

[MTU Cork / Cork Institute of Technology]

2021

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**Annual Quality Report for**  
**MTU Cork / Cork Institute of Technology**  
**Reporting Period 1 Sep. 2019 to 31 Dec. 2020**

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**Annual Quality Report for  
MTU Cork / Cork Institute of Technology  
PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM  
Reporting Period 1 Sep. 2019 to 31 Dec. 2020**

## PREFACE

The **Annual Quality Report (AQR)**; formerly AIQR) forms part of Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) quality assurance (QA) framework of engagement with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The AQR provides documentary evidence of the development and evolution of each institution's internal quality system. It provides QQI with assurance that internal QA procedures have been established and are being implemented consistent with regulatory requirements.

The AQR, particularly part A, should assist with **document management** in the institutional review process and will facilitate institutions in providing review teams with procedural QA documentation in preparation for the external review process. It is an important part of the evidence base considered by external **review teams** as part of QQI's CINNTE cycle of institutional reviews, demonstrating that the institution's internal QA system is aligned with QQI's Core and relevant Sector- and Topic-specific Statutory QA Guidelines, and with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015 (ESG). It enables the review team to satisfy itself of compliance with these requirements for the purpose of the institutional review process.

Each AQR is **published in full on QQI's website**, providing transparency on the HEIs' assurance and enhancement of quality to external stakeholders. (As such, institutions should ensure that their submissions do not contain any data that they consider to be commercially sensitive.) Collectively, the AQRs comprise a single national repository of quality assurance practice in Irish higher education institutions.

Each year, QQI produces a synthesis report of the key themes highlighted across the AQRs, primarily arising from Part B of the reports.

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## Guidelines on Completing the Report

The AQR is aligned with QQI's Core, Sector and Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and with the ESG (2015). A mapping of the ESG to QQI Core QA Guidelines is included in Table 1 below; the structure of Part A of this report template aligns with the first column of the table. Additional guidance on completing this template and reference material is included in each section. Institutions should adhere to this guidance and have regard to QQI Core, Sector and Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. **The guide text within each section should be deleted before submission of the report.**

### Submission Process and Timeline

The deadline for submission of the AQR each year is in February of the relevant year, with the call for submission sent to institutions in November of the preceding year. Once the call for submission has been made, QQI will provide access to QQI's provider portal, QHub, to the designated institution contact(s) to facilitate submission of the report. Through QHub, each institution will have access to an editable version of its AQR for the previous reporting period. This document can then be amended/updated to reflect any changes or developments that occurred during the current reporting period before submitting the final report to QQI.

### Completing the AQR

- When completing the AQR template, all relevant colleagues in the institution should be consulted.
- Consider whether external audiences will be able to understand the terminology used (particularly local abbreviations and acronyms); it may be helpful to include a glossary.
- Aim to avoid duplication in the report - where information is relevant to more than one section, the first mention may be referenced in subsequent sections.
- Provide reflections on what worked well, but also what may have been tried but did not work.

## Report Structure

### Part A: Internal QA System

Part A of the AQR comprises a record of each institution's current QA policies and procedures and should provide links to those policies and procedures. Private HEIs may provide links to the policies and procedures approved by QQI during initial access to validation (IAV) or reengagement. It is the responsibility of each HEI to ensure before submission of the AQR that all links are correct and functional, and that the policies and procedures referred to are the most up-to-date versions available. Given that the AQR is submitted in respect of a discrete reporting period, it may be helpful for institutions to establish a SharePoint/OneDrive folder (or similar) for each reporting period that contains the current versions of their policies and procedures, and that hyperlinks to these versions of the documents be provided in the AQR

Part A is to be completed only if there have been **material** changes to QA policies and procedures during the reporting period. Such changes may include the approval and implementation of new policies or procedures, or significant amendments to existing ones.

### Part B: Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE)

Part B of the AQR documents and captures QA activities, developments and enhancements undertaken by institutions **during the reporting period** and their **impact**. Insofar as is possible, institutions should demonstrate in Part B how plans set out in the previous AQR were progressed during the reporting period - these may be plans linked to strategic objectives, to reengagement advices, or to institutional review recommendations.

### Case Studies

In each reporting period, QQI may request updates on specific thematic areas or may invite the institution to submit case studies in response to specific topics. Further, institutions may include case studies to share good practice on topics of their choosing, demonstrating QA and QE in action. In formulating case studies, institutions are encouraged to reflect on and highlight areas that may be of interest to other institutions and would benefit from wider dissemination. Further guidance is provided in Part B.

## Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template<sup>1</sup>

### Legislation

- [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012 \(as amended\)](#)
- [Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992 \(as amended\)](#)
- [Technological Universities Act 2018](#)
- [Universities Act 1997](#)

### QQI Documents

#### Statutory QA Guidelines (QAG)

- [Core QAG](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Independent/Private Providers](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Designated Awarding Bodies](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Institutes of Technology](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Blended Learning](#)

#### Other QQI Policy Documents

- [QQI's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes, and Joint Awards, 2012](#)
- [QQI's Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners, 2015](#)
- [QQI Policy Restatement on Access, Transfer and Progression, 2015](#)

### Other National/International References

- [European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(2015\)](#)
- [IHEQN Guidelines on Collaborative Provision](#)
- [National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland](#)
- [Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes, 2019](#)
- [HEA National Framework for Doctoral Education](#)
- [The Salzburg Principles](#)
- [The Salzburg II Recommendations](#)
- [SOLAS Code of Practice for Employers and Apprentices](#)
- [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

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<sup>1</sup> These links will be updated as further guidance documents are published.





## PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Table 1

Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)				
AQR Part A Section	QQI QAG Core Sub-section No.	QAG Core Sub-section Title	ESG Standard No.	ESG Standard Title
1.0 - Internal QA Framework	2.1	Governance and Management of Quality	1.1	Policy for Quality Assurance
	2.2	Documented Approach to Quality Assurance		
2.0 - Programme Development and Delivery	2.3	Programmes of Education and Training	1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
4.0 - QA of Research Activities and Programmes			1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review				
5.0 - Staff Recruitment, Development and Support	2.4	Staff Recruitment, Management and Development	1.5	Teaching Staff
2.3 - Teaching, Learning and Assessment	2.5	Teaching and Learning	1.3	Student-centred Teaching, Learning and Assessment
	2.6	Assessment of Learners		
3.0 - Learner Resources and Supports	2.7	Supports for learners	1.6	Learning Resources and Student Support
6.0 - Information and Data Management	2.8	Information and Data Management	1.7	Information Management
7.0 - Public Information and Communication	2.9	Public Information and Communication	1.8	Public Information
2.0 - Programme Delivery and Development	2.10	Other Parties Involved in Education and Training	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review			1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
9.0 - Details of Arrangements with Third Parties				
2.0 - Programme Development and Delivery	2.11	Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review			1.10	Cyclical External Quality Assurance
4.0 - QA of Research Activities and Programmes	QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes			

## Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for MTU Cork / Cork Institute of Technology for the reporting period **1 September 2019 to 31 December 2020**.

The AQR has been approved by Prof Maggie Cusack, MTU President, and Dr Áine Ní Shé, Registrar & VP for Academic Affairs, MTU Cork, and is submitted by Eva Juhl, Institutional Review Facilitator.

### Overview

This report has been prepared and submitted by MTU Cork for the final, extended reporting period of Cork Institute of Technology (CIT), 1 September 2019 to 31 December 2020. On 1 January 2021, Cork Institute of Technology became a constituent part of Munster Technological University (MTU) under the Technological Universities Act 2018, together with Institute of Technology Tralee.

MTU Cork is, and Cork Institute of Technology before it was, a publicly funded higher education provider of national and international standing located in Cork, Ireland's second-largest city and capital of Ireland's south-western Munster province. With ca. 12,700 total enrolments, including 8,500 full-time higher education students, plus over 3,600 music conservatory students and a staff complement of more than 1,500 (of which ca. 1,000 academic teaching and research staff), CIT was the largest of Ireland's, originally, thirteen Institutes of Technology (IoTs) apart from Dublin Institute of Technology. The Institute offered programmes of higher and further education and training in the fields of Biological & Physical Sciences, Business, Computer Science, Engineering & Craft Studies, Fine Art & Design, Maritime Education, Mathematics & Statistics, Music & Theatre, Social Sciences & Journalism, Sports, and Tourism & Hospitality. CIT's institutional structure, progressively consolidated following the introduction of a new, tiered management structure in 2004, consisted of two large faculties distributed over four campuses. From 2015 onwards, the Faculty of Business & Humanities encompassed two cognate schools and CIT's constituent music and art & design colleges, while the Faculty of Engineering & Science comprised three cognate schools and the National Maritime College of Ireland.

CIT made major higher education awards at all levels of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) from Higher Certificate (NFQ Level 6) to PhD (NFQ Level 10), as well as minor and special purpose awards. From 2001 to 2019 inclusive, the great majority of CIT awards were made under 'delegated authority' from the national qualifications authority, first the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), succeeded in 2012 by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). Over time, on foot of comprehensive external review processes, CIT extended the scope of its delegated authority to include awards for all taught programmes to Masters' level (2005); PhD awards in specified fields of research (Life & Physical Sciences, Electronic Engineering, Manufacturing & Mechanical Engineering in 2005; Computing resp. Computer Science in 2013); joint awards with University College Cork (2011); and four specified transnational joint awards in the area of media communication with Hochschule Darmstadt, Germany (2013) – the last being the first Bologna-compliant international joint awards offered by a public HE institution in either jurisdiction. In 2014 CIT also successfully submitted itself to stringent external review under saved HETAC policy to obtain delegation of authority for Masters by Research awards in all discipline areas offered, separately and prior to adoption of a sectoral protocol. In 2020, the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019 made the Institutes of Technology designated awarding bodies with intrinsic authority for awards up to Master's level, although doctoral degrees made by the Institutes remain under the delegated authority construct.

The statutory functions of the Institutes of Technology under the 'IoT Acts' 1992 - 2006 included provision of courses of study as well as research, consultancy and development work "for the economic, technological, scientific, commercial, industrial, social and cultural development of the State with particular reference to the region served by the College". The mission of the Institutes was professionally orientated with a strong focus on

technology, science and applied research. In line with the Institutes' regional focus, over 70% of CIT's annual student intake came from Cork city and county year-on-year.

The Technological Universities Act of 2018 continues to identify an emphasis on career education, technology and regional offerings as distinctive features and focal points of technological university provision in Ireland.

At the same time, driving forward internationalisation is central to MTU's ambitions. The university's vision for internationalisation is to develop its graduates as global citizens with the necessary abilities and confidence to live, work, achieve and participate fully in an international environment.

MTU Cork / CIT's professional focus is reflected in the broad spectrum of its provision which encompasses both academic programmes and craft and degree apprenticeship programmes leading to both further and higher education awards. It is further reflected in the remarkable extent of professional recognition and accreditation achieved by MTU Cork / CIT programmes across all discipline areas, and is also obvious in the manifold professional development offerings for mature, work-based learners, be it through bespoke delivery of modules and short courses at company premises or through the broad and varied portfolio of part-time and evening courses. Last but not least, continuous industry input was, and continues to be, a feature of programme design and emphasis on work placement in many higher education programmes across all academic fields.

Lastly, MTU Cork / CIT's research has achieved significant national and international impact, as evidenced by a range of recognised key performance indicators including success rates in competitive funding calls, citation rates of scholarly outputs, profile of international collaborators and number of research contracts with industry. The impact profile affirms the excellence of MTU Cork / CIT's research activity across the continuum from fundamental to commercialisation.

### AQR Process

As for all CIT Annual Quality Reports to date, this report was developed, collated and editorially overseen by the Institutional Review Facilitator in the Office of the Registrar and Vice-President for Academic Affairs of MTU Cork/CIT working in conjunction with the Registrar. Inputs for the individual sections are sought in the form of written, or in some few cases, oral contributions from the responsible head of function and/or functional specialists within particular areas as appropriate. While the material received is editorially prepared to ensure relevance to the purpose of the report and maximise overall coherence and flow, the AQR represents the view of the institution as a whole on its quality systems and activities as expressed by those of its members responsible for and most familiar with the implementation of its individual functions.

In the first instance, individual approval is thus normally sought by the Institutional Review Facilitator from each contributor for the edited section(s) to which s/he contributed. The complete finalised draft AQR is formally circulated to all members of senior staff and any other contributors for commenting and suggestions for amendment (for AQR 2021, this will be split into Part A and Part B). Formal approval of the final report is sought from the President prior to submission to QQI.

Drafting of AQR 2021, the final quality report for Cork Institute of Technology, coincided with the first few months of the transitional phase of MTU immediately post-designation. As will be appreciated, structures and processes are undergoing rapid development during this time period. At this point, it still largely reflects the inherited framework and procedures of Cork Institute of Technology. Where elements have changed following the transition to MTU, care has been taken to clearly describe the changes.

Thus, while the presentation of the quality systems in place at MTU Cork (Part A) is as up-to-date and accurate as possible at the time of writing, it is very much a snapshot in time. Certain of the features described in this AQR may therefore be no longer in place when the report is published. As well as that, now current links to pages or sub-sites of the public MTU Cork/CIT website may no longer point to 'live' locations.

## 1.0 Internal QA Framework

### 1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

#### 1.1.1 The Quality Assurance System of Munster Technological University (MTU) and AQR 2021

On 1 January 2021, Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) became a constituent part of the Munster Technological University (MTU). MTU was established under the Technological Universities Act (2018) through the merger of two former Institutes of Technology, CIT and Institute of Technology Tralee. With establishment of the new technological university, CIT and IT Tralee both stood dissolved.

While MTU is a new legal entity with a separate statutory role and a different governance and management structure, the TU Act 2018 provides for an initial transfer of functions (Section 37), programmes of education and training (Section 59), and quality assurance and access, transfer and progression procedures (Section 61) from the dissolved component institutions to the new technological university on designation day. The MTU Governing Body, in one of its first acts, ratified the continued application of the regulations, policies and procedures of MTU Cork and MTU Kerry respectively to those modules and programmes to which they applied immediately before establishment of the MTU. The separate sets of regulations and policies are to remain in place until such time as they are altered by MTU by way of amendment or replacement.

This Annual Quality Report is submitted by MTU Cork, but annualised Part B refers back to the academic year 2019/20, extended to include Semester 1 of 2020/21, reporting the academic quality assurance and enhancement activities of Cork Institute of Technology up to the point of its dissolution.

For reasons of accuracy and clarity, the following three sections, A 1.1.2 to A 1.1.4, will therefore present the governance and quality management frameworks of CIT separately to those of MTU. The presentation of individual quality procedures in subsequent sections, however, will treat the procedures of CIT and MTU Cork as a continuum, unless they have been varied by MTU within the period of reporting.

#### 1.1.2 Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) – Legislative Context and Statutory Functions

The Irish Institutes of Technology (IoTs) are statutory entities established by act of government. Their functions are governed by the [Institutes of Technology Acts 1992 – 2006](#) (IoT Acts) and include provision of courses of study as well as research, consultancy and development work “for the [...] development of the State with particular reference to the region served by the College”. Their institutional mission is professionally orientated, with a strong focus on technology, science and applied research.

Up to the end of 2019, IoTs made awards at specified levels of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) under delegated authority from [Quality and Qualifications Ireland \(QQI\)](#), the statutory qualifications and quality assurance authority for the further and higher education sectors in Ireland, and from its predecessor, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council.

The coming into effect of the full Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019 on 1 January 2020 established the Institutes of Technology as designated awarding bodies with full ownership of all awards to Masters’ level. Awarding powers for any doctoral awards (NFQ Level 10) conferred by the IoTs remain under delegated authority however and are granted by QQI on a per-discipline basis.

Cork Institute of Technology held delegated authority to make doctoral awards in Electronic, Manufacturing and Mechanical Engineering, Computing and Physical and Life Sciences. PhD research programmes offered by CIT in other fields of study led to QQI awards. By contrast, Munster Technological University holds awarding powers to doctoral level across all discipline areas represented at the university.

Continued recognition of MTU / CIT awards within the National Framework of Qualifications – as well as retention of CIT’s delegated PhD awarding powers prior to attainment of technological university status – is contingent on the successful completion of comprehensive, cyclical, external reviews of CIT’s institutional governance, management and quality assurance mechanisms. These cyclical (‘CINNTE’) reviews, organised and overseen by QQI, require a thorough institutional self-evaluation, followed by external peer review by an independent panel of national and international experts. All CINNTE review reports are published on QQI’s public website.

### 1.1.3. Cork Institute of Technology – Governance and Management Structures

As for all Institutes of Technology under the IoT Acts, statutory responsibility for the management of Cork Institute of Technology lay with the President and the Governing Body.

The CIT Governing Body in conjunction with the President managed the affairs and the property of the Institute, with some functions specifically reserved for each. The members of Governing Body were appointed by the Minister for Education & Skills for a period of five years. Membership included representation from significant external stakeholder constituencies of the Institute, as well as three members elected by CIT academic and administrative staff and two officers of the CIT Students’ Union (see also Sections [A 1.1.6 a](#) and [A 1.1.7 a](#) below). Governing Body carried out its work through a number of committees dedicated to particular functions, including its long-standing Audit & Risk, Finance, and Arts Committees and its most recent two committees, the MTU Committee and the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee. The CIT Governing Body had adopted the [amended 2012 Code of Governance for Institutes of Technology](#) to govern its business practices and published its membership, meeting agendas and digests [on the CIT website](#). Comparable information about the MTU Governing Body is now available from the [new MTU website](#).

Academic Council, the second statutory board of the Institute, advised Governing Body on academic matters and was responsible for the protection, maintenance and development of the academic standards and programmes. With over 100 members, Cork Institute of Technology had one of the largest and most representative Academic Councils in the sector. This ensured that all significant academic issues were widely consulted on and debated across the Institute.

The CIT President was the Institute’s chief officer, supported in the execution of their functions by three Vice-Presidents and the Institute Executive Board (IEB).

The Registrar & Vice-President for Academic Affairs, the Vice-President for External Affairs and the Vice-President for Finance & Administration were responsible for managing the key central functions of CIT. The day-to-day administration of these functions was carried out by a number of Central Services Units attached to the office of each Vice-President and headed by a Central Services Manager.

The Institute Executive Board was a non-statutory committee set up in March 2004 following introduction of a stratified management structure. The IEB was composed of the President, Vice-Presidents, Heads of Faculty, Head of Strategic Development, amplified for the final two years of CIT’s existence by two Heads of School, the Chair of the Heads of Department Group, and the CIT MTU Project Director. The IEB assisted the President in the management of the Institute and formulated strategy and policy on academic and external matters, significant operational issues, and programmes & budgets for approval by the Governing Body.

The academic management structure of CIT was faculty-based. Following a process of consolidation over the years, the Institute comprised two large faculties distributed over four campuses. The Faculty of Business & Humanities encompassed two cognate schools and CIT’s constituent music and art & design colleges, the CIT Cork School of Music and the CIT Crawford College of Art & Design. The Faculty of Engineering & Science had three schools and the National Maritime College of Ireland.

Each school and constituent college was made up of two to four cognate academic departments, except for the National Maritime College of Ireland (NMCI). The latter incorporated one academic department, the Department of Maritime Studies, and a Commercial Services division responsible for managing all NMCI commercial activities and training courses. The programmes offered by the Department of Maritime Studies also provide for the non-military academic requirements of the Irish Naval Service.

The management of central CIT functions, such as admissions and entry of examination results, was predominantly handled by the central Institute administration, supported by a comprehensive and information technology infrastructure which was continually enhanced and adapted to developing requirements. Individual faculties and colleges had executive responsibilities in matters related to faculty-level strategic planning, academic management and quality control.

As a publicly funded body, Cork Institute of Technology was accountable to the Higher Education Authority of Ireland (HEA) and was subject to external audit of its Annual Statutory Accounts by the Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG), as is MTU. In addition, the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA) on behalf of the Institutes of Technology engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers to carry out internal audits at national and individual Institute level. These reviews covered the full array of institutional activities, with internal support in CIT provided by the Vice-President for Finance & Administration. A comparable internal audit scheme is to be implemented in the context of MTU.

An organisation chart for Cork Institute of Technology (based on 2018/19) is given in [Figs. 1a and 1b](#) overleaf.

#### 1.1.4 Strategic Plan and Academic Strategy of Cork Institute of Technology

The strategic development of Cork Institute of Technology was guided by its Strategic Plans. The third and final of these, the [CIT Strategic Plan 2018 – 2023](#), anticipated the start of a period of transformation, jointly with Institute of Technology Tralee, into a leading technological university. The strategic vision, institutional values and strategic priorities offered by the CIT Strategic Plan 2018 – 2023 were thus intended not just to guide the continued growth of Cork Institute of Technology, but also to underpin and support the first steps in the development of a new, even more diverse, regionally grounded but globally minded technological university.

As was the case for previous strategic planning cycles, articulation of the CIT Strategic Plan 2018 – 2023 with key national systems priorities for this period was achieved through agreement of a [Mission-based Performance Compact](#) between Cork Institute of Technology and the Higher Education Authority (HEA), following a process of strategic and performance dialogue. Based on qualitative and quantitative success indicators proposed by CIT in relation to its strategic objectives, the HEA performance compact formed the basis for measuring institutional performance and allocation of funding for the most recent strategic planning cycle.

The final Strategic Plan was complemented by a [CIT Academic Strategy 2019 – 2023](#). The Academic Strategy aimed to set out the principles for CIT's further academic development in three mutually supportive academic pillars which further unfolded the Institute's strategic priorities across its spectrum of academic activities: ambitious and visionary student scholarship and teaching; impactful research and creative scholarship; and expanding and deepening engagement with our broader community.

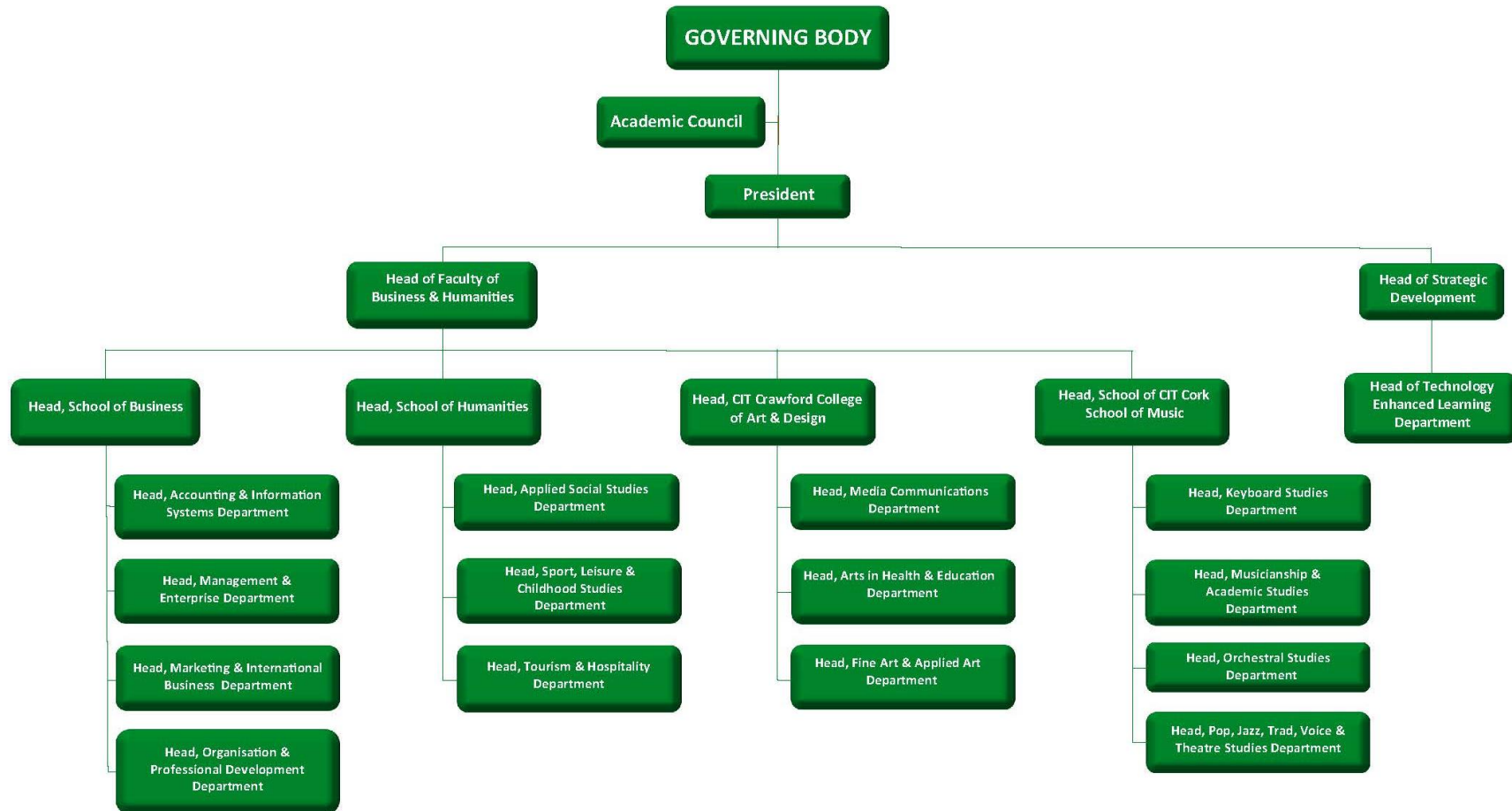
The strategic and academic trajectories set out in these strategy documents, together with other relevant documents and plans of CIT and IT Tralee, will inform the drafting of the initial Strategic Development Plan for MTU. This plan is prepared by the MTU President and will specify the new university's objectives and strategies for the first three to five years post-designation.



