Athlone Institute of Technology

Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report 2019

Based on the reporting period 1 September 2017 – 31 August 2018

The Cyclical Review Process

Part 1

Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures

Overarching institution-level approach and policy for QA (ESG 1.1)

1. Overarching Institution Quality Policy
A brief synopsis of the overarching institution quality policy which sets out the links between QA policy and procedures and the strategy and strategic management of the institution.

Athlone Institute of Technology is a Higher Education Institute which was established in 1970 as Athlone Regional Technical College. It became a self-governing entity in 1993 and underwent a name change by Statutory Order to Athlone Institute of Technology in 1998. The Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) granted the institute delegated authority in 2004 to develop, design and validate its own courses, to conduct examinations, and to confer its own academic awards up to and including Level 9 and a number of Level 10 disciplines.

During the reporting period the Strategic Plan 2014-2018 *Global Focus – Regional Impact* came to conclusion. This was a very successful plan that brought with it a number of notable achievements, for example:

- Sunday Times Institute of Technology of the year 2018.
- ISSE- AIT students most satisfied in Ireland leading in quality of interactions and collaborative learning.
- First Institute of Technology to be awarded College of Sanctuary.
- 94% of the graduate class of 2017 were employed, in training or in further study six months after graduation.
- Software Research Centre wins Horizon 2020 funding in Cyber security.
- Institute applies for Athena Swan Bronze award.
- 1st third level college in Ireland to receive APS accreditation in pharmaceutical sciences.

Planning for the new strategic plan coincided with the HEA strategic dialogue and performance compact. This gave us an opportunity to fully integrate areas of priority and ensure the precision of

future endeavours.   Taking a thematic approach to both the Compact and Strategic Plan has enabled the development of crosscutting themes that reflect national objectives and AIT priorities. In essence the Compact is a subset of our emerging Strategic Plan that sets out our ambition and vision for the next 5 years. Enveloping the 5 core themes with the plan is our commitment to quality culture enhancement and excellence in operation and governance.

The institute's academic, support, and administrative functions contribute to determining the quality of the overall learner experience. In order to assist in the achievement of its mission and vision for the future, the institute has established procedures for quality improvement and quality assurance. The Quality Assurance Manual exemplifies a verifiable expression of that contribution and the institute's academic quality assurance procedures operate at various levels. The Quality Assurance manual details systematic quality assurance procedures for a range of data collection and analysis, identifies the appropriate forum for monitoring the data, and requires both a recording of actions to be taken and a review of the effectiveness of these actions. The institute has developed rigorous procedures to ensure that the quality of courses is maintained and enhanced. These processes are continually monitored, reviewed, and updated in accordance with decisions by AIT's academic council, and in accordance with the requirements of appropriate national agencies. The manual, policies, and procedures for academic quality assurance are stored electronically on a password controlled intranet to facilitate staff access, transparency, and ongoing modifications. This quality assurance information is also made available to learners, prospective students, and the public. Quality assurance related information for learners is provided on the AIT Website.

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/

2. Quality assurance decision-making fora
A brief description of institution-level quality assurance decision-making fora

The responsibilities of the institute's academic council are set out in statute. It is supported in its work by the office of the Vice President Academic & Registrar and by the Quality Office. The academic council delegates responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement to the active academic strategy & quality committee which is chaired by the ViPAR and supported by the Quality Office. The Governing Body takes a particular interest in the quality agenda and periodic reports are made to it, both in writing and through direct presentation.

The Academic Strategy and Quality (ASQ) Committee, which is appointed by Academic Council, has the responsibility for identifying appropriate strategies and developments to facilitate the institute's achievement of its academic development objectives; and advising on the policies, processes, and procedures which impact on the academic standards of education and training which is provided, organised, or procured by the institute.

This committee is a sub-committee of academic council and has responsibilities for the following:

Monitoring and reviewing the institute's access, transfer, and progression policies and considering new or alternative qualification methods for facilitating students access onto institute programmes.

Making recommendations to academic council on the identification, achievement and enhancement of standards for the institute's programmes.

Identifying the requirement for, establishing, monitoring and reviewing procedures for quality assurance for the purpose of further improving and maintaining the quality of education and training which is provided, organised or procured by the institute in accordance with Section 28 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

Actively contributing to the major quality assurance instruments such as institutional and programmatic reviews.

Evaluating at regular intervals and as directed from time to time by academic council of the institute's programmes of education and training in relation to the development, validation and review of programmes; assessment of student performance; ongoing monitoring and evaluation of programmes; evaluation by learners of that programme; and evaluation of services related to that programme.

Recommending strategies relating to all aspects of the institute's strategy for the development of lifelong learning provision across all faculties, departments, and functional sections of the institute. This includes the provision of guidance on collaboration, the establishment of new courses, major changes to existing courses, and graduate programmes.

Leading on all elements relating to learning and teaching and assessment approaches.
Please see link below under the Quality Section of the AIT website to the Institute Committee Structure:

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/ait-organisational-and-management-structure

Confirmation of QA Policy and Procedures

1. Programme Design and Approval (ESG 1.2)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance policy and procedures for the design and approval of new programmes.

Please see link below under the Quality Section of the AIT Website to the Procedures and Guidelines document for the Design, Development, Evaluation and Withdrawal of Taught Programmes at Athlone Institute of Technology.

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/policies-procedures

In keeping with QQI requirements a rigorous and consistent process to the design and review of programmes has been developed and agreed by the relevant stakeholders. This process must be adhered to when developing new programmes within the institute. A detailed process flow chart was devised by the Quality Office which assists programme design teams by outlining the steps involved and can be accessed at the following link on the website:

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/summary-of-new-programme-proposal

In addition, the Quality Office in consultation with the Learning and Teaching Unit devised a Programme Development Support Document and Checklist and Sign-off by the Faculty Heads. This document is a tool to support the programme development process. It aims to give the programme development team (PDT) a guide to the key areas for consideration and inclusion in advance of submitting a programme proposal to the Academic Standards and Quality (ASQ) committee. In addition, it includes a checklist and sign off sheet. A copy of this document can be accessed on the quality section of the AIT website at:

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/summary-of-new-programme-proposal

Finally, external expertise and reference points are also an integral part of programme design and form part of all programme validation panels.

2. Programme Delivery and Assessment (ESG 1.3)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance policies and procedures for the ongoing delivery and assessment of programmes.

Please see link below under the Quality Section of the AIT website which leads to the Institute Policy on Programme Delivery and Assessment.   A link is also provided to the AIT Standards, Assessment and Awards document.

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/policies-procedures

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/standards-assessment-awards

These documents were devised to outline the Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures for the ongoing delivery and assessment of programmes.

3. Research Quality (ESG 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.9)
Links and/or text relating to any specific quality assurance procedures for the design, approval, delivery, assessment and monitoring of research programmes, if they exist.

Quality Assurance for Research

The Procedures and Guidelines for Postgraduate Research document provides a common point of reference for all staff and postgraduate research candidates in the institute and relevant funding agencies. Quality Assurance for research practices in AIT is also influenced by the series of booklets produced by the Irish Universities Quality Board on *'Good Practice', 'In the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Higher Education.*

The Management of Postgraduate Research

Research is managed by many facets, but at its core is the support of the research candidates and their supervisors. As per the institute's statutory frame, the institute has an Academic Council appointed by the Governing body. The Academic Council has appointed a Research, Innovation and Enterprise (R,I&E) sub-committee to advise on, and coordinate, research in the institute. There are

two postgraduate research candidate representatives on this committee (the terms of reference of the group are set out in Appendix 1 of the AIT *Procedures and Guidelines for Postgraduate Research* document. A Postgraduate Review Group (PRG) has been established by the R, I&E Committee to assess and advise on any research postgraduate matter as set out in Appendix II of the *Procedures and Guidelines for Postgraduate Research* document.

A graduate research school is linked to the registration department of the institute and reports directly to the Academic Registrar. It is responsible for the registry of all postgraduate research candidates from admissions to graduation including, periodic reviews, progression, transfers and examinations. It is responsible for postgraduate research policy development, regulations and operational matters. It also works to facilitate the early resolution of any complaints or conflicts that may arise by providing open discussions and clarity with respect to expectations and realities.   The Graduate School is supported by the Academic Registrar, Postgraduate Review Group, the schools and research institutes, and the Office of Research.

Evaluation of the Quality of Programmes and Research Performance

Reviewing and Evaluating Research Applications

The Postgraduate Review Group (PRG) reviews the suitability of all research applications for Masters and PhD programmes.

Research and Professional Development Plan (RPDP)

A RPDP has been developed as a process by which the candidate can manage the development, advancement and completion of his/her research and forms an integral in monitoring progress. The RPDP comprises five main parts, each with its own specific objective to support the successful completion of the research degree:

(a) *Student Summary* – the record of personal details along with details of the programme of research and any funding information.

(b) *Research Plan* - developed in conjunction with the supervisor to reflect intellectual vision and aspirations. It will provide a mechanism for the monitoring of the students' progress and should be updated to reflect progress.

(c) *Professional Development Plan* - enables the student to have a clear understanding of what skills, abilities, competencies and knowledge he/she actually has and should audit skills and identify the

further development of skills by highlighting any future courses necessary to support the successful completion of the research programme.

(d) *Meetings* - involves the formal documentation of regular meetings between the student and their supervisor. Such meetings are key elements in motivating progress, identifying problems early and avoiding indecision

(e) *Achievements - allows* for the recording of the student's entire achievements during his/her research programme at AIT. These can include attending and/or presenting at a conference or seminar, academic tutoring and mentoring, demonstrating of practical classes, poster display, journal publication, organising of event, etc.

Monitoring Research Progress – formal six-monthly progress and satisfaction reports by both candidate and supervisor.

As well as the RPDP and regular progress meetings between supervisor and candidate, both the candidate and each of their supervisors, submit separate formal progress reports to the Research Innovation and Enterprise Committee, through the Postgraduate Research Coordinator and the Postgraduate Review Group. This process is required to take place every six months and is usually carried out in December and June. A report is generated and presented to the PRG for consideration and recommendations. The candidate and supervisor each receive a copy of each other's progress reports and the reports are filed in the Postgraduate Research Office. Full details on the monitoring of the candidate's progress are outlined in Section 7.3 of the *'Procedures and Guidelines for Postgraduate Research at the Institute'*.

Stage 1 Progression Report

All postgraduate research candidates must comply with this Stage 1 procedure in order to progress with their studies. The purpose of the exercise is to enable postgraduate candidates to demonstrate that they have made sufficient progress to-date and have the potential to continue.

This review is undertaken after the first 12-month study period and examined by an Independent Panel of Assessors.

External Organisation Reviews and Reports

- When a company is involved in a research project, the supervisor(s) ensure that appropriate arrangements are put in place at the outset of the research project between the candidate, the supervisor(s) and the company. This is to ensure that the research candidate's progress continues to be carefully monitored and focused towards the ultimate objective of the project.

- Interim Reports are frequently required to assess the technical progress of innovation partnership projects. The main focus of this report is to gauge progress against the deliverables promised for the project mid-term, as defined in the proposal document previously submitted prior to project approval.

- Should a company require the candidate to work for periods in the company then it is the responsibility of the supervisor(s) to guarantee that these periods will be dedicated to the work of the research candidate.

- Careful records of such visits/placements/discussions are maintained by the supervisor. If the collaboration involves an extended period of placement in an industry/organisation then a supervisor should be appointed from the industry/organisation to aid the candidate. The responsibilities of the supervisor within the external organisation are equivalent to that of the internal supervisor. The external supervisor is also provided with a copy of this document to allow them to familiarise themselves with their responsibilities.

- In some cases, it may be necessary for the supervisor(s) and candidates to sign a non-disclosure/confidentiality agreement put together by a collaborative external organisation.

Candidate Presentations
Research candidates are required to participate in the Research Presentation Programme within the institute i.e. make a minimum of one presentation to a group of - candidates and staff from within the institute and occasionally external experts, during their postgraduate studies. The candidate will also be required to answer questions on their project at the end of the session.

Please see link below under the Quality Section of the AIT website to Procedures and Guidelines for Postgraduate Research in AIT (including all issues relating to ethics in research).

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/postgraduate-research

Future Plans

AIT is currently undertaking a review of the existing structures on research programmes at both masters and PhD level, with a view to implementing structured Masters and PhD programmes.

It is envisaged that these new structured programmes will be implemented during semester two of the academic year 2018-2019, having undergone both internal and external review and ratified by the Institute's Academic Council.   Progress on this review will be documented in the AIQR return for the 2018-2019 period.

4. Student Lifecycle (ESG 1.4)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures that are encompassed by the student lifecycle.

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Student Lifecycle Management

The Registry Department, under the direction of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar and the management of the Academic Administration and Student Affairs Manager, in collaboration with the Faculties, and other key functional areas, such as the Student Resource Centre and Library are responsible for Student lifecycle management from pre admission to graduation and beyond. In managing the entire student life cycle the department supports the institute in achieving its stated vision and mission.

Policies and procedures for student access, transfer and admission are managed by the Admissions office and centrally located at https://www.ait.ie/life-at-ait/registry/admissions . Standards, Assessment and Awards is the guiding policy document in relation to examination, assessment, publication of results and classification of awards, administered by the Examinations Office and available at https://www.ait.ie/life-at-ait/registry/examinations . The Collection of Fees policy document details the guiding principles with regard to student registration, fee collection and fee payment and comes within the remit of the Registration https://www.ait.ie/life-at-ait/registry/registration and Fees and Grants offices https://www.ait.ie/life-at-ait/registry/fees-and-grants .

The Registry Department, in conjunction with the Banner Office and the Faculty Offices, maintains and controls the institute's student record system, including personal information, grant records, student registration, student results, the issuing of all graduate parchments and the publication of all timetable and examination schedules. Student progression information is considered at faculty level and implemented by the Registry Department.

The input of the Registry department to student lifecycle management is crucial to the institute and in managing this function the department supports the quality initiatives of the institute.

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/student-lifecycle

The First Year Experience

Following acceptance of a place on a first year programme in AIT, we begin engaging with incoming students. An information pack is sent out with details of how to register on-line and their invitation to attend their faculty tailored New Student Induction programme. This programme has been developed and honed over a number of years with consideration given to students' immediate commencement needs while trying to balance the potential for information overload. The emphasis is on creating a warm and welcoming environment and giving students enough and timely information to get their first year off to a flying start. The process is centrally managed through the Student Resource Centre with involvement from the faculties, progressing students and the Students' Union who all play a role in creating an atmosphere of welcome and celebration.

A focus on the first year experience and assisting students with a successful transition to third level led to the collaborative development of an extended seven-week induction programme to be piloted in 2017-2018 called 'AIT Connect'. https://www.ait.ie/life-at-ait/current-students/your-first-year/ This programme is geared towards student needs and addresses themes such as settling in and making connections with new friends, faculty staff and support services, welfare and health, learning support, mental health, time management and finding professional inspiration. AIT Connect compliments existing successful activities such as:

1. **The Peer Assisted Student Support Scheme (PASS)**, https://www.ait.ie/life-at-ait/student-supports/pass which fosters cross year support between students and encourages students to learn co-operatively under the guidance of trained 2nd year students who can be awarded academic credit for their voluntary role.

2. **The Learning & Development in Higher Education** (Health & Science; Hospitality & Business) and **Communications (**Engineering & Informatics) modules where the common themes in **AIT Connect** are reinforced, referenced and further developed.

In 2018 we extended AIT Connect to include the 'AIT Connect Snapchatters' – PASS Leaders from the previous year were trained and now run year round student led Snapchat channels to engage with fellow students, promote and build awareness of events and supports for students and also answer any queries they may have and refer them to the appropriate supports. We have found that students prefer to engage through social media and feel very comfortable interacting with peers.

