



IRISH PLANNING INSTITUTE

EDUCATIONAL GUIDELINES

BACKGROUND

The Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Institute imposes the following educational obligations on the Institute:-

- (a) to advance the art and science of urban, rural and regional planning in Ireland for the benefit of the community;
- (b) to raise the standard of planning practice and implementation in Ireland;
- (c) to encourage and elevate the technical and general knowledge of persons engaged in or about to engage in the planning profession;
- (d) to protect and improve the status of the planning profession in Ireland.

The Institute's policy in relation to the education requirements for election to Corporate Membership is:-

“It shall be the policy of the Institute that recognised schools of planning shall be within a University or within an Institute of Third Level Education of comparable status”.

The Institute, when it was established in 1975, recognised the following courses:-

- (a) The Town Planning Diploma and Master's Degree courses of the Department of Regional and Urban Planning, University college Dublin (N.U.I.)
- (b) The Town Planning Diploma and M.Sc. (professional) courses of Queen's University, Belfast.
- (c) The former Town Planning Diploma course (1967 – 1969) of the College of Technology, Bolton Street (now Dublin Institute of Technology).

The Institute is empowered to recognise other planning courses from time to time.

In addition to the above, the Institute is obliged, as an Irish regulating body, to have regard to the European Communities General Directive on the Mutual Recognition of Diplomas (89/84 EC). It is policy to co-operate with any recognised school of planning in the formulation, organisation and completion of any Aptitude Tests or other validation arrangements required under this Directive.

The purpose of these guidelines is to set out the requirements of the Institute for the recognition, by way of accreditation, of new planning schools and/or new courses in existing recognised planning schools, and to provide a set of criteria by which continued accreditation of existing recognised courses may be carried out.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

In order to meet the requirement of the Institute, it is necessary for a planning school to comply with the following general education principles:-

- (a) To ensure that those accepted into recognised planning schools have a sufficiently high standard of academic achievement and/or experience (as appropriate) in a field considered relevant to the management of the environment.
- (b) To ensure that graduates from recognised schools have a proper and adequate knowledge and understanding of current planning practice in Ireland, and of current international planning practice.
- (c) To ensure that graduates from recognised schools can apply the planning process in the fields of activity where employment is available to Irish Planners.
- (d) To establish a core of professional planners capable of advancing the research, knowledge and practice of physical planning in Ireland.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Institute adopts and considers as its key requirements the Common Core for Planning Education and Training, as adopted by the European Council of Town Planners (E.C.T.P.) in 1995. [This is set out in Appendix 1.]

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

1. Course Duration

The Institute considers that the minimum period of study to attain the required standards is:-

- A full-time under-graduate course of not less than four academic years' duration with appropriate practical work/experience.
- A full-time post-graduate course of not less than two academic years' duration.
- A part-time post-graduate course of equivalent to an aggregate duration of two academic years, or such lesser period as the Institute considers appropriate where the intake consists of mid-career/experienced practitioners in other disciplines relevant to planning.

The course duration should have regard to the basic qualifications and/or experiences of individual students. At all times, the duration of the course should orientate itself to the production of graduates confident in the basic components of planning practice in Ireland.

2. Course Composition

A planning school should at all times have a sufficient number of suitably-qualified full-time academic staff to guarantee a comprehensive and relevant planning course. In this regard options for specialised studies should therefore be carefully monitored.

It is not the intention of the Institute to require specific allocations of times to particular subjects. This matter can be left to the discretion of the school as long as the overall guidelines are achieved to the satisfaction of the Institute. In drawing up timetables, it is accepted that allowance should be made for teaching staff to keep themselves up-to-date in all aspects of the subjects taught.

Research within the planning school is to be encouraged generally, but should not be undertaken by staff members in such a way as to limit the duration or intensity of their teaching work and staff-student contact.

3. Course Philosophy

It should be the aim of the planning course to produce planners capable of developing conceptual and practical skills.

The graduates should have a comprehensive understanding of the needs and aspirations of the society they serve. The professional planner is identified by the ability to analyse, interpret and synthesise a wide range of information and the ability to translate this into practical policy and implementation proposals.

The graduates should be instilled with a strong ethical and professional approach, and an understanding of the needs both of the individual and of society, and of the role of planning in achieving these needs.

It is important to realise that planning education produces not only professionally-qualified town / spatial planners, but that it also produces people with a wide range of skills which can be and are applied to a wide variety of employment roles in central and local government and within the private sector.

4. Planning Law, Administration and Management

Irish Planning law should be fully covered, as should Irish Environmental law, together with related legislation affecting the legal and administrative practice. In particular, the administration of local, regional and central government in the country (both north and south) should be adequately covered. An appropriate knowledge of law and administration in other European countries should also be included. Particular emphasis should be placed on the legal implementation of planning policy, including enforcement.