Fig. 1a: Organisation Chart for Cork Institute of Technology (Academic Year 2018/2019) – Part 1



Fig. 1b: Organisation Chart for Cork Institute of Technology (Academic Year 2018/2019) – Part 2





### 1.1.5 Quality Assurance of the Academic Provision at CIT and MTU Cork

The validation (accreditation), monitoring and periodic review of academic programmes in Cork Institute of Technology was carried out under CIT's academic and quality assurance regulations as agreed with Quality and Qualifications Ireland. Following TU designation these regulations were adopted as the initial QA procedures for MTU Cork. Unified regulations and procedures for the university as a whole are currently under development.

For new taught programmes, validation continues to be predicated on successful completion of both internal and independent external quality reviews. These include a review of the content and structure of the proposed programme and of the staffing, resourcing levels and supports envisaged. In Cork Institute of Technology, the final decision on validation was taken by the Governing Body on the advice of the Institute's Academic Council; this continues to be the case in the initial post-designation period of MTU.

Under existing processes, executive responsibility for the implementation of procedures for the validation and quality assurance of programmes lies with the Office of the Registrar & Vice-President for Academic Affairs. Programme validation is generally granted for five years, after which a review of the operation, enduring quality and continuing relevance of the programme is carried out to establish its eligibility for renewal of validation. This 'Programmatic Review', as the current process is known, is carried out on a school/college basis and takes into account the operational and strategic context as well as programme-level elements. The continuous monitoring and development of the academic programmes is a matter for the programme boards, which are comprised of heads of academic unit, programme staff and learner representatives. Assessment results and decisions on progression and award classification were ratified by the CIT Academic Council and continue to require ratification from the MTU Academic Council, pending adoption of alternative regulations for MTU if any.

Research degree provision at MTU Cork / Cork Institute of Technology is governed by comprehensive regulations for postgraduate research study. These cover all quality-relevant aspects of postgraduate education. Even prior to attainment of full awarding status with TU designation, CIT's postgraduate regulations never made a distinction between research programmes leading to Institute awards and those leading to QQI awards, but applied an equally stringent quality process to every programme irrespective of award. Complementary policy documents covering, inter alia, ethical research practice, IP issues and conflict of interest establish a secure legal and ethical framework within which postgraduate education can take place, while strategic development of the institutional research environment falls within the remit of the Research Office. Executive responsibility for maintenance of the research register and for decisions on admission, progression, transfer and submission lies with the Dean of Graduate Studies, who may draw on the advice of a Postgraduate Research Study Board (PRB). Within academic units, the monitoring and development of Structured PhD and Professional Doctorate programmes falls to doctoral programme panels established by the unit head on the advice of the unit's Research Studies Committee. Any taught modules offered as part of a structured research programme are validated and reviewed under the quality assurance process for taught programmes. Recommendations of the Postgraduate Examination Board on attainment are ratified by Academic Council or, in the case of doctoral awards in research fields where CIT did not hold delegated authority, by QQI.

A formal register of all valid CIT taught and research awards approved by the Academic Council was maintained by the Office of the Registrar & VP for Academic Affairs (see also [Section A 2.3.5 Validated Awards Register](#)).

### 1.1.6 Representation of Learners in Governance and Quality Management

#### a. Learner Representation in Governance – MTU Cork / CIT Students' Union

Learner representatives are systematically included in MTU Cork / CIT governance and management structures at all levels. MTU Cork / CIT's active and engaged [Students' Union](#) (SU) is the main vehicle through which learner

representation is organised. Students' Union membership is automatic for all registered MTU Cork / CIT students on payment of full fees, which include a small union levy.

The structures and procedures of the MTU Cork / CIT Students' Union are set out in a formal [constitution](#). The Students' Union has a six-strong Executive composed of three sabbatical and three non-sabbatical officers, with the former – the SU President, Vice-President Education and Vice-President Welfare – representing the views and interests of students at relevant institutional governance fora.

The membership of the CIT Governing Body appointed under the IoT Acts included the Students' Union President and Vice-President Education, whose one-year terms were tied to the duration of the sabbatical term. Both officers were also ex-officio members of the CIT Academic Council. The composition of Academic Council furthermore included one Students' Union nominee representing CIT's constituent colleges and two student members elected by the class representatives and the postgraduate research students respectively. Attendance of the SU Vice-President Welfare at meetings of the Academic Council was enabled as appropriate.

Commensurate with their functions, the Students' Union sabbatical officers also sat on a variety of other executive and non-executive committees of MTU Cork / CIT, including the Governing Body Finance Committee, Strategic Development Committee, Student Finance Committee, and the Student Services Company Board.

#### b. Learner Representation in Programme Management – Class Representatives

The second key learner representation mechanism is the class representative system. 'Class reps' are elected at the beginning of each academic year to act as principal spokespersons for their cohort and liaise with academic and support staff on its behalf. Each class rep is a member of the Students' Union Council and reports back to the SU Executive at Union Council Meetings on issues of concern to the group. Class representatives participate in programme management chiefly through their membership of programme boards.

#### c. Learner Representation in Academic Quality Assurance

Through 'class rep' participation in programme boards, the learner voice is also systematically represented in ongoing programme monitoring, for which programme boards have primary responsibility.

Learners are also included in both phases of the MTU Cork / CIT programmatic review. In each phase, a separate panel meeting with students is scheduled where no staff representing the unit under review are present. The Registrar's Office seeks to ensure that each student group is as broad and representative as possible and includes learners who have acted as class rep or taken on other student leadership roles, e.g. through AnSEO, the Student Engagement Office (see also [Section A 8.1, Periodic Review of Programmes](#), and [Section A 3.4.a, Academic and Career Support Services](#)).

While not mandatory in new programme development, departmental consultation will often include surveys of existing students and recent graduates on various aspects of the prospective programme, particularly in the case of progression programmes.

Representation of learners on validation and programmatic review panels themselves is still in its infancy, though MTU Cork intends to pilot inclusion of student reviewers in programmatic review shortly, with training to be delivered in collaboration with AnSEO's [Le Chéile](#) student partnership programme.

### 1.1.7 Representation of External Stakeholders in Governance and Quality Management

Externality, i.e. the systematic consideration of external perspectives to increase reliability and accountability in internal decision-making, is a key principle of institutional governance and academic quality management at MTU Cork / CIT, as it is in the vast majority of academic institutions in Ireland and the United Kingdom.

#### a. External Stakeholder Representation in Governance

At the highest level of governance, it was a requirement under the IoT Acts 1992 – 2006 that the Chair and a significant proportion of the members of the CIT Governing Body be external; a comparable requirement applies to the Governing Body of MTU under the Technological Universities Act 2018.

The external members of the CIT Governing Body, who made up two thirds of its total membership, were nominated by the regional Education & Training Board (ETB), the Irish Council of Trade Unions and five further organisations representative of CIT's programme portfolio with reference to specified areas of social interest. The five organisations were voted on and proposed by the Academic Council for each new Governing Body term.

#### b. External Stakeholder Representation in Quality Assurance

The principle of external stakeholder representation is also built into the full spectrum of academic quality assurance processes of MTU Cork / CIT. In keeping with the institutional mission, professional and industry views are systematically sought and acted on alongside academic inputs wherever necessary.

A key mechanism for ensuring that external peer perspectives feed into academic quality management is the external examiner system, which is synopsised in [Section A 2.4.2, Assessment and Academic Integrity](#). Information and links regarding the assessment of postgraduate research specifically are also provided in [Section A 4.0, QA of Research Activities and Programmes](#).

Equally, all core MTU Cork / CIT processes for the approval and review of modules and programmes incorporate external stakeholder representation, in some cases at multiple points. Programmatic review, for instance, is conducted by a largely external panel of academic and professional peer reviewers with an external chair. As part of the 'PR' self-evaluation process, the relevant academic unit will review ongoing stakeholder feedback – e.g. through standing industry advisory panels – and/or seek specific inputs from external individuals and organisations, such as key regional employers or academic and professional collaborators. This feedback often informs revisions to the curriculum or to programme management processes. Lastly, in each of the two review phases a separate panel meeting with an external stakeholder group is scheduled as standard. See [Section A 2.1.2 a, Key Features of the Programme Design and Validation Process](#), and [Section A 8.1, Periodic Review of Programmes](#), for further information on the key programme QA processes.

A further layer of externality is added in the many MTU Cork / CIT programmes which are professionally recognised, accredited or regulated. Further details on the representation of professional body perspectives through professional accreditation processes are available in [Section A 2.1.3, Programme Validation and Professional Accreditation](#) below.

## 1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

Validation/accreditation of collaborative provision is governed by national legislation and national and [institutional policy regarding the quality assurance of collaborative programmes and joint awards](#).

To date, MTU Cork / CIT has not designated any linked providers.

### 1.2.1 Collaborative and Transnational Provision under Delegated Authority

Prior to the coming into force of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act of 2019, which established Cork Institute of Technology as a designated awarding body, CIT's procedures for making joint awards aligned with the 2014 *Sectoral Protocol for the Delegation of Authority (DA) by Quality and Qualifications Ireland [...] to make Joint Awards*. However, CIT had previously already gained delegated authority for joint awards with University College Cork (2011) and for named joint media awards with Hochschule Darmstadt, Germany (2013) following stringent external review.

In the case of transnational awards, some processes also required the involvement of external quality assurance agencies or statutory bodies. Thus, validation/accreditation and revalidation/re-accreditation of the joint awards of CIT with Hochschule Darmstadt involved both HETAC/QQI and the Agentur für Qualitätssicherung durch Akkreditierung von Studiengängen (AQAS), one of several quality assurance agencies accredited by the German Accreditation Council nationally to carry out programme and system accreditations.

### 1.2.2 Policy and Arrangements for Collaborative Provision in MTU (Cork) and CIT

Formal Joint Awarding Agreements are in place for all joint awards made by MTU Cork / CIT, with appropriate provisions covering continuing delegated authority conditions for doctoral programmes where applicable. All collaborative programmes, irrespective of whether they lead to an MTU / CIT award or a joint award, are subject to detailed agreements governing the arrangements for provision and quality assurance of the programme, including assessment standards, learner protection, and the making of the award. Under the existing process, each agreement requires prior approval of the MTU / CIT Academic Council and Governing Body before the collaborative programme can be validated.

With regard to the long-standing joint awarding arrangement of MTU Cork / CIT with UCC (as well as, in the recent past, between Cork Institute of Technology and Hochschule Darmstadt), the institutions operate well-established joint mechanisms for the validation, operation, ongoing monitoring and periodic review of the relevant programmes. These include Joint Management Boards and, in the case of UCC, a Joint Board which makes recommendations to the MTU / CIT Academic Council and UCC Academic Board.

## 2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

### 2.1 Programme Development and Approval

#### 2.1.1 Programme Quality Assurance Framework

In Cork Institute of Technology, the development, validation (academic accreditation), monitoring and periodic review of academic programmes were carried out under CIT's academic and quality assurance regulations as agreed with Quality and Qualifications Ireland. Following designation of CIT, together with Institute of Technology Tralee, as a Technological University, CIT's procedures for quality assurance, including for programme development and approval, continue in force as quality procedures of Munster Technological University (MTU) Cork under Section 61 of the Technological Universities Act 2018, until such a time as the new university adopts new procedures specifically developed by and for MTU.

Executive responsibility for the implementation of procedures for the validation and quality assurance of programmes continues to lie with the Office of the Registrar & Vice-President for Academic Affairs. Programme validation is generally granted for five years, after which a review of the operation, enduring quality and continuing relevance of the programme is carried out to establish its eligibility for renewal of validation. This programmatic review is carried out on a school/college basis and takes into account the operational and strategic context as well as programme-level elements. The continuous monitoring and development of the academic programmes is a matter for the programme boards, which are comprised of heads of academic unit, programme staff and learner representatives. Assessment results and decisions on progression and award classification require ratification by the Academic Council. (See also [Section A 8.1, Periodic Review of Programmes](#), and [Section A 2.4.2, Assessment and Academic Integrity](#).)

This section presents the QA framework for MTU Cork / CIT's taught provision. For procedures for the approval of postgraduate research degree programmes specifically, refer to [Section A 4](#) below.

#### 2.1.2 Programme Development and Validation

##### a. Key Features of the Programme Design and Validation Process

For new taught programmes, validation continues to be predicated on successful completion of both internal and independent external quality reviews. These include a review of the content and structure of the proposed programme and of the staffing, resourcing levels and supports envisaged. In Cork Institute of Technology, the final decision on validation was taken by the CIT Governing Body on the advice of the Academic Council. The MTU procedure for the validation of new programmes is currently under development but is likely to retain iterative approvals from Academic Council – or a committee with delegated powers from Council – and Governing Body.

Beginning with the design of the MTU Cork / CIT module descriptor (see [Section A 2.4, Teaching, Learning and Assessment](#), for further detail), MTU Cork / CIT's processes for initial programme validation and for periodic review – require and reinforce systematic attention being given to the achievement of a pedagogically sound, effective, and integrated teaching, learning and assessment strategy.

At the programme level, the programme validation and review processes require departments to comment on the teaching, learning and assessment strategy for each programme in the programme self-evaluation report submitted to the external expert panel. The information contained therein, and the qualitative feedback obtained by the panels from their meetings with learners, graduates and lecturing staff, is complemented by

quantitative student performance data which give an indication of the success of the programme teaching and learning strategy in relation to the achievement of the learning outcomes by the different cohorts of learners.

The effectiveness of the proposed teaching, learning and assessment strategies from a professional vantage point is furthermore investigated when academic units seek advice on their programme proposals from employer groups or industry advisory panels for both initial validation and revalidation. Thus, industry feedback was a significant factor in the decision of the CIT Faculty of Business & Humanities to vastly extend the inclusion of significant work placement periods across its programme portfolio during the 2015/16 programmatic review.

The overall programme document provides a curriculum map showing where the intended programme learning outcomes are achieved. Peer reviewers are asked to ascertain that each programme outcome is supported by a sufficient number of modules to ensure it can be achieved by the average learner, irrespective of elective choice. Furthermore, an assessment matrix for each programme is reviewed to ensure that the time and nature of the assessment tasks is appropriate. Reviewers will frequently address issues such as assessment clustering or over-reliance on one form of assessment methodology.

In addition to external peer review, the Institute's quality assurance processes also require that each programme and module undergoes a detailed internal moderation process before it is proposed for (re-) validation. Internal moderation amongst others aims to establish that the teaching, learning and assessment strategies, both at module level and cumulatively at programme level, are sound and suited to the intended module and programme outcomes, programme stage and delivery mode; that the content, teaching & learning methodology and (re-)assessment strategy of each module are well aligned, mutually supportive and appropriate to the module credit weighting; and that learners receive appropriate formative feedback allowing them to improve their academic performance.

An outline of criteria and process for the selection and recruitment of external review panel members is provided in [Section 8.2, Selection and Recruitment of External Reviewers](#), below.

#### b. Institutional Policy on Programme Design and Validation

The core policy document regulating the design and approval of new programmes at MTU Cork / Cork Institute of Technology is the [Handbook for Module and Programme Approval](#), with a supplementary [procedure for the design and approval of Special Purpose, Minor and Supplementary Awards](#) specifically.

An 'omnibus' [Policy on Curricular Structure and Credit Profile](#) sets out the parameters and guiding principles for curriculum design and review under MTU Cork / CIT's framework for modular programme provision.

Amendments to existing modules and programme are also subject to approval, following a defined [procedure for module and programme changes](#). Any major or critical changes to programmes give rise to a differential validation process, which is treated as a new validation of a programme element or elements and – like all new validations – requires Academic Council approval.

The selection of independent internal and external experts for the review of new modules and programmes is also subject to a [Policy on Conflicts and External Work](#), which is currently being redeveloped for MTU.

All key policies and procedures relating to the design and approval of new programmes at CIT and, for the time being, MTU Cork are published on the [Academic Regulations and Policies page](#) of the MTU Cork website.

### 2.1.3 Programme Validation and Professional Accreditation

Where fields of employment are subject to professional regulation, or where successful professional practice is predicated on professional registration, academic programmes may need to achieve and maintain recognition or accreditation from professional bodies or from statutory regulators, such as CORU or the Marine Survey Office in the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport.



While MTU Cork / CIT is cognisant of the primacy of its obligations as a public provider of higher education and training under applicable HE legislation and academic quality frameworks, it also ascertains itself that the professional requirements of each field are taken into account to the requisite degree in programme validation or review processes. Conversely, even outside of regulatory contexts MTU Cork / CIT endeavours to familiarise the relevant professional organisations with its academic quality assurance procedures and criteria. In addition to inviting engagement in the context of various industry liaison fora, where appropriate the Institute arranged for representatives of regulatory or professional bodies to sit in on academic review panels as observers or, for certain areas, invited representatives of such bodies to participate in academic review as a panel member. The programmes of MTU Cork / CIT are currently recognised by ca. 30 separate professional organisations.

#### 2.1.4 Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning Programmes

In line with its long-standing focus on regional provision and career-oriented education and training, MTU Cork / CIT continues to offer both traditional craft and new ('post-2016') degree apprenticeship programmes.

Craft apprenticeships have formed a part of the educational offerings of Cork Institute of Technology, and the Cork Regional Technical College before it, from the outset. At the height of demand for craft apprentices in Ireland prior to the 2008 economic collapse, CIT delivered apprenticeship training for 13 different trades with an annual throughput of close on 2,400 apprentices. Apprenticeship programmes for the larger trades, such as plumbing or carpentry & joinery, are delivered in multiple locations, while other apprenticeships are delivered in one location only; thus, MTU Cork / CIT continues to be the sole provider for apprenticeship programmes in construction plant fitting, pipe fitting and plastering. In addition, CIT delivered Fáilte Ireland further education traineeships to hospitality students for many years. After Fáilte Ireland ceased direct involvement in craft training, CIT redeveloped a number of hospitality traineeships into higher education programmes at NFQ Levels 6 – 8 with a standard academic programme structure. Since September 2018 MTU Cork / CIT has also been offering new degree apprenticeships in the area of hospitality.

In addition to apprenticeship provision per se, a broad – and expanding – range of academic degree programmes incorporate significant work placement, ranging from standard 5 ECTS-credit modules to full placement semesters worth 30 ECTS credits.

##### a. Quality Assurance of Craft Apprenticeship Programmes

Traditional craft apprenticeships lead to further (rather than higher) education and training awards. At the point of writing, they are subject to a separate national quality assurance framework maintained by SOLAS, the state agency established in 2013 to oversee and manage further education and training in Ireland. Following a national review of the craft apprenticeship system concluded in the spring of 2021, it is expected that far-reaching systemic changes will be introduced which will fundamentally alter SOLAS' role in the process and will align and integrate the overall approach to the quality assurance of craft apprenticeships with the system for quality assuring higher education provision within the providing institutions.

In terms of curricular structure, craft apprenticeships are delivered in a phased manner over four years. Phases 1, 3, 5 and 7 are work-based, while Phases 2, 4 and 6 consist of 'off-the-job training' delivered by regional ETB Training Centres (basic skills training, Phase 2) and associated education providers, predominantly Institutes of Technology respectively Technological Universities. The trades apprentice calendar does not follow the academic year, but consists of three terms spread across the calendar year. For that reason, the timetabling of staff lecturing across both further and higher education programmes and managing demand fluctuations for relevant facilities and equipment are some of the endemic challenges of concurrent provision of apprenticeship and academic programmes for the providing institution.

As it stands, the development of, curriculum and assessment design for, and review of apprenticeship programmes lie within the sole responsibility of SOLAS. While individual lecturers are frequently consulted by SOLAS in the context of these QA processes, this is in the capacity of individual subject expert rather than provider representative. The chief vehicle for interaction between SOLAS and the apprenticeship providers on programme quality issues is the – what is still termed – Institutes of Technology Apprenticeship Committee (ITAC), composed of representatives from providing institutions. Normally, SOLAS will first informally advise ITAC members about impending programme changes during tri-annual meetings with ITAC held at the start of each term. These meetings also provide an opportunity for provider representatives to give feedback on and discuss operational or curricular issues arising during the previous term. Subsequently, formal notification about any amendments to apprenticeship programmes is given to the providing institutions by SOLAS. Review of apprenticeship programmes is to take place annually, though for some trades the review intervals – and consequent changes to apprenticeship programmes – can on occasion be longer.

Underneath this top-level structure, cognate trades are organised into Institutes' Fields of Trades Committees, or 'IFOTs'. IFOTs are composed of representatives of all providers which offer apprenticeship programmes in the relevant field, and generally also meet once per term to discuss technical issues. Conclusions or suggestions arising from IFOTs meetings are reported onward to ITAC for further transmission to SOLAS.

All assessments are centrally set by SOLAS. While the timing of practical assessments is up to each provider, all written theory examinations are 'sat' at the same time nationwide. Marks are determined by local apprentice examination boards based on a common marking scheme set by SOLAS. Recent adaptations of the scheme now allow providers to return marks which represent a more detailed and accurate reflection of apprentice performance in the theory exam. Operationally, the existing, somewhat circuitous processes for apprentice assessment and results processing still present some challenges for providers. Apprentice marks are not released by the providing institutions directly, for instance, but are forwarded to the local Education & Training Boards (ETBs) for release to candidates on behalf of SOLAS. However, assessment appeals are to be dealt with under the appeals procedure of the provider. Where this foresees a specific timeframe for lodgement of an appeal tied to the release date, as is the case at MTU Cork / CIT, but the provider is not privy to the release date information when the appeal is lodged, this can make it difficult to determine if an appeal is allowable.

#### b. Quality Assurance of 'New' Apprenticeships – Degree Programmes in Apprenticeship Mode

From September 2017 onwards, MTU Cork / CIT has also been delivering 'new' apprenticeship programmes leading to higher education awards at Higher Certificate (NFQ Level 6) or Ordinary Bachelor (NFQ Level 7) level.

The delivery structure of degree apprenticeships varies; some delivery models combine days of workplace-based learning with days of academic study in one and the same week, while others are phased. However, in the case of phased programmes, certain academic projects may continue during workplace-based phases in order to retain apprentices' connection with academic learning throughout.