In addition, since the establishment of an Academic Writing Centre in 2015 we have seen significant engagement by students and academics utilising the services provided. The AWC amalgamated existing writing supports delivered through the International Office, the Learning & Teaching Unit, and Student Resources. With a remit to accommodate students across all disciplines, the centre aims to promote excellence in academic writing through a writer and process-centred approach. We believe that everyone can write and are committed to equipping our students with the skills they need to become accomplished writers. Academic lecturers offer individual or small group sessions in various aspects of academic writing, including structure of a written assignment, paraphrasing and in-text citations, and grammar, spelling and punctuation. The AWC also created a dedicated Writing Skills page on Moodle. In February 2017, an Academic Writing Tutor was appointed whose primary function is to support the mission of the AWC in building excellence in academic writing by acting as a first point of contact and support for students seeking assistance and to triage and facilitate the referral of students to AWC supports. Her role also involves coordinating and planning the activities of the AWC and managing the WC online system to ensure appointment scheduling and data collection are running smoothly.

Link to Writing Skills page on Moodle: https://elearning.ait.ie/course/view.php?id=33722

The Academic Writing Centre advances previous supports provided through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). To access the evaluation report produced the Learning and Teaching Unit which was instrumental in mainstreaming the AWC under the Student Resource Centre, please see the following link: https://www.ait.ie/life-at-ait/student-supports/academic-writing-centre

Progression

A review and analyses of progression rates is carried out an annual basis. Progression of Year 1 Full time students to Year 2 has been reported and trends identified. The analysis looks at a further analysis which has taken place in this academic year for year 2 to year 3 and year 3 to year 4 on ab initio programmes. Where non progression rates are outside the institute and national norms a more detailed review at module level will inform further for department analysis.

Ab Initio Programmes- Progression Data Analysis – Average data by level since 2010			
NFQ	Year 1 to Year 2	Year 2 to Year 3	Year 3 to Year 4
Level 6	70%		
Level 7	70%	82%	
Level 8	80%	86%	84%

Analysis of Non Progression Year 1 New Entrants Full time by NFQ Level				
	2013/14 to 2014/15	2014/15 to 2015/16	2015/16 to 2016/17	2016/17 to 2017/18
NFQ Level	2014	2015	2016	2017
06	22%	27%	26%	15%
07	28%	26%	27%	26%
08	16%	14%	17%	15%
Grand Total	21%	23%	23%	19%

Data shows that there has been an improvement at all Levels from the 2013/14 Academic Year, 2% overall - 21% to 19% Non-Progression.

Placement

A comprehensive review of placement practices within the institute was conducted in 2017. A working group which was led by the Learning and Teaching Unit was established during the academic year 2017-2018 to develop a set of guiding placement models which would be used by academic staff when developing new programmes or amending existing programmes, in order to provide consistency of approach across the institute. This group put together 4 models and a set of recommendations for the implementation of same. Each model is designed to provide a specific type of learning experience for the student. The four models were devised based on credit allocation at 5 ECTS, 10 ECTS, 30 ECTS and 60 ECTS, reflected in the duration of placement. This development will support programme teams in meeting national and institute strategic goals to allow students access work placement experiences.

Both the Placement Review report and the AIT Placement Models Guide have been ratified by Academic Council and will be implemented in January 2019 across the faculties.

The AIT Placement Models Guiding Document can be accessed on the AIT website at the following link: https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/placements-in-ait

Library

Vital to the student lifecycle is the ability to access the institute library resources.   The library not only provides quality information resources but is committed to ensuring students possess the core skills to locate and access the correct information when and where they need it, and the supplementary skills to know how to evaluate and use the information effectively and ethically. The library supports these goals through participating in the annual induction programmes and their own Information Literacy Skills Training Programmes which are organised by the subject librarians in co-operation with academic departments.

5. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring the competence of teaching staff, including staff recruitment and staff development.

In a knowledge community, our people represent our core asset and AIT is committed to providing its staff with clear guidelines and support. A range of documentation is available to staff on the intranet and the professional development policy states that the institution recognises that staff are a vital and valued asset and encourages and enables everyone to develop their potential. Support for professional development encompasses staff at all levels and in all categories of the institute.

A range of policy documents are provided here by way of example. Included is the institute's Professional Development Policy and the Register of Professional Development undertaken by staff in the institute for the period January 2014 to date.

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/professional-development-recruitment

The Institute has a range of other policies and procedures in place for all staff. These are all published on the Institute's intranet. Such documents include the following:

- Staff Handbook

- Disciplinary Procedures

- Grievance Procedures

- Respect and Dignity

- Code of Conduct for Employees

- Parental Leave Policy

The Executive Management Team fully supported the introduction onto the academic calendar of a two-day induction programme for new staff in key aspects of learning, teaching and assessment including the use of technology to enhance learning. This was initially piloted in 2016-2017, and is implemented annually by the Learning and Teaching Unit.
In the academic year, 2017-2018, the Learning and Teaching Unit continued to engage in a range of activities in keeping with the mission of the institute.

1. **Accredited provision: Postgraduate Diploma in Learning, Teaching and Assessment 2017-2018**

Special Purpose Award/Module	ECTS	No of Participants
Certificate in Learning & Teaching	15	7
Certificate in Technology Enhanced Learning	15	7
Certificate in Formative Assessment Feedback	15	8
Developing Practice in Online Learning, Teaching and Assessment	15	5
Designing a UDL Curriculum	10	8
Implementing a UDL Curriculum	5	6
Capstone Module: Reflection, Action & Evidence Review	5	12
Total Number		53

This level of engagement on the accredited modules remains consistent. In keeping with institute's strategic positioning the 'Developing Practice in the Online Learning, Teaching and Assessment' module was validated for piloting in 2017. Developed to assist staff in the delivery of online programmes, this Certificate in Developing Practice in Online Learning, Teaching and Assessment (15ECTS at Level 9) was validated in 2017-2018 with an initial pilot in 2018-2019.

The aim of this module is to provide educators with the necessary skills to develop and implement a module for the online environment. Informed by relevant literature in the area of online learning, teaching and assessment the module incorporates a combination of theoretical and practical approaches.

For further information about the programme/modules, click on the Learning & Teaching website.

A more extensive report of key staff development initiatives in learning, teaching and assessment including National Forum funded projects and seminars, dissemination and publications are outlined in the Learning and Teaching Unit key activities document, accessible from this link:

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/learning-teaching-unit-key-activities-

6. Teaching and Learning (ESG 1.4, 1.5, 1.6)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring the quality of teaching and learning

The data obtained and analysed from the ISSE is used annually as a guide to develop enhancements in programme design and delivery at institute and faculty level. The ISSE data which are both quantitative and qualitative, provides valuable feedback from students.

Faculty level approaches to institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring the quality of teaching and learning:

- Programme boards - feedback from students and staff leading to continuous improvements supported by ASQ
- External examiner induction and feedback via external examiners' reports
- Exam board meetings and annual statistical analysis of examination results for consideration by Academic Council
- Focus on timely feedback to students
- Consideration for timing of teaching and calendar of assessments
- Academic Writing Centre to provide supports to students when faced with challenges in academic writing, referencing etc.
- External accreditation bodies (for example, the Veterinary Council of Ireland, Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland, Engineers Ireland, the Irish Dental Council)

Learning environment: Multi-purpose and specialised teaching laboratories, art studios, design laboratories, simulated nursing and veterinary clinical laboratories, classrooms, lecture theatres and IT laboratories with data projection facilities. Library with comprehensive book-stocks, journals and databases.

Moodle is the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) used across the institute to support formal and non-formal learning activities. Academic staff use Moodle to scaffold and support active learning, by providing resources specific to their modules, as well as activities designed to foster engagement and collaboration.

Moodle is also used as an assessment tool, and teaching staff create a range of assessment types to assess different forms of learning, e.g. quizzes and reflective journals. Turnitin assignments, used in AIT to promote academic integrity, is embedded within Moodle for ease of access. The VLE is also used to communicate with students, both in the provision of feedback and also as a support mechanism.

Moodle is also used to provide support for students by way of resources for Peer Assisted Student Support (PASS)and Academic Writing.

The Learning and Teaching Unit was funded to host two National Seminars by the National Forum under the themes – Assessment as, for and of Learning and Professional Development.

The Learning and Teaching Unit at AIT continues to offer staff members a number of accredited modules, either as standalone Special Purpose Awards or as part of the Post Graduate Diploma in Learning, Teaching & Assessment.

Details can be found at: http://learningandteaching.ait.ie/programmes/

Peer observation of teaching occurs in these accredited learning and teaching modules. This has acted as a catalyst for further sharing of best practice in learning, teaching and assessment.

Funded Educational Research Projects:

Aligning Teaching and Learning across the Technological Sector (ATLAS)

The AIT Learning and Teaching Unit led the ATLAS project, funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching. This collaborative project sought to interpret the Professional Development Framework (2014) within the context of existing accredited provision across the technological sector with a view to examining and addressing specific professional development needs. All accredited professional development modules and programmes in teaching and learning within the partner and supporting institutes (AIT, DKIT, IT Carlow, LYIT, WIT, GMIT and IADT) were mapped to the PDF. This involved 7 institutions, 6 major awards and 49 modules/special purpose awards. The process included consultations with programme staff and graduates. Using an iterative approach, the partners mapped and interpreted existing provision using the PDF. A bespoke mapping tool and consultation pack was developed to support educational developers in using the framework to review and develop programmes. This mapping tool has subsequently been repurposed for use in AIT when mapping programmes using new competency frameworks devised by professional/awarding bodies such as CORU.

AIT is a partner in a multi-institute research project funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning's Enhancement Fund called 'Technology Enhanced Assessment Methods (TEAM) in Science and Health Practical Settings'. The main aim of the TEAM project has been to develop a framework for applying the principles of good assessment and feedback to practical assessment and to facilitate dialogue among stakeholders about what we want students to learn in practical classes and how our assessment can facilitate this learning.

7. Resources and Support (ESG 1.5)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring funding and resources for learning, teaching and research. Also, links and or text relating to the quality assurance procedures for learning resources and student support.

Staff Resource Planning: AIT operates an annual resource planning process in tandem with the preparation of the annual Operational Programme and Budgets (OPB) whereby relevant managers (i.e. Finance, HR and Academic) review existing staff levels and competencies vis a vis existing and planned new modules and programmes, additional years on existing programmes and all other programme, quality assurance and regulatory requirements to ensure maximum utilisation of existing staff resources and timely and effective recruitment of new staff to meet organisational needs. AIT has an organisational and management structure (see link below)

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/ait-organisational-and-management-structure

which is approved by the Governing Body to ensure the efficient and effective operation of the institute to the highest national and international standards.
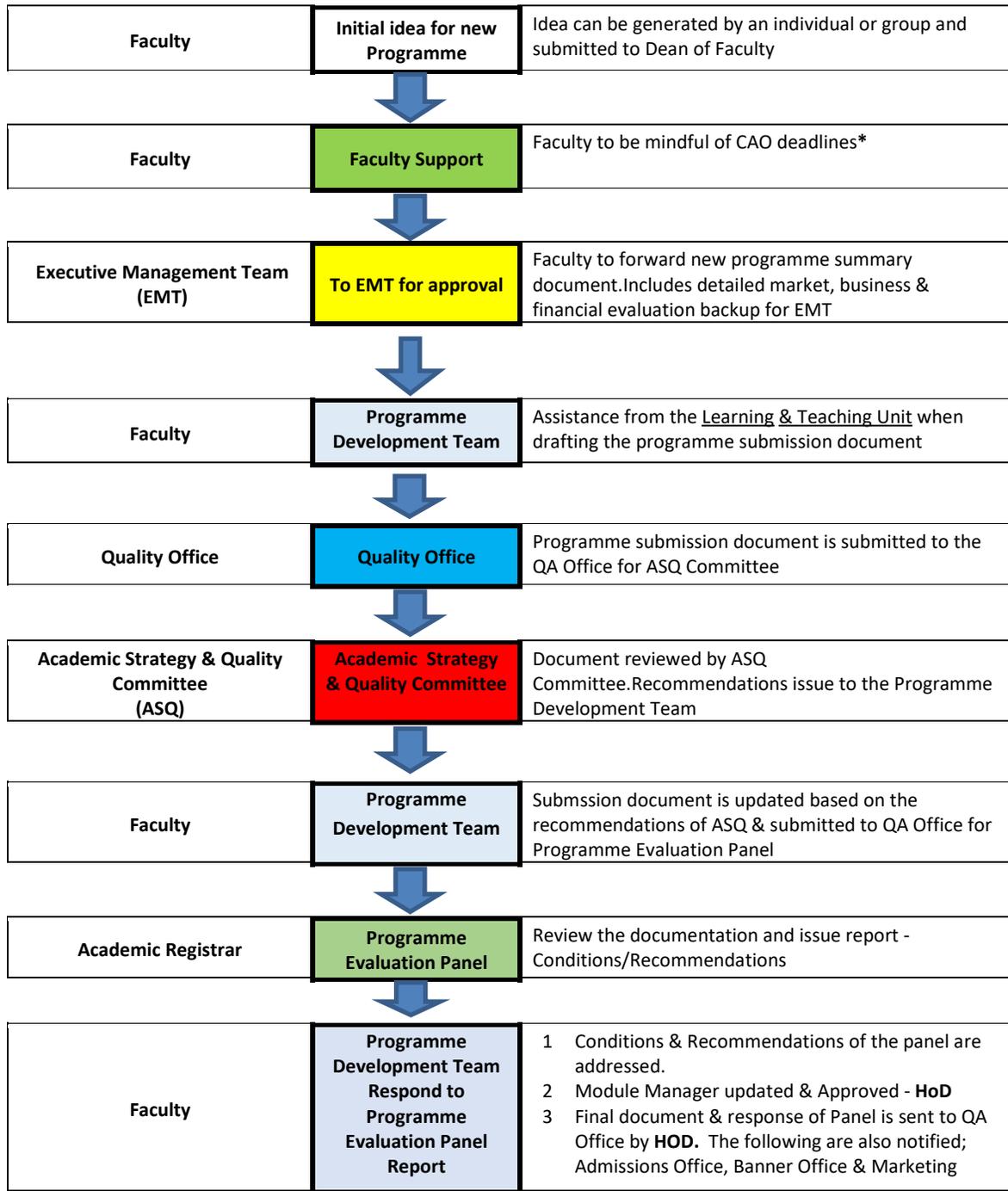
Non-Pay Budget Allocation Process: The resource planning and OPB process also involves review of existing non-pay budget (i.e. operational, equipment and minor capital) allocations by department and requirements for forthcoming year. This process includes review of learning and student support resource requirements.

Capital Projects and Facilities Management (CP&FM): AIT operates a CP&FM committee to review short and long-term capital projects and on-going facility management issues. The estates office seeks capital / projects requests from all departments for existing and planned new programmes and developments to ensure infrastructure and facilities are fit for purpose and meet stakeholder needs.

New Programme Development: The institute encourages differing modes of delivery appropriate to any given programme. Any proposed mode of delivery will be evaluated initially on how it addresses student characteristics and the requirements of a given cohort of learners. The preferred mode of delivery will be consistent with the pedagogical and presentational requirements of the subject matter and reflect the preferred teaching strategy, both in terms of methodologies and learning

outcomes. The proposed delivery model will be evaluated at the initial programme development stage and will be reviewed as part of the regular monitoring of a programme.

The QA process for new programme development is summarised in the chart below. It outlines the responsibility and actions required at the various stage gates of the process.