5. Regional Planning and Settlement Patterns.

The course should deal in detail with the various options for regional planning with particular reference to the state of planning at this level in Ireland. The inter-relationship between national, regional and local planning and administrative links between the levels should be discussed in the context not just of governance but also of the economic development and population of the country. Graduates should also be fully conversant with the situation in Northern Ireland and in the U.K. The history and evolution of various settlement patterns in different cultures should be stressed in order to promote an understanding of relationships, causes and consequences.

6. Rural Planning

This course should reflect the particular rural heritage of the country and its agricultural base, changes in rural land use and the natural environment. Water pollution, afforestation, conservation, landscape, access to the countryside and coast, interface between urban and rural planning, energy, transportation and communications are considered to be essential components of rural planning.

7. Urban Metropolitan Planning

The course should particularly reflect the emergence and growth of Ireland's metropolitan areas, their inter-relationships, the administrative and functional linkages and frameworks. The course should deal with the issues of national and regional spatial planning, property market dynamics and development economics and with concepts of city growth, restraint and sustainable settlement patterns.

8. Planning Practice

The course should give comprehensive coverage of planning practice in both parts of Ireland. This should include the inter-relationship of practice at the various levels, Development Plan preparation, Environmental Impact Assessment, public participation, the appeal and reference procedures as well as compulsory purchase acquisition, compensation and arbitration procedures. Development Control is seen by the Institute as an essential element in planning practice and all graduates should have a comprehensive knowledge of this process and the role of the professional planner within it.

9. Design/Project Work

All graduates should be given a full understanding in design, including architectural and graphical, and a reasonable competence in drawing and map work. Graduates should have first-hand experience of the analysis of planning application drawings, including via electronic means.

Projects should be carefully selected to give full coverage to the range of subjects taught within the overall course. Timing of projects should be organised so that all of the relevant lectures have been delivered prior to the initiation of the project so that maximum benefit will accrue. There should be a reasonable proportion of individual to group project work. Group projects should aim to familiarise graduates with working in inter-disciplinary settings. Individual projects should have a considerable element of decision-making and presentation built in.

10. Planning Techniques

The planning school should keep up-to-date with modern technology, as applied to planning. Formal classwork/lectures should give graduates a good understanding of forecasting and analysis techniques currently used in planning practice, together with a general knowledge of techniques of a more academic relevance. Training should be given in presentation, communications, negotiation and participation techniques. Workshop and project work in techniques should be provided in addition to lectures.

The planning school should have available to students all of the necessary equipment, including ICT, to enable them to carry out their academic work and to become familiar with the use of such equipment in planning practice.

11. Staff/Student Relationships

The Institute considers that it is important to take into account the general maturity and academic achievements of the students. Such students should therefore be involved as of right in course development, and structures should be provided within the planning school to facilitate staff-student dialogue on a regular basis, at group/class level as well as on an individual level.

Adequate provision should be made in staff timetables and contact time to facilitate staff monitoring of theses and dissertation work carried out by students as part of their course.

Conclusion

The Institute wishes to emphasise that it is a professional rather than an academic body. Its accreditation procedures and requirements therefore reflect its role in the promotion of planning and the planning profession in Ireland. It should not be seen as giving academic recognition to courses, which is a separate process that is necessary within the general educational area. In accreditation matters, the Institute's primary responsibility is to ensure high professional standards, so that graduates are equipped with the knowledge, skills and values required for planning practice in Ireland.

An outline of the accreditation procedures / visiting arrangements that will generally be applied by the Institute are set out in Appendix 2.

APPENDIX 1.

The Common Core for Planning Education and Training

(Supplement to Appendix B of the European Town Planners' Charter)

ECTP defines the minimum core of education and training needed for the planning profession. This common core is an integral part of Appendix B of the European Town Planners' Charter, and a fundamental part of the planning profession in Europe.

The language and order used are formulated in such a way that any European planning school can interpret the common core as appropriate to its own educational requirements.

1. Environmental Context

- Perception and appreciation of the physical, natural, human, social, economic and built environments.
- Knowledge and understanding of the various mechanisms involved in local development, and in creation and use of space, society, the development of the natural environment, the principles of sustainable development and knowledge of local traditions.
- Understanding of the needs of the individual.

2. Theory and Methodology of Planning

- Planning history and philosophy; theory; stakeholders' interests, notions of space and time.
- Urban policies, town and country planning, city planning: parameters and methodologies, application, synthesis, management, evaluation.
- Selection and design of tools applicable to urban processes and strategies of agents.
- Knowledge of potential contribution from other disciplines and appropriate methods for evaluation of public policy.
- Research training.
- Understanding the dynamic processes underlying the development of human settlements.