Degree apprenticeship programmes fall under the quality assurance framework for higher education. By default, delivery and assessment, validation, continuous monitoring and review of the new apprenticeships thus follow the standard MTU Cork / CIT QA processes as described in this report. However, in the case of consortium programmes (see next paragraph), it is frequently the regulations and procedures of the lead provider that apply, as governed by the individual consortium agreement. The involvement of SOLAS in the operation and quality assurance of degree apprenticeships is far more limited than in the case of trade apprenticeships, being generally restricted to apprentice registration.

Many new apprenticeships are developed for consortium delivery within the Institute of Technology and Technological University sector, with professional organisations also often involved in programme development and delivery of work-based elements in particular. The academic lead institution within a consortium normally



takes responsibility for validation of the programme specification and for overseeing programme operation across the consortium partners, for instance by facilitating joint programme board meetings involving all participating providers. The arrangements for quality assurance and delivery are specified in a consortium agreement, which in the case of MTU Cork / CIT case requires approval from Academic Council before programme delivery can commence (see also [Section A 1.2](#) above).

As degree apprenticeship is a relatively new model of provision, the quality assurance parameters for consortium delivery have not – yet – been standardised in all respects. This means, for instance, that the applicable delivery and assessment regulations and ownership of the award are currently agreed separately for each new degree apprenticeship. The resulting variations, even between apprenticeship programmes offered by one and the same consortium with the same lead institution, are tempered by the fact that the academic quality procedures across the IoT and emergent TU sectors remain strongly aligned to a common sectoral framework.

### c. Work Placement in Standard Undergraduate Programmes

Work placement in standard academic programmes is formally assessed according to the approved placement module assessment scheme and criteria. In validation and programme review, detailed attention is also paid to the quality assurance arrangements of work placement elements – including placement contracts, guidance and induction for learners and workplace supervisors, academic oversight and student welfare procedures – to ensure a valuable and safe student experience and secure, reliable assessment.

## 2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

### 2.2.1 Student Lifecycle

#### a. Standard Application and Admission Procedures

Application for admission into Year 1 of full-time programmes of MTU Cork / CIT is made through the Central Applications Office (CAO), the agency responsible for processing undergraduate applications on behalf of Irish higher education institutions. The decision on admissions is taken by the Institute respectively TU, which instructs the CAO to make offers to successful candidates. Application for entry into full-time post-Year 1 programmes is made directly to MTU Cork / CIT.

Admissions criteria and information on admission, registration and commencement of studies can be found in the [Student Admissions and Registration](#) area of the MTU Cork / CIT website. Procedures for application and admission as well as general and programme-specific entry requirements are also detailed in the [MTU Cork / CIT prospectus](#). Admissions requirements and procedures for international students are outlined in the [International Students](#) section of the website. Procedures and guidelines for the admission of mature applicants are provided in the prospectus and on the [Mature Students](#) section of the MTU Cork / CIT website. (See also [Section A 2.2.2](#) and [Section A 3.5](#) below for initiatives and supports in relation to lifelong and international learners.)

Student induction is organised by the [AnSEO Student Engagement Office](#) as part of the Institute-wide [Good Start](#) programme. The [New Students](#) section on the – what is still currently called – MyCIT student portal also provides clear and detailed information on MTU Cork / CIT specifically tailored to new students.

#### b. Progression

Eligible full-time continuing students are automatically enrolled for each new academic year. Eligible full-time students with programme options and graduates progressing to follow-on programmes at the next-higher NFQ level (e.g. from Level 7 to Level 8) are sent a registration form by the Admissions Office in early August.

General regulations for the progression between programme stages are contained in the [MTU Cork / CIT Regulations for Modules and Programmes \(Marks and Standards\)](#).

The general requirements and procedures for transfer and progression between programmes at undergraduate level (where the 'ladder' system remains) are contained in the MTU Cork / CIT [full-time prospectus](#). In addition, the institution has published [Guidelines for Admission to NFQ Level 8 Degrees \(Post-NFQ Level 7 Award\)](#).

Following the introduction of Covid-19 adaptations to delivery and assessment arrangements, supplementary regulations for [stage progression](#) and for [admission of NFQ Level 7 graduates to Level 8 degrees](#) were approved by the CIT Academic Council for 2019/20 and – in a revised version reflecting the increased ability to plan for remote learning – for 2020/21 and [published together with the relevant 'baseline' regulations](#).

### c. Academic Engagement and Fitness to Study

MTU Cork / CIT has achieved national and international recognition for its work in the area of student engagement and communication, led by its [AnSEO Student Engagement Office](#) in partnership with academic departments and the Students' Union.

One focal area of this work is the First Year Experience. AnSEO initiatives such as the [Good Start](#) programme and [Academic Success Coaching](#) aim to build engagement and proactively identify and support learners in need of early-stage intervention during their crucial first few weeks in college. New students challenged by the academic environment or the competing demands of study, work and/or their personal life are supported in acquiring tailored personal and academic success strategies. Unsure or wavering students are supported to systematically explore all available avenues, including alternative programme choices or viable alternatives to academic study, before they continue on a programme to which they are not well suited, limiting their chances of academic success, or else drop out without knowing what to do next.

In relation to learners experiencing other life issues, or creating such issues for others, which may fundamentally impede or negate their ability to continue in study or to safely and effectively practice their intended profession, [Fitness to Study](#) and [Fitness to Practice](#) policies have been implemented in MTU Cork / Cork Institute of Technology. These policies are available on the [main MTU Cork / CIT website](#) and the [MyCIT student portal](#). Information on other policies and procedures supporting student welfare can be found in [Section A 3.1](#) below.

The MTU Cork / CIT policy framework is complemented by a wide range of well-established academic and welfare supports offered by MTU Cork / CIT to support learners in addressing academic and life issues before they can cause disengagement and, ultimately, failure or non-completion of the academic programme. Targeted supports are furthermore available to international students. The range of student services and supports is outlined in [Section A 3.4](#) and [Section A 3.5](#) below respectively.

### 2.2.2 Widening Participation

As noted in the recent PWC review of the MTU Cork / CIT Access Service, the “objective of achieving equity of access to higher education is rooted in principles of equality and social inclusion and has been a longstanding

priority of Irish education policy”<sup>2</sup>. MTU Cork / CIT’s commitment to the region and the social and economic welfare of all of its people means that fostering inclusive access to higher and further education has always been and remains one of MTU Cork / CIT’s key institutional commitments and strategic priorities.

For many decades, Cork Institute of Technology has offered a broad and varied spectrum of programmes in a variety of delivery modes attracting an ever more diverse learner intake; this has broadened even further with the creation of the new, larger, transregional Munster Technological University. MTU Cork / CIT has furthermore put in place a comprehensive set of policies and resources to proactively widen participation in higher and further education in the region and beyond, and to enable every learner who enters a MTU Cork / CIT programme to successfully complete their studies and reach their full academic potential, irrespective of background or circumstance.

#### a. Equity of Access

“Spear-headed by its [Access Service](#), the Institute [and now university] engages in an extensive programme of outreach activities as well as delivering a range of pre-entry, entry and post-entry support programmes for target under-represented groups.”<sup>3</sup> Through its dedicated [Disability Support Service](#) team, the Access Service also actively promotes and contributes to the implementation of the MTU Cork / CIT Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) agenda and advocates for inclusive practices within the institution.

Extensive information on MTU Cork / CIT’s access procedures and supports for learners from under-represented groups, including members of ethnic minorities and learners presenting with disabilities or learning differences, can be accessed through the [Access Service web pages](#).

Facilitated by the Access team, MTU Cork / CIT operates schemes for supported progression to higher education from designated ‘DEIS’ schools ([Linked Schools Programme](#)) and further education (FE) colleges (Cork Colleges Progression Scheme) in the region. Development of a broader progression framework defining, amongst others, parameters and pathways for progression from further education offerings of regional providers to higher education programmes in MTU is under consideration by a high-level joint steering group of MTU and the Cork and Kerry Education and Training Boards.

#### b. Flexible and Lifelong Learning Opportunities

One of the actions under MTU Cork / CIT’s ongoing strategic commitment to inclusive access to education opportunities and a diverse student body (see [CIT Strategic Plan 2018 – 2023](#)) is to increase opportunities for mature, work-based, lifelong, part-time and flexible learners. With over a quarter of all taught higher education students enrolled on ‘flexible learning’ – i.e. part-time, blended or online – programmes (2,975 for 2019/20), combined with mature learner enrolments on full-time HE programmes (600, or 7% of F-T enrolments in 2019/20) and learners on professional development courses, MTU Cork / CIT already has a sizeable population

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<sup>2</sup> PWC, Cork Institute of Technology Access Service Review, October 2020, p. 6

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

of learners who avail of learning opportunities later in life, either as returning or as first-time students, and is committed to further expanding its range of options for lifelong access to higher education.

One means by which MTU Cork / CIT has been delivering on this commitment is the strategic expansion of flexible learning opportunities, in particular the distance learning portfolio. Building on a state-of-the-art e-learning infrastructure and the dedicated pedagogical and technological supports of the [Department of Technology-Enhanced Learning \(TEL\)](#), MTU Cork / CIT offers a significant [portfolio of flexible online programmes](#), both degrees (at Higher Diploma and Masters level) and shorter certificate courses. The significant expertise built up by the Technological-Enhanced Learning Department held CIT in good stead in its move to predominantly or exclusively online delivery of all of its programmes following the introduction of Covid-19 restrictions across higher education institutions in March 2020.

The online provision complements and extends the reach of MTU Cork / CIT's traditionally strong suite of [Continuing Education courses](#), with access and delivery mechanisms that are tailored to the needs of learners unable to participate in standard full-time programmes. A range of short courses developed in consultation with employers and delivered both online and in more traditional formats are furthermore [offered under Springboard+](#) or in conjunction with local development projects such as [WREN](#).

Last but not least, MTU Cork / CIT's [Extended Campus](#) works with numerous regional and national organisations interested in developing their workforce and adding to their employees' skills sets. Extended Campus services include Learning Clinics where Extended Campus staff and industry partners together identify organisational learning needs and the programme offerings and delivery strategies best suited to meeting these. Solutions identified may include existing, 'off-the-shelf' programmes as well as collaborative development of customised learning pathways which utilizing modular 'building blocks'; workplace or e-supported delivery; and the integration of learning gained at the workplace through MTU Cork / CIT's well-established [RPL and WPL](#) (work-based learning) mechanisms.

### 2.2.3 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

In the more than two decades since CIT first established a dedicated RPL resource and began to develop processes to support the recognition of prior learning, a significant body of research and scholarship on Recognition of Prior Learning has been created at the institution. Recent areas of investigation include EU-funded projects on the recognition of learning through volunteering and recognition of skills of migrants and refugees to support their integration into learning and work.

Candidates wishing to apply for entry, advanced entry, exemptions, module credit or indeed full awards on the basis of prior learning – be that formal or non-formal/informal learning – can do so in accordance with of MTU Cork / CIT's [Policy Governing Recognition of Prior Learning](#).

RPL can be applied for in any valid MTU Cork / CIT programme or module. Recognition of prior learning claims are made against complete modules, and applicants must demonstrate that all learning outcomes have been satisfactorily met to gain exemptions (in the case of prior certified learning) or module credit.

The extensive range of well-established RPL supports available to candidates and academic assessors through the [MTU Cork / CIT RPL Service](#) positions Cork Institute of Technology and its successor, MTU, at the forefront of RPL practice and policy nationally. A postgraduate-level module on RPL Practice and Pedagogy is available to staff and has also been offered successfully to staff of a number of ETBs.

A 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary publication summarising the development and achievements of the MTU Cork / CIT RPL Service may be accessed from the service's [homepage](#).

## 2.2.4 Portability of Qualifications and Credit

### a. Curricular Features Supporting Credit Transfer

MTU Cork / CIT's programmes are designed to ensure maximal portability of credit for their graduates, not just within Ireland, but within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The MTU Cork / CIT curriculum model is captured in the MTU Cork / CIT [policy on curricular structure and credit profiles](#). Programme features specifically designed to support transferability include modularised and semesterised delivery and a standard module credit volume of 5 ECTS credits. Modules attracting multiples of 5 credits are allowable where the optimal learning experience demonstrably involves integrated learning and assessment, meaning that the learner is required to address complex authentic problems, synthesise previously acquired knowledge and skills, and largely self-direct her or his learning. Typical examples of larger modules are performance-based modules and final year theses or 'capstone' projects, which may attract up to 30 ECTS credits.

### b. Alignment of Awards with the National Framework of Qualifications

In addition, as further detailed elsewhere in this report (see for instance [Section A 2.3](#) below), MTU Cork / CIT awards align with the National Framework of Qualifications, and alignment is confirmed through all standard programme quality assurance processes. This alignment underpins the recognition and thus portability of MTU Cork / CIT qualifications within Ireland and – through alignment of the NFQ with the [European Qualifications Framework \(EQF\)](#) under the [Bologna Agreement](#) – within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

## 2.2.5. Certification

All student assessment performance and award records of MTU Cork / CIT students are safely and securely stored by the Examinations Office in the central student records database, for which strict data access and protection protocols apply.

Achievement of an award of Cork Institute of Technology was certified through the issuing of a formal award parchment, bearing the institutional seal, and a transcript of award stage results (Diploma Supplement) to the successful graduate by the [CIT Examinations Office](#). In line with [QQI policy](#) for the making of awards under delegated authority, parchments for major awards recorded the NFQ level of the award, the named award and detailed programme specialisation, the award classification and the date of the award. Parchments for non-major awards (in MTU Cork / CIT's case, special purpose or minor awards) presented the same information, as well as the credit value of the award and the title of the linked major programme in the case of minor awards.

Parchments for joint awards between providers and awarding bodies required the agreement of bespoke parchment formats between the providers and all relevant national authorities to ensure that the minimum requirements of each awarding authority involved were met.

The award information on the formal parchment was complemented by the detailed transcript of stage results, recording the academic year and examination 'sitting', full award and programme title and programme delivery mode, overall classification of the stage result, and the credit value and percentage grade achieved for each module completed within the stage. Learners were also able to request a statement of their stage results in the form of a '[Europass](#)' [Diploma Supplement](#). In addition to the stage results, this provides contextual information on the qualification, awarding institution, grading scheme and applicable assessment and award regulations, as well as brief standardised summary of the national higher education and training system. Together, the award documentation issued by CIT facilitated clear alignment of a graduate's award with the National Framework of Qualifications and indicated its transfer value for academic progression and, where applicable, professional status of the graduate within the European Higher Education Area.

MTU Cork / CIT learners completing individual modules which do not make up an award are issued with 'single subject' (module) certificates to formally certify attainment of transferable module credit. CIT module certificates recorded the title, ECTS credit volume and level designation of the module, and the percentage grade achieved. CIT / MTU module levels are classified according to an internally agreed verbal taxonomy, but their 'fit' with the programme levels of the National Framework of Qualifications can be determined by reference to the [CIT Policy on Curricular Structure and Credit Profile of CIT \[...\] Programmes](#). (See also [Section A 2.3.2](#) on the development of module LOs and their alignment with POs and award standards.)

As per national policy as well as custom and practice, successful graduates of Cork Institute of Technology, and now Munster Technological University, are formally conferred with their award at a public [conferring ceremony](#), at which prescribed academic dress is worn. Conferring is normally effected through formal presentation of the award parchment to the graduand by the President. Where applicable, QQI awards were conferred at the same ceremony by a designated representative of the national awarding authority.

The award date adopted by CIT was the date of Academic Council ratification of the relevant stage results. This allowed the Institute to issue award documentation administratively in advance of a scheduled conferring if the need arose, for instance where official parchments or transcripts were required by prospective employers.

## 2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

### 2.3.1 Award Standards

Prior to attaining designated awarding body status, Cork Institute of Technology made awards at NFQ Levels 6 – 10, and conferred these on successful graduates, in line with national [Policy and Criteria for Making Awards](#) as determined by QQI.

Following full enactment of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019 on 1 January 2020, the Institutes of Technology were empowered to determine their own awards and award standards up to NFQ Level 9 (Masters' level). However, it remains both a [requirement under the Amendment Act](#) and an imperative of student-centred provision that MTU Cork / CIT's awards continue to be "included within" the National Framework of Qualifications. While deliberations regarding the requisite new procedures to formally confirm NFQ alignment of awards to QQI were ongoing at sectoral level, the CIT Academic Council in 2019/20 adopted the existing [active QQI standards for higher education awards](#) as the pro-tem award standards for Cork Institute of Technology for the sake of continuity.

Shortly after TU designation, the QQI award standards were adopted by the MTU Establishment Day Academic Council as the interim award standards of Munster Technological University also, pending the development by MTU of its own set of award standards.

### 2.3.2 Development and Review of Module and Programme Learning Outcomes

#### a. Development of Graduate Profile and Programme Learning Outcomes

Academic staff in CIT typically employ a 'Backward Design' approach to programme and module design. This approach is a three-step process whereby the curriculum design team:

1. Researches and describes the desired knowledge, skills and competences to be gained by the learner upon successful completion of the programme or module. These are expressed as intended learning outcomes for the programme or module under development.



2. Develops an assessment strategy to measure achievement of these prescribed learning outcomes. For programmes, a curriculum map is developed which maps intended module learning outcomes (MLOs) to programme outcomes indicating how the achievement of programme learning outcomes is supported. For modules, based on the concept of constructive alignment, module assessment items are mapped to MLOs. Through purposeful design of module assessment strategies, the achievement of MLOs and hence programme learning outcomes is assured.

3. Describes the teaching and learning strategy to be employed in the curriculum unit. For programme design, the strategy will prescribe the approved programme schedule detailing the modules to be undertaken by the learner. For modules, the module descriptor details the balance of directed and independent learning to be undertaken by the learner as well as indicating the nature of the directed learning, for instance lectures, laboratories, studio work or tutorials.

When seeking to validate a programme, the proposers are required to undertake consultation with appropriate stakeholders (industry, professional bodies, regulators, alumni, learners) to determine a graduate profile for the programme under development. In revalidation, stakeholder consultation is conducted to ascertain that the graduate profile continues to meet current professional or progression requirements, and furthermore that the level of knowledge and skills shown by graduates in 'real world' contexts reflects the intended graduate profile. (See also [Section A 1.1.7, Representation of External Stakeholders \[...\]](#).)

Once determined, the intended graduate profile is expressed in terms of intended programme learning outcomes which describe the knowledge, skills, and competences of the graduate of the programme. The intended programme learning outcomes are then mapped to the CIT/MTU award standards to ensure alignment with the target NFQ level and award descriptor for the programme. To support this mapping exercise, the Academic Quality Enhancement (AQE) office offers learning clinics to prospective design teams, as well as providing detailed exemplars and recorded process demonstrations on the Workvivo staff intranet.

#### b. Development of Module Learning Outcomes

The equivalent process at module level sees the module author determine the learning to be achieved by the learner upon successful completion of the module. In the higher education context, most of this learning is situated in the cognitive domain (as opposed to the affective or psychomotor domains); psychomotor learning however features more markedly in craft apprenticeships leading to further education awards. The learning is described in a set of intended module learning outcomes. Depending on the starting point of module development, the MLOs are then evaluated to either establish the level of the prescribed learning, or to confirm that the volume and complexity of the intended learning as described match the target level of the module. This involves interrogating the learning outcomes to determine the nature of the ability/understanding described and the context in which the learning is to take place. The level of the expected ability/understanding is normally determined from the chosen verbs which are reviewed against appropriate taxonomies (such as Bloom, Krathwohl or Dave). The context is evaluated by considering the inherent complexity of the learning and the degree of autonomy and originality expected of the learner. Module authors are supported in this process by training seminars and one-to-one consultation clinics provided by the AQE office.

#### c. Review of Module and Programme LOs and their Alignment with the Award Standards

As part of the overarching quality assurance system, programme and module learning outcomes undergo both an internal and external review process. For modules, the internal review is conducted as a desk review by a member of the AQE office. The internal reviewer, who holds the post of Curriculum Design Facilitator and, normally, holds a postgraduate qualification in the area of teaching and learning, reviews the proposed module to ensure compliance with good practice with respect to learning outcomes, assessment and teaching and learning strategies. Subsequently, proposed modules are reviewed by a minimum of two external reviewers.

These reviews are conducted as desk reviews with reviewers submitting review reports or, where multiple new modules are being proposed for a new programme, may take the form of a module review panel meeting with reviewers and module authors present. New modules are approved once amendments to the module descriptors arising from both the internal and external reviews have been incorporated. For programmes, programme specification documentation is reviewed by a member of the AQE office to ensure that the proposed design complies with Institute curriculum policy. Subsequently, the documentation is reviewed by an external panel of academic and industry experts. As part of this process, the review panel are required to evaluate if the specified intended programme outcomes accurately reflect the proposed graduate profile. Furthermore, the panel is required to evaluate if the specified intended programme outcomes of the award being sought are aligned with the appropriate NFQ level and award descriptor.

Particular attention is paid to the alignment of module and programme outcomes with the award standards in programme design and review in the context of collaborations with providers whose education and training provision is not in itself aligned to the National Framework. An example would be the recently introduced [BSc \(Hons\) in Global Business and Pilot Studies](#), offered collaboratively with Atlantic Flight Training Academy (AFTA). The learning outcomes of the embedded flight training, leading to a Commercial Pilot's License regulated by the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA), have also been expressed in terms of NFQ-aligned levels of knowledge, skill and competence and mapped all the way through to the relevant MTU Cork / CIT award standards (in this case, the NFQ Level 8 Award Standards for Business and Science) to confirm that the programme and all its components meet the required standard.

### 2.3.4 Exit and Embedded Awards

In addition to the target award, many degree programmes offer a – generally embedded – exit award or awards. Exit awards may be applied for by learners who are not in a position to complete their studies towards the target award due to life circumstances. The majority of current exit awards are at Higher Certificate level, with some Ordinary Bachelors and Postgraduate Diplomas also offered as appropriate.

Arising from the 'ladder' system of programme provision which initially dominated the Institute of Technology sector, many of CIT / MTU Cork's long-standing Bachelor programmes retained the first award in the sequence, the Higher Certificate (120 ECTS credits), as an embedded exit award when they were converted to three- or four-year ab-initio programmes. For new degree programmes validated in the last number of years, exit awards are normally created and validated together with the target award. As a minimum, this entails submission of a set of programme outcomes and a statement of the professional value of the exit award to the new programme review panel as part of the review documentation for the target award.

Use of existing cognate lower-level awards as non-embedded exit awards is also possible. This requires a 'differential validation' based on a detailed demonstration of how the minimum intended outcomes of the exit award programme are met through successful completion of the relevant exit stage of the target programme. A recent example would be the approval by CIT of the Higher Diploma in Science in Data Science and Analytics as a non-embedded exit award of the MSC in Data Science and Analytics in 2019/20.

The principles governing the provision, validation and making of embedded and exit awards are set out in the [Policy on Exit and Embedded Awards in CIT Taught Programmes](#). Information on the exit awards available to deserving learners on specific programmes is provided in the [CIT prospectus](#).

To safeguard the good standing of CIT and the excellent reputation of its graduates now and in future, the Institute has adopted a [Policy on the Revocation of CIT Awards](#).



### 2.3.5 Validated Awards Register

A formal register of all valid taught and research awards made by Cork Institute of Technology was maintained by the Office of the Registrar & VP for Academic Affairs. This register, which in 2013/14 replaced the so-called QQI 'Order in Council' circulated to the Institutes annually (resp. bi-annually) for updating, was formally adopted by the CIT Academic Council.