Faculty	**Initial idea for new Programme**	Idea can be generated by an individual or group and submitted to Dean of Faculty
Faculty	**Faculty Support**	Faculty to be mindful of CAO deadlines*
Executive Management Team (EMT)	**To EMT for approval**	Faculty to forward new programme summary document.Includes detailed market, business & financial evaluation backup for EMT
Faculty	**Programme Development Team**	Assistance from the Learning & Teaching Unit when drafting the programme submission document
Quality Office	**Quality Office**	Programme submission document is submitted to the QA Office for ASQ Committee
Academic Strategy & Quality Committee (ASQ)	**Academic Strategy & Quality Committee**	Document reviewed by ASQ Committee.Recommendations issue to the Programme Development Team
Faculty	**Programme Development Team**	Submssion document is updated based on the recommendations of ASQ & submitted to QA Office for Programme Evaluation Panel
Academic Registrar	**Programme Evaluation Panel**	Review the documentation and issue report - Conditions/Recommendations
Faculty	**Programme Development Team Respond to Programme Evaluation Panel Report**	1 Conditions & Recommendations of the panel are addressed. 2 Module Manager updated & Approved - **HoD** 3 Final document & response of Panel is sent to QA Office by **HOD.** The following are also notified; Admissions Office, Banner Office & Marketing

Supports Provided to Students: The AIT Student Resource Centre provides a range of supports and resources to all registered students of AIT including the Access Office, Student Assistance Fund, Careers Office, Health Centre, Counselling, Tutor Support, Academic Writing Centre, Disability and Learning Support. We support students who may have queries, challenges or problems during their time in the institute. We pride ourselves on being friendly and welcoming and strive to do our utmost to help students. Through our work in facilitating the student experience we engage with fellow staff members throughout the institute and external agencies, employers and stakeholders. We also endeavour to respond to the evolving nature of student needs. As many of our students commute and have conflicting schedule pressures and busy class timetables, in 2016/17 we also began providing phone and email learning support through our Science, Maths and Business Tutors and also through the Academic Writing Centre. Optimum use is made of available technology with a significant number of online resources for students such as our Moodle Writing Skills page.

The procedure for engaging with the Student Resource Centre to seek learning resources or student supports varies somewhat according to service area and the nature of the help sought. Details of these procedure documents can be accessed by following the link below which is located under the Quality Section of the AIT website.
https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/student-lifecycle

AIT Library – Resources and Supports 2017-2018

AIT Library is an integral part of the teaching and learning at AIT by the facilitation of online 24/7 access to a range of subject specialist database and other electronic resources such as eBooks. Engagement and development are the focal point of the regularly updated LibGuides about subject resources, referencing and plagiarism.

Library resources are identified and explored by engagement in annual general induction programmes. The library provides their own Information Literacy Skills Training Programmes which are organised by the Subject Librarians in co-operation with academic faculties.
The library began extending its opening hours in the two weeks before each examination session in recent years. Consequently, it functions as a central academic support beyond hours.

Further development has been undertaken with the new Library Management System Koha (New which was installed in the Summer of 2017. Extensive staff training and development have been undertaken to further utilise and integrate the features of this system to support library users.

Enhancements have been made to the Library Website and online resources. Collaborations with colleagues have been undertaken and are ongoing with the Writing Centre and Student Union. Collaborative initiatives took place in connection with the PASS initiative (see under Student Lifecycle) and the library referencing expert worked with PASS leaders to act as a mentor for Academic referencing skills.

The Library ran a fully integrated and interactive programme under the National Library Ireland Week Event. There was engagement with students online and in the library as well as the Student Union in the form of a pop up library and an informational video. See link here:

https://www.dropbox.com/s/hwvez0yu0u44yvo/20181121_Library%20week%20video_2.mp4?dl=0

The library staff look forward to developing and engaging more with students and staff going forward.

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8. Information Management (ESG 1.7)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for collecting, analysing and using relevant information about programmes and other activities.

Student Data is collated and submitted to the HEA twice annually for statistics purposes. November is the provisional student numbers report and March is the final student numbers report. These extracts are used within AIT to analyse trends and numbers by institute, faculty, department and programme and many different reports are derived from this source data. It is used in various strategic discussions which contributes to programme planning and review of numbers across the institute and is used to inform internal discussions. AIT has a 'Procedure for preparation, validation and submission of the HEA SRS (Nov & March)' which is regularly reviewed and updated for changes as required.

AIT is cognisant of the New Data Protection Laws which come into effect from May 2018 and in preparation for same the institute has appointed an Information and Compliance Officer who plays a key role in preparing the institute for the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and in the overall management of information compliance, coordination of operations (including records retention) and risk management in respect of institutional data and related matters.

9. Self-evaluation and Monitoring (ESG 1.9)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for self-evaluation and internal monitoring.

Programmatic Review:
This is a quinquennial quality review process which gives the faculties within AIT an opportunity to conduct a critical evaluation and review of their programmes. This review is a core statutory obligation for the institute under Section 28(2) of the Qualifications, Education and Training Act. It is a positive, supportive and open process and results in the production of a five-year plan for the faculties which should align with the institute's Strategic Plan. The self-evaluation process, with inputs from experts and stakeholders (internal and external), involves the production of a self-evaluation report (SER). The self-evaluation comprises a critical evaluation of all aspects of each programme being reviewed – its strategy, learning outcomes, modules, assessment, resources etc. Review of the SER by external peers results in a Programmatic Review Report which will include a set of conditions and recommendations. The faculties will then provide a response to this report and both the report and responses are published on the AIT website.

See the followng link: https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmatic-review-2015-reports

Institutional Review:
The institute also undergoes cyclical Institutional Reviews which are carried out by QQI. The last Institutional Review for AIT took place in 2011. The next review is scheduled to take place in 2022.

The Institute conducts its Annual Internal Quality Review (AIQR) which is published on the QQI website.

The Academic Strategy and Quality Committee

The Academic Strategy and Quality (ASQ) Committee, appointed by academic council, has responsibility for identifying appropriate strategies and developments to facilitate the institute's achievement of its academic development objectives; and provides advice on the policies, processes, and procedures which impact on the academic standards of education and training which is provided, organised, or procured by the institute.

Policies and Procedures:

Annually, the Institute actively reviews the national and international QA policies and procedures and benchmarks its own policies and procedures against best practice. Any relevant changes are incorporated into the institute's own regulations and procedures with the approval of Academic Council.

Programme Boards:

Each faculty appoints Programme Boards to consider all matters affecting the operation and innovation of each programme within the faculty. They:

- monitor the implementation of academic policy including learning, teaching and research issues, maintenance of standards and administration of the course, including selection, teaching, academic counselling and industrial/professional placement of students, and publication of course publicity material
- appoint such subcommittees as are deemed necessary for assisting in the administration of the course
- make an assessment of the progress of students and, where necessary, propose exclusion on academic grounds in accordance with the appropriate institute regulations
- review the reports of external examiners and propose appropriate action
- review student feedback and recommend appropriate action
- review annually the operation of the programme, consider proposals for its improvement and complete annual reports for tabling at ASQ
- consider from time to time the need to revise, develop or otherwise substantially alter the course in the light of prevailing circumstances, and prepare appropriate proposals
- approve minor programme changes and table them for final sanction at ASQ
- prepare relevant materials for school and institutional review
- discuss and make recommendations upon, as appropriate, the resource and staff development requirements of the course
- carry out such duties as agreed in conjunction with other schools, in relation to joint programmes

External Examiners:

External Examiners act as independent and impartial advisors providing the institute with informed comment on the standards set and student achievement in relation to those standards. External examining is therefore an integral and very important part of institutional quality assurance. The main purposes of external examining are:

- To verify that Learning Outcomes as assigned to a programme / module to which the external examiner has been appointed have been met
- To assist AIT in the comparison of academic standards across higher education awards and award elements
- To ensure that AIT's assessment processes are fair and are fairly operated and are in line with AIT regulations. It shall be the External Examiners' task to scrutinise the examination process on a continuing basis and report to senior management on whether particular students' performances have been judged properly against the institute's awards standards and further, whether the assessment process has measured Learning Outcomes appropriately and whether the examination process has been conducted fairly. It shall be the institute's task to respond to any observations made by the External Examiners in an appropriate manner

See the following link: https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/external-examiners

The Irish Survey of Student Engagement:

The Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) is a survey which is designed to ask students directly about their full experience of higher education. Student feedback is providing AIT with valuable information to identify effective practice and provision and to prompt awareness of, and action on, any particular issues or challenges that affect students in the institute.

The ISSE project is funded by the HEA and co-sponsored by the Higher Education Authority, Institutes of Technology Ireland (IOTI), the Irish Universities Association (IUA) and the Union of Students in Ireland (USI). The survey was developed in response to a key recommendation of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 that every higher education institution should put in place a comprehensive anonymous student feedback system to inform institutional and programme/course development, as well as national policy.

ISSE is based on best practice internationally as developed by the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) since 2007 and the US National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) since 2000.

Up until 2017, first years, final years and post graduate taught master's students were invited to participate in this survey but from 2018 the post graduate research students will be invited to

participate in a specific tailored survey which will focus on students' experiences during their research degree. The questions will be designed to match the experiences of research students and will be pre-tested with groups of research students in a range of institutions, including Athlone Institute of Technology.

The information obtained from ISSE is a key output to the quality assurance mechanisms of AIT.

It has done so by:

- increasing transparency in relation to the student experience
- enabling direct student input on levels of engagement and satisfaction in AIT
- identifying good practice that enhances the student experience in AIT
- assisting AIT to identify issues and challenges affecting the student experience in the institute
- serving as a guide for continual enhancement of institutions' teaching and learning and student engagement
- documenting the experiences of the student population, thus enabling year on year comparisons of key performance indicators
- providing insight into student opinion on important issues of higher education policy and practice
- facilitating comparison with other higher education systems internationally

See the following link:

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/irish-survey-of-student-engagement-isse

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10. Stakeholder Engagement (ESG 1.1)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for the involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.

Please see link under the Quality Section of the AIT website which leads to the Institute Policy on Stakeholder Engagement: https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/policies-procedures

At the core Institute Stakeholder Engagement policy is the commitment to engage intensively with the society that the institute serves. This engagement is managed through the identification of the distinct stakeholder groups who have a legitimate interest in the operations of the institution. Stakeholders are defined as those individuals and groups who impact and/or could be affected by this organization's activities, learning and teaching, research, and engagement. The relevance of the institute's offerings and activities requires regular interaction with identified stakeholder groups.

The institution maintains a current list of stakeholders. The intention is not to develop an exhaustive list but rather to build and maintain a catalogue of stakeholders who can influence the work of the institute and/or who are themselves dependent or impacted by the institute.

Stakeholder observations and concerns are fed into strategic monitoring and planning by the strategic plan oversight group.   This group works closely with the EMT.

Athlone Institute of Technology provides a minimum of annual feedback to its stakeholders. This is managed via both electronically and/or through direct meetings. The mode of interaction is determined through the preference of individual stakeholders.

11. Engagement with Other Bodies (ESG 1.1)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for engagement with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies and other quality assurance and awarding bodies (details of specific engagements should be provided in the online section of the form).

Please see link below which provides details in relation to the Professional Body Accreditation in AIT.
https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers

The institutes three faculties have extensive links with professional bodies which include the following organisations; The Veterinary Council of Ireland, Athletic & Rehabilitation Therapy Ireland (ARTI), Tusla, Nursing & Midwifery Board of Ireland, The Dental Council of Ireland, The Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland, Engineers Ireland, Chartered Accountants Ireland (CAI), Association of Chartered and Certified Accountants Ireland (ACCA), Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA), Certified Public Accountants in Ireland (CPA), Accounting Technician Ireland (ATI).

The faculties liaise on a regular basis with the relevant bodies and undertake periodic reviews to ensure the programme content aligns to the professional bodies to ensure accreditation is maintained. In some cases, such as with Chartered Accountants Ireland (CAI) our Masters of Arts in Accounting programme is subject to an annual quality assurance review via a joint board. To ensure the QA process with regard to a programme which has exemptions up to and including the penultimate level of their professional accountancy examinations.

Regional Skills Forum

Another strategic engagement in which AIT participates is the Midlands Regional Skills Forum. This Forum facilitates engagement between regional education and training providers, local authorities, local enterprise offices and relevant public and private sector organisations to support employers and job creation. A Regional Skills Forum Manager was appointed who acts as a liaison person between the Institute and Industry.

12. Provision and Use of Public Information (ESG 1.8)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for the provision of clear, accurate, up-to date and accessible public information.

The Institute provides a wide range of public information. The primary source for stakeholders is the AIT website (www.ait.ie).

Please see link below under the Quality Section of the AIT Website to the Institute Policy and Procedure Governing Information Management and Public Information

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/policies-procedures

The role of the AIT marketing and communications department is to enhance our institutes national and global reputation, help build effective stakeholder relationships, and attract and develop students with the potential to excel. We are responsible for building and maintaining the Institutes brand and competitive position regionally, nationally and internationally. We are committed to delivering world-class communications; engaging with future students, students, staff and stakeholders to help build an outstanding educational and student experience, develop high quality services and to raise awareness about the institute and all its activities. We engage with stakeholders in Ireland and all around the world and have expertise in branding, strategic marketing, event management, digital and traditional media and internal communications.

AIT ensures that all information about our activities including programmes is clear, accurate, up to date and readily accessible for general consumption either for prospective, current students, graduates, other stakeholders and the public. All publications issued by the institute for either public consumption or internal communications perspective are made visible on the website and through the internal intranet. This ensures that there is visibility and transparency with regards to the

institute. Examples of such publications include AIT's Strategic Plan, Presidents reports, graduate survey, UG and PG prospectus etc.

The AIT prospectus is available at https://www.ait.ie/courses/prospectus : Details of current programmes on offer at AIT is available at: https://www.ait.ie/courses.   Additionally, in line with Section 9 of the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016) written reports on quality evaluations are also published on the AIT website. Samples of these reports are available at: https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/external-validation-panel-reports.

Moodle: A range of documentation is made available to students through the VLE. These include: Programme and Module Assessment Strategies, Module descriptors, Calendar of Assessments, Student Handbook, Department Handbook, Programme Manual.

Module Management System

The Academic Module Manager system is used in the design of programmes and modules, and also acts as a central repository for all approved programme documents and module descriptors. Version 2.0 is being used at present in the Institute but collaborations between a number of IoTs who use this system is being carried out at the present time with a view to upgrading the system to Version 3.0 in 2018-2019.   This will greatly improve the quality of the information relating to programmes and modules which is generated from the system both internally and for external panel evaluation purposes. A key outcome will be the publication of a summarised version of all programme documentation to the web, which will be of major benefit to current and prospective students in addition to other key stakeholders.

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13. Linked Providers (for Designated Awarding Bodies) (ESG 1.1)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring engagement with linked providers including the procedures for approval, monitoring, review, withdrawal of approval and appeal for linked providers.

The institute has an existing range of provision that falls under the terms of the QQI's collaborative policy. In addition, links will be considered only where clear benefits from establishing any collaborative programme and from the involvement of each of the partner providers can be shown. It is recognised that contemporary higher education involves a greater range of collaborative partners and arrangements.

AIT subscribes to the guiding principles set out in the Irish Higher Education Quality Network's (IHEQN) draft Guidelines for Collaborative and Transnational provision, namely:

1) **Principle one:** providers of higher education have primary responsibility for the management and provision of programmes of higher education and training for learners
2) **Principle two:** providers of higher education have the primary responsibility for the quality assurance of their provision, wherever or however it is delivered
3) **Principle three:** providers of higher education must ensure that learners enrolled on collaborative or transnational programmes (whether at home or overseas) which lead to awards of an Irish awarding body, receive an equivalent learning experience to that of learners studying at their campus in Ireland
4) **Principle four:** providers of higher education are cognisant of the strategic context for collaborative or transnational provision
5) **Principle five:** providers of higher education give due consideration to the academic support and pastoral care of students, and to their representation on appropriate institutional bodies/groups
6) **Principle six:** providers of higher education, recognising that their decisions to collaborate and/or provide transnational higher education programmes may involve ethical considerations, are committed to respecting the human rights of their staff, learners, and partners in all their joint ventures
7) **Principle seven**: providers of higher education develop institutional approval and quality assurance processes for collaborative/transnational provision which include the conduct of appropriate due diligence checks

The procedures with regard to the procedures for approval, monitoring, review, withdrawal of approval and appeal for linked providers are set out in our policy on Supplementary Quality Assurance Procedure for collaborative provision, to include national and transnational programmes. The full policy document can be accessed at the below URL.

