumni and employers have a particular role to play at this point, i.e. The end of the programme. For example, graduate destination surveys are becoming more valuable to feedback into the design of the programme. See [HEA \(2015\) What do Graduates Do](#) as an example of this approach in Ireland. More routine data gathered at the end of the programme can also provide a

picture of the programme's progress, in terms of, for example, students grades, failure rates, awards and achievements, GPA. These all add to our understanding of the programme.

End of Year/Stage Evaluation

An interim approach to programme evaluation is stage (or end of year) evaluation. Most of the standardised and non-standardised questionnaires to students, noted earlier, are designed for the full programme and not for one year of the programme (with the exception of the ISSE/AUSSE for year 1). However, *Student Focus Groups* (Gibbs et al, 1988) and *The Nominal Group Techniques*, along with other more qualitative methods, could be also used for stage evaluation. (See Also Varga-Atkins, McIsaac & Willis, 2015).

Another approach that can be useful at stage level is the use of some questionnaires that compare across modules. Appendix 5 gives an example of one that can be used to give an indicator of how modules relate to each other and asks some open questions of student experience of the year/stage, i.e. *The Comparative Evaluation of Modules at Stage (Year) Level*. This approach is more useful than asking students individually about, for example, workload in each module. Another approach that could be used for student feedback at end of stage/year is an adapted version of the H Form (Guy & Inglis, 1999). This approach combines a quantitative score, i.e. 1-10, with some qualitative comments based on that figure.

Figure 10.3 - An Adapted Version of Guy and Inglis (1999) H-Form for Year/Stage Evaluation

How did you find this stage/programme?

Why did you not give it 10? (negatives)

Group Agreed score out of 10
(mark X)

Why did you not give it 0? (positives)

0

10

Suggestions for improvement, most important first

H-Form Adapted from Guy, S., and A. Inglis. 1999. Tips for trainers: introducing the 'H' form – a method for monitoring and evaluation. *Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) notes* February 1999. Lon: IIED.

Similar to end of programme, other data that can be useful at the end of a stage/year is progression rates, grades, numbers of student on modules, failure rates on particular modules, etc.

Module Evaluation

Student Evaluations of Modules

The most common form of evaluation in higher education is student feedback on their modules. This makes a valuable contribution, but care must be taken that the sum of these evaluations does not equate to a programme evaluation. In Ireland there are many different evaluation of module questionnaires and there is no national module

survey currently. Some institutions however have developed their own evaluations for module level. For example, UCD uses an [anonymous online module evaluation](#) with seven core institutional questions, and an additional six (optional and free choice) questions added by the module co-ordinators. The process also encourages staff to ‘close the feedback loop’ so students are familiar with the changes made as a result of their own or other students’ feedback. This is an important step to increase the low response rates associated with multiple module feedback from students.

There are some international standardised module evaluations available, for example:

Student Evaluations of Educational Quality (SEEQ)

The *SEEQ* (Marsh 1982) is one of the best researched student feedback instruments. It is designed to measure factors including: Learning/Value; Instructor enthusiasm; Organization; Individual rapport; Group interaction; Breadth of coverage. The *SEEQ* has been shown to reliably discriminate between teachers and to provide valid measure based on a number of indicators of effective teaching (Marsh, 1987).

Module Experience Questionnaire (MEQ)

A version of the *Course Experience Questionnaire* (Ramsden, 1991). The *Module Experience Questionnaire* has been used successfully in the UK (Lucas at al, 1997) to measure differences in students’ learning responses to the design of individual modules (in contrast with the use of the *Course Experience Questionnaire* in Australia where it is used to measure students responses to entire programmes). The *MEQ* contains the following scales for module evaluation: Good Teaching; Independence; Appropriateness of workload; Appropriateness of assessment; Deep approach; and Surface Approach.

In the UK the main module evaluation is the *The National Student Survey (NSS)* (see <http://www.thestudentsurvey.com/>). There are 23 core questions that relate to the following subheadings:

- teaching on my course
- assessment and feedback

- academic support
- organisation and management
- learning resources
- personal development
- overall satisfaction. (<http://www.thestudentsurvey.com/>)

See the most recent review of the National Student Survey ([HEFCE, 2014](#))

Mid Unit Feedback

One of the criticisms of end of module feedback, is that it is too late to change or address issues that arise during the module. Gathering students' views on the module while the module is still in progress allows student to have their voices heard for the module in which they are currently engaged. One such questionnaire was designed by James Wisdom and give some advice on how to carry out such a process during the module , see [Mid-unit Questionnaire](#)

Staff Peer and Self Assessment of the Module

There are some useful module design guides arising from the blended and online literature to assist staff in self and peer reviewing their module designs. These are collated in the reference list in Table 10.4 and are linked to common themes for evaluating the design of a module.