## 2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

In its last Strategic Plan (2018 – 2023), Cork Institute of Technology, building on its foregoing mission statements, defined its strategic mission as the provision of “student-centred, career-focused education and research for the personal, professional and intellectual development of the student and for the benefit of the broader society in the region and beyond”. The Institute’s approach to teaching and learning was designed to enable and foster the most efficient attainment of this mission, both through the structural framework for the development, delivery and quality assurance of the curriculum and through the application and further development of specific methodologies and supports for teaching, enabling learning and assessment in the – real or virtual – ‘classroom’.

MTU Cork continues to further build on this legacy, while at the same time affirming the right and responsibility of the institution “to preserve and promote” the principles of academic freedom in its internal and external activities, as enshrined in the Technological Universities Act 2018 and the IoT Acts 1992 – 2006 before it.

### 2.4.1 Teaching and Learning

#### a. Pedagogical Principles in Module and Curriculum Design

When a new module is developed, the design of the formal module descriptor enforces the systematic capture and constructive alignment of fundamental elements of the module teaching and learning strategy from the outset. The descriptor thus defines, describes and encourages an interlinkage between the module learning outcomes, indicative content, the assessment and re-assessment formats and weightings, and the delivery formats, including the extent of independent learning expected.

At the curricular level, MTU Cork / CIT’s principles for modular programme design – summarised in the [Policy on Curricular Structure and Credit Profile](#) – embed a number of precepts fundamental to the mission and pedagogy of the institution. The attendant design features appear most pronouncedly in full-time undergraduate programmes, where they are aimed at supporting learners new to higher education in transitioning to third-level study and taking responsibility for charting and developing their own learning.

Each ab-initio undergraduate degree programme offered by MTU Cork / CIT must include the common “CIT – Creativity, Innovation & Teamwork” module in its first semester. The CIT Module aims to equip learners with the skills and knowledge for a successful engagement in third-level education and subsequent life-long learning opportunities. Delivery of the CIT module is adapted by each department to the particular context of the discipline, so that no two instances will be exactly alike. Common to all deliveries however is the focus on developing independent learning, thinking and reasoning skills, team-working abilities, academic integrity precepts and basic academic writing and referencing skills as appropriate to the field of study. Learners also develop a vision of their ideal career path to start them out on the journey of taking ownership of their learning.

Most advanced programme stages include both a cognate elective or electives and a Free Choice option. The inclusion of Free Choice in the majority of undergraduate programme stages is designed to further encourage learners to take responsibility for their own learning and their personal and professional development. While many learners avail of cognate modules related to their own specialism as their Free Choice, others opt to broaden their educational experience by taking a module from outside their own field, be it in the form of a

language or entrepreneurship module or in pursuit of a 'niche' interest, such as the choice of certain engineering modules on the part of music students. Though logistical or resource constraints will often limit the accessibility of modules offered by other discipline areas, the maintenance of the principle of choice as an enabler of competence development is an important one in the pedagogy underpinning MTU Cork / CIT's modular model.

#### b. Quality Assurance of Programme Teaching and Learning Strategies

MTU Cork / CIT's processes for initial programme validation, as well as for periodic review, require departments to comment on the teaching and learning strategy for each programme in the programme self-evaluation report submitted to the external expert panel. The information contained therein, and the qualitative feedback obtained by the panels from their meetings with learners, graduates and lecturing staff, is complemented by quantitative student performance data which give an indication of the success of the programme teaching and learning strategy in relation to the achievement of the learning outcomes by the different cohorts of learners.

The overall programme document provides a curriculum map showing where the intended programme learning outcomes are achieved. Peer reviewers are asked to ascertain that each programme outcome is supported by a sufficient number of modules to ensure it can be achieved by the average learner, irrespective of elective choice. Furthermore, an assessment matrix for each programme is reviewed to ensure that the time and nature of the assessment tasks is appropriate. Reviewers will frequently address issues such as assessment clustering or over-reliance on one form of assessment methodology.

In addition to external peer review, MTU Cork / CIT's QA processes also require that each programme and module undergoes a detailed internal moderation process, carried out by the Academic Quality Enhancement Unit in the Registrar's Office, before it is proposed for (re-) validation. Internal moderation amongst others aims to establish that the teaching, learning and assessment strategies, both within modules and cumulatively at stage and overall programme level, are pedagogically sound, coherent and optimally support achievement of the intended learning outcomes within the given programme delivery mode; that the individual teaching, learning and assessment elements within each module are consistent with each other and reflect the module level and credit weighting; and that learners receive appropriate formative feedback allowing them to improve their academic performance.

#### c. External Stakeholder Input into Development of Teaching and Learning Strategies

At an earlier stage of programme (re-)development, the appropriateness of the proposed teaching and learning strategies is investigated when academic units seek advice on their programme proposals from employer groups or industry advisory panels. Thus, industry feedback was a significant factor in the decision of the CIT Faculty of Business & Humanities to expand the use of significant work placement periods and incorporate these into its complete programme portfolio to the furthest extent possible during the 2015/16 programmatic review.

Teaching, learning and assessment strategies may also be subject to review in professional accreditation or recognition processes. The professional organisation may wish to ascertain if the methodologies employed are suited to helping learners meet the requirements of the workplace in their chosen field, or it may require use of certain – particularly assessment – methodologies to grant exemptions from or admission to professional examinations. In some cases, professional accreditation processes may reveal a degree of divergence between the overall pedagogical philosophy of MTU Cork / CIT and that of a particular professional body. This is another reason why the institution continues to work closely with its professional partners in order to enable the partners to improve their understanding of each other's educational mission and aims, and to advance the development and promulgation of student-centred approaches to teaching, learning and assessment for professionally-oriented higher education, guided by best current pedagogical theory and practice.

#### d. Learning through Extracurricular Engagement and Participation

Learning opportunities at MTU Cork / CIT are not restricted to the – real or virtual – classroom. In keeping with its institutional mission and ethos, MTU Cork / CIT offers learners numerous opportunities to broaden their horizons and to develop their personal and leadership skills through participation in activities and initiatives beyond their academic programme, be it through societies, the arts or sport, Institute-wide [entrepreneurship competitions](#) such as the annual MTU Cork / CIT [Prize for Innovation](#), [Innovation Challenge](#) or [APPrentice Competition](#), community engagement initiatives such as the [CIT Volunteer Abroad programme](#), or indeed through participation in governance and programme management through the [MTU Cork / CIT Students' Union](#) (see [Section A 1.1.6](#) above).

#### 2.4.2 Assessment and Academic Integrity

Assessment is the means by which learners formally demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes of a module or programme, thereby earning academic credit and, eventually, the right to be conferred with a particular award. The quality assurance of assessment – from its design through delivery and operation to the evaluation of its outcomes – is thus critical to establishing and maintaining confidence in the standards of MTU Cork / CIT awards.

Equally as important are measures to foster academic integrity and to prevent academic misconduct or address it where it does occur. While academic misconduct is normally understood as dishonesty in completing assessments, academic integrity is far broader than just 'not cheating'. It refers to a set of positive values which inform daily practice in academic endeavour, be it on the part of learners, lecturers or researchers, and which ideally both feed and are nurtured by an institutional culture of 'doing things right'.

##### a. Assessment Standards

MTU Cork / CIT's assessment standards and regulations are rooted in the long-standing sectorial framework for determination of assessment grades and of progression and award standards set out in [QQI's Assessment and Standards](#), and should be understood before that backdrop.

The current standards, regulations and procedures for the assessment of programmes and the making of awards of MTU Cork / CIT are set out in its [Regulations for Modules and Programmes \(Marks and Standards\)](#). These regulations apply to all programmes of MTU Cork / CIT. Supplementary regulations specific to the assessment of postgraduate research degree programmes are included in the MTU Cork / CIT [Regulations for Postgraduate Study](#) (see also [Section A 4.1, Quality Assurance Framework for Research Degree Provision](#), below).

Following adaptations to MTU Cork / CIT's delivery and assessment modalities as a consequence of Covid-19, two sets of time-limited [supplementary regulations for the assessment of taught programmes](#) were approved by the CIT Academic Council for Sem. 2 of 2019/20 and for 2020/21 respectively, which were published together with the core regulations during the time period to which they applied. In determining these, the guiding principle was to mitigate as far as possible the extra challenges arising for learners while absolutely maintaining academic quality and standards.

##### b. Assessment Design and Review

The format, general design and weighting of continuous assessment tasks and final examinations undergoes rigorous internal and external quality review when modules and programmes are first developed (see [Section A 2.1.2](#)), when the [assessment design is amended in any significant way](#), and during periodic review (see [Section A 8.1](#)). Adaptations to the assessment design are routinely proposed by the relevant module lecturers, based on the operational experience of delivering and marking assessments or on external examiner feedback.

Assessment design issues may also be picked up by the programme boards in the course of their ongoing programme performance monitoring activity (see [Section A 8.3](#)).

### c. Assessment and Examination Procedures

Operationally, the organisation of final examinations and the preparation of stage results, records of achievement and award certificates is the remit of the MTU Cork / CIT Examinations Office. The website of the [Examinations Office](#) provides students and staff with extensive information and guidance on the assessment and examination process, assessment regulations, and academic honesty and integrity.

The published policies, procedures and guidelines of MTU Cork / CIT on the operation and conduct of examinations and continuous assessment set out and regulate

- The [conduct of candidates during examinations](#);
- [Institutional policy on academic honesty](#), defining different types of academic dishonesty and misconduct and outlining the follow-up process for potential instances of misconduct;
- A [process for formal inquiry into allegations of misconduct related to examinations and assessment](#); and
- A process for submission of [extenuating circumstances](#) related to non-completion of examinations and assessment tasks.

Candidates are furthermore furnished with a published [process for notifying observed correction errors and appealing the outcomes of examinations and assessment](#).

With regard to the external moderation of assessment and examinations in taught programme provision, MTU Cork / CIT has published policy sets out the principles for the selection and appointment of [external examiners](#) and set out the rights and duties of externs (see [Section A 2.4.3.d](#) for a synopsis of the external examiner system).

The procedures for selection and duties of external examiners in research degree programmes are incorporated in the MTU Cork / CIT [Regulations for Postgraduate Research Study](#).

### d. External Moderation of Assessment in Taught Programmes

A key piece of the quality assurance of assessment is the external examiner system which ensures external moderation of both the design and the outcomes of assessment and examinations.

Taught MTU Cork / CIT programmes whose curriculum is largely drawn from a single field or a small number of cognate fields of study are moderated on a per-programme basis, with two ‘externs’ – one academic and one professional examiner – normally appointed for each programme. Assessment in service-in areas such as mathematics, languages or business skills, by contrast, is moderated by ‘subject externs’ who review modules in a particular specialism delivered across a variety of programmes. Selection of external examiners for multi-disciplinary programmes looks to ensure reasonable coverage of the main disciplines represented.

Nominations for external examiner are formally approved by the MTU / CIT Academic Council for a three-year term, following vetting by the Office of the Registrar & VP for Academic Affairs which considers the proposed extern’s experience and expertise as well as any potential conflict of interest issues (see also [Section A 2.1.2 b](#)). Re-nomination is possible where a suitable new extern is not available but is not encouraged.

External examiners are responsible for reviewing all draft examination materials – including marking schemes and model solutions – and for considering the appropriateness of the internal marking in a representative sample of submitted learner work. In some subjects the latter function may also encompass presence during a percentage of oral or performance examinations. Externs are normally expected to conduct at least one visit to the institution to coincide with the meeting of the Progression & Awards Board for the respective programme

and also provide an annual summary report of observations and recommendations to the MTU Cork CIT Registrar which feeds into ongoing programme monitoring and programmatic review.

Introduction of the bespoke MAX<sup>e</sup> digital exam paper management system in the final years of CIT has simplified communication and reduced the administrative load for both externs and MTU Cork / CIT in relation to scheduled final exams. Ways of obtaining maximum utility from MAX<sup>e</sup> to support the external review of continuous coursework, now the dominant form of assessment in many programmes, are being actively explored. Due to the diversity of disciplines and assessment formats, which amongst others include artefacts and recordings, and the sheer volume of assessment at an institution of MTU Cork / CIT's size, the external moderation of 'continuous assessment' remains subject to greater local variation than is the case for final examinations. It is anticipated that the initial findings of a review of the external examiner system commenced by CIT will feed into the implementation of a revised system of external examination for MTU.

For an outline of the role of external reviewers in postgraduate research degree study, see [Section A 4.1 c](#) below.

#### e. Academic Integrity and Prevention and Detection of Academic Misconduct

Fostering academic integrity and the prevention of academic misconduct, or its detection and the implementation of appropriate consequences for same, are the cornerstones of maintaining trust in the assessment system of a higher education institution and the awards that are founded on this.

MTU Cork / CIT's academic integrity and misconduct policy and procedures are publicly available and widely promulgated throughout the institution (see [Section A 2.4.2 c](#) just above). Learners have their attention drawn to the requirement for academic honesty at various points of their academic journey, including in the context of the foundational "[CIT \(Creativity, Innovation & Teamwork\)](#)" module common to all standard undergraduate degree programmes. Students submitting final theses/dissertations or projects, whether at undergraduate or postgraduate level, are required to sign a declaration confirming the originality of their work and the absence of unauthorised collusion, but module lecturers often require similar declarations to accompany other coursework submissions as well. With the move to fully remote online teaching and assessment post-Covid-19, a standard declaration of originality was developed and introduced for all written submissions across MTU Cork / CIT.

To limit the incidence of academic misconduct from the first, the [MTU Cork / CIT Teaching & Learning Unit \(TLU\)](#) and the [Department of Technology-Enhanced Learning \(TEL\)](#) jointly offer assessment design training for staff which, amongst others, demonstrates ways in which careful assessment design can minimise opportunities for 'cheating' (see also Sections [A 3.3 a](#) and [A 5.1 b](#) below). The TLU also collaborates with the MTU Cork / CIT Library in offering 'disseminator' training for lecturers to help their students avoid plagiarism and access useful online referencing resources (see [Section A 3.2 b](#)).

Practical advice and training for students at all levels on assessment literacy, good academic writing and referencing practice and the avoidance of plagiarism is offered by a number of MTU Cork / CIT services, such as the [Academic Learning Centre](#), the [Academic Success Coaching](#) service and the [Library](#). The annual "[Just Ask! About Results](#)" campaigns of [AnSEO](#), the [Student Engagement Office](#), also aim to raise awareness of poor assessment practices.

MTU Cork / CIT currently uses Turnitin plagiarism detection software, which is fully integrated with the VLE. At the point of writing, however, MTU is transiting to a new, university-wide plagiarism software solution, Ouriginal (formerly Urkund). Ouriginal offers additional opportunities for 'deep integration' with Canvas and will likely be rolled out across the university by the time this report is published.

Not least given the variety of assessment types and purposes, use of plagiarism detection software is not mandatory in MTU Cork / CIT, though department-level usage policies are in place in several academic departments. Even where no such departmental policy exists, many academic staff members use Turnitin to

both prevent plagiarism in written coursework – by encouraging students to check drafts for similarity matches and/or requiring submission of assignments through the software – and to support the detection and confirmation of plagiarism in submitted work. The TEL Department runs frequent Turnitin workshops for staff which also cover aspects of institutional academic integrity and misconduct policy and of assessment design. A number of help articles on the TEL staff ‘knowledge base’ (<https://telhelp.eu.helpdocs.com/>) provide basic information on how to set up Turnitin assignments and interpret Turnitin originality reports.

Minor instances of academic misconduct are dealt with at the departmental level by the Module Examination Boards (MEBs). Suspected infringements of a serious nature or repeat infringements are referred to the institutional Assessment Infringements Board (AIB), which reviews the evidence in each case, hears from the students and staff members concerned, and determines an appropriate course of action in line with MTU Cork / CIT policy. The AIB reports to Academic Council on its activities and also makes recommendations on the further development of academic integrity and misconduct procedures.

Should credible suspicion of serious academic misconduct on the part of an MTU Cork / CIT graduate arise post-graduation, to the extent that this casts doubt on the entitlement of the graduate to their award, the [MTU Cork / CIT Policy on Revocation of Awards](#) may be evoked. This foresees an investigation of the suspected historic misconduct by a high-level institutional committee with the primary aim of determining if, on balance of the evidence, the award conferred upon the graduate was deserved, or was not deserved and should be revoked. The final decision on revocation lies with the Governing Body of CIT / MTU.

(With regard to academic integrity and research ethics in postgraduate research education specifically, see also [Section A 4.3](#) below.)



## 3.0 Learner Resources and Support

MTU Cork / CIT – as is MTU as a whole – is committed to creating and maintaining a safe, welcoming and inspiring academic environment which enables and encourages all learners to reach for and achieve their full academic and personal potential. This section describes the policies, structures and services in place to support both the individual learner and the MTU Cork / CIT community as a whole to thrive and succeed.

### 3.1 Policies and Procedures Related to Student Welfare and Community Standards

Links to key policies for MTU Cork / CIT learners regarding academic matters as well as learner welfare and standards of conduct are collated and prominently displayed on the [MyCIT Student Portal homepage](#); pertinent academic policies and procedures can furthermore also be accessed from the [Academic Regulations and Policies](#) page on the main MTU Cork / CIT website.

#### a. Community Standards and Student Discipline

The standards of conduct expected of learners specifically are collated in the MTU Cork / CIT Student Regulations. These ‘portmanteau’ regulations combine general regulations and guidelines on appropriate and responsible learner conduct and discipline with regulations for the usage of facilities and services and key learner-facing academic regulations and procedures. The MTU Cork / CIT disciplinary regulations are also published in a separate section of the [MyCIT Student Portal](#) itself.

Operating procedures in respect of disciplinary matters are overseen by the MTU Cork / CIT Disciplinary Committee. This committee also investigates serious offences outside of a standard catalogue which attracts pre-defined penalties. Committee decisions may be appealed under the [Student Disciplinary Appeals Procedure](#).

#### b. Learner Grievances and Student Ombudsman

Based on previous work done by the Institutes, the first common policy adopted by Munster Technological University following designation has been its [Dignity & Respect Policy](#) and associated [Procedure](#). This policy aims to foster a positive culture which values the contribution of each member of the MTU community, be they staff or student, promotes respectful and professional behaviour, fosters inclusion, and addresses bullying and harassment where it does occur.

The scope of this new, university-wide policy intersects with a number of policies of Cork Institute of Technology presently still in force in MTU Cork (pending further development of the overarching MTU policy framework), particularly the CIT [Student Grievance Procedure](#), which gives learners recourse to a sequence of both informal and formal steps to resolve grievances.

A critical element of the Student Grievance Procedure is the annual appointment of a [Student Ombudsman](#), with Cork Institute of Technology one of the first Irish HEIs to introduce this function. The post holder will be an experienced member (or retired member) of academic staff. The Ombudsman’s main functions relate to Stage 1 (informal grievance) and Stage 3 (grievance review) of the process. Throughout the different stages of the process, the Ombudsman acts in a mediatory or advisory capacity, rather than as an arbitrator. The vast majority of grievances are satisfactorily resolved the informal stage, but occasionally a grievance escalates to Stage 2, and a resolution is formally determined and recorded. If this resolution is subsequently appealed, the Ombudsman will convene a Grievance Review Panel to conduct a final hearing. In such a case, the Ombudsman (or her/his nominee) will act as Secretary to the panel meeting.

### c. Wellbeing and Mental Health

While the Fitness to Study / Practice policies (see [Section A 2.2.1 c](#) above) support the institution in addressing concerns over the suitedness of learners to academic study and professional life, the [Student Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy](#) aims to direct and inform learners looking for mental health supports as well as staff members concerned about learners with acknowledged or suspected mental health issues.

## 3.2 The MTU Cork / CIT Libraries

### a. Library Collections

MTU Cork/ CIT Library significantly contributes to the achievements of CIT's/MTU's education, research and lifelong learning strategies by offering exceptional expertise, scholarly resources, spaces and technologies to all of CIT's/MTU's community, regardless of location or mode of learning. Ensuring equality of access to, and full use of, all library resources and facilities is a critical aspect in the role of library services at CIT/MTU.

Physical library facilities are spread across MTU Cork/CIT's four campuses and are designed to enhance opportunities for study and reflection while efficiently housing over 130,000 print items and several key collections of artefacts held in the [Special Collections](#) category. The library materials cover all subject areas represented in MTU Cork / CIT and provide access to titles in Science, Engineering, Business, Social Studies and Humanities. All physical library material is publicly searchable from the [MTU Cork / CIT Library website](#) by using the Online Public Catalogue module of *Koha*, the Library Management System.

A variety of over 850 well-proportioned, abundantly lit study spaces is available across the MTU Cork / CIT libraries, with WIFI access throughout. The main library, located on the Bishopstown campus, was awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland (RIAI) in 2003 and includes bookable social learning spaces that provide users with comfortable areas for collaborative and group study. Recent refurbishment introduced a number of high table 'hot desk' study spaces for short-term occupancy and inclusive motorised sit/stand workstations. Self-service kiosks are now provided in three of the four MTU Cork / CIT libraries.

As outlined in the library's [Collection Development Policy](#), CIT / MTU Library seeks to be a hybrid library, i.e. having the optimum combination of varied and in-depth in-house collections while delivering access to premium online resource content to all of the academic community. Both physical and electronic materials are mapped to a sophisticated discovery layer, a mega-aggregate of disparate content. This surfaces results of all of the library's indexable content into a single search box, retrieving a broad scope of material via a faceted and relevancy-ranked search functionality with ability to drill down instantly to any native database. The physical library holdings are complemented by a broad range of digital resources, encompassing 100,000+ e-books accessible through [Ebook Central](#) and a significant collection of both broad-based and specialist [e-journal and standards databases](#). The multi-disciplinary databases provided currently include Science Direct, Emerald Insight and EBSCOhost (with subsections - Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, OmniFile Wilson Web, SportDiscus, Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale (RILM) and MathsciNet). Subject-specific databases include ACM, IHS, SAI Global (NSAI, ISO, EN Standards) ARTSTOR, IEEE, SAGE Business Cases, Sage Research Methods, and Scopus.

### b. Library Services and Supports

As student learning modes expand and diversify, the Library resources continue to adapt and grow in response to developing user expectations.

The public [MTU Cork/ CIT Library website](#), with integrated mobile device compatibility, offers a continually expanding range of [online guides, video tutorials](#) and webinars. The website also features a comprehensive [Subject Guide Portal](#) for undergraduate students, created by library staff in collaboration with academic staff



from relevant departments. MTU Cork / CIT Library staff have created their own dedicated [YouTube channel](#) which hosts a large selection of instructional videos designed and produced by members of the library team.

The most recent communication tool introduced by the MTU Cork / CIT Library – the first library in the Irish higher education domain to fully utilize this technology – is “Berkeley”, the Virtual Librarian. Berkeley is a ‘24/7’ virtual assistant chatbot built on IBM’s [Watson Assistant](#) platform. Implementation of this AI support tool has allowed the Library to build, train, and deploy conversational interactions with immediate responses to the most frequently asked library queries, regardless of time and user location. Library staff are able to regularly update conversation starter topics, a feature which proved especially useful during the rapidly evolving pandemic crisis as the chatbot can immediately reflect operational changes and new services, such as [‘Click & Collect’](#).

The highly qualified, experienced and skilled staff of the MTU Cork / CIT Libraries – without a doubt the Libraries’ greatest resource – continually demonstrate significant capacity to deliver innovative library services combined with a passion for engagement and outreach within MTU Cork / CIT and the wider community. There is a clear commitment to enable students to discover and utilize resources for their study and future career, become independent and self-motivated learners and to learn the necessary skills to become independent life-long learners. The MTU Cork / CIT Libraries cater for information literacy requirements at all levels, i.e. undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD level, as well as academics and researchers. Presentations and workshops for members of the MTU Cork / CIT academic and research community [offered via the Library website](#) or [in collaboration with other units, such as the Teaching & Learning Unit \(TLU\)](#), are thus complemented by ‘outreach’ offerings, such as workshops for regional DEIS schools or as part of life-long learning community events in the region. Since introduction of the Covid-19 restrictions, all Library training and engagement activities have moved online, along with most other activities of MTU Cork / CIT.