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/policies-procedures#

14. DA Procedures for use of QQI Award Standards (IoTs only)
Links and/or text relating to the specific procedures for the approval of programmes in keeping with Core Policy and Criteria for the Validation of Education and Training Programmes by QQI, the Sectoral Protocols for the Awarding of Research Master Degrees at NFQ Level 9 under Delegated Authority (DA) from QQI and the Sectoral Protocols for the Delegation of Authority by QQI to the Institutes of Technology to make Joint Awards, May 2014.

Athlone Institute of Technology adopts for use QQI awards standards as published at
http://www.qqi.ie

Institutes of Technology Ireland (IOTI) Sectoral Protocol for the Awarding of Research Master's Degrees at NFQ Level 9 under delegated authority (DA) from Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
http://www.iadt.ie/content/files/00_iadtpolicy_IoT_Sectoral_Protocol,_Validation_Research_Progs_Level_9.pdf

Institutes of Technology Ireland (IOTI) Sectoral Protocol for the Delegation of Authority (DA) by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) to the Institutes of Technology (IoTs) to make Joint Awards
http://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/IoT%20Sectoral%20Protocol%20on%20Programmes%20Leading%20to%20Joint%20Awards.pdf

15. Collaborative Provision (ESG 1.1)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for engagement with third parties for the provision of programmes.

AIT has a policy in place called Supplementary Quality Assurance Procedures for Collaborative Provision. This policy was implemented following a condition set out by the external evaluation panel at Institutional Review 2011.

The panel recommended that Delegated Authority granted to Athlone Institute of Technology be continued as provided for the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 subject to the following condition:

'Athlone Institute of Technology must agree its quality assurance procedures for collaborative provision with HETAC. The institute should not recruit new students to collaborative programmes prior to consultation with HETAC regarding the completion of this condition'.

These matters were successfully concluded and AIT acknowledges the support of QQI on this.

At present, Athlone Institute of Technology has a range of partnerships, exchanges and collaborations of varying degrees of complexity and engagement.

Please see links below on the AIT website to the Supplementary Quality Assurance Procedures for Collaborative Provision and also AITs register of collaborative provision.

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/policies-procedures#

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers

16. Additional Notes
Any additional notes can be entered here.

17. Internal Review Schedule
The internal reviews schedule or cycle at the level of unit of review within the institution. The units of review can be: module; programme; department/school; service delivery unit; faculty. The cycle will usually run over a 5-7 year period and all units should be encompassed over the full period of the cycle.

Year	2017/2018
Areas/Units	Faculty of Engineering & Informatics Faculty of Science and Health Faculty of Business and Hospitality Department of Lifelong Learning
Number	**12 New programme proposals, which include** 3 Masters (with embedded awards), 4 Bachelor 4-year ab initio degrees 1 Higher Cert (2 year programme) 1 Add-on degree programmes 3 Special Purpose Award programmes 1. BSc (Hons) in Software Design with Mobile Apps and Connected Devices (4-year ab initio) 2. Higher Certificate in Software Design (2-year programme). 3. BSc (Hons) in Software Design with Mobile Apps and Connected Devices (1-year add-on) 4. Certificate in Emergency Nursing SPA Level 8, 2 x 10 credit modules 5. BSc (Hons) in Applied Psychology Level 8 (4 year ab initio)

	6. BA (Hons) in Design Technology & Innovation (4 year ab initio)
	7. Master of Science in Nursing Leadership and Quality Healthcare (90 credits, Level 9), with the following embedded awards:
	    • Post Graduate Diploma in Nursing in Leadership and Quality Healthcare (60 credits at Level 9).
	    • Postgraduate Certificate in Nursing in Leadership and Quality Healthcare (30 credits at Level 9).
	8. MSc in Biopharmaceutical Technology (90 credits at Level 9) with the following embedded award:
	    • Post Graduate Diploma in Biopharmaceutical Technology (60 credits at Level 9).
	9. Certificate in Scenario Planning for Brexit SPA (10 credits at Level 9).
	10. MSc in Data Analytics
	11. Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Business Information Systems.
	12. Certificate in Science in Fundamentals of BioPharm and Med-Technology SPA Level 6, 2 x 10 credit modules
	
	40 (approx) Programme/Module Changes which were discussed at Faculty Programme Boards and submitted to the Academic Strategy and Quality Committee at the end of semester 1 and end of semester 2 to be implemented for the following academic year. These changes relate to, for example, assessment breakdown, changes to learning outcomes. There is a quality process in place when any changes are proposed. This can be seen at the following link:
	
	https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/module-manager-process

Link(s) to Publications	https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/summary-of-new-programme-proposal https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/external-validation-panel-reports https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/module-manager-process
Year	2018/19
Areas/Units	
Number	
Link(s) to Publications	

Year	2019/20
Areas/Units	
Number	
Link(s) to Publications	

Year	2020/21
Areas/Units	
Number	
Link(s) to Publications	
Year	2021/22
Areas/Units	Institutional Review will be carried out in 2022
Number	
Link(s) to Publications	

Year	2022/23
Areas/Units	Institutional Review report due in first quarter of 2023
Number	
Link(s) to Publications	

Year	2023/24
Areas/Units	
Number	
Link(s) to Publications	

Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures	AIQR-Part1updated 21.02.2018.docx
PRSBs	10
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	First Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Veterinary Council of Ireland
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Bachelor of Science in Veterinary Nursing; https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers
Date of last review or accreditation	07-12-2017
Next review year	2022
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Second Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland

Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Bachelor of Science (Hons) in General Nursing; Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Psychiatric Nursing; Please note that the requirements and standards for nursing have changed and as a result the nursing curriculum in Athlone Institute of Technology is currently under review in order to match the requirements and standards. This process is underway in the Institute and a review from the National Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) will take place in the coming year. https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers http://www.nmbi/Home
Date of last review or accreditation	01-09-2014
Next review year	2018
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Third Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Engineers Ireland
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	HC in Engineering in Civil Engineering; HC in Engineering in Electronic and Computer Engineering; HC in Engineering in Mechanical Engineering; BEng in Civil Engineering; BEng in Computer Engineering; BEng in Electronics & Wireless Communications; BEng in Mechanical Engineering; BEng in Mechanical Engineering & Renewable Energy; BEng in Mechatronics; BSc in Network Management. The majority of programmes listed above are accredited until 2021 - for complete listing see the following links: https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers http://www.engineersireland.ie/Services/Accredited-Courses.aspx
Date of last review or accreditation	01-09-2017
Next review year	2021

Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Fourth Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Association of Chartered Accountants of Ireland (CAI); Association of Chartered and Certified Accountants of Ireland (ACCA); Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA).

Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Bachelor of Arts Honours in Accounting, Level 8 Master of Arts in Accounting, Level 9 Bachelor of Business (ladder system), Level 8 Bachelor of Business (ab initio) Honours Level 8 Bachelor of Business and Law Honours Level 8 Bachelor of Arts Honours in Accounting, Level 8; Bachelor of Business (ab initio) Honours, Level 8; Bachelor of Business Honours, (ladder system) Level 8; Master of Arts in Accounting, Level 9; Bachelor of Arts Honours in Accounting, Level 8; Bachelor of Business (ladder system), Level 8; Bachelor of Business ab initio (Honours), Level 8 Bachelor of Business and Law (Honours), Level 8 *There will be different review dates for the various programmes as outlined in the Programmes and Register link on the AIT Quality website. See the following link: https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers **Chartered Institute of Accountants Ireland:** https://www.charteredaccountants.ie/Prospective-Students/Apply-and-Join/Exemptions </p> **ACCA Global:** </p> http://www.accaglobal.com/pk/en/help/exemptions-calculator.html </p> **CIMA Global:** </p> https://www.cimaglobal.com/Starting-CIMA/Starting-CIMA/Exemptions/Exemption-Search/
Date of last review or accreditation	31-05-2015
Next review year	2021

Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Fifth Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Tusla
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Bachelor of Arts in Applied Social Studies in Social Care; https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers
Date of last review or accreditation	01-09-2015
Next review year	2020
Collaborative programmes	7
Section: Collaborative Provision	First Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Collaborative programmes
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Cavan Institute, Cathedral Road, Cavan. http://www.cavaninstitute.ie/
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Higher Certificate in Applied Social Studies in Social Care, Level 6; The attached link on the AIT website provides details of this collaboration: http://www.ait.ie/Programmesandregisters/
Date of last review	30-05-2013
Next review year	2018
Section: Collaborative Provision	Second Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Collaborative programmes
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Gurteen College, Ballingarry, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary. http://www.gurteencollege.ie/

Programme Titles and Links to Publications	The two programmes of study where collaboration takes place are as follows: Higher Certificate in Business in Equine Studies, Level 6; Bachelor of Business in Equine Studies, Level 7; The attached link on the AIT website provides details of this collaboration: http://www.ait.ie/Programmesandregisters/
Date of last review	25-05-2011
Next review year	2018
Section: Collaborative Provision	Third Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Collaborative programmes
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Zambia Centre for Accountancy Studies, P.O. Box 35243, Lusaka, Zambia; http://www.zcas.ac.zm/
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	The programme of study where collaboration takes place is as follows: Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Applied Accounting Level 8; The attached link on the AIT website provides details of this collaboration: http://www.ait.ie/Programmesandregisters/
Date of last review	18-09-2013
Next review year	2018
Section: Collaborative Provision	Fourth Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Collaborative programmes
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Equal Ireland, Education Research and Related Services Co. Ltd., Building 8, 6d, Lisobaun Business Park, Tuam, Co. Galway; http://equalireland.ie

Programme Titles and Links to Publications	The programmes of study where collaboration takes place is as follows: Higher Certificate in Business Enterprise and Community Development Level 6; Bachelor of Arts in Business and Community Development Level 7; Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Social Enterprise, Leadership and Management Level 8; The attached link on the AIT website provides details of this collaboration: http://www.ait.ie/Programmesandregisters/
Date of last review	30-04-2013
Next review year	2018
Articulation Agreements	134
Section: 1 Articulation Agreements	First Set of Records
Name of the Body	Dongbei University of Finance and Economics (DUFE), Dalian China
Name of the Programme and Links to Publications	Name of Programme: Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting Level 8; For further details please see the following link: https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers **Dongbei University of Finance and Economics (DUFE), Dalian China** AIT recognises the Accounting curriculum of DUFE. More than 60 students have studied on the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting at AIT. Graduates of the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting at AIT have the option of studying for the remaining examinations of the Professional Accounting bodies or studying on the Master of Accounting at AIT. AIT receives 3-10 students from DUFE to the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting each year. A delegation from DUFE visited AIT during 2016-2017. Awarding Body: Students receive AIT award when they transfer to AIT: Title of Award: Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting Level 8.
Date of last review of arrangement/agreement	12-11-2015
Next Review Year	2020
Section: Articulation Agreements	Second Set of Records

Name of the Body	East China University of Technology (ECUT)
Name of the Programme and Links to Publications	Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) in Software Engineering Level 8; Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) in Mechanical Engineering Level 8; For further details please see the following link: http://www.ait.ie/Programmesandregisters/ East China University of Technology (ECUT), Nanchang, China A Memorandum of Understanding between AIT and ECUT for Software Engineering was first signed in May 2008. Students complete the first three years of study at ECUT and transfer to the final year of the Bachelor of Engineering in Software Engineering at AIT. Athlone Institute of Technology recognises the curriculum taught at ECUT. ECUT received recognition of programme by the Ministry of Education in China for a joint Bachelor degree between AIT and ECUT for Software Engineering. Following the success of this programme a joint programme in Mechanical Engineering was launched in 2013 with an intake of 100 students. AIT recognises the curriculum in Mechanical Engineering at ECUT allowing the students to transfer to the final year of the Bachelor of Engineering in Mechanical Engineering (Honours) degree at AIT. The first group of 16 students transferred to AIT in September 2016. AIT receives 10-15 students per year for transfer to the Bachelor of Engineering in Software Engineering (Honours) degree at AIT. Awarding Body: Students receive an AIT award when they transfer to AIT. Title of Award: Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Software Engineering, Level 8. Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Software Engineering (Level 8); Date of last review: 15th December 2014 Annual review meeting takes place at AIT or ECUT Agreement expiry date is 03 December 2022. Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Mechanical Engineering (Level 8); Date of last review: 03 December 2013 Annual Review meeting takes place at AIT or ECUT. Agreement expiry date is 03 December 2021.

Date of last review of arrangement/agreement	15-12-2014
Review year for agreements	2022
Section: Articulation Agreements	Third Set of Records
Name of the Body	Jianghan University, Wuhan, China
Name of the Programme and Links to Publications	Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Graphic and Digital Design (Level 8); For further details please see the following link: https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers **Jianghan University, Wuhan, China** Athlone Institute of Technology and Jianghan University received approval from the Ministry of Education in China to commence a joint undergraduate programme for Visual Design Communication with an intake of one hundred students in September 2015. Students complete the first three years of Design programme in Jianghan University and have the option to transfer to the final year of the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Graphic and Digital Design (Level 8) programme at AIT. The first cohort of 10-15 students is expected to transfer to AIT in September 2018. Awarding Body: Students receive AIT award when they transfer to AIT. Title of Award: Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Graphic & Digital Design (Level 8) Date of last review: January 2015 Annual review meeting to take place at AIT and Jianghan University
Date of last review of arrangement/agreement	31-01-2015
Review year for agreements	2023
Do you wish to make a final submission?	Yes, this is my final submission
On behalf of the President/Provost/CEO I confirm that the information submitted in this AIQR is accurate and correct.	Confirmed
Overview of internal governance, policies and procedures (Word Template).	Confirmed
Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies.	Confirmed

Collaborative Provision.	Confirmed
Articulation Agreements.	Confirmed
Date of Final Submission	20-02-2019

Parts 2-6

Institution-led QA – Annual Information

Parts 2-6 are completed annually with information pertaining to the reporting period (i.e. the preceding academic year only).

Part 2: Institution-led QA – Annual

Part 2 provides information relating to institution-led quality assurance for the reporting period.

Section 1: Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Developments

> **1.1** The evolution of quality assurance and enhancement systems in support of strategic objectives in the reporting period.

Athlone Institute of Technology has adopted an inclusive and reflective approach to quality assurance. There is an enhancement focus and the goal of initiatives in this area is to improve the student experience. This focus is informed by the attention that quality received within the institution's strategic plan https://www.ait.ie/about-ait/strategic-plan/.

The introduction leads to the proposal that AIT is on a path with mission distinctiveness and quality enhancement as the lodestar.

AIT continues its commitment to the quality of learner experience and maintains this focus in the development of the new Strategic Plan 2019-2024. Our priorities that emphasise the successful, connected, engaged and holistic student, demonstrates the importance placed on the student experience. The consistently high ISSE participation rates give reliability and validity to the student voice and a confidence in the associated QA actions. Ensuring the integrity of decision-making AIT integrates all stakeholder views in QA processes and decision and utilise all available data to ensure fully informed decision making. The growing commitment and emphasis on becoming a data-driven institute has witnessed the development of data dashboards and reporting structures that clearly direct and target intervention. Notably, the development of the Student lifecycle dashboard that monitors students from application to completion has highlighted a number of targeted actions. This coupled with the development of the ISSE institutional report has empowered decision makers. Learner

experience as a central tenant of AIT's focus impacts on all facets of instructional activity and therefore is a significant focus of all QA policies and procedures.

