NATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE GUIDELINES FOR ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION - HELP OR HINDRANCE IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION

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This paper will outline the nature of a national guideline for quality assurance and standards in architectural education. It will also report on the application of the guidelines in testing the curriculum of the Bachelors and Masters programmes of the Cork Centre for Architectural Education. Finally it will evaluate the robustness of the guidelines in accommodating curriculum change in the context of technology change, by considering the specific case of incorporating into the curriculum, education and training for architects and students aimed at assisting them in contributing to the development of the "intelligent" building.

The author will draw upon recent experience serving on an Expert Committee charged with drawing up guidelines for the Quality Assurance in architectural education in the Republic of Ireland. This work was undertaken at the behest of HETAC, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council, a body established by the Irish government with responsibility for the maintenance of quality and standards in many parts of the third level (post secondary school) education.

The preparation of guidelines on quality and standards in architectural education was timely given some significant changes in the context of professional practice and architectural education in Ireland. The country introduced legislation in 2007, in the Building Act, which protects the title of "architect" and its usage. The professional body, the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland, has been appointed as the agency responsible for the registration of architects within the terms of the new law, and for the accreditation of their training and education. This responsibility also extends to control at the national level, of entry to the profession within the European Union, as defined in "Professional Qualifications" (EU Directive 2005/36). Furthermore, after a prolonged period of unprecedented growth in the construction sector and growth in demand for architectural services, lasting till 2007, the number of architectural schools in the country grew from 2003, from just two, long-established schools in the capital city, Dublin, to a total of five in 2006, with the new schools being distributed across the country.

The new HETAC document attempts to identify the abilities, skills, and knowledge that graduates should achieve at different levels in their architectural education. These guidelines are used as an

index to test the curriculum at the author's own school, the Cork Centre for Architectural Education. The results will be used to evaluate the utility of the HETAC document in evaluating curricula, and in supporting the maintenance of quality, and facilitating innovation.

To investigate the latter issues of innovation and curriculum development, the author will take as a case study, the extent to which the new guidelines encourage, or inhibit the incorporation of curriculum change driven by technology change. Specifically it will examine the application of recommendations for the education of architects and architectural students being developed within the NEMBES project, an Irish Government funded (PRTLI-IV), multi-disciplinary project aimed at developing a Centre of Excellence in Cork for the application of embedded technology in the built environment. This curriculum change is intended to enable architects to contribute to the development of "intelligent" environments through utilising electronic sensors and actuators enabling performance and configurationally changes in built enclosures, in response to environmental parameters and occupant behaviour.