The MTU Cork / CIT Library is committed to promoting and supporting scholarly communications and is actively developing Open Science infrastructures that support the data management needs and research integrity agenda of the research community. The MTU Cork / CIT Library manages MTU’s membership of the new [Irish ORCID consortium](#) and recently launched its first Institutional Repository, [SWORD](#) (South West Online Research deposit). The SWORD repository records, preserves and disseminates CIT respectively MTU research outputs and also features publishing capabilities and a conference hosting infrastructure.

### 3.3 Information Technology Services and Supports

#### a. Canvas Virtual Learning Environment – Department of Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL)

MTU Cork / CIT has long-established expertise in the use of technology for teaching and learning and has, for many years, now offered a suite of fully online programmes. MTU Cork / CIT also has a [rich e-learning infrastructure](#) in place, at the heart of which sits the [Canvas Learning Management System](#) (also called a Virtual Learning Environment). Canvas is a cloud-based platform with a range of features to support important online teaching and learning functions with respect to assessment, content sharing, communication and collaboration, class management and learning analytics. Canvas is managed by the [Department of Technology-Enhanced Learning \(TEL\)](#) and is integrated with the Banner student record system (see [Section A 6](#)), so that staff and students are automatically ‘enrolled’ on the relevant modules based on the most up-to-date information.

Canvas was originally chosen as CIT’s Learning Management System – following an extensive and inclusive procurement process – because of the quality of its user experience, mobile support, learning analytics capabilities, ease of use, and ease of integration with other platforms and tools. The latter point has been a key one in allowing TEL to selectively release new tools and functionality and to mainstream new integrations in a systematic and evidence-based way.

Since its introduction, Canvas has been reframed as the central hub and access point for all components of online learning at MTU Cork / CIT across the full continuum of delivery modes, from its use as a complement to

traditional face-to-face delivery to its central function in supporting fully online programmes and modules. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, such flexibility together with in-house experience in TEL allowed the institution to respond quickly and effectively to the demands of emergency remote teaching (ERT). The Canvas platform was the primary – and often exclusive – way in which staff engaged with learners throughout this period, and the system supported a number of different ERT approaches, both through its out-of-the-box platform features and in the way in which TEL were able to integrate the system with a number of other ed-tech components and tools. Such integrations include, at present, a plagiarism detection system (Turnitin), e-learning authoring systems (H5P and Screencastomatic) and a digital badging platform (Badgr).

The key integrated platform, however, particularly in the ERT context, is the video conference platform Zoom which was used previously in support of online programmes but which was rolled out across MTU Cork / CIT in its entirety to support ERT.

Canvas and Zoom together have, finally, been a source of powerful learning analytics, giving lecturers and programme co-ordinators valid, reliable and actionable insight into online learner engagement and performance which has been particularly important in the ERT context.

### b. Information Technology Services

In its Academic Strategy, CIT set out to further enhance an engaging, high-quality, flexible and inclusive learning experience for all students and to provide them with excellent, modern educational resources and infrastructure. Recent years have seen the implementation of an IT Transformation programme, which has served the institution well during the Covid-19 emergency period.

A central IT Services Team works to provide high quality IT services and solutions to students and staff, thus enhancing student experience and supporting academic delivery across the four MTU Cork / CIT campuses, in collaboration with relevant technical staff in the academic units. A strong focus is placed on staff development and empowerment through effective IT governance processes and appropriate IT staff training programmes, accompanied by regular awareness-raising campaigns through various media on critical topics such as cybersecurity. Comprehensive information on available IT supports can be accessed through the [IT Services Tab](#) on the [MTU Cork Campuses \(MyCIT\) Student Portal](#) and the [MTU Cork / CIT IT Services website](#).

The – virtual and physical – IT Service Desk responds to a wide range of computer-related queries. Issues can be related in person, by email, online or by phone. All problems are regarded as important and receive a swift response appropriate to the level of criticality to the business of MTU Cork / CIT in line with the institutional [IT Support Model](#). The physical IT Service Desk is located in the main Open Access Lab adjacent to the Bishopstown Library and supports both students and staff.

All new MTU Cork / CIT students receive their (currently) [myCIT.ie](#) and [Web4 Student](#) account details on registration, along with their MTU Cork / CIT SmartCard. MyCIT email accounts are based on Gmail, with online tutorials supporting learners in setting up and fully utilising their myCIT email account. Students use Single Sign On (SSO) authentication to log into all relevant IT services, including email, Canvas VLE (see above) and WiFi. A Microsoft Office plan is available free to current MTU Cork / CIT students which permits learners to install, at no cost, the latest version of the MS Office suite (including MS Word, Excel and PowerPoint apps) on up to five personal devices, use MS Office online on any device and avail of 1TB Cloud storage on OneDrive.

Apart from being the primary form of campus identification, the MTU Cork / CIT SmartCard provides access to Library facilities and services, restricted-access laboratories and campus car parking facilities. It also acts as a personal electronic ‘purse’ for use at ‘Smart’ campus locations including photocopiers, print and reprographic services, food services and campus shops.

The main WiFi network across all MTU Cork / CIT campuses for students and staff is Eduroam, with wireless hotspots located throughout all campus locations.

### c. IT Infrastructure Support for Academic Delivery and Administration of the Student Lifecycle

The IT Services Department also provides support to the Department of Technology-Enhanced Learning and other academic departments involved in the delivery of online or blended programmes. This work has informed the implementation and ongoing development of MTU Cork / CIT's Emergency Remote Teaching Model in response to Covid-19, which was first put in place in March 2020.

Given the academic portfolio of MTU Cork / CIT, Covid-19 has presented particular challenges for the attainment and assessment of learning outcomes related to laboratory work. Following extensive work on the MTU Cork / CIT Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI), which had previously mainly supported programme delivery in Computer Science and Mathematics, both the range and functionality of the VDI were massively extended in time for the commencement of the 2020/21 academic year. Several additional areas – including Engineering, Life Sciences, Business and Music – are now enabled to avail of virtual desktops for remote delivery purposes. Furthermore, remote 'labs' are now integrated with the timetabling system, so that any laboratories scheduled are automatically aligned to the class timetable. The VDI permits lecturers to collaborate with students during remote lab sessions, complementing the use of MS Teams to facilitate screensharing and provision of individual assistance to students during class time.

## 3.4 Academic and Welfare Services and Supports

Information on available learner services and supports can be accessed amongst others under the [Student Life](#) tab on the MTU Cork / CIT home page and the [myCIT student portal](#).

On the main Bishopstown campus, the principal student services hub is the Nexus Student Centre. This houses most of the services outlined in the sections below, as well as a Student Common Room, meeting rooms and 'high-street' services such as a mini-market, bistro and banking service. A more limited range of comparable services is available in each of MTU Cork / CIT's constituent college campuses. The Nexus also hosts many key events of the MTU Cork / CIT annual calendar, including graduation ceremonies.

A key role in maintaining ongoing links between the main campus and the 'satellite' campuses is that of the Campus Liaison Officer, who visits each constituent college on a weekly basis and provides information about supports available to all students.

### a. Academic and Career Support Services

Key services and supports related to aspects of programme access and entry, academic study and graduate career development are provided by MTU Cork / CIT's [AnSEO](#), the [Student Engagement Office](#), the [Access & Disability Service](#) and the [Careers Service](#), in addition to the core administrative services and supports of the MTU Cork / CIT [Admissions](#) and [Examinations Offices](#).

In addition to its work around First Year engagement (see [Section A 2.2.1.c](#) above), the Student Engagement Office delivers or coordinates student success initiatives such as the [Just Ask!](#) campaigns or [Academic Success Coaching](#), which offers one-to-one or group coaching sessions intended to improve the ability of learners at all stages to identify academic goals and to develop strategies and skills to meet these. Another core strand of AnSEO's work revolves around building student partnership in quality through different project strands recently brought together under the banner [Le Chéile](#).

AnSEO also incorporates the [Academic Learning Centre](#), which offers individual or group-based advisory sessions and tutorials support in academic writing as well as a range of STEM areas in which learners traditionally experience a level of difficulty, particularly Mathematics.

## b. Student Life and Welfare Support Services

Student life consists of much more than academic study, and the formation of mature, rounded, engaged personalities is one of the most important functions of the college years. The very active MTU Cork / CIT [Arts, Sports](#) and [Societies](#) Offices play a vital role in helping students build friendships and support networks, open themselves up to new possibilities and perspectives and develop a sense of belonging, engagement and pride. In turn, positive integration into the MTU Cork / CIT community contributes to improved engagement and retention in the students' chosen academic programme.

Supports and services related to students' physical and mental health and welfare needs are provided by the MTU Cork / CIT [Medical Centre](#), [Counselling Service](#) and [Accommodation Office](#), while the [Chaplaincy](#) offers pastoral care which is rooted in the Christian tradition but accessible to all.

Learners facing economic hardship may apply for financial support through the [Student Assistance Fund](#), administered by the MTU Cork / CIT [Access & Disability Service](#). A critical element of this for the duration of the Covid-19-related remote delivery arrangements is the [Government Laptop Loan Scheme](#) aimed at enabling equitable access to necessary digital devices for disadvantaged learners.

MTU Cork / CIT student supports are funded through a devolved budget managed by the Student Finance Committee. Reporting to the Finance Committee of Governing Body, the eleven members of the Student Finance Committee include representatives of the institutional executive and relevant services as well as four representatives of the Students' Union. Devolution of service funding to this committee thus ensures that learners, through their formal representational structures, are enabled to play a critical part in the governance and management of the services provided to them. Any funds remaining once allocation of funding to the regular student services is complete are utilised to support various student-focused special projects, such as the Health & Wellbeing initiative outlined above.

Responsibility for the management of the two ESF funds, the Student Assistance Fund and the Fund for Students with Disabilities, lies with the Access Funding Committee. Chaired by the Registrar & Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Access Funding Committee is tasked with the following responsibilities: evaluation and revision of policies and procedures regarding these funds, and preparation of internal and external audits of these funds. It includes representatives from Finance, Student Services, Access & Disability, and relevant senior managers, as well as representation from the Students' Union.

In addition to its role in institutional governance mechanisms (see also [Section A 1.1.6](#)), the MTU Cork / CIT [Students' Union](#) (SU) also offers students many practical supports and services 'at eye level'. On the main Bishopstown campus, students can access the permanently resourced SU Office in the Nexus Student Centre for day-to-day necessities such as low-cost college supplies, bus passes and a phone charging station, as well as to arrange meetings with the SU sabbatical officers to discuss issues or concerns. While not available during Covid-19 restrictions, a free weekly SU ['Shopping Shuttle'](#) bus service operates between the suburban Bishopstown campus and its adjacent student residences and the closest major shopping centre. Finally, during the academic year the Students' Union publishes its monthly [expliCIT Magazine](#), written and produced by MTU Cork / CIT students with student interests and information needs in mind.

## 3.5 Services and Supports for International Learners

MTU Cork / CIT's International Office provides end-to-end support to incoming and outgoing learners embarking on an international experience. In line with the National Strategy for Higher Education, the International Office recognises that different groups of students need different and uniquely tailored academic, life and cultural supports to enable successful integration and participation in their new living and learning environment. The International Office aims to support incoming students of different cultural origins to have the best possible life

and learning experience at MTU Cork / CIT, as well as preparing outgoing students for a successful period of living and studying abroad.

Information topics such as the application process, programme entry requirements, orientation and registration, fees and scholarships, living in Ireland, visas and health insurance is readily available to international applicants on [MTU Cork/CIT's International Office website](#), grouped to address the differing needs of [Incoming Erasmus, Non-EU Full Degree](#) and [Study Abroad/Exchange](#) students. Post-registration, incoming international students are issued with an [International Student Handbook](#) which is updated annually.

To ensure continuity of support post-Covid-19, the MTU Cork / CIT [Virtual International Office](#) was launched. This allows learners and staff to 'drop in' virtually via a Zoom link with queries or requests for advice.

Furthermore, a new International Student module is now accessible on Canvas, CIT / MTU's virtual learning environment. This module provides practical information on living in Ireland specific to the needs of current international learners (on topics such as PPS Numbers, bank accounts and the immigration process). It is also used as an additional channel for the university to communicate with and distribute information to international learners specifically, improving the reach of targeted information provision outside of emails.

Registered international learners at MTU Cork / CIT have access to the same broad range of student services and supports as local students, of course, outlined amongst others in the preceding [Section A 3.2, The MTU Cork / CIT Libraries](#), and [Section A 3.4, Academic and Welfare Services and Supports](#). International students may also draw on the supports of the Students' Union (see [Section A 3.4 b.](#) just above; also see [Section A 1.1.6](#)), of which they are members for the duration of their registration with MTU Cork / CIT.

In addition to service provision to students, the International Office is engaged in advocacy for internationalisation within the institution, working closely with MTU Cork / CIT's other support offices – such as the Careers, Accommodation and Societies Offices, the Counselling Service or the Chaplaincy – and academic departments to ensure that the additional needs of international learners are understood and supported.

## 4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

Provision and quality assurance of postgraduate research education lie within the remit of the School of Graduate Studies, headed by the Dean of Graduate Studies, while strategic development of the institutional research environment falls within the remit of the MTU Cork / CIT Research Office.

Complementary policy documents covering, inter alia, ethical research practice, IP issues and conflict of interest establish a secure legal and ethical framework within which research and postgraduate education can take place. Thus, the quality assurance policies and procedures for postgraduate research study are embedded into the wider [MTU Cork / CIT research policy framework and infrastructure](#).

### 4.1 Quality Assurance of Research Degree Provision

#### a. Research Degree Programme Provision under Delegated Authority (DA)

Historically, research degree provision and the making of research awards in the Irish Institutes of Technology sector took place under the construct of ‘delegated authority’. This was predicated on the initial achievement and maintenance of general delegation of authority to make awards. Delegated authority was initially granted and overseen by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), which was superseded in 2012 by Qualifications and Quality Assurance Ireland (QQI). While ‘DA’ for taught awards to certain NFQ levels was granted to the whole of the Institute, research approval and accreditation and delegated authority for research awards had to be applied for on a per-discipline basis. With the coming into force of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019, the Institutes became designated awarding bodies for all awards to Masters’ level (NFQ Level 9), including Masters by Research. Delegated authority continued to apply to doctoral awards, however. Prior to achieving TU status, Cork Institute of Technology held delegated authority to make doctoral awards in the fields of Electronic, Manufacturing and Mechanical Engineering, Computing, and Physical and Life Sciences.

With technological university designation, the institutions which now form MTU gained full awarding status for all award types and levels. However, even while under delegated authority, Cork Institute of Technology applied the same quality assurance procedures to every research degree programme provided, irrespective of whether it led to a CIT award or a QQI award.

#### b. Quality Assurance Framework for Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes

Executive responsibility for maintenance of the research register and for decisions on admission, progression, transfer and submission lies with the Dean of Graduate Studies, who may draw on the advice of a Postgraduate Research Study Board (PRB). Within academic units, the monitoring and development of Structured PhD and Professional Doctorate programmes falls to doctoral programme panels established by the unit head on the advice of the unit’s Research Studies Committee. Any taught modules offered as part of a structured research programme are validated and reviewed under the quality assurance process for taught programmes. Recommendations of the Postgraduate Examination Board on attainment are ratified by Academic Council or, in the case of doctoral awards in research fields where CIT did not hold delegated authority, by QQI.

The [Regulations for Postgraduate Research Study](#) are MTU Cork / CIT’s key document for the quality assurance of research programmes, and were also adopted as the initial postgraduate regulations of the Munster Technological University shortly after designation.

The CIT / MTU postgraduate regulations govern the different stages of the postgraduate research student lifecycle, monitoring and supervision, submission and examination, and award classification. They also set out appeals and grievance procedures for postgraduate research students. The frameworks for structured PhDs and for professional doctorates are included in appendices.



Comprehensive information about postgraduate study opportunities, available supports (including the Rísam PhD Scholarships) and key policies and supporting documents can be accessed via the [web pages of the MTU Cork / CIT Graduate School](#).

#### c. External Review of Student Progress in Research Programmes of Study

External reviewers play a key role in the quality assurance of research programmes of study at key milestones in the postgraduate student lifecycle. As part of the registration process, the research proposal of the potential Master or doctoral student is externally reviewed to ensure the proposal has the potential to allow the learner to achieve the award standards of the target award. The proposed research methodologies, personal development plan and research plan are also reviewed as part of this process to ensure that they are fit for purpose. Proposed amendments suggested by the reviewer are then addressed by the learner and his/her supervisory team and a finalised research proposal submitted to the Graduate Studies Office for formal approval. Once approved, the learner is given probationary registration status on the relevant research register.

A second milestone occurs approximately eighteen months into the programme of study, when the Masters student may apply for transfer to the doctoral register or the doctoral student wishes to complete their probationary registration and transfer to full registration. In both cases, a detailed progress report is submitted by the learner to her/his Graduate Supervisory Panel (GSP). This progress report includes a discussion on the probationary or transfer student's work to date, together with details of any significant changes being proposed to the research programme. A review is then undertaken by an independent external expert in the discipline area concerned of the completed and intended work. The GSP, taking cognisance of this review, either recommends or fails to recommend to the Graduate Studies Office that the learner be transferred to the doctoral register or have their registration status updated as appropriate.

## 4.2 Quality Assurance of Research and Innovation Activities

### a. Management and Oversight of Research Development

The strategic development of research is supported and steered by the MTU Cork / CIT Research Office, led by the Head of Research. The Research Office has a leading role in developing the institutional Research & Innovation Strategy and also facilitates the implementation of the [MTU Cork / CIT Researcher Career Framework](#).

An Institutional Research and Innovation Steering Committee (IRIS), established by Cork Institute of Technology to provide additional independent insight into research matters and consisting of senior academic and research managers from across the institution, continues to operate within MTU Cork and to report directly to the President. The Research & Innovation Committee of the CIT Academic Council (respectively now of the Cork Academic Legacy Committee of the MTU Academic Council) keeps members informed of developments in research pertinent to the QA process and continues to play an important role in research policy development.

A central element of the MTU Cork / CIT Researcher Career Framework, defining the institution's criteria and processes for responsible and sustainable research capacity building and – in the case of CIT – providing a point of intersection between achievement of capacity and participation in institutional governance structures, is the research entity designation process operated by MTU Cork / CIT. This process determines whether clusters of individuals and the infrastructure they have access to meet the criteria to be designated as a Research Centre or a Research Group, providing QA at the point of establishment by examining whether all relevant governance, management and resources are available to researchers from postgraduate researcher level and upwards.

Significant achievements of designated Research Centres and Groups were reported on in the CIT Annual Report. Furthermore, the CIT Academic Council, with approval from Governing Body, latterly introduced a separate research staff constituency. In addition to elected research staff members, Heads of designated Research



Centres were entitled to sit on Council in an ex-officio capacity. This ensured representation of the research voice and key institutional research interests in institutional governance and academic quality assurance.

#### b. Management and Oversight of Innovation and Knowledge Transfer

Innovation and knowledge transfer activities arising from the research activity are coordinated and supported by the Innovation & Enterprise Office. Specialist Commercialisation Officers provide advice on contracts with other HEI's and industry, whilst dedicated Finance Office staff advise on the estimation and drawdown of budgets in line with funding requirements (of the funder, national and international legal authorities). Dedicated personnel in the HR Office provide governance around recruitment and employment contracts. A Research Information System (RIS), operated by the Research Office, provides oversight to research and academic entities on their projects.

#### c. Research Funding

Most research income is competitively generated, through funding applications to national and international funding agencies for specific research projects under relevant funding calls. Through the RFAM budget, provided as additional funding via the HEA and based on a transparent rubric which takes account of PG graduations, research income and knowledge transfer metrics, the Research Office is enabled to support research activities targeted at building sustainable capacity in the MTU Cork / CIT R&I ecosystem. The CIT Research Office and the Innovation & Enterprise Office provide support for the research community with regard to the dissemination of funding opportunities and the completion of funding applications.

The Research Office and the Innovation and Enterprise Office also endorse applications to funding agencies taking due account of eligibility criteria and terms & conditions of the call. Contracts with all external parties are checked by internal specialists for adherence to relevant national and MTU Cork / CIT internal policies.

### 4.3 Research Integrity Framework

The MTU Cork / CIT Researcher Career Framework defines the roles and responsibilities and remuneration scales of all researchers, ensuring full consistency across the organisation. The Framework adheres to the European Charter and Code for Researchers and is instrumental in MTU Cork / CIT holding the Human Resources Excellence in Research badge.

MTU Cork / CIT's policy on research integrity and guidelines for ethical research conduct are set out in the [Code of Good Practice in Research](#). As was CIT before it, MTU is a signatory to the National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland, and the institutional Code of Good Practice in Research provides a series of guiding principles and standards for good research practice and applies to all disciplines. A [Protocol on Research Misconduct](#) outlines the steps to be taken in the event of a serious breach of research integrity. A Research Integrity Officer is employed on a part-time basis to deal with research integrity issues. MTU Cork / CIT requires all researchers to complete the nationally approved course on research integrity provided by [Epigeum](#). Additional courses developed in-house provide training in critical research QA issues such as Open Science, data analysis and management, and research ethics. All research applications involving humans or animals must receive ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee and all research performed by MTU Cork / CIT researchers or their partners in a project must meet, as a minimum, the standards set down in the Code of Good Practice in Research.

MTU Cork / CIT's [Policy on Conflicts and External Work](#) is pertinent to the research context also and includes an appendix on avoidance of conflict specifically in the recruitment of external examiners for research degrees.

With regard to research outputs, an [Intellectual Property Policy](#) is in place for CIT / MTU. Taking into account GDPR and applicable copyright legislation as well as conflict of interest issues, this is made available to researchers [together with a number of supporting operational documents](#).

Dedicated academic integrity and research ethics training for research degree students is provided through the structured elements of their research programme. Postgraduate students also have access to training offerings of the Library or Teaching & Learning Unit (TLU) (see also [Section A 2.4.2 e](#) above).

## 5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

### 5.1 Recruitment and Professional Development of Staff

#### a. Policy and Procedures for Staff Recruitment, Induction and Progression

MTU Cork / CIT has in place a comprehensive framework for the recruitment, induction, progression and professional development of its staff. This is supported by a set of policies, procedures and guidelines made available to staff by the [Human Resources Office](#) on the internal Workvivo staff server.

Members of internal interview boards are provided with a guidance manual designed to facilitate the interview process, for instance by outlining appropriate interview questions.

In order to 'gender-proof' recruitment, selection and promotion procedures and practices, MTU Cork / CIT is furthermore providing unconscious bias training to all staff who are routinely called upon to sit on interview boards, including Heads of Department and Heads of School. Originally provided by an external organisation, the unconscious bias training programme is now being rolled out by MTU Cork / CIT staff following upskilling under the Train-the-Trainer initiative.

A global Staff Induction Workshop is offered to new staff members by the HR Office at various times throughout the year. Adapted annually to reflect key institutional developments, the workshop introduces new staff to MTU / CIT's campuses and organisational structure; gives an overview of key institutional functions, personnel, policies and procedures; and suggests possibilities for making social connections with the staff community, such as the sports clubs and the MTU Cork / CIT Staff Social Committee. In line with institutional commitments under the Athena SWAN action plan (see [Section A 5.3 b](#)), from this point forward 'gender-proofing' also applies to the staff induction workshops, and will be achieved through purposeful involvement of both female and male Heads of Departments. New staff members are also supplied with a "Staff Induction – Starting Off Essentials" Guide intended to help them settle into their new roles in a seamless manner. In addition, a range of practical and academic [staff induction resources](#) can be accessed through the website of the [MTU Cork / CIT Teaching & Learning Unit \(TLU\)](#) (see also the next Section, A 5.1.b).

Recruitment and selection procedures are currently under review in the technological higher education sector, with a view to simplifying the process and making it more efficient.