Over the recent years more members of our community, both students and staff, have become engaged with the quality discussion. This results from a conscious endeavour to embed enhancement and to have this supported by a strong quality office with informed and permanent support. The strategic objectives of the institution are delineated under seven pillars within the strategic plan and quality is the prerequisite for all. In addition, the implications of the recent legislative change and especially the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, has demanded greater responsibility from individual institutions as they assume increasing autonomy. Athlone Institute of Technology has responded with an increased emphasis on enhancement and on empowering its community to contribute to the fullest over the full lifecycle of the life of a learner. Our Learning and Teaching Unit has worked diligently to equip staff to foster a distinctive approach in respect of learning, teaching, and assessment, and further enhance opportunities for learner engagement and individual development. In addition, the institution has developed and promoted a distinctive set of AIT graduate attributes, thereby helping shape the professional growth of our learners and the holistic development of the individual. These graduate attributes were first introduced during the reporting period of this AIQR and will be included in the upgrade to the Module Manager System, which is to be implemented in 2018.

1.2 Significant specific changes (if any) to QA within the institution.

The reporting period saw the **Institute Plagiarism Committee**, which is a sub-committee of commence their role in January 2018, with representatives appointed from all departments throughout the Institute.   The role of this committee is to:

- investigate cases of alleged plagiarism;
- establish whether the allegation of plagiarism is founded and, if so, to determine whether it is a case of incidental or substantive plagiarism;
- impose an academic sanction, where appropriate;
- keep up to date with best practice guidelines and national/international developments in the area of academic integrity.

The committee met on two occasions throughout the reporting period, to deal with incidents of plagiarism which occurred during Semester 1 and Semester 2. The committee were guided by the

Institute Plagiarism Policy and an end of year report was issued to Academic Council summarising all incidents which occurred during that particular year. In addition, a training plan with regard to plagiarism is being devised by the Learning and Teaching Unit and this will be delivered to all stakeholders during the academic year 2018-2019.

The following policies were drawn up and implemented for the academic year 2017-2018:

Student Fitness to Practice Policy:

The Policy was approved by Academic Council in March 2018. The purpose of the policy was to:

- Endeavour to ensure the safety of the public whereby students of AIT engage with them either in a professional or an educational capacity;

- Instil in students the qualities and competences required as part of their engagement in an educational programme within AIT;

- Ensure students are supported and given appropriate guidance when they experience challenges and issues that may affect their ability to engage with an educational programme within AIT;

- Provide a suitable framework and mechanism for the effective management of Fitness to Practice issues that may arise either prior to or during a student's programme of study.
  In addition to this overarching Fitness to Practice Policy it was necessary for each Faculty within Athlone Institute of Technology to draw up an Addendum to the policy which is pertinent to their field of study.

Procedure for Supporting Nursing Students with a disability undertaking the B.Sc. Honours in Nursing Programmes (General & Psychiatric), while on clinical placement:

The purpose of this procedure is to facilitate the correct process to be followed in order to support a BSc (Hons) nursing student who discloses a disability in either Athlone Institute of Technology or while on clinical placement in the Dublin-Midlands Hospital Group, the Ireland-East Hospitals Group and CHO Area 8, by staff who are involved in the education and assessment of student nurses in clinical practice.

Student Code of Discipline:

The purpose of this Code of Discipline is to promote and ensure the provision of a safe environment for all students. All students are required to observe this Code of Discipline which applies to registered students within the Institute, including those students off-campus while representing the Institute, and on all other occasions when they are identifiable as students of the Institute. Students are also required to observe all other Institute regulations and to conform to all such regulations. Cases of 'Unfair Practice' during examinations are dealt with through the Institute's Examination Regulations and

Procedures, and referred to the Disciplinary Committee, if appropriate. This Disciplinary Procedure supersedes all existing procedures.

Student Policy on Gender Identity and Gender Expression:

The drafting of this policy was in response to the growing need for Athlone Institute of Technology to recognise the range, type and nature of gender diversity within its student body and in particular to form a policy framework to ensure good practice in its approach to diversity. This policy will establish the philosophy and values that the Institute applies to its operations, in recognition of the need for respect and dignity for each student. Its purpose is to guide institutional action and to direct procedures that impact on gender identity and expression. It also recognises the legal and regulatory framework within which the Institute operates and the obligations, constraints and opportunities that the legislation creates.

Establishment of a Working Groups

A number of working groups considered and made recommendations on such matters as the academic calendar, the admissions policy, the examinations policy and the Institute Standards, Assessment and Awards document.

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy
Currently the AIT RPL policy is under review and it is envisaged that a new policy will be in place during the academic year 2018/2019.

Placement Models

The report on the output of the Placement Models Working Group was produced in May 2018. Please see the following link for this report:

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/placements-in-ait

A full list of the AIT policies can be found on the AIT website through the following link:

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/policies-procedures

1.3 The schedule of QA governance meetings.

Governing Body Meeting Dates Academic Year 2017-2018
Wednesday 20th September 2017
Wednesday 25th October 2017
Wednesday 6th December 2017
Wednesday 7th February 2018
Wednesday 21st March 2018
Wednesday 9th May 2018
Wednesday 20th June 2018

Academic Council Meeting Dates Academic Year 2017-2018
Friday 15th September 2017
Friday 13th October 2017
Friday 1st December 2017
Friday 26th January 2018
Friday 9th March 2018
Friday 4th May 2018
Thursday 14th June 2018

Academic Strategy and Quality Meeting Dates 2017-2018
Wednesday 27th September 2017
Wednesday 18th October 2017
Thursday 23rd November 2017
Tuesday 12th December 2017
Friday 26th January 2018
Monday 19th February 2018
Tuesday 13th March 2018
Friday 20th April 2018
Wednesday 16th May 2018
Friday 8th June 2018

Section 2: Reviews in the reporting period

2.1 Internal reviews that were completed in the reporting period.

During the academic year 2017-2018 there were a number of new programme proposals brought forward from the Institutes three faculties and the Department of Lifelong Learning. All of these proposals went through the quality assurance processes at AIT. They were first brought to Executive Management for initial approval and financial analysis and then to the Academic Standards and Quality Committee for review and finally to external panel for evaluation and approval. On completion of these steps the programmes were brought to Academic Council for ratification.

The following is a summary of these proposals:

The Faculty of Engineering and Informatics presented a suite of programmes as follows:

- **BSc (Hons) in Software Design with Mobile Apps and Connected Devices (Level 8)**. This is a 4 Year Ab Initio programme.
- **BSc (Hons) in Software Design in Mobile Apps and Connected Devices** (1 Year Add On) **and;**
- **Higher Certificate in Software Design**

The above programmes were developed in response to Government expert group reports on future skills needs in the software. By 2021 it is anticipated there will be 28 billion connected devices in use worldwide (Ericsson 2016). The graduates of this proposed programme will graduate into a world in which the smartphone will be a "Universally Connected Remote Control".   In 2017 global revenue increased to $77 billion with 268 billion global app downloads. The estimated mobile app revenue was $35 billion in 2014, $45 billion in 2015 and $58 billion in 2016 (Business to Community 2017). Gross annual revenue from Mobile apps is projected to exceed $189 billion by 2020 (Statista 2017).   Also, according to the Forfas Vacancy Overview Report, 35% of all difficult-to-fill vacancies were for the ICT sector, primarily for professional roles in software development including software developers: mobile (iOS/Android), database (with Oracle/SQL), web, cloud; with skills in Java, JavaScript, C++, and .Net the most frequently mentioned. These programmes will provide these technical competencies. There was a 5% increase in employment in the software sector between quarter 4 2015 and quarter 4 2016, representing an additional 4,500 persons (Skills Ireland 2016). Recent research gives evidence that enterprise needs for IoT drives demand for mobile app developers. (Alpha Software 2018).

The **Faculty of Science and Health** presented the **BSc (Hons) in Applied Psychology (Level 8)**

The justification for developing this new CAO programme offering was that significant changes were taking place in Social Care education in Ireland. The Social Care sector will experience its most important change in those forty years as it joins social workers, speech & language therapists, physiotherapists and a host of other health and social care professional groups as a regulated profession in its own right. CORU is the body established by the Minister of Health to regulate the Health and Social Care sector. Within the next two years, all Social Care courses, including those at AIT, will undergo an exacting process of approval by CORU.

Another justification for the development of a new undergraduate psychology programme is that, nationally, demand for places on psychology courses is high. Psychology has become one of the most popular undergraduate subjects and degree choices on college campuses throughout the world. For example, twenty years ago in the U.S., 50,000 students graduated with psychology bachelor degrees. By 2007, the number awarded psychology bachelor degrees had grown to 90,000 - out of a total of 1.5 million awarded. By 2014, the number conferred with a bachelor degree in psychology had risen to 117,000, out of a total of 1.87 million awarded.

Part of the attraction of a psychology degree is the perceived impact psychology is regarded as having on all areas of life including the family, education, physical and mental health, advertising, consumer behaviour, human resources (HR), public relations, group behaviour and crime.

In addition, increasingly, more students are attracted by psychology because of its scientific approach and its recognition as a science of behaviour. These students are interested in the perceived ability of psychology to understand, explain, control and predict behaviour through an examination of various aspects of human functioning such as sensation, thinking, perception, learning, memory, neuroscience and psychopathology.

The BA (Hons) in Design Technology and Innovation (Level 8) programme was also presented by the Faculty of Science and Health. This four-year ab initio programme is an exciting interdisciplinary blended programme and is a joint project between the Faculties of Science and Engineering. From a Design perspective, it uses Design and User Centric Design (UCD) as core pillars. However, the programme looks to Engineering to help to adapt design research methodologies, and to develop tools and technical understanding across product, system and service design; future technologies and innovation. The rationale is to offer students a fully collaborative, blended learning experience, integrating the language and principles of design thinking and user-centred research with experimental maker lab practices.

Most importantly, the model of delivery for learners within the Design Department, better known as the 'studio' model is ideally suited to this cross-disciplinary project. The approach supports cross-pollination, promoting discourse across disciplines. Leading international providers of design education such as the Royal College of Art in the UK, the Design Academy in the Netherlands and the New School Parsons, US, extol the benefits of this creative Framework.

It will particularly target second level students who have traditionally pursued careers in Product Design and Product Development. In particular, it targets those studying LC subjects such as *Design and Communications Graphics (DCG)* and *Technology.* The programme provides a pathway to build upon competencies such as comprehending, analysing and communicating information presented verbally or graphically; problem solving; and creative thinking skills developed through the analysis and solution of problems in both two and three dimensions' graphics.

Other target student groups include mature students with backgrounds in electronic/mechanical engineering. The one-year full time placement in year 3 is expected to attract students interested in getting real-time industry experience. This industry-based year follows an apprenticeship style of industrial training which is fully assessed and accredited.

The development of this type of multidisciplinary course is in line with future career opportunities articulated in various national reports including:

- Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025
- Innovation 2020
- National Skills Bulletin 2017
- National Design Strategy 2016

Certificate in Emergency Nursing SPA

The Health Service Executive (on behalf of all Publicly Funded Health Agencies) invited proposals from suitably qualified Universities and Higher Educational Institutes (HEI) including Institutes of Technology for the accreditation, delivery and evaluation of a Certificate in Emergency Nursing SPA (Level 8) for approximately 550 nurses based on an agreed curriculum developed by the National Emergency Medicine (EMP)/Emergency Nursing Interest Group (Clinical Facilitator sub-group).   The **Faculty of Science and Health** at Athlone Institute of Technology was successful in this tender and was awarded the contract as a result.

The aim of the Certificate in Emergency Nursing is to enhance the novice nurses' knowledge, skills and competencies in the delivery of evidence based care for patients who are victims of accidents and

sudden illness.   This will be achieved through a combination of lecturers, e-learning and exposure to a clinical placement in the Emergency Department.

The **Faculty of Science and Health** also presented the **MSc in Biopharmaceutical Technology (Level 9)** programme. According to the Future Skills Needs of the Biopharma Industry in Ireland (August 2016), the Biopharma industry is one of the most rapidly growing sectors in Ireland, employing 28,200 people in 2015 and accounting for more than €30bn in exports. There are pipeline Biopharma capital projects worth over €4bn in the coming years, but crucial to the future development of the Irish Biopharma Industry will be the availability of suitably qualified graduates with the knowledge and skills required to work in this growing sector. The 2016 Future Skills Report has predicted the generation of 8,400 potential job openings in the Irish Biopharma Industry up to 2021 and that Biologics manufacturing will become a more significant component of the Irish Biopharma Industry.

The **Faculty of Business and Hospitality** presented a **Certificate in Scenario Planning for Brexit**. This 10 credit Special Purpose Award will be delivered in tandem with the already approved Postgraduate Steps. The module provides participants with an opportunity to resolve business issues using scenario planning tools. The Programme has three separate phases commencing with an overview of strategy before focusing on scenario planning in particular. The third phase provides an insight into the business issues associated with "Brexit'. By way of assessment, scenario-planning techniques will be applied to simulate the effects of Brexit leading to a presentation and strategy document applicable to the learner's organisation.

The Faculty also presented the **MSc in Data Analytics (Level 9)** programme. The Vacancy Overview Report (May 2017) notes that in Ireland, data analytics was the second most frequent job role announced after IT Security. In recognition of this, The Department of Accounting and Business Computing developed a Level 8, Higher Diploma in Data Analytics that was submitted and approved under the Springboard programme in 2015. The programme ran from academic year September 2015 – August 2016 and included a work placement element. Experience from developing and delivering this programme was harnessed to develop the Master of Science in Data Analytics, resulting in a programme that the department believes is of a suitable academic standard to meet the needs of industry in the region, nationally and internationally. The National Skills Bulleting report suggests that the demand for graduates with skills in this area will continue to rise.

The remaining programme that the **Faculty of Business and Hospitality** presented was a

Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Business Information Systems. This proposal sought approval for a

four-year full or part-time Level 8 Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Business Information Systems. The

inclusion of this ab-initio honours degree to the Institute's portfolio supports the strategic objectives

of the Institute in terms of regional development, creating sustainable links with industry and

supporting the needs of industry.

The previous Business Computing programmes offered by the department of Accounting and Business

Computing were removed from the CAO offering in April 2016 due to a low number of applications.

The department have since worked on a replacement offering harnessing industry requirements both

regionally and nationally. This programme is considered to be attractive to potential students due to

its content mix and the possibility of acquiring industry certification in certain technologies in parallel

to completion of the degree. In addition, the programme has been aligned with the new Leaving

Certificate modules on Computer Science that will be offered on a phased basis from September

2018.

The **Department of Lifelong Learning** developed a **SPA Cert in Fundamentals of BioPharm and Med-**

Technology (Level 6) programme. In recent years, the Irish Midlands has become a third cluster of

Biopharma and MedTech industries. This programme was designed as an introductory programme to

meet a range of current and future skills needs in the Biopharmaceutical industry, as identified in the

August 2016 Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN). The structure of the programme facilitates

flexible delivery in order to meet the target cohort requirements of the Springboard+ (Homemakers,

Jobseekers and those in employment seeking up-skilling to NFQ level 6). It will be offered as a 20

credit special purpose award for the homemaker and jobseeker cohort and classes will be delivered in

a flexible manner.

For those in employment wishing to up-skill and who wish to study specific modules relevant to their

jobs, these lectures will be scheduled at times suitable to all students utilising blended delivery

modes. The modules on offer were selected following a period of consultation with Pharma and

Biopharma companies in the midlands region, in conjunction with the Regional Skills Manager, the

IDA Midlands Regional Business Development Manager and Biopharmachem Ireland.

Details with regard to the timings of the above programme approvals can be accessed on the Quality

Section of the AIT website at: https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/summary-of-new-programme-

proposal.

The External Evaluation Reports can be accessed at: https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/external-validation-panel-reports.