Table 10.4 - Common Themes and Tools for Blended and Online Module Design (O'Neill & Cashman, 2015b)

Themes O'Neill & Cashman, 2015	Module: Common components	References
Learning Outcomes	Level; alignment with programme outcomes; clearly defined; measurable	1. Quality Matters, 2. Online Course Review Rubric, Southern Mississippi
Design & Organisation	Learning approach (also referred to as 'instruction method' or 'T&L methods'); structure & sequence of learning activities; alignment of T&L activities and assessment; learning activities are authentic; ...	3. Quality Assurance Checklist, Central Michigan University 4. Distance Education Course Rubric, Craven Community College
Assessment & Feedback	Authenticity; timely responsive & varied feedback; criteria setting; guidelines; volume; variety; self / peer assessment	5. Teaching with Sakai Innovation Award Evaluation Rubric 6. Rubric for Online Instruction, CSU Chico
Orientation	Student facing; guidelines / instructions / transparent; welcome message staff & students; netiquette; minimum technological standards; prerequisite knowledge	7. Online Learning Course Quality Guide, BYU Idaho 8. Quality Online Course Initiative Rubric & Checklist, University of Illinois
Student & teacher Interaction	Expectations; teacher/student roles; student-student interactions; teacher-student interactions; learning community; student-centred learning; engagement	9. Blackboard Exemplary Course Program Rubric 10. Coulter Faculty Centre Online Course Assessment Tool (OCAT) and Peer Assessment Process
Instructional Materials	Accessibility; appropriate use of media; benchmark quality of presentation; reliable; citation of third party materials	11. Online Course Evaluation Project (OCEP), Monterey Institute for Technology and Education
Learner Support	Staff contact details; academic support; technical support; information literacy; online library	12. Online Course Assessment Tool (OCAT) and Peer Assessment Process, Coulter Faculty Centre
VLE Interface Design	Navigation & clear organisation; access; link; accessibility; consistency of presentation	13. Online Course Quality Rubric, Utah State
Evaluation	Student evaluation, staff peer/self evaluation	14. Blended Course Peer Review Form, University of Central Florida 15. 5-star online course review, University of West Georgia

Some examples of common tools used to peer review the design of a blended/online module are listed below:

The Blended Learning Toolkit

The Blended Learning Toolkit was prepared by the University of Central Florida (UCF) and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) with funding from the Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC). (UCF, 2015)

It is available under commons copyright and contains the following components:

- *Best practices, strategies, models, and course design principles.*
- *Two prototype blended course templates in key core general education disciplines: Composition and Algebra.*

- *Directions and suggestions for applying the Toolkit resources to create original blended courses other than Composition and Algebra.*
- *Train-the-trainer materials for faculty development.*
- *Assessment and data collection protocols, including survey instruments and standards.*
- *Research and literature references related to blended learning ([UCF, 2015](#))*

The Quality Online Course Initiative

The Illinois Online Network ‘partnered with 2-year and 4-year, public and private educational institutions in Illinois to create and utilize a quality online course rubric to improve and evaluate online courses’. [*Illinois Online Network*](#)

The rubric is divided into the [following categories:](#)

- Instructional Design;
- Communication, Interaction and Collaboration;
- Student Evaluation and Assessment;
- Learning Support and Resources;
- Web Design and
- Course Evaluation.

Blackboard Exemplary Course Programme Rubric (BECPR)

This evaluation is used for courses/modules in Blackboard.

Ongoing monitoring throughout the programme

Given the length and complexity of a programme, it is commonplace to have more on-going monitoring processes with multiple stakeholders. Many programmes have student-staff committees that address ongoing issues that arise in the programme. Most institutions have student class representatives on these and other University committees. There is a growing movement to also involve students in the design of pro-

grammes, both before and during its implementation (Cook-Sather, Bovril & Felten, 2014).

The external examiner system, particularly in the UK and Ireland, is one of the most regular external monitoring processes, albeit limited to that of a programme's assessment system. In addition, programmes (or their Schools) may undergo quality assurance processes that evaluate the overall quality of the programme. However, many of the changes done at programme level can occur as a result of ongoing staff meetings and informal conversations. Whereas this iterative approach can be very valid, care is needed that the programme does not become disjointed and that changes align with both the programme's educational philosophy, models and outcomes. There is also a danger in this more iterative approach that new content and concepts are added into a curriculum and nothing is taken out. This has been referred to as 'curriculum creep' (Walsh, 2014).

In Conclusion

As a programme is a complex set of activities and as a curriculum is 'a dynamic and interactive process of teaching and learning' (Fraser & Bosanquet, 2006), then its evaluation strategy needs to be systematic and multifaceted. It is important that there is a holistic overview at key points in time on how the programme is experienced by the different stakeholders. Graduates who have recently experienced the full programme are a very valuable resource in this regard. However, staff and other stakeholders are also important contributors to the evaluation process. There are some key quantitative tools that can give some reliable data, such as the ISEE and the NSSE, and these are usefully balanced by the more qualitative approaches such as staff peer review, student focus groups and nominal group techniques.