#### b. Continuous Professional Development of Academic Staff

MTU Cork / CIT makes provision for staff development for all categories of staff, and its staff development programme is widely availed of. Each academic unit is allocated funding for staff development, which is generally used to fund attendance at conferences and seminars for staff members of that unit. Under the central staff development budget of the Office of the Registrar & Vice President for Academic Affairs, MTU Cork / CIT staff may apply for funding to pursue further, part-time academic studies in MTU Cork / CIT or in other higher education institutions, mainly on Masters or doctoral programmes. All staff development funding applications require the approval of the head of the relevant academic or administrative unit. Academic units and central institutional functions may also apply for funding for dedicated short courses, workshops and seminars designed to meet specific identified staff development needs. Depending on the nature of the requirements, these may be confined to a particular department or may be interdepartmental.

The Office of the Registrar & Vice President for Academic Affairs and School of Graduate Studies together operate the MTU Cork / CIT Staff Doctorate Scheme for academic staff. This is open to full-time permanent / CID academic staff and staff employed as researchers. Normally, a call is issued once per annum and is subject to an assessment process. The scheme funds tuition fees, a small budget for consumables / conferences, and, for

lecturing staff, a timetable alleviation. (See also [Section A 4.2](#) above with regard to the MTU Cork / CIT Researcher Career Framework and its role in research capacity building.)

Finally, the continuous development of the professional and pedagogical competence of academic staff forms an important part of the activities of the [Teaching & Learning Unit \(TLU\)](#). CPD offerings of the TLU range from provision of a modular [MA in Teaching & Learning in Higher Education](#) and a wide range of short staff development seminars to seed funding for teaching & learning initiatives. The TLU also facilitates learning communities (e.g. for lecturing staff delivering the common *Creativity, Innovation & Teamwork* ('CIT') module, see [Section A 2.4.1](#) above) and networking events, all offered in formats designed to maximise ease of access. In addition, the Teaching & Learning Unit is engaged in ongoing pedagogical research and in piloting new development projects, such as a recently devised early career staff mentoring scheme.

### c. Recruitment and Development of Researchers

MTU Cork / CIT is a two-time holder of the [EURAXESS HR Excellence in Research Award](#) (in 2017 and 2019 respectively), recognising the institutional commitment to the adoption and realisation of the 40 principles of the European Charter for the Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers ('Charter & Code'), and showcasing MTU Cork / CIT internationally as a favourable working environment for researchers.

In line with CIT / MTU Cork's strategic goals of strengthening and extending research activities and engaging and empowering staff, the university recognises the need for research units to be in a position to recruit talented researchers as expeditiously as possible while adhering to best practice in recruitment, selection and provision of opportunities for professional development.

The HR Excellence in Research Award recognises CIT / MTU Cork's progress in supporting researchers at all career stages, including the introduction of structured PhDs, the implementation of the MTU Cork / CIT Researcher Career Framework (see [Section A 4.2](#) above) and the ongoing commitment to professional development.

A significant milestone towards full implementation of the EC 'Charter & Code' was the adoption of an '[OTM-R](#)' (open, transparent and merit-based) [Researcher Recruitment Policy for MTU Cork / CIT](#), detailing every step of the recruitment process, from advertising to appointment. Other recently completed actions include appointment of a HR staff member dedicated solely to researcher recruitment, provision of CIT / MTU graduate internships for research positions, and provision of paid student work placement opportunities in one of the TU's research centres or groups.

## 5.2 Staff Wellbeing and Support

CIT / MTU offers ongoing support for the mental wellbeing of its staff members through its Employee Assistance Service (EAS), now provided by Spectrum.Life. The assistance service is designed to support employees with personal or work-related concerns through telephone support, specialist information and face-to-face counselling. Beyond fully anonymised usage level data, no information on service use is shared with MTU. Information on the service and the associated wellbeing platform/app is available in the MTU Staff Wellbeing space on the internal Workvivo staff portal.

## 5.3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

### a. EDI Policies, Procedures and Awareness-Raising Activities

As an employer and education provider both, CIT / MTU not only has the responsibility of adhering to legislative requirements regarding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, but – as importantly – of doing so in a manner that is visible to all. Relevant pieces of legislation include the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act (2005), the Equal

Status Acts (2000-2018), the Employment Equality Acts (1998-2015), and the Gender Recognition Act (2015), which inform all aspects of staff recruitment and management.

Increased training, policy development and communications activities and greater student and staff participation in EDI research support CIT / MTU in communicating legislative requirements and acceptable behaviours and in fostering active support for 'living' EDI principles among the members of the university. Due to the requirement for physical proximity in EDI training, training activities themselves have had to be suspended post-Covid-19, but are intended to recommence for both staff and students as soon as the environment allows for them to be provided safely. Meanwhile, other activities designed to raise awareness for equality, diversity and inclusion issues could continue, however, such as a new online [EDI Awareness programme](#) jointly organised by a number of MTU services and the MTU Students' Union (see also [Section A 2.2.2](#) on Widening Participation).

#### b. Gender Equality (Athena SWAN Bronze Award)

Since May 2019, CIT / MTU Cork has been in possession of an Athena SWAN Bronze Award, in recognition of its commitment to addressing gender barriers and advancing the careers of women and trans people. Adoption of the [Athena SWAN Charter](#), launched in the United Kingdom in 2005 and extended to Ireland in 2015 with funding from the Higher Education Authority, commits higher education and research institutions to removing barriers that contribute to gender-based underrepresentation and to taking a targeted approach to address issues of both internal and external origin. Initially focused on STEMM areas (science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine), the Charter has since expanded to include many other fields. Achievement of an Athena SWAN Bronze Award requires a thorough analysis of institutional data, policies and procedures, identification of key issues, and the creation and implementation of a three-year action plan to address the issues identified.

Actions taken by CIT / MTU Cork under the Athena SWAN action plan include the aforementioned introduction of 'gender-proofing' measures in staff recruitment or induction (see [Section A 5.1 a](#) above). Another measure was the establishment of a formal LGBT+ Network with the goal of ensuring that CIT / MTU Cork is a supportive, welcoming environment for those within the LGBT+ community. Newly recruited staff members are advised of this network as a potential source of support. Completion of further action plan items will require the support of all members of the new technological university at this point.

Support from Advance HE (the UK non-profit agency that manages the Athena SWAN Charter) furthermore enabled Cork Institute of Technology to fund a group of female staff members to avail of its [Aurora Leadership Development Initiative for Women in HE](#). MTU Cork / CIT is committed to continue participation in the Advance HE Aurora programme on an annual basis to support female leadership among its staff going forward.

The national Gender Equality Taskforce has noted that engagement with the Athena SWAN process has been transformative for Irish HEIs, and has encouraged institutions to work towards obtaining a Silver- and, eventually, Gold-level award by demonstrating progressive levels of achievement in relation to the embedding and promotion of gender equality and evidence of impact against challenges from actions implemented. While cognisant of the growing momentum around Athena SWAN certification, the taskforce has also recognised that, owing to revised application requirements which have increased the workload involved, the original timelines may not be achievable for institutions.

With regard to Munster Technological University, a legacy process will need to be applied for to allow CIT's Bronze Award to be recognized as a legacy award of MTU once this is possible following a sufficient relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions. Thereafter, the university plans to progress supplemental departmental awards in the first instance, followed by a renewal of the Bronze Award for the TU as a whole. Application for an Athena SWAN Silver award application is intended in the medium term.

## 6.0 Information and Data Management

### 6.1 Operational Information

In Cork Institute of Technology, a set of key performance data and summary statements on developments in the areas of academic provision and supports, engagement activities, finance (including audited accounts), administration and staffing were collated and published by the Office of the President on behalf of Governing Body as part of its Annual Reports to the HEA. Annual Reports for past years were published in the [Reports, Plans and Policies](#) section of the CIT Website.

In the context of programme quality assurance, the presentation and analysis of relevant statistical data as well as qualitative information from internal and external sources (such as surveys, focus groups, industry advisory boards, literature etc.) is a key component of the self-evaluation phase within each of the core QA processes ([Validation Review](#); [Annual Programme Status Review](#) – see esp. [Policy Appendix B](#); [Programmatic Review](#)).

Core learner, graduate and staff data are collated centrally in MTU Cork / CIT's Banner Student and CORE HR Staff Records Systems. Relevant Banner and CORE data are made available to authorised users in the faculties and the central administration for purposes of managing and quality assuring the provision and related supports as necessary. Examination records are kept and processed securely on a separate server. The introduction by CIT of its bespoke exam paper management system, MAX<sup>e</sup>, has furnished MTU Cork/CIT with a tool for easy tracking and analysis of exam paper submission and review statistics. Facilities usage is managed and monitored and managed through different systems for a variety of purposes, including timetabling, energy management, etc. The central institutional data repositories are supplemented by 'special purpose' CRM databases maintained by particular services and functions, e.g. the Alumni Office. Preparations to introduce the new, more feature-rich update of Banner (8.5) for MTU are underway at the point of writing (see also [Section A 3.3 c](#)).

Increasingly, as systems capacity is improving, the preparation and provision of statistical data which had to be carried out manually previously is being automated. Thus, programme performance data considered as part of the Annual Programme Status Review is pre-loaded into the APSR report templates, which can be accessed by authorised users via the MTU Cork / CIT Enterprise Reporting Portal.

Some details on the CIT data hub project, which is continuing in MTU, are provided in Part B ([Section B 2.2.6](#)).

### 6.2 Data Protection and Information Management

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which came into force in all countries of the European Union in May 2018, brings with it a stringent set of institutional obligations and responsibilities regarding the collection, use and protection of personal data. At present, MTU Cork / CIT is progressing towards full compliance with GDPR in accordance with a multi-annual institutional implementation plan which covers governance; the institutional documentation framework; personal data management processes, training and awareness; and technological capability. New procedures such as Data Protection Impact Assessments have been introduced, but will take a certain amount of time to embed as routine institutional processes.

A suite of GDPR-compliant Data Protection Policies, originally developed in the context of a THEA (Technological Higher Education Association) sectoral project, is published in the [Reports, Plans and Policies section](#) of the MTU Cork / CIT website. Work on ensuring that the institutional requirements under GDPR are adequately reflected in other institutional policies and procedures is ongoing. Implementation of GDPR across MTU Cork / CIT is overseen by the CIT Data Protection Officer.

In addition to the GDPR-related duties, the Data Protection Officer also processes any freedom of information requests made to MTU Cork / CIT. A log of FOI requests and FOI Model Publication Scheme are accessible on the [Freedom of Information section](#) on the public website.

## 7.0 Public Information and Communication

The main repository for public information about MTU Cork / Cork Institute of Technology is the [MTU Cork / CIT website](#). Amongst others, this offers a [Find a Course](#) section allowing prospective students to obtain the current approved specifications for CIT programmes and modules, as well a section detailing the procedures and current deadlines for [admissions and registration](#). MTU Cork / CIT also makes available a range of policies and reports related to the governance, management and quality assurance activities of the Institute, including [Governing Body meeting agendas and digests](#); [academic regulations and policies](#); [general policies, plans and reports](#); and reports on [validations](#) and [programme reviews](#).

The [Research, Innovation & Enterprise](#) tab of the public website is the gateway for initial information about research activity, research degree provision and innovation and technology transfer activities at MTU Cork / CIT.

These online resources are complemented by information provided through a variety of printed or downloadable programme literature, including the [Prospectus of Full-Time Programmes](#) and the [Continuing Education Prospectus](#).

Information on the Institute and its portfolio of programmes is also disseminated via different social media outlets (including for instance [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) or [YouTube](#)) and regular information events held both on campus and in an outreach format, such as the [Open Day](#), [Postgraduate Fair](#), [Mature Student Evenings](#) or the [MTU Cork / CIT STEM roadshows](#).

The office responsible for collating the prospectuses, managing the MTU Cork / CIT website and overseeing the provision of public information on various social media channels is the [MTU Cork / CIT Marketing Unit](#).

At the point of writing, the legacy MTU Cork / CIT website is being iteratively phased out and transitioned to a common MTU web presence.



## 8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

Ongoing monitoring and regular review of the programme provision are central elements of the internal quality assurance system of higher education providers in the European Higher Education Area.

### 8.1 Periodic Review of Programmes

The periodic review of programmes at MTU Cork / Cork Institute of Technology – called ‘Programmatic Review’ following long-standing sectoral usage – is governed by the MTU Cork / CIT [Academic Policy on Programmatic Review](#). Programmatic review encompasses, as a minimum, a thorough self-evaluation of the academic unit hosting the complement of programmes under review, followed by a site visit from a panel of independent external experts with representation from the Registrar’s Office. Each review stage generates a detailed report. A positive overall recommendation in the report of the peer review panel forms the basis for revalidation of the programmes by Academic Council.

In programmatic review, peer evaluators analyse the effectiveness of the suite of programmes offered by an academic unit of MTU Cork / CIT, with an emphasis on quality and flexibility of response to changing needs. While some years ago, the standard unit of review was the faculty, with increasing growth of the institution and creation of fewer and larger faculties, it has become the norm to conduct programmatic review on a school or constituent college basis.

MTU Cork / CIT conducts programmatic review in two phases. While Phase 1 looks at strategic and high-level issues, Phase 2 is devoted to a detailed programme review. Each phase is built on a self-study by the unit under review, supplemented by, normally, two days of meetings of the peer review panel with staff, students and other stakeholders. Where relevant, the review panel will also receive a tour of facilities in order to gain an impression of the sufficiency and quality of the teaching, learning and research spaces, critical equipment and other physical resources. With the introduction of Covid-19 restrictions, programme review panel meetings, too, have had to move online. The first remote programmatic review event was Phase 1 of the programmatic review of the National Maritime College of Ireland in November 2020. The remote panel meetings proved no less effective than the traditional face-to-face sessions, albeit the physical facilities tour was replaced by a detailed visual presentation of the key spaces and resources.

The overall aims of programmatic review are to ensure

- that the programmes of the academic unit remain relevant to learners, employers and other stakeholders;
- that the strategy, resources and systems of the academic unit and MTU Cork / CIT are sufficient to support and develop the academic activities;
- that there is demand for the graduate profile produced by academic unit’s programmes;
- that the Programme Outcomes correctly describe the desired graduate profile; and
- that the academic unit’s programmes deliver the Programme Outcomes.

The two review phases address these aims with different emphases and to a different extent.

Externally, the periodic review of programmes contributes to the enhancement of public confidence in MTU Cork / CIT and its awards. Internally, it is an important ‘way stage’ in a continuous quality improvement cycle which affords the opportunity to step back from the ongoing business of programme delivery to reflect on the current status and future direction of an academic unit and its programme portfolio.

## 8.2 Selection and Recruitment of External Review Panel Members

External members of programme validation and review panels are selected for the experience and expertise they bring to a panel, as well as for their (confirmed or likely) ability to effectively participate in or – in the chair’s case, lead – a criteria-based academic peer review.

In line with the institutional focus on career education and academic policy (see for example the [Academic Policy on Programmatic Review](#)), MTU Cork / CIT review panels include both academic and professional / industry experts. In addition to balancing the academic and professional membership, the achievement of gender balance is a key guiding principle for panel recruitment, within the constraints of given expertise needs and availability (which in turn may be influenced by existing gender representation patterns in a field).

Panellist selection and recruitment for validation of major awards and programme reviews is facilitated and overseen by the Academic Quality Enhancement (AQE) Office operating within the Registrar’s Office. Once the AQE Office has determined which panel profile will best match and support the exact purpose and scope of the review, and mindful of the general principles just outlined, the Office will seek to identify suitable national – or, wherever feasible, international – panel members whose qualities and qualifications, taken together, will enable the panel to competently address the review criteria in their totality. In the context of the programmatic review process, ‘Phase 1’ panel members will thus ideally hold executive leadership roles within their academic or professional organisations which will allow them to take a high-level, strategic perspective on the operation and development of a complex academic unit. By contrast, the focus in ‘Phase 2’ lies on specialist knowledge of a particular academic or professional field to underpin a detailed, thorough review of a suite of cognate programmes. If appropriate in view of the profile and intended outcomes of a programme, panels may also include experts in teaching & learning, or may include relevant research expertise where academic units have a strong track record in research and postgraduate research education in addition to their taught portfolio.

Suitable review panel members are normally identified in consultation with the relevant academic unit to ensure that the balance of specialisms adequately matches the academic profile and portfolio of the unit. However, as the ability of panel members to use sound judgment and arrive at unbiased conclusions is critical to the integrity of the panel process, the AQE Office will ensure that all potential external panel members take note of the [MTU Cork / CIT Policy on Conflicts and External Work](#) during the panel recruitment phase and formally confirm the absence of interest, or declare potential interests so that they can be mitigated, before engaging in the review.

Validation panels for non-major awards of a limited credit volume may be convened by the relevant Head of Faculty/School, taking into account any requirements set by the Dean of Academic Quality Enhancement (see [Procedure for the Design and Approval of Special Purpose, Minor and Supplementary Awards](#)). Where the award has a low credit volume, such panels may include one external panel member only, though more often than not two external panellists will be invited. The absolute requirement to ensure a sound and unbiased review and avoid conflict of interest continues to apply, however, as does the general principle of balancing industry and academic membership on larger panels.

Once recruited, panellists receive a number of preparatory documents to guide and induct them into the panel process, its purpose and its intended outcomes. In addition, for more substantial panel reviews, a short induction session will be held at the outset of a panel site visit. Following the move to remote panel reviews following the beginning of Covid-19 restrictions, increased emphasis has been put on thorough advance preparation of panel members to support the panel members in ‘gelling’ as a cohesive group and conducting an efficient and purposeful review. (On the recruitment of external examiners for taught provision, see also [Section A 2.4.2 d.](#))

### 8.3 Annual Programme Status Review (Programme Monitoring)

Continuous monitoring of the academic programmes is carried out by the individual programme boards. The boards report annually on programme development and enhancement measures, guided by MTU Cork / CIT's [Policy and Procedure for the Annual Programme Status Review \(APSR\)](#). To support and guide programme boards, the Institute's Enterprise Reporting Portal provides authorised users with a standardised report template for each programme. Each template is pre-populated with key performance data for the relevant programme drawn down automatically from the Banner student record system (see [Policy Appendix B: Sample Template for Programme Review Report \(CAO\)](#)). In their analysis, the boards consider qualitative feedback from different sources – such as external examiner reports – as well as a range of quantitative performance indicators (applications and acceptances, enrolment and retention, student and graduate performance).

### 8.4 Evaluation of the Student Experience

The key instrument for the evaluation of the student experience is the annual [Irish Survey of Student Engagement \(ISSE\)](#), in which all public higher education providers in Ireland have been participating since its inception in 2013. The outcomes of the ISSE are analysed by the Institute and discussed by the Academic Council and other relevant units. This comprehensive national learner survey is complemented by various local instruments, such as focus groups organised by AnSEO – the Student Engagement Office in connection with student engagement initiatives. The HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey is also carried out by the Institute, and the results are made available to the faculties for analysis.

### 8.5 Internal Audit and Other Quality Reviews

At the level of institutional governance, in Cork Institute of Technology the evaluation of the programme provision was complemented by an annual schedule of Internal Audits commissioned by the Audit and Risk Committee of Governing Body. The internal audits covered all areas, functions and services of CIT and were carried out by external consultants appointed on a sectorial basis.

At the point of writing an Audit and Risk Committee has been set by the Governing Body of Munster Technological University and has commenced deliberations on audit procedures and a work programme.

In addition to the Internal Audit cycles and sectoral reviews commissioned by the HEA, specific areas and functions of MTU Cork / CIT also undergo voluntary external review and ongoing self-monitoring to benchmark the quality of institutional structures and processes against internationally recognised standards such as the ISO.

Thus, MTU Cork / CIT maintains ISO 50001 certification for its Energy Management Systems.

In addition, the management and quality system of MTU Cork / CIT's constituent National Maritime College of Ireland (NMCI), which due to its private-public partnership structure and the combined effects of different regulatory and academic quality obligations faces challenges of unusual breadth, depth and complexity, are certified under the ISO 9001-2015 standard, making NMCI the only third-level institution on the island of Ireland to hold this quality management certification.

### 8.6 Engagement with External Quality Assurance

The internal quality assurance system of MTU Cork / CIT is linked into external quality assurance cycles at the national level systematically through a number of mechanisms.

Chief amongst these are the annual reports – including the present Annual Quality Report – to the two statutory agencies with legal and regulatory responsibilities for Irish further and higher education, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and the Higher Education Authority (HEA). The reports are complemented by cyclical dialogue meetings with each agency and a schedule of external institutional audits (commissioned by the HEA)

respectively major cyclical institutional reviews (overseen by QQI). The engagement of CIT / MTU with each agency is governed and bounded by the statutes, national strategies and government policies which determine the remit of each authority vis-à-vis the Irish higher education providers.

#### a. Engagement with the Higher Education Authority (HEA)

The ongoing formal and semi-formal engagement of MTU Cork / CIT with the HEA, the statutory planning and development body for further and higher education, encompasses an annual programmes & budgets process and strategic dialogue as well as other HEA-sponsored programmes, initiatives and functional audits. During the reporting period for this AQR – the last for Cork Institute of Technology – the Presidents of CIT and IT Tralee attended the HEA strategic dialogue meetings for both Institutes in anticipation of their impending merger to become Munster Technological University.

The annual Programmes & Budgets documentation for Cork Institute of Technology, which was approved by the Institute Executive Board and the Governing Body Finance Committee and included student number returns, draft accounts and four-year income and expenditure projections, formed the basis of the annual HEA core grant, one of two major sources of income for the Institute (the other being student fees). Since the Institute was under statutory obligation to return a balanced budget, CIT's financial statements were subject to annual audit by the Comptroller & Auditor General, and tax could be subject to a Revenue Commissioner audit.

#### b. Engagement with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

As summarised above, quality-related engagements of MTU Cork / CIT with QQI range from formal, cyclical external reviews of the whole institution to semi-formal interactions of the agency with particular MTU Cork / CIT functions or individual members in the context of specific quality initiatives or expertise requirements.

The Annual (Institutional) Quality Reports to QQI (now abbreviated as AQR), commencing in 2013/14, present a synopsis of the current internal quality assurance structures and procedures (Part A) and of quality-relevant institutional activities and developments during the annual reporting period (Part B), with particular attention on the QA of programme provision and the student experience. The MTU Cork / CIT AQRs draw on both routine internal reporting mechanisms such as Academic Council and Governing Body records, faculty analyses of Annual Programme Status Review Reports or the annual reports of functional areas such as the Access Office, and reports on once-off reviews and audits, such as a thematic analysis of programmatic review reports conducted by the Registrar's Office, a HEA audit of the ERASMUS+ programme, or an internal audit of Admissions.

The AQRs for the most recent three reporting periods are [published by QQI on its own website](#). The agency furthermore conducts a review of all AQRs received and publishes a summary report on themes and quality highlights for the relevant reporting period under the title Quality in Higher Education.

QQI also has statutory responsibility for the 'CINNTE' review (as it is termed in its present format), a seven-yearly external review of the effectiveness and implementation of the institutional quality assurance mechanisms. The CINNTE review will draw on the quality information collated through the AQRs in conjunction with the cyclical one- or two-yearly dialogue meetings between representatives of the authority and MTU Cork / CIT senior managers and function leaders with a responsibility for quality.

Even before CIT became a designated awarding body in January 2020, formal interactions in the context of QQI's role as an awarding body had become less and less frequent, due to CIT's extensive delegation of authority to make awards at all NFQ levels. The enactment of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019, and even more so future MTU designation, will change the relationship in respect of QQI's quality assurance functions, too, with increasingly broader primary responsibilities for quality assurance and enhancement functions resting upon the institution itself.