Ongoing review/amendments to Programmes/Modules post Approval Process

If a faculty deems it necessary to amend a programme/module following validation during delivery to the students, there is a process in place for this.   All changes requested are discussed initially at programme board level within the faculty and if agreed they are then brought to the Academic Quality and Strategy Committee who review the proposals twice yearly, in December and April. If they are agreed, then all necessary updates are made to the internal systems such as Module Manager and Banner. For further information on this process and the regulations with regard to same please see the following link which is located on the Quality Section of the AIT website:

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/module-manager-process

Review of External Examiner Reports

External Examiner Reports are reviewed on an annual basis initially by the President and VIPAR and then by the relevant faculties. A summary of these reports is drafted by the Quality Office and the faculties are requested to provide updates on how they addressed the recommendations of the external examiners.

Programme Boards

At faculty level Programme Boards are held once per semester to consider all matters affecting the operation and innovation of each programme. Such issues as programme changes, external examiner reports and assessment of the progress of students are addressed at Programme Board. There is always a student representative on the Board. The Programme Board plays an integral role in the smooth operations of each faculty in the institute.

New Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland Standards and Requirements 2016

In light of the new Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland Standards and Requirements 2016 a route and branch update of the four-year Bachelor of Science (Honours) in General Nursing and the four-year Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Psychiatric Nursing within the Department of Nursing and Healthcare in collaboration with AIT's Clinical partners in the HSE was undertaken. The following work breakdown structure outlines the processes involved:

1. **Curriculum Design & Development;**
- Course Philosophy
- Educational Philosophy
- Programme aims/ Outcomes
- Core Indicative Content (Nursing Informatics and Social Policy)
- Taxonomy of Learning (Steineker and Bell)
- Teaching and Learning opportunities (Get list of teaching sessions received in clinical areas e.g. End of Life, Renal, and Dementia Care; include Journal clubs)
- Continuous professional development (Portfolio of learning year 1-4. Reflective element on Moodle)

2. **Student entry, admission, transfer, discontinuation & completion; Exit awards; student attendance records update**

3. **Programme Governance and Management**
- Local Joint Working Group
- Membership (to include students & consumer) General and Psychiatric students to be invited, Bernie to follow up
- New Memorandum of Understanding (Need to be signed with new hospital groups)
- Student Welfare Policy (for review)
- Disciplinary Policy (for review)
- Dignity and Respect policy (for review)
- Course Leader Coordinator
- Link lecturer arrangements
- Continuous quality improvement

4. **Student support, supervision and Learning Resources**
- Grievance & Complaints policy for students in place
- Ratio of CPCs

5. **Assessment Strategies**
- Student assessments
- External examiners
- Student evaluation (QAI already in the curriculum document)

6. **Self-Assessment Document**

7. **Practice Placement Allocations**
- Clinical Placements Allocations Group to;
- Identification of sites to include:

- Care of the Older Person increasing to 6 weeks
- Primary Health Care Nursing increasing to 4 weeks (This can be with the Public Health Nurse, Visiting the Primary Healthcare Team, Community Nurse or Care of the Person with an Intellectual Disability).
- Specialist mental health nursing (8 weeks e.g. CNS/ ANP nurse led services, drug/alcohol dependence, forensic/prison medical services, child and young person services, suicide/self-harm prevention, homeless team, perinatal services, voluntary agencies, dual/complex needs, other. Practise placements outside of Ireland (maximum of 13 weeks)

8. **Practice Placement Learning Environment and Competence Assessment**
- Clinical Competency Assessment Documentation Group to;
- Review of Clinical Workbooks
- Domains of competence
- Action plans/ learning contracts
- Repeat opportunities

9. **Clinical Learning Environment Group**
- Members (programme leaders, link lecturers, allocations staff, NMPDU, CPCs)
- Educational Audit Tool Group to: (Develop a new audit process and tool with NPDC, CPCS and AIT staff)
- Student Handbook (to include Disability Guidelines)
- Student skills books
- Preceptorship; Initial preparation & updates; Preceptorship course; blended learning SPA

10. **Learning Outcomes Clinical Area**
- Update all clinical learning outcomes to reflect 6 Domains of competence (NPDC, CPCs & Link Lecturers)
- Develop final practice placements learning outcomes for year 1-3 (NPDC, CPCs & Link Lecturers)
- Protected time policy
- Arrangements are in place for preceptor supervision and examining of Undergraduate students
- Preceptorship evaluation Safety of the practice learning environment
- Framework in place for students to raise concerns Undergraduate health problems

11**. Quality Assurance and Enhancement Mechanisms**
- Reports of internal and external subject quality reviews
- Reports of module, year and programme evaluation
- Students', former students' and employers' evaluations of the programme
- Sufficient registered practitioners to facilitate the supervision of nursing students
- Evidence based practice guidelines to support care delivery (PPPGs)
- Reports of research awareness and the application of research findings among clinical practitioners
- Reports on the delivery of person-centred, holistic care of the person using health services
- Unit Profiles and in the Educational Audits

- Policies/protocols in respect of medication management
- Policies/protocols in respect of good practice in recording the delivery of nursing care
- Mechanisms and evidence of audit of nursing documentation
- Evidence of maintenance of competence and of continuing professional development of all
- academic and practice staff involved in programme delivery
- Evidence of clinical risk management programmes Kevin O'Malley HSE
- Mechanisms for and evidence of student support, supervision and assessment whilst in practice settings. (Employee Assistance, Counselling Policy)
- Mechanisms for and evidence of educational and clinical audit
- Mechanisms are explicit as to the role and function of members of the public and person's in receipt of healthcare in the process of programme review and evaluation

12. **Professional Advisory Group**
- Continuous Professional development, Education

13. **Education Management and Evaluation**
- Document to be put on shared folder for each programme
- Template of Audit document
- All updated Modules to be presented to CPCs and NPDU at next programme board
- Attendance in practical's commencing 2018 to be wrote into document

Monitoring and Evaluation of Erasmus+ Programmes

The HEA and the EU Commission monitor the correct implementation of the Erasmus Charter at AIT. All mobility's are recorded on an online system called the Mobility Tool. This system is checked regularly by the HEA to ensure it is up to date. Interim and Annual Reports record all activities for the academic year. At the end of each mobility programme a financial and written report on all aspects of the Erasmus + programme is prepared and submitted to EU Commission. Sample documentation is sent to the HEA for examination and proof of payment of Erasmus monies must be presented to the HEA. The HEA may 'desk check' documentation at any time. The Erasmus Office at AIT is also subject to random external audits at any time.

The International Office carries out an annual review of agreements with partner universities in the EU and Non-EU markets to determine which agreements are active and date of expiry of agreement. If the relationship with the partner university is active, AIT renews the agreement. An updated list of EU and Non-EU partner universities is sent to the Quality Office by the International Office once per year, usually in November. Please see link below which provides a table of all EU and Non-EU partners.

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers

2.2 Profile of internal approval/evaluations and review completed in the reporting period.

Number of new **Programme Validations/Programme Approvals** completed in the reporting year	**12**
Number of **Programme Reviews** completed in the reporting year	
Number of **Research Reviews** completed in the reporting year	
Number of **School/Department/Faculty Reviews** completed in the reporting year	
Number of **Service Unit Reviews** completed in the reporting year	
Number of **Reviews of Arrangements with partner organisations** completed in the reporting year	10*

* This number represents Articulation Agreements that were reviewed during the reporting period.

The Collaboration Agreements will be reviewed during the academic year 2018/2019.

2.3 Profile of reviewers and chairs internal approval/evaluations and review for reviews completed in the reporting period.

Composition of Panels	%
Internal	
National	85%
UK	15%
EU	
Student	
Other	

Chair Profile	%
Internal	
Similar Institution	100%
Different Institution	
International	

Section 3: Other Implementation Factors

3.1 A description of how data is used to support quality assurance and the management of the student learning experience.

During the academic year 2017-2018 the main source of information with regard to the student learning experience was obtained by means of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) which was carried out over a three-week period during February/March 2018.   This survey was designed to ask students directly about their full experience of higher education.

A total of **65%** participated in the survey.   The cohort of students who participated in the survey were from first year, final year, and postgraduate taught master's programmes. Testing of the original ISSE questions with students in 2013 led to the conclusion that that survey did not meet the needs of research students and these students were not invited to participate when that survey was implemented.   In 2018, post-graduate research master's students were invited to participate in the ISSE survey.   A separate survey was tailored specifically for research master's students, and the participation rate for this group was **64%**.

Since the survey's inception in 2013 AIT continues to maintain the highest response rate annually.

The data gathered through the ISSE affords the opportunity to gain insights into the student and environmental factors which influence the nature of student engagement in the institution. Analysis of the data was shared among all relevant parties throughout the institute by means of presentations to both staff and student body representatives.

The number of AIT students that participated in the 2018 Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) increased by 4.6% on 2017.

In this survey 43 of the quantitative questions contribute to one of 9 indicators. The 9 indicators are as follows:

Higher order learning; Reflective and integrative learning; Quantitative reasoning; Learning strategies Collaborative learning; Student-faculty interaction; Effective teaching practices; Quality of interactions Supportive environment

Indicator scores are based on the responses to the questions which directly contribute to that indicator.

The responses to each question are converted to a 60-point scale, where 0 is the minimum response and 60 is the maximum.
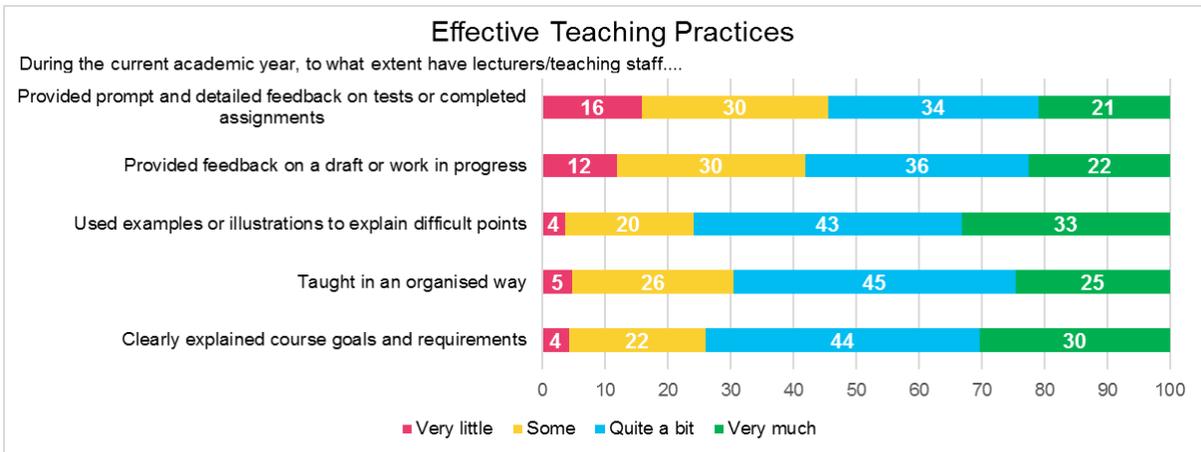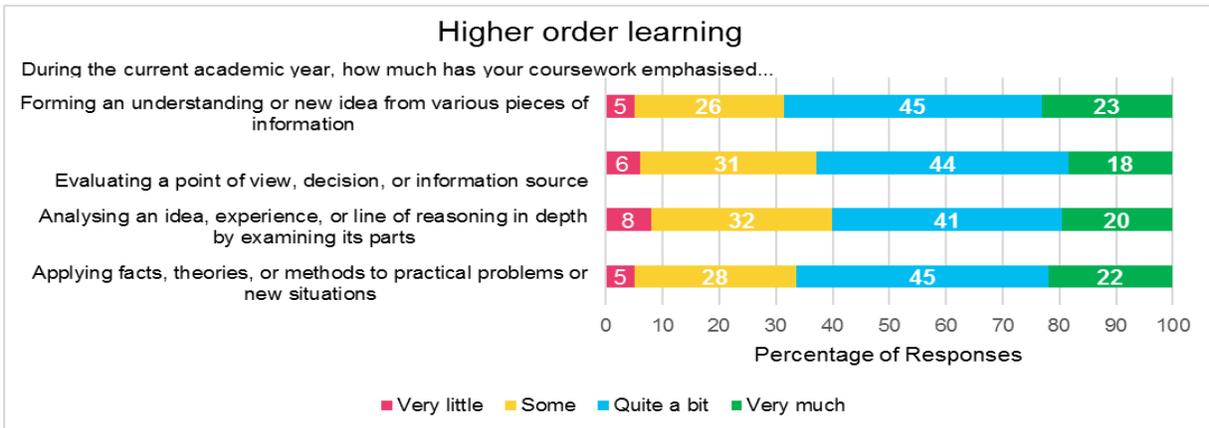
With regard to questions not relating specifically to indicators, students rated their entire educational experience at AIT very highly.

The resulting data obtained from ISSE is used at faculty meetings and programme boards. Areas for improvement are highlighted and continually being acted upon throughout the institute.

Please see link below under the Quality Section of the AIT website which outlines detail in relation to the Irish Survey of Student Engagement for the reporting period.

https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/irish-survey-of-student-engagement-isse

AIT is committed to supporting student engagement and leveraging data to enhance student success. Throughout the institute there are pockets of excellent practice, where data is gathered, analysed and acted upon. Examples include:

• The use of the VLE (Moodle) at a basic level to record attendance and logins with follow up by faculty

• A more advanced use of the VLE through the monitoring of activities for student engagement

• Specific educational research projects initially supported through the Learning and Teaching Unit and subsequently embedded in teaching practice. These utilise educational technologies such as classroom response systems, online portfolios and collaborative multi-media tools, to support learning and feedback.

• A number of meetings and workshops for The National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) took place in 2017/2018. A series of workshops are planned in 2018/2019 to progress this project.

In addition, systems used by the library and the academic writing centre provide valuable data on student engagement to inform the provision of services to students.

AIT has invested in a package of key initiatives to support the transition to higher education for a diverse student population. These include:

• AIT Connect - a seven week extended induction/transition programme coordinated by the Student Resources Centre in collaboration with faculties and other key stakeholders

• Peer Assisted Student Support - a student-led facilitated study programme where trained 2nd year student PASS Leaders run a series of study sessions to help their fellow first year students

• Student Tutors – maths, business, programming and science

• Academic Writing Centre (AWC), which focuses on promoting excellence in writing

Data Protection Regulations and how they support Quality Assurance

Athlone Institute of Technology in order to carry out its statutory functions, collects and processes personal data of students. The institutes take the confidentiality of all personal data seriously and

takes all reasonable steps to comply with the principles of Data Protection legislation. The institute endeavours to collect personal data only in order to meet specific legitimate purposes and to retain that data only for so long as those purposes remain valid. Ordinarily the institute will not pass personal

data to any third party except where required by legislation, statutory obligations or for other legitimate purposes as balanced against the rights and interests of the Data subject.

Personal data may be defined as data relating to a living individual who is, or can be identified from, either the data itself or from the data in conjunction with other information that is in, or is likely to come into, the possession of a Data Controller. Athlone Institute of Technology is a data controller as defined under the legislation and will comply with its obligations under the Data Protection Acts of 1988-2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679. With regard to the dissemination of personal information to any third party the institute may provide information to relevant authorities, such as QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland), FETAC (Further Education & Training Awards Council), HEA (Higher Education Authority), CAO (Central Applications Office), Grant Awarding Bodies, other Colleges and Research Institutes and Research Collaborators, the Department of Education & Science, and other relevant authorities such as: the Department of Social Welfare, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Health and Children.

For information on AIT's privacy policies see https://www.ait.ie/about-ait/gdpr/.

Electronic student records containing information about individual students (which typically could include name and address on entry and completion, contacting next of kin, programmes taken, examination results and awards obtained) are collected and processed by the institute. Most of this data is gathered during 1st year Registration in AIT. The information given on the registration form is stored on the institute database and then used for multiple purposes related to the student's study (examples of the use of this data are: class lists, computer accounts, library access, AIT Card, examinations, graduation, alumni, sport, health etc.). In accordance with AIT's Records Retention Policy, electronic student records are kept permanently. Students have the right to be forgotten and therefore non-essential information can be removed on request. Further down the line it may become part of a purging process for data past a certain age.