3. Institutional Framework

- Planning law and relevant systems of government and planning administration at national and local level; mechanisms operating in the local economy; significance and legal framework of local practice, understanding and critical analysis of differences between countries.

- Knowledge and understanding of interrelationships between various levels: national, regional, local and their particular characteristics.
- General knowledge of statistical sources, main financial context and indicators of finite resources (human, physical, economic).

4. Professional Practice and Techniques

- Demonstrate the particular importance of planning methods, definition of needs, projection and anticipation of future needs.
- Strategies. Project formulation and simulation. Evaluation of possible results.
- Ability to work with inter-disciplinary teams, public relations, conflict resolution, fundamentals of applied law.
- Management and co-ordination of the planning process.
- Plan preparation and adoption. Site planning and plan-making.
- Understanding aesthetic values. Basis of the design process; urban design; town plans; comprehensive development plans.
- Communication techniques: form, content and method of communication with related professions, people and government. Communication methods and skills (spoken, graphic, written, computer).

5. Professional Matters

- Demonstration of knowledge, approach and competence of professional planners.
- The planner's responsibility, ethics, responsibility, hierarchy.
- Practice guidelines.
- Codes of professional conduct.
- Promotion of professional standards, professional organisation.

Text adopted by the General Assembly of the ECTP in Athens, November 1995.

APPENDIX 2 Accreditation Procedures

Initiation of Accreditation Process

The initial approach for the first-time accreditation of a planning course comes from the educational institution itself, and will not be at the initiative of the Institute. Where review or renewal of accreditation is envisaged, this can be done at the initiative of the Institute, or through a request from the educational institution.

New courses can be considered when the first intake of students are nearing the end of the course. The Institute may, following the accreditation visit in such circumstances, decide to accredit the course from that point, or may allow retrospective accreditation of the course where it is satisfied that the course is fully compliant with the Institute's Educational Guidelines.

Duration of Accreditation

Accreditation is generally given for a period of years, not exceeding ten, but may be for a shorter period where considered necessary by the Council of the Institute. Shorter periods of accreditation can be awarded if there are aspects of a course that the Institute considers need to be improved, or if the Institute considers that inadequate resources (e.g. staff, financial, teaching time etc.) are being provided to the course.

Accreditation Team

The Institute Council will appoint an Accreditation Team, which shall consist of not less than three members of the Institute. At least one of these will generally be a member of the Council of the Institute. None of the members of the Team will have any direct connection with the planning school / course being accredited. The role of the Accreditation Team is to assess the course on behalf of the Institute and to report to the Technical and Education Committee / Council of the Institute on the matter. The decision as to whether or not a course merits accreditation, and on what conditions, is ultimately for the Council of the Institute.

Contact Member

One member of the Accreditation Team, or, in exceptional circumstances a separate appointee of the Council, will act as Contact Member, and will liaise with the representatives of the educational institution in relation to the accreditation process. He/she will be responsible for the logistical arrangements for the visit of the Accreditation Team, and for the provision by the educational institution of documentation.

The Accreditation Visit

The visit of the Accreditation Board will generally be held over a period of one/two days, and will involve meetings with all of the staff of the course, both full-time and part-time. It will also involve separate meetings with the students currently enrolled

in the course, and may also involve meetings with past students/recent graduates. In some cases, the Team may also meet with members of the Institute in private practice who have employed graduates of the course, or who have experience of the course in other ways.

The Team will expect to be supplied with the course documentation, syllabi, lecture timetables etc., in advance of the visit. It will be of assistance to the Accreditation Team if, in addition to the formal course curricula and timetables, documentation from the educational institution can be provided showing how the course in question covers the specific subject areas/headings given in the Educational Guidelines (nos. 3 – 10).

The outline programme for the visit will be agreed with the Contact Member prior to the visit, and should provide the Team with opportunities to do at least the following:-

- to meet with the staff and students;
- to see examples of the students' work, including any project work and any dissertations/theses;
- to see accommodation, computing and library facilities available to the course, and to obtain documentation on the resources available to the course, and likely to be available to the course for the period of accreditation envisaged/sought;
- to consider the research interests and experience of staff, and any opportunities for involving the students/recent graduates in such research.

Generally, the Accreditation Team will prepare its report and will give an initial indication of its draft findings to the representatives of the educational institution, for their comment, prior to finalising its report. This final report, with any such comments, will be provided to the Institute Council, via the Technical and Education Committee. The Council, having considered the matter, will then formally inform the educational institution of the outcome.