As is the case for links with the HEA, formal high-level links between QQI and MTU Cork / CIT are complemented by a multitude of less formal engagements at the staff level, whether that be through participation in national sectoral initiatives such as the recently established National Academic Integrity Network, membership of various QQI- or provider-organised academic quality review panels both nationally and internationally, external examinership, or any other avenues for quality-relevant engagement. While the contribution of such engagements to institutional quality is harder to capture systematically, collectively they have the effect of strengthening familiarity and engagement with national and international academic quality frameworks at all levels of the institution and ensuring an ongoing, informal quality dialogue across the higher education system in Ireland and beyond.

### c. Engagement with Professional and Other External Quality Assurance Frameworks

As described earlier in this report (see [Section A 8.5](#) just above and also [Section A 1.1.7 b](#)), MTU Cork / CIT also systematically engages with a number of other external quality frameworks.

Some of these are engagements sought by MTU Cork / CIT to streamline and certify particular function- or area-specific management processes. These include certification of MTU Cork / CIT's energy management system under ISO 50001 and certification of the management and quality system of NMCI under ISO 9001-2015.

MTU Cork / CIT also engages with the discipline-specific external QA frameworks for regulated professions under the remit of CORU (Social Care Work, Biomedical Science) or the International Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) overseen by the Marine Survey Office (Nautical Science, Marine Engineering, Marine Electrotechnology). In certain joint postgraduate programmes with University College Cork, the QA procedures of the Teaching Council also apply (Art & Design Education). Even where professional registration is not mandatory, the desirability of professional accreditation for graduates in fields such as Engineering, Architecture or Accountancy means that MTU Cork / CIT regularly engages with many different professional QA frameworks maintained by representative professional bodies or associations, both national and international. The engagement of the university with these professional quality frameworks may take different forms, but more often than not implies regular external review or audit of curricula, arrangements for programme delivery and the overall academic quality framework of the institution by the regulator or relevant professional body.

## 9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

### 9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	31
Awarding bodies	6
QA bodies	0

*Note: Number of PRSB arrangements given as of 30 April 2021*

<b>1. Type of arrangement</b> (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland (RIAI)
Programme titles and links to publications	<p><i>Programme Titles</i></p> <p>Bachelor of Science in Architectural Technology; Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Architectural Technology.</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p><a href="https://www.cit.ie/course/CR090">https://www.cit.ie/course/CR090</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.cit.ie/course/CR560">https://www.cit.ie/course/CR560</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.riai.ie/careers-in-architecture/how-to-become-an-architectural-technologist">https://www.riai.ie/careers-in-architecture/how-to-become-an-architectural-technologist</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.riai.ie/careers-in-architecture/education/accredited-programmes">https://www.riai.ie/careers-in-architecture/education/accredited-programmes</a></p>
Date of accreditation or last review	5 June 2019
Date of next review	2022

<b>2. Type of arrangement</b> (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Association for Nutrition (UK)
Programme titles and links to publications	<p><i>Programme Titles</i></p> <p>Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Nutrition &amp; Health Science</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p><a href="https://www.cit.ie/course/CR333">https://www.cit.ie/course/CR333</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.associationfornutrition.org/degree-accreditation/accredited-programmes">https://www.associationfornutrition.org/degree-accreditation/accredited-programmes</a></p>
Date of accreditation or last review	Day(s)-Month-2019
Date of next review	[Year]

<b>3. Type of arrangement</b> (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport
Programme titles and links to publications	<p><i>Programme Titles</i></p> <p>Higher Certificate in Science in Nautical Studies;  Bachelor of Science in Nautical Studies;  Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Nautical Science;  Bachelor of Engineering in Marine Engineering;  Bachelor of Engineering in Marine Electrotechnology.</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p><a href="https://www.nmci.ie/undergraduatecourses;">https://www.nmci.ie/undergraduatecourses;</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.ie/pdf/81536/?page=null">https://www.gov.ie/pdf/81536/?page=null</a></p>



	(Marine Notice No. 28 of 2020 / Schedule of Examinations for Certificate of Competency for Deck Officers, Marine Engineer Officers, Skippers and Second Hands in the year commencing 7th September 2020); <a href="https://www.gov.ie/pdf/19838/?page=1">https://www.gov.ie/pdf/19838/?page=1</a> (Marine Notice No. 19 of 2019 / Schedule of Examinations for Certificate of Competency for Deck Officers, Marine Engineer Officers, Skippers and Second Hands in the year commencing 2nd September 2019).
Date of accreditation or last review	n/a
Date of next review	n/a

<b>4. Type of arrangement</b> (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	The Institution of Chemical Engineers (IChemE)
Programme titles and links to publications	<i>Programme Titles</i> Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Chemical and Biopharmaceutical Engineering  <i>Links to Publications</i> <a href="https://www.cit.ie/course/CR105">https://www.cit.ie/course/CR105</a> <a href="https://www.icheme.org/education/find-a-degree-programme/">https://www.icheme.org/education/find-a-degree-programme/</a>
Date of accreditation or last review	3 September 2020 (preceded by site visit in May 2020)
Date of next review	Tbd (dependent on completion of remaining condition)

<b>5. Type of arrangement</b> (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Engineers Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	<p><i>Programme Titles</i></p> <p>Bachelor of Engineering in Mechanical Engineering;          Bachelor of Engineering in Biomedical Engineering;          Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Mechanical Engineering;          Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Biomedical Engineering.</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p><a href="https://www.cit.ie/course/CR071;">https://www.cit.ie/course/CR071;</a>  <a href="https://www.cit.ie/course/CR075;">https://www.cit.ie/course/CR075;</a>  <a href="https://www.cit.ie/course/cr108;">https://www.cit.ie/course/cr108;</a>  <a href="https://www.cit.ie/course/CR520;">https://www.cit.ie/course/CR520;</a>  <a href="http://www.engineersireland.ie/services/accredited-courses/charteredengineer.aspx">http://www.engineersireland.ie/services/accredited-courses/charteredengineer.aspx</a></p>
Date of accreditation or last review	30 April 2021 (postponed from 2020 due to Covid-19)
Date of next review	2021/2022

<b>6. Type of arrangement</b> (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Engineers Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	<p><i>Programme Titles</i></p> <p>Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Civil Engineering;          Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Structural Engineering (Environment and Energy);          Master of Engineering in Civil Engineering;          Master of Engineering in Structural Engineering (Environment and Energy).</p> <p><i>(Note: Last accreditation of the standalone 90-credit MEng in Civil Engineering and MEng in Structural Engineering (Environment and Energy) programmes. New intakes from Sep. 2021 will be into the 5-year integrated Masters.)</i></p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p><a href="https://www.cit.ie/course/CR051">https://www.cit.ie/course/CR051</a>  <a href="https://www.cit.ie/course/CR109">https://www.cit.ie/course/CR109</a>  <a href="https://www.engineersireland.ie/Professionals/Membership/Become-a-member/Accredited-third-level-courses">https://www.engineersireland.ie/Professionals/Membership/Become-a-member/Accredited-third-level-courses</a></p>
Date of accreditation or last review	30 April 2021 (postponed from 2020 due to Covid-19)
Date of next review	2021/2022

## 9.2 Collaborative Provision

Type of arrangement	Total number
Joint research degrees	2 <i>Note: Total of 10 individual PhD agreements under 2 joint research degree programmes</i>
Joint/double/multiple awards	6 <i>Note: Includes taught and research degrees</i>
Collaborative programmes	17 <i>Note: Includes programmes leading to joint awards; excludes prog. leading to exit awards only</i>
Franchise programmes	0
Linked providers (DABs only)	0
<i>Note: Number of collaborative arrangements given as of 30 April 2021</i>	

<b>1. Collaborative provision</b>	
(Type of collaborative provision)	Collaborative programme
Name of body (/bodies):	CPA Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	<p><i>Programme Title</i></p> <p>Master of Science in Applied Accounting</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p><a href="https://courses.cit.ie/index.cfm/page/course/courseId/2009">https://courses.cit.ie/index.cfm/page/course/courseId/2009</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.cpaireland.ie/become-a-student/CPA-Qualifications/CPA-Accounting-Masters-Qualification/Cork-Institute-of-Technology">https://www.cpaireland.ie/become-a-student/CPA-Qualifications/CPA-Accounting-Masters-Qualification/Cork-Institute-of-Technology</a></p>
Date of last review	9 May 2019
Date of next review	2024/25

<b>2. Collaborative provision</b>	Collaborative programme
(Type of collaborative provision)	Collaborative programme
Name of body (/bodies):	IoT Consortium in conjunction with BioPharmaChem Ireland (Lead Provider: TU Dublin, Tallaght)
Programme titles and links to publications	<p><i>Programme Title</i></p> <p>Higher Certificate in Science – Laboratory Technician [Apprentice Mode].</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p><a href="https://courses.cit.ie/index.cfm/page/course/courseId/2354">https://courses.cit.ie/index.cfm/page/course/courseId/2354</a></p> <p><a href="https://apprenticeship.ie/career-seekers/get-started/learn-more/logistics/logistics-associate-l6">https://apprenticeship.ie/career-seekers/get-started/learn-more/logistics/logistics-associate-l6</a></p>
Date of last review	Programme specification validated by TU Dublin, Tallaght Campus in 2018/19. Approval of CIT instance by the AC Exec. Committee on 19 June 2019 after approval of the Consortium Agreement.
Date of next review	2023/24

<b>3. Collaborative provision</b>	Collaborative programme
(Type of collaborative provision)	Collaborative programme
Name of body (/bodies):	IoT Consortium in partnership with the Logistics Associate Apprenticeship Consortium (Lead Provider: TU Dublin)
Programme titles and links to publications	<p><i>Programme Title</i></p> <p>Higher Certificate in Science in Logistics [Apprentice Mode].</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p><a href="https://courses.cit.ie/index.cfm/page/course/courseId/2354">https://courses.cit.ie/index.cfm/page/course/courseId/2354</a></p> <p><a href="https://apprenticeship.ie/career-seekers/get-started/learn-more/logistics/logistics-associate-l6">https://apprenticeship.ie/career-seekers/get-started/learn-more/logistics/logistics-associate-l6</a></p>
Date of last review	Programme specification validated by TU Dublin in 2018/19. CIT Academic Council approval of CIT instance on 5 Feb 2020, following approval of the Consortium Agreement.
Date of next review	2023/24

<b>4. Collaborative provision</b>	Collaborative programme
(Type of collaborative provision)	
Name of body (/bodies):	Atlantic Flight Training Academy (AFTA)
Programme titles and links to publications	<p><i>Programme Title</i></p> <p>Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Global Business and Pilot Studies</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p><a href="https://www.cit.ie/course/CRBGBPS8">https://www.cit.ie/course/CRBGBPS8</a></p> <p><a href="https://afta.ie/">https://afta.ie/</a></p>
Date of last review	7 December 2020 (panel review). Approved by the Cork Legacy Committee of the MTU Academic Council on 5 March 2021, subject to approval of the Consortium Agreement by the MTU AC and GB. Consortium Agreement approved by MTU AC on 26 March 2021 and by MTU GB on 9 April 2021.
Date of next review	2025/26

<b>5. Collaborative provision</b>	Joint research degree (double degree)
(Type of collaborative provision)	
Name of body (/bodies):	Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) / Munster Technological University (MTU); Politecnico di Bari (POLIBA); Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro (UNIBA); Technische Universität Wien (TU Wien); Université de Montpellier (UM).
Programme titles and links to publications	<p><i>Programme Title</i></p> <p>OPTAPHI (European Joint Doctorate Programme on Optical Sensing using Advanced Photo-Induced Effects)</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p><a href="https://www.cappa.ie/portfolio-items/optaphi/">https://www.cappa.ie/portfolio-items/optaphi/</a></p>
Date of last review	Overarching Consortium Agreement dated 8 Sep. 2020.
Date of next review	2023

## 9.3 Articulation Agreements

### Definition:

Per the IHEQN Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision, an **articulation agreement** may be defined as a process whereby all students who satisfy academic criteria on one programme are automatically entitled (on academic grounds) to be admitted with advance standing to a subsequent stage of a programme of a degree awarding body. These arrangements are subject to a formal agreement between the parties.

### Guide:

If the institution has articulation agreements with other bodies in place, indicate the total number in the first box, then, in the subsequent boxes, provide details of the any new or updated articulation agreements. Details of more than five arrangements may be included if necessary. If available, links to any publications related to the arrangement may be included alongside details of the arrangement.

Articulation agreements - Total number	1
1. Articulation agreement:	Outward
Name of body (/bodies):	University College Cork
Programme titles and links to publications	<p><i>Articulating programme:</i></p> <p>MTU Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Home Economics and Business (3 years, 180 ECTS credits)</p> <p><a href="https://www.cit.ie/course/CR930">https://www.cit.ie/course/CR930</a></p> <p><i>Articulates with:</i></p> <p>UCC Professional Master in Education (Home Economics)</p> <p><a href="https://www.ucc.ie/en/pec01/">https://www.ucc.ie/en/pec01/</a></p>
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	
Date of next review	
Detail of the agreement	<p>The MTU BA (Hons) in Home Economics and Business currently constitutes the only initial teacher education programme in Ireland combining Home Economics with Business as a 2<sup>nd</sup> subject. Achievement of a Second-Class Honours Grade 2 or higher entitles graduates to progress, through a protected pathway, to the UCC Professional Master of Education in order to qualify for entry into the post-primary teaching profession. Certain programme design features of the BA have been</p>



	determined by Teaching Council requirements and as a consequence deviate from the standard MTU Cork curricular model, including duration and the derogation from elective choice.
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<b>2. Articulation agreement:</b>	
Name of body (/bodies):	
Programme titles and links to publications	
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	
Date of next review	
Detail of the agreement	

[MTU Cork / Cork Institute of Technology]

2021

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**Annual Quality Report for  
MTU Cork / Cork Institute of Technology  
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE  
ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT  
Reporting Period 1 Sep. 2019 – 31 Dec. 2020**

# PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT

## 1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

### 1.1 Strategic QA Updates

#### 1.1.1 Preparations for Institutional Merger and Redesignation as Munster Technological University

As indicated in Part A, Section 1.1.1, Munster Technological University (MTU) was established under the Technological Universities Act (2018) through the merger of Cork Institute of Technology and Institute of Technology Tralee (IT Tralee). With establishment of the new technological university, CIT and IT Tralee both stood dissolved.

Consequent to the February 2019 application for technological university application, the visit of the international panel in May 2019, and the subsequent decision of the Minister for Education & Skills in September 2019 to postpone the granting of TU designation, the MTU Consortium worked intensively to meet the specified conditions and to report to the Minister on the achievement of same no later than the end of Q1 2020.

A Joint Governing Bodies MTU Steering Group (the Steering Group) was established and met on a monthly basis from 16 October 2019 up to the merger. It comprised the main stakeholders drawn from both Governing Bodies, and operated according to Terms of Reference approved by each. Subject to ratification of their decisions by the Governing Bodies, it was ceded appropriate authority as required, and worked effectively in terms of establishing an integrated, coherent and effective approach to establishing the TU and for the continuation of this work following designation. The Steering Group was supported, as required by the Minister, by senior personnel of both institutes and external experts.

The MTU Project Leadership Group comprised ten sponsors each of whom had direct management responsibility for delivery of individual workstreams in the project, including academic affairs; corporate affairs; research, innovation and engagement; multi-campus university; and students' union. Eight of the sponsors were senior managers at executive level, while the two Student Union Presidents also acted as sponsors. Each of the project workstreams had an assigned project leader, and the project leaders attended all meetings of the Project Leadership Group.

An MTU Joint Executive was established by the institutes in early November 2019. This brought together the most senior academic and administrative leaders of the two institutes. Monthly meetings were held sequentially in CIT and IT Tralee and were chaired by the respective institute President. The Joint Executive addressed a number of key strategic initiatives, including processes for programme mapping and new programme development; budget planning and resource allocation; master-planning and corporate areas such as risk management and internal audit. It also agreed that, where relevant and feasible, CIT and ITT would collaborate and develop joint funding proposals for calls such as Human Capital Initiative, Springboard, etc.).

The senior personnel and external experts who supported the Joint Governing Bodies MTU Steering Group and who also sat on the MTU Project Leadership Group had been mandated by the Governing Bodies of both institutes to provide executive leadership for the programme of work, including through the establishment and operation of appropriate working groups. There was a total of 21 such working groups across the various workstreams; these comprised of almost 300 staff members of both institutes (182 individuals) and additional representatives of the Students' Unions.

A high-level plan was developed for the establishment of the first MTU Governing Body and its committees. This plan addressed the development of MTU Governing Body policies and signing authorities aligned to the TU Act 2018. A draft agenda for the first meeting of the MTU Governing Body and an operational plan for the first six months was developed. Also developed in advance of merger was a plan for the establishment of the legal entity of MTU including areas such as insurance, risk management, Companies Registration Office, bank accounts, Charities Act, and revenue compliance.

With the oversight of the Joint Governing Bodies MTU Steering Group, the executive search leading to the nomination of a first President was completed, culminating in the appointment of Prof Maggie Cusack as inaugural President of MTU on 1 January 2021.

During the reporting period, much work was done on the arrangements for establishing an MTU 'transitional' Academic Council, to take effect on designation day. The Academic Council Working Group (ACWG), established in December 2019, was tasked with preparing a template for the initial Academic Council of MTU, to be put in place on the day of establishment. It was proposed that this first Academic Council of MTU would be, in effect, a transitional body formed in accordance with the TU Act (2018) but with time limited arrangements, for the matters set out in the Act. [Section 1.1.2](#) contains more information on this planning.

The MTU Academic Domains Working Group progressed thinking on the purpose of an Academic Domain in terms of the creation of an identity for students and staff, coherence for the wider stakeholder community possible relationship to management structures, and the promotion of collaboration within and across disciplines. Five Academic Domains were set out in the Report to the Minister, spanning across campuses, supporting academic activities including teaching and learning, research and engagement, and serving as a scaffold for the proposed membership models for the first Academic Council.

The MTU Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures Working Group developed agreed core working principles to underpin an MTU QA Policies and Procedures Framework based on the principle that all students be treated with fairness and consistency, regardless of campus or programme.

Working groups within the Research, Innovation & Engagement Workstream progressed the development of a set of strategic and inter-related initiatives in relation to the achievement of the respective increases in research students and the percentage of full-time academic staff with a doctoral qualification or appropriate equivalent. The plan included an iterative increase in student numbers and measures to increase staff doctoral qualifications, while taking cognisance of the financial considerations (costs and funding sources), physical infrastructural requirements and research support services required to ensure a fully joined up approach.

The two Students' Unions engaged and worked together on the provision of strong future representation for students following TU designation, so as to ensure that the student experience is at the centre of all proposed outcomes.

Building on long-established collaboration between the two institutes in the area of academic administration and Student Affairs, previous work was reviewed and updated, with a focus on ensuring a high-quality student service provision and an equitable student experience for students of MTU.

The two finance teams, having agreed a detailed plan for the upgrade and subsequent merge of the two finance systems, achieved full integration shortly after designation. During the reporting period, work on preparing new draft joint finance policies and aligning business processes across both institutes remained ongoing and has continued post designation.

During the reporting period, a plan for merger of the two Human Resources systems was agreed, and a single HR, payroll and expenses system was in place shortly after designation. The HR Offices also continued to support

regular consultation meetings with all staff unions on all aspects of the MTU project; this included collaboration with all unions on priority HR policies which were approved on or shortly after designation day.

The two IT Services Teams jointly worked on significant projects in the areas of identity management and systems architecture which allowed for the redesign of the implementation of these systems to ensure that a fully integrated system would be delivered which would provide the foundation for a 'Digital by Default' strategy. All systems in both institutes were reviewed and a prioritised plan of pre-merger and post-merger systems projects was agreed for MTU. This joint Identity and Access Management project was a strategic and key pre-requisite for providing access to systems in a consistent manner across the new university, regardless of campus location or whether online. At the time of writing, Office 365 systems, including email, are on target to be integrated by late June 2021.

Library staff of both institutes continued to engage in collaborative work towards a shared vision of a state-of-the-art resource, in accordance with the expectations of the [Technological Universities Research Network \(TURN\) Report \(2019\)](#). While it was decided not to merge the library systems in advance of designation, an interim solution to ensure seamless multi-campus access was identified, along with an aligned policy on subscriptions and fines to be in place on designation day, the redesign of the library website, and the merging of the content management systems offering a gateway to services and supports.

The MTU Consortium submitted bi-monthly reports to the Minister, culminating in the March 2020 Report. The HEA requested the International Advisory Panel which had considered and reported on the February 2019 application and May 2019 site visit to review the documentation. While it had been initially envisaged that a return visit to CIT and ITT would take place, this was not possible due to the pandemic. The Advisory Panel was asked to complete a desk-based review and indicate where further engagement with the MTU Consortium would be necessary. Following completion of the review and on the recommendation of the Advisory Panel, the HEA Executive engaged with MTU stakeholders on the areas requiring further documentation and clarification as identified in the Advisory Panel's report. To support the process and to ensure no obvious bias occurred and that the relevant criteria were applied, the HEA Executive engaged a process auditor. The HEA Executive, using the advisory panel's report, followed up with the MTU Consortium and ascertained, through documentation and dialogue, evidence of recent progress sufficient to confirm that the conditions for designation of MTU as a Technological University had been met. The HEA Board accepted this conclusion, noting the challenging timeframe and context this review had been carried out, and made a positive recommendation to the Minister, who granted the application on 25 May 2020.

In the final months before the merger, the Academic Affairs Workstream, consisting in the first instance of the Registrars and specially dedicated staff of the respective Registrar's Offices, prioritized mission critical items in advance of Designation Day. First among these was the planning for Academic Council, and further detail on this planning is provided in [Section 1.1.2](#) which follows. A unified set of MTU Postgraduate Research Regulations was progressed as a matter of priority in advance of the establishment of MTU. Following the completion of a mapping exercise of the respective postgraduate research regulations of CIT and IT Tralee, a risk assessment was undertaken to identify any issues arising for existing research students of IT Tralee were MTU to adopt the CIT Postgraduate Research Regulations. Arising from this, MTU Academic Council subsequently adopted the CIT Postgraduate Regulations in February 2020. At the time of writing, work is ongoing on the operationalization of these regulations on the MTU Kerry Campus, pending the development of an integrated organisational structure for the university.

Significant work was done on mapping the assessment regulations and other academic policies and procedures through the Academic Affairs Workstream, with input from members of the Registrar's Office staff, Chairs of Institute Boards, etc.

### 1.1.2 Planning for MTU Academic Council

The MTU Academic Council Working Group (ACWG), established in December 2019, was tasked with preparing a template for the initial Academic Council of MTU, to be put in place on the day of establishment. It was proposed that this first Academic Council of MTU would be, in effect, a transitional body formed in accordance with the Technological University Act (2018) but with time limited arrangements, for the matters set out in the Act. More specifically, the ACWG was tasked with making proposals for Standing Orders; Agenda items; Committee requirements and structures; and effective operation in a multi-campus environment. The ‘Process of Agreement’ envisaged a presentation of the Initial Report of the ACWG to a joint meeting of the two Academic Councils, with its final report to be considered by the two Councils, again in joint session.

The first joint meeting of the Academic Councils of CIT and IT Tralee took place on 28 February 2020; at this meeting, the ACWG presented four options for the configuration of the transitional MTU Academic Council:

1. A “Large” transitional MTU AC incorporating all members of the pre-existing CIT and ITT Academic Councils;
2. A “Medium” transitional MTU AC, ca. 60% of the combined pre-existing CIT and ITT Academic Councils;
3. A “Small” option of approximately one third of the size of the combined pre-existing CIT and ITT Academic Councils;
4. A “Slim” option of 19 or 25 members.

Arising from that meeting, the “Large” and “Medium” options were prioritised for further development. It was proposed that each of these would be supported by an Executive Committee to order and manage the agenda for each meeting of Academic Council and to carry out certain delegated functions at times when a meeting of the full council is not feasible.