The new GDPR is due to be enacted across Europe in May 2018 and it will bring significant changes to the current system. One of the biggest changes will be the introduction of significant monetary penalties for breaches of the law. Other changes include additional legal requirements on Data Processors, broadened definition of personal data and significant changes to the issue of consent, particularly fully informed consent.

AIT will be appointing an Information and Compliance Officer in the coming months who will ensure that the institute will be compliant with the new Data Protection Regulations.

More information on AIT's policies on data protection are available from dp@ait.ie or on our website at www.ait.ie/gdpr

3.2 Factors that have impacted on quality and quality assurance in the reporting period.

The reporting period witnessed the passing of the TU legislation and as such a dramatic change to the HE landscape in Ireland. AIT's commitment to becoming a TU is evident from our commitment to research excellence, staff development, the learner experience, and continued commitment to having a positive impact on the social, cultural, and economic development in our region. AIT's regional focus is a critical dimension of all decision-making and as such has a profound impact on future collaborations. Our ambition to become a TU with full designation is significantly important to the future development of the Midlands region and cannot be overstated.

AIT welcomed the development of Omnibus Delegated Authority at Level 10 and had identified a number of emerging research areas that would have benefited from such a policy reaching fruition. As AIT is not currently in a TU consortium, such a policy could have significantly benefited research staff at AIT.

Athlone Institute of Technology is one of the four partners of what is termed the MEND cluster (Midland, East, and North Dublin). The Higher Education Authority undertook to assess the regional clusters in respect of their initial activity against the Authority's stated goals and reported accordingly to the institution presidents on same in November 2015. With respect to the MEND cluster, or what has been termed the Dublin II (i) cluster, comprising Athlone Institute of Technology, Dublin City University, Dundalk Institute of Technology, and Maynooth University, the report noted that considerable progress was made during 2014. The report proceeded to find that the cluster has both achieved the minimum outcomes and has moved beyond that to deliver more ambitious outcomes.

In subsequent dialogue, the cluster partners had proposed to the Authority that the strands that had informed the initial phase of activity – namely those concerning access, transfer, and progression, the building of a FET HET network, the mapping portal for FET provision and progression within the region, the agreement on SRS protocols to facilitate collaborative programme development and potential for enhanced transfer within the region, and the demographic study and mapping of existing provision – constituted a significant basis for increasing collaboration and that modest additional funding should be considered to allow the partners to exploit further the secure basis that had already been realised. In 2015 the MEND regional cluster received funding from the HEA to support a specific project to be developed by the MEND cluster in respect of student pathways and academic planning. This project had four specific elements:

1.   Maintenance and development of the FE/HE network.

2.   Maintenance and extension nationally, if feasible, of the portal.

3.   Continuance of the academic planning process and its role as exemplar for the sector.

4.   The mapping of SMEs regionally and institution of a systematic engagement with enterprise.

The work of these projects has been completed. For the mapping of SMEs regionally and developing systematic engagement, the working group extended to incorporate the Regional Skills Forum Managers from the MEND region. The project piloted a sector and developed an engagement framework in what was deemed Phase 1 of the project. The working group identified a number of potential development areas for Phase II leading to more comprehensive and streamlined source of information available to both HEIs and Regional Skills Managers within the cluster, along with greater enterprise engagement and inter-institutional collaboration within the region to meet the needs of the region.

On a separate front, Athlone Institute of Technology has taken a lead role in the creation and operation of the Midland Regional Skills Forum. Of the nine national fora, the Midlands was the first to appoint a regional skills manager who is supported by an inclusive board comprising academia, agencies, and enterprise and one chaired by the Vice President Academic and Registrar. The inclusive educational engagement in this forum has strengthened the ties between the college and further education providers and notably the local ETBs.

AIT continues to positively support the MEND cluster and maintain the excellent work that MEND has undertaken over the past number of years. AIT remains focused on identifying areas and opportunities for future collaboration and it is our intent to strengthen this collaboration.

3.3 A description of other implementation issues.

Athlone Institute of Technology welcomes this opportunity to update the authority on its work over the period in question and compliments the format of this input to the annual dialogue.

The vision for the institute as recorded in the current strategic plan is that AIT will be a Technological University distinguished by outstanding learner experience, international focus, distinctive regional contribution and high quality impact of its staff, teaching, applied research and innovation.

In pursuit of our ambition to become a Technological University, AIT welcomes the opportunity to seek delegation of authority at Level 10 in evolving and emerging areas.

Part 3: Effectiveness and Impact

Part 3 provides information relating to the effectiveness and impact of quality assurance policy and procedures for the reporting period.

1. Effectiveness
Evidence of the effectiveness of QA policies and procedures during the reporting period.

During the reporting period evidence of the effectiveness of QA Policies and Procedures was reflected and the following are a number of examples of how this occurred.

- The Implementation of QA policies across functional areas.
- Review process facilitated through programme and examination boards.
- New programme development across all faculties.
- Programme and module revisions.
- Policy development and review of existing policies.
- Review of External Examiner Reports.

Below is a synopsis of how the External Examiner process is carried out within the institute:

External Examiners who are approved by Academic Council and appointed for a three-year period, which may be extended thereafter. External examiners act as independent and impartial advisors providing AIT with informed comment on the assessment process itself and on student achievement against approved learning outcomes.

External examining is therefore an integral and very important part of AIT's quality assurance. It shall be the External Examiners' task to scrutinise the examination process within AIT on a continuing basis and submit their reports to senior management on whether particular students' performances have been judged properly against the institute's awards standards and further, whether the assessment process has measured learning outcomes appropriately and whether the examination process has been conducted fairly.

Senior management circulates the external examiner reports to the faculties for consideration at discussion and action at programme board level. Feedback is then provided by the faculties to both the external examiners and quality office in order to complete the process.

Training is delivered to External Examiners on an annual basis by the institute to ensure all quality procedures are being adhered to and all parties are familiar with their roles and responsibilities.

Many programmes within AIT are accredited by **professional bodies** which protect both the public interest and the interests of professionals. The professional bodies may act to protect the public by maintaining and enforcing standards of training and ethics in their profession.

Programme Boards: Each academic programme delivered across AIT, through its programme board, reports on the effectiveness of the delivery, assessment and quality for all programmes. The programme board meets at least once each semester with student representatives across all stages of the programme. All of the issues reported are documented and reviewed by the programme board to ensure an efficient resolution. These include strategy, proposed programme changes, resources, retention, assessment, documentation, qualifications, contact hours, placement and any other relevant programme changes.

The effectiveness and impact of AIT's quality assurance policies and procedures is reflected in the nature, breadth, depth, and rigour of its targeted QA activities, as reported through internal and external channels, including the **Academic Strategy and Quality Committee** which is a subcommittee of academic council. The Academic Strategy and Quality Committee has responsibility to monitor and review the institute's access, transfer, and progression policies and consider new or alternative qualification methods for facilitating students access onto institute programmes. Also, the committee will make recommendations to academic council on the identification, achievement and enhancement of standards for the institute's programmes. The committee actively contributes to the major quality assurance instruments such as institutional and programmatic reviews. It has the responsibility to

evaluate at regular intervals and as directed from time to time by academic council of the institute's programmes of education and training (including evaluation by persons who are competent to make national and international comparisons in that respect) in relation to the development, validation and review of programmes; assessment of student performance; ongoing monitoring and evaluation of programmes; evaluation by learners of that programme; and evaluation of services related to that programme, and shall provide for the publication in such form and manner as the institute thinks fit of findings arising out of the application of those procedures.

2. Impact
Evidence of the impact of QA policies and procedures during the reporting period.

- AIT's Academic Council, supported by its associated committees, for example, the Academic Strategy and Quality Committee, recommends new and revised policies for approval to its Governing Body.

- The increased use of technology enhanced learning and teaching and assessment methods is evident across the institute.

- The level of external engagement is notable throughout the institute.

- The level of training and support provided by the Learning and Teaching Unit continues to have a significant impact to the quality across the institute.

3. Themes

Analysis of the key themes arising within the implementation of QA policies and procedures during the reporting period.

Retention

Student retention and progression continues to be a concern. It is being addressed by the institute.

There are a number of initiatives being undertaken by the faculties of the Institute which will focus on improving student retention and enhancing the learner experience among the first year student cohort. Some of these initiatives will include:

- The introduction of a first year assignment at Induction Day.
- Speaking with all first year students within the first 2 weeks of the commencement of programme.
- Regular student meetings with the Head of Department.
- Ensuring that students are aware of the calendar of assessments.
- Informative parent's evenings.
- Improved engagement of students in the classroom.
- Briefing for students with failed modules following semester 1.
- Emphasis on specific areas such as performance, esteem, personal Life, mental health, resilience, determination, personal organisation, respect, humanity, work-life balance.
- Identifying at-risk students through attendance monitoring, assessment submission and Moodle usage.

Professional Body Recognition

Many professional bodies associated with AIT perform professional certification to indicate a person possesses qualifications in the subject area, membership in a professional body is a requirement by the graduates in order to be legally able to practice the profession.

Below you will find a directory of the main professional bodies affiliated to AIT which are reviewed on an ongoing basis. https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers

AIT Graduate Attributes

AIT Graduate Attributes inform the development of Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategies at both institute and faculty Level. The rationale is to offer an alternative perspective to staff when designing and revising modules and programmes and to differentiate the institute and its graduates.

AIT Graduate Attributes will be included for consideration and mapping to assessments at programme design stage, in the updated version of Module Manager 3.0.

Industry Engagement

AIT has three strategic research institutes in Materials research (MRI), Bioscience research (BRI) and Software research (SRI), along with two Enterprise Ireland funded Technology Gateways – Applied Polymer Technologies (APT) and Connected Media Application Design and Delivery (COMAND) - driving market-informed research in collaboration with industry partners. Further research clusters exist at faculty level.

AIT's strategy is to be partner of choice for enterprise, focusing our applied research, innovation and enterprise support activities on addressing the needs of regional and national industry by proactively collaborating with start-ups and established companies and by providing a comprehensive range of knowledge intensive services, with a focus on SMEs.

AIT's Midlands Innovation and Research Centre (MIRC) provides incubation facilities for innovative and knowledge-based enterprise, delivers the Enterprise Ireland New Frontiers entrepreneur development programme in partnership with Maynooth University, is a location of ESA Space Solutions Centre Ireland, and makes available the resources and expertise of AIT to support client companies and enterprise in the region.

AIT has been building its research, innovation and enterprise capacity over recent decades and has in place the conduits to transfer knowledge and technologies in a manner that supports entrepreneurs, innovators, SMEs and industry partners.

In September 2017, An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar launched the SFI-funded CONFIRM Centre for Smart Manufacturing led by UL in which AIT is a partner. CONFIRM's vision is to transform and grow Irish manufacturing by integrating intelligence within products, machines, production systems and supply chains. AIT is involved in or leading a significant number of the Centre's Work Packages and Targeted Projects.

In October 2017, 13 high potential entrepreneurs commenced participation on AIT-MU New Frontiers 2017.

In November 2017, the Irish Space Industry Group in collaboration with Space Industry Skillnet and AIT organised a Space for Growth conference event at AIT to bring interested parties together for the first time to explore activities already taking place in the Irish space sector and to present a strategy for realizing Ireland's economic and social potential from the global space economy.

KTI's Annual Review and Knowledge Transfer Survey 2017 ranked AIT second among the Institutes of Technology for Total number of Collaboration, Innovation Voucher and consultancy services agreements with industry.

15 academic staff across Software, Polymer, Life & Physical, Nursing, and Sport were successful on attaining Research Time Release for 2017/2018.

In June 2018, a Design Team was appointed for the 900m² extension of MIRC facilities. MIRC expansion is a key element of AIT's institutional strategy – working in partnership with Enterprise Ireland - to significantly increase the number of high-growth knowledge-intensive export-focused businesses in the Midlands.

As of August 2018, AIT ranked second among 39 public Knowledge Providers in Ireland for completion of Enterprise Ireland Innovation Voucher projects on behalf of SMEs, having completed 414 Voucher projects since programme commencement in 2007.

Faculty of Continuing, Professional, Online and Distance Learning– Engagement with Industry

The Department of Lifelong Learning (DoLL) within Faculty is partnering with local industry in the Midlands region, designing and delivering industry focused programmes. These accredited programmes are customised to the needs of industry and are delivered using flexible delivery channels to suit industry partners and programme learners. The Faculty co-ordinates the Springboard initiative within the Institute, necessitating close ties with industry and the Regional Skills Forum Manager. The success of this is demonstrated in the number of students who attend the range of AIT Springboard programmes and who work in industry across the entire Midlands region. The Springboard+ courses are a direct response to the current and projected skills needs of local industry. In addition to Springboard, DOLL works collaboratively with numerous industries in the Midlands in the design and delivery of bespoke professional and academic programmes across levels 6 – 9.

Part 4: Quality Enhancement

Part 4 provides information which goes beyond the description of standard quality assurance procedures. Quality enhancement includes the introduction of new procedures but also extends the concept of quality assurance to other initiatives, activities and events aimed at improving quality across the institution.

**4.1 Improvements and Enhancements for the Reporting Period**
Improvements or enhancements, impacting on quality or quality assurance, that took place in the reporting period.

ISSE:

Mention has been made previously of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement popularly known as the ISSE. AIT has consistently demonstrated its commitment to the importance of this initiative through the levels of engagement recorded. This reflects a commendable commitment from various bodies within the institute including the Students' Union and most especially from the student body itself which clearly values this opportunity to register an opinion.

Students acknowledged that they were provided with prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments.

Below you will see the AIT ISSE indicator performance comparison between 2017 and 2018
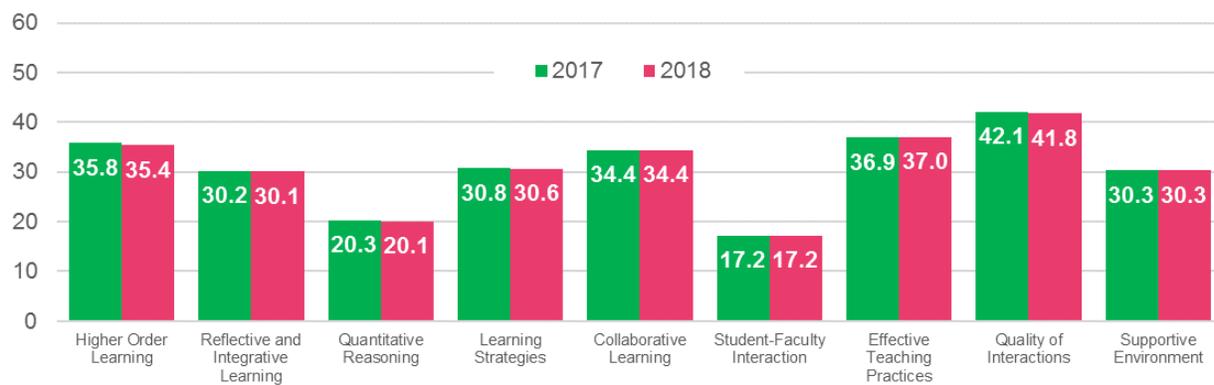
This data indicates a higher satisfaction rate for Effective Teaching Practices. All other indicators show little change year on year.

The Institute Library

AIT Library is an integral part of the teaching and learning at AIT by the facilitation of online 24/7 access to a range of subject specialist database and other electronic resources such as eBooks. Engagement and development are the focal point of the regularly updated LibGuides about subject resources, referencing and plagiarism.

Library resources are identified and explored by engagement in annual general induction programmes. The library provides their own Information Literacy Skills Training Programmes which are organised by the Subject Librarians in co-operation with academic faculties.

The library began extending its opening hours in the two weeks before each examination session in recent years. Consequently, it functions as a central academic support beyond hours.

Further development has been undertaken with the new Library Management System Koha (New which was installed in the Summer of 2017. Extensive staff training and development have been undertaken to further utilise and integrate the features of this system to support library users. Enhancements have been made to the Library Website and online resources. Collaborations with colleagues have been undertaken and are ongoing with the Writing Centre and Student Union.

Collaborative initiatives took place in connection with the PASS initiative (see under Student Lifecycle) and the library referencing expert worked with PASS leaders to act as a mentor for Academic referencing skills.

The Library ran a fully integrated and interactive programme under the National Library Ireland Week Event. There was engagement with students online and in the library as well as the Students Union in the form of a pop up library and an informational video. (See link here: https://www.dropbox.com/s/hwvez0yu0u44yvo/20181121_Library%20week%20video_2.mp4?dl=0 AIT Library look forward to developing and engaging more with students and staff going forward.

National Student Engagement Programme

The National Student Engagement Programme is a collaborative initiative under development by the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). The National Student Engagement Programme will develop student capabilities and institutional capacity to enhance engagement at all levels across the higher education system.

The programme has two objectives. The first is to develop and support the implementation of a student training programme. The second related objective is to build institutional capacity to provide high quality opportunities for learners to engage.

Training sessions have been delivered to Class representatives in AIT. A stage 2 (analysis workshop) will take place in AIT in 2018.

4.2 Quality Enhancement Highlights
Analysis of quality enhancement activities that were initiated during the reporting period and which would be of interest to other institutions and would benefit from wider dissemination.

During the reporting period 2017-2018 there were many improvements made in the institute which impacted on Quality Assurance. Examples of enhancements which took place during this year are as follows:

1. The Midlands Regional Skills Forum was the principal organising party for the Biopharma and Medtech Engineering Fair which was held at Athlone Institute of Technology on Thursday 28 September 2017. Additional stakeholders involved in the event included Biopharmachem Ireland (BPCI), Irish Medtech Association Skillnet, First Polymer Skillnet, Pharmachem Skillnet and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. The event provided an excellent opportunity for companies to meet a pool of highly skilled and motivated graduates, job seekers and career changers from all regions. Tailored CV and Interview workshops ran throughout the day.

2. The Student Ambassador Programme was set up in and comprises of a group of current AIT undergraduate students who are selected to represent AIT to prospective students, their parents and guidance counsellors. The Student Recruitment Office manages the Student Ambassador Programme. The role of the Student Recruitment Office is to let prospective students know about the opportunities available to them at AIT, whether its talking directly to a student, or though parents or school guidance counsellors. The role of a Student Ambassador is to give the real picture about life at AIT. In other words, what it is really like to be a student at AIT from talking about their course, a typical day at AIT, to student life, clubs, societies and

campus facilities. Student Ambassadors positively promote AIT and the role includes assisting with presentations, helping at Open Days, assisting with campus tours, attending career fairs and joining the recruitment team on local school visits. Student ambassadors also contribute to AIT's social media presence by writing student blogs and recording posts for the AIT social accounts.

3.   During the academic year 2017-2018 a presentation titled "Flipping Teams" was made to the Academic Strategy and Quality Committee. This presentation was an update on the Team-Based Learning (TBL) and Flipped Classroom Community of Practice (CoP) in the Business Faculty. Each team member presented their approach to Team Based Learning.

4.   AIT was named as the "Institute of Technology of the year - 2018". Alistair McCall, editor of The Sunday Times Good University Guide said: "Athlone has risen to its highest ranking in The Sunday Times Good University Guide league table this year, further eroding the traditional divide in league tables between the universities and institutes of technology. It makes an attractive offer to students nationally and plays a pivotal role regionally as a centre of excellence in everything from polymer engineering to smart manufacturing.
"Its appeal to students is evidenced in the findings of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement. The fact that nearly two-thirds of them respond to the survey, against a national average of 27%, speaks volumes, as do results that put Athlone ahead of the field in vital areas for students including effective teaching practice, a supportive learning environment and providing high quality interactions between academics and undergraduates.
"It's win this year is thoroughly deserved."

5.   The Institute commenced work on its new Strategic Plan which will cover the period 2019-2023 and a Steering Group was established to lead the process.

6.   The Institute was awarded a Certificate of Recognition for the work it carried out with the Carnegie Framework. This was a framework which was set up to develop Community Engagement initiatives and forge stronger links with community groups.

7.   During September 2017 AIT was welcomed as a member institution of the Athena SWAN
      Charter and a steering committee was formed to work towards submitting an application for
      the Bronze Award.

8.   In June 2018 the Faculty of Science & Health received The Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences
      (APS) accreditation for the BSc of Science in Pharmaceutical Sciences. AIT is only the 2nd
      institute globally and the 1st higher education institute in Ireland to receive this accreditation
      for the programme.

9.   AIT and local development company Midlands Science announced a new strategic alliance to
      jointly promote science education and careers across the Midlands region. This agreement
      involved an expert panel from across the Institute's disciplines and Midlands Science working
      together co-operatively on science education and skills development and outreach. This
      includes expert mentoring programmes and workshops for schools, targeted activities during
      Science Week and a joint promotion of Science, Engineering, Technology and Maths (STEM).

10.   Funding for a new STEM building for AIT was secured as part of the Department of Education
      and Skills €200 million investment in Institutes of Technology. This will create additional
      capacity for up to 1,000 STEM students, enabling AIT to provide for increase student demand
      on STEM programmes in pharma, biopharma, microbiology, sport and health science and
      design, innovation and technology.

11.   In September 2018 AIT hosted the first annual Science Undergraduate Research Experience
      Conference (SURE). The conference was co-ordinated through the SURE-Network, a
      community of 12 different IoTs interested in enhancing practice in undergraduate research in
      the sciences.

12.   The Quality Office developed a template to analyse and report the outcomes of the Irish Survey
      of Student Engagement. As a consequence, a number of themes will be identified which will
      give rise to improvements in key areas within each faculty.

13.   A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between AIT and Ericsson in relation to a research partnership programme (EARP). The joint research programme which commenced in September 2017 will create a stream of PhD students and post-doctoral researchers jointly supervised by AIT academics and Ericsson researchers.

14.   The faculties hosted External Examiner workshops during the first semester of the academic year. These events are a key part of building relationships between the faculties and external examiners. It affords the opportunity to outline the quality assurance procedures with regard to assessment of programmes and modules.

15.   There were significant enhancements to research within the Institute and these can be found at the following link also which is situated under the Quality Section of the AIT website https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/quality-enhancements

16.   There were a number of excellent initiatives undertaken by the Learning and Teaching Unit within the institute which are outlined in detail on the Quality section of the AIT website https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/learning-teaching-unit-key-activities-

Part 5: Objectives for the coming year

Part 5 provides information about plans for quality assurance in the institution for the academic year following the reporting period (in this instance 1 September 2017 – 31 August 2018).

5.1 Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Plans
Plans for quality assurance and quality enhancement relating to strategic objectives for the next reporting period.

The reporting period saw significant investment in the development of the new strategic plan and although not finalised a number of areas for development were identified and planned:

•   Development of reporting schedules and critical data to align with decision-making timelines.

•   Development of student dashboards to ensure improved decision making.

- Centralise data management to align Compact, Strategic Plan, Risk Register, Internal Control Framework and Health and Safety, review and exploit digital technologies.

- Formation of pre-clearance procedures to ensure the increased capacity for strategic dialogue at Academic Quality and Strategy Committee.

- So as to build research capacity and scale a re-articulation of structured research programmes was identified as a means of ensuring contemporary and relevant research provision.

- Planned review of Graduate School structure with respect to organisational structure, so as to future proof for scale.

- Establishment of a Faculty of Professional, Online, Distance and Continuous Learning, with the mission of access, up-skilling, and further internationalisation, planned review of policies and procedures.

- Review of assessment policies to create evidence of impact of current practices and procedures.

- Develop further dialogue with FE providers to explore more comprehensive articulation agreements.

The strategic alignment of the Performance Compact and the New Strategic Plan supports the idea of connected activities. The thematic approach facilitates the use of transversal initiatives to achieve a coherent eco-system that links research, contemporary provision with 'best in class' learner experience.

5.2 Review Plans
A list of reviews within each category (module, programme, department/school, service delivery unit or faculty), as per the internal review cycle, planned for the next reporting period.

- Creation of the New Strategic Plan 2018-2022

- All Collaboration/Articulation Agreements which are due for renewal will be reviewed with the partners and new Agreements signed.

- All policies and procedures which are due for updating will be reviewed by working groups and brought before the Academic Strategy and Quality Committee for approval.

- Further updating and developing the Institute Quality Manual.

- The establishment of a Central Data Centre within the Quality Office which will collate and manage reports such as CAO, ISSE and Attrition.

- Upgrading the Academic Module Manager System, to AMM3.

5.3 Other Plans

- ISSE: Further analysis of ISSE will take place during the academic year 2018-2019 in order to further enhance all aspects of the student experience.

- Athena Swan: The Athena SWAN Charter launched in 2005, recognises and celebrates good practice in the recruitment, retention and promotion of women in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM) in Higher Education. The Charter aims to address gender imbalances in STEMM disciplines, based on the belief that endeavours in these fields will be enriched when they can benefit from the talent of the while population, and when barriers to progress in academic careers are removed. By signing the Charter, Irish universities and Institutes of Technology have made a progressive commitment to embed its six principles in their policies, practices and culture. As an institute nearing its 50th anniversary, AIT recognises the strategic importance of such an agenda in helping attract and retain the brightest and most competent educators and researchers to guide the next generation of great thinkers.

   AIT's ambition is that through the attainment of the Athena SWAN Bronze Award, is to develop an effective strategy, committed to the ongoing development of effective and progressive policies, procedures and initiatives.

   Subsequently, this will increase the number of female applicants for positions and progression, lead to enhanced job satisfaction, a better work environment and higher numbers of women in research and STEM disciplines to ensure that they continue to thrive and prosper. AIT intends to ensure that the growing institute continues to exude a culture of inclusivity - free from bias - which recognises the role each of our stakeholders play in ensuring we achieve gender equality.

   AIT began its self-assessment process in September 2017 with the establishment of a self-assessment team (SAT) prior to signing up to the Athena SWAN Charter. The SAT comprises of

a Steering Committee and four sub-groups set up to take responsibility for extracting, collating and analysing statistics, reviewing policies and procedures and developing the Action Plan. When forming the SAT, careful consideration was given to the demographics of the group to ensure balance and representation.

Chaired by the Vice-President for Strategic Planning, Institutional Performance, Equality & Diversity Mr John McKenna, the team encompassed a grouping of staff whom collectively have a broad range of experience and expertise in teaching, research, management, administration and technical support from across AIT. In addition, SAT member Dr Chris McDermott has been a member of the Athena SWAN Ireland Committee, since March 2018.

Since its inception, the team have met monthly, with sub-groups meeting in addition to the larger group. The Chair reports regularly to both the Executive Management Team (EMT) and Governing Body. The SAT team has ensured that the self-assessment process has been highly consultative, and throughout the process, sought advice and information from others, both within the Institute and externally, with regard to surveying, data, analytics and statistics.

In November 2018 Athlone Institute of Technology will submit a report, action plan and application for the Athena SWAN Bronze Award.

- Exams Office:

    - There will be a stricter implementation of exam regulations.

    - There will be a review of the processes surrounding control of grade data held by the exams office.

    - 2017 -2018 was a year of staff changes in the Exams Office. Quality improvements will form the agenda for academic year 2018 – 2019.

    - There are plans to implement a pilot in Semester 2 – 2018/2019 of Inventise, an exam paper lifecycle management system for handling examination papers from creation to printing with a view to increasing efficiency and security in the process.

    For additional information on examinations AIT see the following link: https://www.ait.ie/life-at-ait/registry/examinations

Part 6: Periodic Review

Part 6 provides information that acts as a bridge between the AIQR and periodic external review.

6.1 The Institution and External Review
A description of the impacts of institutional review within the institution.

AIT is scheduled for an institutional review in 2023. Preparation for the review is supported by the identification of thematic priorities that form the basis for data, initiatives, and KPI's prior to the review event. Please see section 6.3 of this document for details of thematic focus.

6.2 Self-Reflection on Quality Assurance
A short evaluative and reflective summary of the overall impact of quality assurance in the reporting period or, over a more extensive period, in the review.

AIT continues to have robust QA processes and policies. This position has been strengthened during the reporting period with the addition of a number of new policies and a continuous review and development of existing policies and practices. The addition of data and the emphasis on utility of reports (with increased access to data by virtue of timey reports) forms a best practice approach to quality assurance and enhancement activities.

The student voice makes a significant contribution to the quality culture at AIT and is further strengthened by the internal ISSE report, Data dashboards, and NStep programme, for example.

The new strategic plan will support the development of more comprehensive data creation and reporting and links transversal initiatives that will collectively ensure QA assurance and enhancement.

6.3 Themes
Developmental themes of importance to the institution which will be relevant to periodic review.

Building on the success of the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan: *Global Focus-Regional Impact*, and serving as a bridging between strategic plans, the Institutes Compact agreement with the HEA enables the refocusing of priority areas for the Institute, while maintaining the momentum generated to date.

Athlone Institute of Technology in its Compact agreement with the HEA identifies five Strategic Themes and acknowledges the connectedness of priorities that define the ecosystem of Athlone Institute of Technology as an ambitious and evolving institution. The synergy between the Institutes identity, vision, function, and experience culminates in identifying our strategic priorities.

1. Enhanced Industrial Engagement

2. Build Research Capacity and Scale

3. Connecting Research and Teaching

4. Access, Progression, and Success Strategy

5. Internationalisation Strategy

Athlone Institute of Technology prides itself on the quality of the student experience and acknowledges that the success of our strategic priorities is predicated on the quality of the provision. Therefore, Athlone Institute of Technology has established two foundational priorities that govern all activities:

• Quality Culture Enhancement

• Excellence in Operation and Governance

Over the course of the 2014 – 2018 Strategic Plan, Athlone Institute of Technology has risen to its highest ranking in The Sunday Times Good University Guide league table, further eroding the traditional divide between the Universities and Institutes of Technology. AIT's appeal to students is evidenced in the findings of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement, with AIT's response rate continuing to be the highest in the country by a considerable margin at 61%, achieved via a partnership approach between the quality office, academic staff and the students' union.

The successful delivery on initiatives of *"Global Focus-Regional Impact"* Strategic Plan have to date provided a high-quality, student-centred educational experience with a strong focus on academic excellence; creating a "best in class" learning environment for the AIT learner. Additionally, the Institutes ability and strength in identifying areas of skills shortage and working with businesses to improve links between enterprise and academia have contributed to its graduates enjoying jobs success with 93% either employed, in training or in further study 6 months after graduation, which is a testament to AITs innovative approach and close links with industry.

AIT continue to be as ambitious for our Institution as we are for each of our students and our 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, currently in the write-up stage is being informed by internal and external stakeholders, including staff, students, industry, business, civic and cultural groups who are united in shaping our region and our future collectively.

The Institutes vision to be a contemporary, ambitious and engaged educational institute driven by impactful research and capable of changing practices and thinking worldwide, will be enabled by the successful delivery on the initiatives and priorities identified in the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan:

- To create agile and adaptable global graduates with the skills and competencies necessary to succeed in today's fast-moving innovation economy.

- To provide a high-quality, student-centred educational experience with a strong focus on academic excellence; creating a "best in class" learning environment.

- To champion an agenda of inclusivity and diversity within our institute, recognising its value in attracting top talent and unleashing a bright and upwardly mobile future for.

- To engage actively and impact fully with students, staff, businesses and our communities.

- To engage in research that changes practice and impacts on societal issues for future generations.

The Strategic Priorities for AIT going forward, and aligned with regional and national strategy, are, that in providing a high-quality, student-centred educational experience with a strong focus on academic excellence; creating a "best in class" learning environment, we will produce agile and adaptable global graduates with the skills and competencies necessary to succeed in today's fast-moving innovation economy.