Much of the discussion at the second joint meeting of the two Academic Councils, held on 27 November 2020, focused on balancing inclusivity with effectiveness and efficiency, and on how significant responsibilities and decision making might be delegated to committees. The meeting agreed that the ‘large’ and ‘medium’ models continue to be the preferred options. The proposals were refined further and presented to the Joint Governing Bodies MTU Steering Group at its final meeting in December 2020, ahead of the inaugural meeting of the MTU Governing Body. It was also noted that Governing Body could decide to form a small Academic Council in order to meet the legislative requirements to have an Academic Council in place from Establishment Day. This small Academic Council would be in place for a very limited period to allow for the formation of the ‘transitional’ MTU Academic Council.

### 1.1.3 Establishment Day Governing Body and Academic Council

The first meeting of the Governing Body of Munster Technological University (MTU) took place on 1 January 2021. At that inaugural meeting, MTU was formally established and Prof Maggie Cusack was appointed as President. The first, ‘Establishment Day’ Governing Body comprised of an external Chair and four further members, three of which are external (with the fourth being the MTU President).

Soon after designation, MTU Governing Body commenced the process of expanding its membership, this to be completed within a six-month timeframe, in accordance with the Technological Universities Act 2018. This will enable the appointment of both student and MTU staff members to Governing Body. The external membership provided for under that legislation is an external Chair, 3 – 8 external members nominated by a committee of Governing Body, three members nominated by the Minister, and one member nominated by the relevant Education and Training Boards. Unlike the IoT Acts, the TU Act does not prescribe specific areas of society to be covered in the selection of external Governors. A Nominations Committee of Governing Body has been formed and the process of appointing additional external members through that committee is in train at the point of writing.

On Establishment Day, Governing Body decided to establish a small, time limited, Academic Council to ensure business continuity, particularly in regard to Winter examination processes. While the five-member inaugural Governing Body did not include students, student representation was maintained on the Establishment Day Academic Council, with the two Students' Union Presidents of MTU Cork and MTU Kerry among its nine members.

The 'Establishment Day' Academic Council agreed that the former Academic Councils of Cork Institute of Technology and Institute of Technology Tralee would continue to exist as academic committees of the MTU Academic Council with their subcommittees in place to meet if and when required.

At the time of writing, planning is well advanced on the expansion of the Academic Council to the 'medium' membership model as outlined in [Section 1.1.2](#); this model having been approved by Governing Body on 12 February 2021. This expanded, 'transitional' Academic Council will be in place by May 2021. The legacy councils will continue to be in place, but will deal only with legacy and operational issues during the term of the 'transitional' MTU Academic Council and with significant delegated authority to manage quality assurance according to the existing QA frameworks of the two institutions. Meanwhile, the early business of the 'transitional' Academic Council will include arrangements for the establishment of six new 'integration and development' committees, aligned with the functions of the Academic Council under the TU Act (2018), which will focus on the development of a unified academic quality framework for the university and planning for the 'steady state' Academic Council.

#### 1.1.4 Academic Policies and Procedures

As during the previous reporting period, Cork Institute of Technology did not make any radical changes to the academic quality framework due to the intensifying work towards the creation of the Munster Technological University jointly with Institute of Technology Tralee. For the most part, policy and procedural work in 2019/20 related to projects already in train or consisted of creation of implementation procedures for previously adopted policy. New policy development, whether commenced or completed during the reporting period, responded to critical developments in the higher education landscape in recent years, such as the implementation of the national research and development strategy Innovation 2020, which led to the development and approval of a CIT Open Access Policy and implementation procedures.

In addition, CIT adopted a number of supplemental provisions amending existing policy and procedures for the duration of the Covid-19-related emergency remote delivery and assessment mechanisms. Many of these were approved by the Academic Council Executive Committee (ACEC) in the first instance to ensure a sufficiently swift response to need. Where this was the case, the full Academic Council was notified of the approval at its next scheduled meeting; emergency provisions which diverged significantly from standard 'pre-Covid-19' regulations were also brought to Governing Body. These supplemental provisions were approved for the Summer 2020 and Autumn 2020 examination sessions in the first instance. Early in academic year 2020/21, at which time it had been clarified that the academic delivery model would be blended in nature, these provisions were reviewed again by Council and relevant committees thereof, and retained, revised or removed.

##### *New Policies and Procedures Approved in 2019/20:*

- CIT Open Access Policy (approved AC December 2019)
- Adoption of QQI's active NFQ Standards for Higher Education as interim award standards for CIT (AC February 2020)
- CIT Open Access Policy Procedures (approved AC June 2020)



*Supplements or Amendments to Regulations, Policies and Procedures Related to Covid-19 Restrictions:*

- Supplement to Regulations for Modules and Programmes (Marks and Standards) applicable to the end of the 2019/20 academic year (V1.0 approved AC and GB May 2020, V2.0 approved AC and GB November, December 2020). At its April 2020 meeting, Academic Council preceded this by approving the principles for amendment of regulations, policy and procedure regarding:
  - Module Assessment Extenuating Circumstances;
  - Range for Consideration of Borderline Cases;
  - Repeat for Improvement (2020 Autumn Repeat Examinations only);
  - Removal of Additional Academic Penalty for 2020 Autumn Repeat Examination Sittings;
  - Procedures for Individual Extenuating Circumstances;
  - Consideration of Candidate Performance at Progression & Awards Boards (PABs);
  - Classification of Ordinary and Honours Bachelor Awards;
  - Progression Threshold for Credit Outstanding.
- Continuity Plan for Teaching, Learning & Assessment (two iterations);
- Supplemental Regulations on Viva Voce Examination of Doctoral Candidates (approved ACEC April 2020);
- Amended Criteria for Entry to Honours Degrees (Post-Level 7 Award) (V1.0 approved ACEC / AC April 2020, V2.0 approved AC November 2020);
- Supplement to the Policy Governing Academic Honesty, Plagiarism and Infringements Relating to Examinations and Assessment (approved ACEC May 2020);
- Supplement to the Procedure for Formal Inquiry by the Assessment Infringements Board (approved ACEC May 2020).

*Other Revisions to Regulations, Policies and Procedures*

- Amendments to Postgraduate Research Regulations (approved ACEC June 2020, following approval in principle by the full AC)

Approved amendments to the postgraduate regulations comprised changes related to updated national policy as well as emergency provisions regulating the conduct of remote examinations post-Covid-19.

While MTU is a new legal entity with a separate statutory role and a different governance and management structure, the Technological Universities Act 2018 provides for an initial transfer of functions (Section 37), programmes of education and training (Section 59), and quality assurance and access, transfer and progression procedures (Section 61) from the dissolved component institutions to the new technological university on designation day. As noted in Section A 1.1.1, the MTU Governing Body, in one of its first acts, ratified, on the recommendation of the MTU Academic Council, the continued application of the regulations, policies and procedures of MTU Cork and MTU Kerry respectively to those modules and programmes to which they applied immediately before establishment of the MTU, until such a time as they are altered by MTU by way of amendment or replacement. This was effected through the approval of two policy documents which set out the status and interpretation of Academic Affairs QA procedures at CIT / MTU (Cork), IT Tralee /MTU (Kerry) respectively, that pre-dated the establishment of MTU. These documents were published on the university's website, and a 'must read' statement was published on all relevant university webpages.

The development of an integrated Academic Quality Assurance Framework for the University is being progressed as a matter of high priority.

### 1.1.5 Other Policies and Procedures

Based on previous work done by the Institutes, the first common policy adopted by Munster Technological University following designation has been its [Dignity & Respect Policy](#) and associated [Procedure](#). This policy aims to foster a positive culture which values the contribution of each member of the MTU community, be they staff or student, promotes respectful and professional behaviour, fosters inclusion, and addresses bullying and harassment where it does occur.

The Dignity & Respect Policy and associated Procedure and the MTU Code of Governance were approved by Governing Body at its inaugural meeting. A number of others have been approved in the meantime, including the university's Safety Statement, Protected Disclosures Policy, and policies in the areas of Data Protection and IT. Governing Body has resolved that where no new MTU policy/procedure has been approved, and until such time as they are altered by way of amendment or replacement by MTU, HR and other non-academic policies and procedures that applied at CIT, IT Tralee, respectively immediately before the establishment of MTU on 1 January 2021 shall continue to apply in respect of MTU staff and facilities at MTU Cork / MTU Kerry respectively. In the case of any MTU staff appointed from 1 January 2021, the policies and procedures that are applicable will depend on where the primary place of work is.

### 1.1.6 Changes to Policies and Procedures Related to Covid-19 Restrictions

The policy amendments as per 1.1.4 above were accompanied by further changes across the MTU Cork / CIT quality system effected to reflect and quality assure necessary adaptations to the mechanisms for programme delivery and assessment (including viva voce examinations of research degree candidates), conduct of assessment appeals hearings and infringements enquiries, and academic quality review. These changes are intended as time-limited emergency measures for the duration of the Covid-19 restrictions; their continued applicability is monitored by the Academic Council, respectively the Cork Academic Legacy Committee of AC, and its Executive Committee on an ongoing basis. With regard to Covid-19-related changes to regulations and policy in particular, the prompt and effective communication and promulgation of the amended policies and processes to staff and students as soon as possible following approval was prioritized, with relevant procedural or policy supplements published on MTU Cork / CIT's public website and/or the Workvivo staff server, as relevant. The Communications Officer was invited to all meetings of the CIT Academic Council Executive Committee during this period.

Additional Covid-19-related measures approved during 2019/20 include:

- Use of online Duolingo test as a replacement for the IELTS English Language Examination to satisfy language requirements at entry on an interim basis (approved ACEC April 2020);
- Development of a detailed Department Plan for every programme delivered for Sem. 2 of 2019/20 and Sem. 1 and Sem. 2 each of 2020/21 (approved by the CIT AC Executive Committee, resp. the MTU Cork Academic Legacy Committee of Academic Council (CALCAC) or the CALCAC Executive Committee, as finalised following internal review by the Registrar's Office);
- Approval of exemptions, for matriculation purposes only, for applicants in subjects in the 2020 Leaving Certificate taken at home for whom the EOCG was unable to award a calculated grade, following the approach proposed by IUA and THEA (approved AC June 2020);
- Time-limited approval of revised transition programme schedules for the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering to allow introduction of work placement in advance of the postponed programmatic review of the School of Mechanical, Process and Electrical Engineering (approved ACEC July 2020);
- Procedures for student declaration of Covid-19-related Individual Extenuating Circumstances;

- Procedure and template for Student Declaration of Academic Integrity regarding remotely submitted work;
- Framework and criteria for use of proctored closed-book remote examinations;
- Guidelines for the conduct of remote Module Examination Boards and Progression & Awards Boards;
- Arrangements for teaching, learning & assessment for apprentices and Final Year Fine Art students.

## 1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR) Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Update on Status Provide brief update on status, whether completed or in progress. If an action was planned in the previous AQR, but not completed, provide reasons/short reflections for the delay/non-completion.
1	Strategic Management Framework (see <i>AQR 2019</i> , 2.1.1.1, p. 4f, on adoption of new CIT Strategic Plan 2018 – 2023)	Following the approval and launch of CIT's <a href="#">Strategic Plan (2018)</a> and <a href="#">Academic Strategy (2019)</a> , work commenced early in 2019/20 on the implementation framework at faculty/school/department/central function level. A detailed mapping exercise was undertaken, taking these documents and the Institute's compact with the HEA into account, to plan for an effective approach. However, this period coincided with the establishment of the MTU working groups, and this impacted on progress as the workload for these groups was both time intensive and time sensitive. However, it was during this time that strategic planning moved into the MTU context, with the mission and vision of MTU elaborated further upon in the Consortium's March 2020 response to the Minister. By this time, the <a href="#">Technological Universities Research Network (TURN) Report</a> had been published; this report further defined and articulated the trajectory for TUs, MTU included. In the latter part of the reporting period, the onset and continuation of the Covid-19 crisis rendered it necessary to prioritise academic and business continuity.
2	AnSEO – Graduate Attributes Framework / Centre for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning	<p><u><i>Graduate Attributes Framework</i></u> The project start and recruitment of Project Officer were delayed until September 2020 due to the Covid-19 lockdown. There was also a need to prioritise pivoting existing AnSEO programmes online, and the pandemic also impacted on progress re consultation with some stakeholders across campuses.</p> <p>At the time of writing, the project is well under way. An MoU/contract has been agreed, approved and signed with our partner university, Birmingham City University (BCU). There is good progress on the adoption and adaptation of</p>

		<p>BCU's Grad+ system to enable EDGE. The <a href="#">EDGE webpages</a> are in development emerging. It is planned to pilot the EDGE programme in Semester 1 2021/22 with targeted cohorts of students and to incrementally extend EDGE to the general student population across all MTU campuses by Semester 2 2021/22.</p> <p><i>Centre for the Enhancement of Learning &amp; Teaching</i>  <a href="#">AnSEO – The Student Engagement Office</a> and the <a href="#">Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU)</a> thus maximising synergies between Teaching, Learning and Assessment Enhancement and Student Engagement, Progression and Success. While it had been envisaged that the two functions would be rebranded and reimagined under a student- and staff-facing Centre for Learning and Teaching, events overtook this plan. This work would have been hugely challenging in the Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning context. It was also decided to hold off on change in light of expected emergence of a new organizational structure following the establishment of MTU.</p> <p>In the interim, the sparq@CIT (student partnership in quality programme) has been grown and renamed as <a href="#">Le Chéile</a> and will scaffold student /staff collaboration and co-creation of Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Student Engagement (TLASE) enhancements. There have also been many TLASE developments funded under SATLE 2019 (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching &amp; Learning), addressing assessment, student success, active learning with many collaborative projects across CIT and now MTU. All of this work will inform the emerging Teaching, Learning, Assessment &amp; Student Engagement Strategy of MTU. A draft TLASE strategy was included in the March 2020 response to the Minister and will inform emerging TLASE strategies at MTU.</p>
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## 1.3 Governance and Management

### 1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
CIT Governing Body <i>(13 meetings, including 1 special meeting)</i>	3 October 2019; 7 November 2019; 5 December 2019; 6 February 2020; 5 March 2020; 27 March 2020; 21 May 2020; 4 June 2020; preceded by governance training (Deloitte); 2 July 2020; 1 October 2020; 5 November 2020; 12 November 2020 (Special Meeting); 3 December 2020.
CIT Academic Council <i>(12 meetings)</i>	4 October 2019; 8 November 2019; 18 December 2019; 5 February 2020; 11 March 2020; 22 April 2020; 13 May 2020; 17 June 2020; 25 September 2020; 23 October 2020; 18 November 2020; 16 December 2020.
Executive Committee of the CIT Academic Council <i>(37 meetings)</i>	27 September 2019; 4 November 2019; 11 December 2019; 29 January 2020; 4 / 18 / 20 / 23 / 25 / 31 March 2020; 1 / 2 / 3 / 6 / 8 / 15 / 22 / 29 April 2020; 1 / 6 / 20 / 27 May 2020; 3 / 5 / 10 / 22 June 2020; 17 July 2020; 2 / 9 / 14 / 17 September 2020; 1 / 16 October 2020; 11 / 18 November 2020; 9 / 18 December 2020.

1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Plenary Meetings of the Academic Councils of CIT and IT Tralee	28 February 2020; 27 November 2020.
CIT Institute Executive Board <i>(27 meetings)</i>	24 September 2019; 22 October 2019; 20 November 2019; 17 December 2019; 21 January 2020; 3 February 2020 (Special IEB meeting) 13 / 21 (continuation) February 2020; 27 March 2020; 9 / 24 April 2020; 8 / 15 / 22 / 28 May 2020; 4 / 11 / 19 June 2020; 3 July 2020; 14 August 2020; f1 / 22 September 2020; 6 / 27 October 2020; 17 November 2020; 1 / 15 December 2020.
Joint Executive (MTU Agenda) <i>(24 meetings)</i>	11 September 2019 (CIT); 8 October 2019 (CIT); 5 November 2019 (CIT); 3 December 2019 (IT Tralee); 7 January 2020 (CIT); 3 March 2020 (CIT); 31 March 2020 (remote); 7 / 21 / 28 April 2020 (remote); 5 / 12 / 19 / 26 May 2020 (remote); 2 / 16 / 23 June 2020 (remote); 14 July 2020 (remote); 25 August 2020 (remote); 15 September 2020 (remote); 13 / 20 October 2020 (remote); 10 November 2020 (remote); 8 December 2020 (remote).
MTU Leadership Forum  (Joint Committee of CIT, IT Tralee and BH Associates on behalf of the HEA)  <i>(30 meetings)</i>	4 / 10 / 16 / 22 / 29 October 2019; 5 / 12 / 19 November 2019; 3 / 10 / 17 December 2019; 14 / 28 January 2020; 4 / 6 / 11 / 21 February 2020; 3 / 10 / 24 March 2020; 7 / 21 / 28 April 2020; 5 / 12 May 2020; 11 / 30 September 2020; 21 October 2020;

	11 November 2020; 2 December 2020.
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#### Note

The CIT Strategic Emergency Management Team met frequently from February 2020. In June 2020, the Covid-19 Operations Group was established, along with a number of subgroups, including Academic Delivery, Student Engagement & Experience, and Infection Control.

### 1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

#### 1.3.2.1 New CIT Governing Body

With the term of the then sitting CIT Governing Body coming to an end in April 2020, the process for selecting five new nominating bodies to be recommended to the Cork Education & Training Board by CIT commenced early in the reporting period. Following a vote in Academic Council, the nominating bodies selected were Biopharmachem Ireland, Engineers Ireland, IDA Ireland, the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) and Sport Ireland.

#### 1.3.2.2 Extension of Academic Council Term

In February 2019, CIT Governing Body approved the extension of the Academic Council term until 31 December 2020 at the latest, conditional on achievement of MTU designation by January 2020. In October 2019, Governing Body further considered the matter in light of the decision of the Minister for Education & Skills to postpone the granting of the TU application and agreed that it was essential that there would be continuity in the work of Academic Council in 2020 now more than ever. Governing Body therefore agreed that the extension to 31 December 2020 remain in place. Academic Council was informed by the President of this decision of Governing Body and it was noted that if the application for designation was found to be unsuccessful prior to this date that elections could then ensue.

As set out in Sections 1.1.1 and 1.1.2, planning for the MTU ‘transitional’ Academic Council was prioritized as a mission critical item in the lead up to Establishment Day. In October 2020, an election for CIT Academic Council ahead of the merger was suggested, the rationale being that the membership of the MTU ‘transitional’ Academic Council would likely draw, in whole or in part, from each of the final Councils of CIT and IT Tralee (Section 1.1.2 refers). Following comprehensive review and consultation, it was noted that this would impact heavily on areas such as Human Resources, IT Services, and Registrar’s Office, all of which were already centrally involved in the response to the pandemic and the preparation for the merger. Due to the prevailing public health restrictions, elections would have to be held online. Even if some/all of these areas were asked to prioritise Academic Council Elections over other work, the best possible timeline for a first sitting of the new Council was December 2020, within a month of dissolution. Accordingly, the extension of the Council term to 31 December 2020 was maintained as a reasonably expedient approach, taking all of the circumstances into account.

#### 1.3.2.3 Student Representation on Academic Council Committees

In November 2019, following discussion with the CIT Students’ Union Executive, the approval of Council was sought for inclusion of a nominated student representative from among the student members of Academic Council on each of the six Academic Council committees. While the student representatives on Academic Council had never been excluded from joining the Committees, the provisions for Committee formation in the Standing



Orders of Council did not provide for systematic respectively ex-officio inclusion of student members. This meant that some Committees included students amongst their elected membership while others did not.

#### 1.3.2.4 Senior Staff Appointments and Retirements

Unless otherwise noted, all members of senior staff, including new appointments during the reporting period, have continued in their posts in MTU Cork post-designation, pending introduction of a new institutional management structure for Munster Technological University.

- Extension of appointment of the CIT President, with the final period of appointment extended to the MTU designation date. However, the President took the decision to retire in December 2020.
- Extension of appointment of the CIT Registrar & VP for Academic Affairs (Acting), with the final period of appointment extended to the MTU designation date. Subsequent re-appointment of the incumbent (for MTU Cork) on a fixed-term basis.
- Head of Department of Accounting and Information Systems, August 2019
- Head of Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering (Acting), August 2019
- Head of Department of Architecture (Acting), 21 October 2019 to 24 January 2020
- Vice-President for External Affairs, February 2020
- Head of Faculty of Engineering and Science, June 2020
- Head of School of Science & Informatics (Acting), June 2020
- Head of Department of Applied Social Studies, July 2020
- Chair of Cybersecurity (new post created under the HEA SALL initiative), July 2020
- Head of Department of Computer Science, September 2020
- Head of Department of Biological Sciences (Acting), September 2020
- Head of Implementation – MTU Academic Planning and Policies, December 2020 (to end 2020/21)
- Head of Department of Process, Energy & Environmental Engineering (Acting), December 2020

#### 1.3.2.5 Institute Executive Board (IEB)

Two new Heads of School representatives were nominated to the IEB in September 2020, in accordance with a rotation arrangement established in September 2018: the Head of School of Business (nominee of the Faculty of Business & Humanities) and the Head of the National Maritime College of Ireland (for the Faculty of Engineering & Science).

## 1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review

### 1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

Unit of review for which report has been published during reporting period	Date of completion/reason for conducting review (if not planned) or non-completion (if planned but not conducted)	Links to relevant publications
Programmatic Review of National Maritime College of Ireland (NMCI), Phase 1 – Strategic Review	28 – 29 October 2020	
Review of Access & Disability Service (Pilot Service Unit Review conducted by PWC)	April – October 2020	<a href="#">CIT Access Service Review - Report</a>

## 1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels<sup>4</sup> involved in IQA

(i) Expert Review Team/Panel Size and Related Processes

	Total	Academic Schools/ Department	Professional Services/Support Unit	Approval/Review of Linked Provider	Programme Approval	Programme Review	Other
<b>Number of review/ evaluation processes</b>	8	0	0	0	8	0	0
<i>of those:</i>							
<b>On-site processes</b>	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
<b>Desk reviews</b>	2	0	0	0	2	0	0
<b>Virtual processes</b>	5	0	0	0	5	0	0
<b>Average panel size for each process type*</b>	5 <sup>^</sup>	0	0	0	5 <sup>**</sup>	0	0

\* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

<sup>^</sup> exactly: 4.5

<sup>4</sup> QQI acknowledges that the terminology used to describe the groups of individuals that conduct peer review/evaluation varies from institution to institution.

## (ii) Composition of Expert Review Teams/Panels involved in IQA

Type of Expert/ Role on Panel	Total	Gender			Internal	National	International			Institution Type	
		Male	Female	Other, or unspecified			UK, incl. NI	Other European	Outside of Europe	Similar	Different
Chair*	6	5	1	0	1	5	0	0	0	1	4
Secretary^	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Academic/Discipline Specific	10	7	3	0	0	10	0	0	0	3	7
Student Representative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
QA~	6	1	5	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Teaching & Learning	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
External Industry** /Third Mission	10	6	4	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	10

Chairs are also included in the count of panel member 'function types' below ^ The secretariat for CIT major award panels is normally provided by the internal QA representative ~ Includes 1 Head of School taking on the role of Registrar's Office/QA representative \*\* Some panellists both work in industry and have (usually P-T) lecturing roles in other HEIs. Where the industry role was the primary role at the time of the panel, this was used for the count.

## 2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

### 2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

With growing attention on matters of academic integrity within higher education, spurred amongst others by concerns about the increasing reach and sophistication of international ‘contract cheating’ services, MTU Cork / CIT is currently in the process of implementing a broader, more integrated institutional approach to the creation of an academic integrity culture, emphasising the positive value of owning one’s academic achievement for the student and their personal and professional development, and the prevention and detection of academic misconduct.

#### 2.1.1 Academic Integrity Working Group

In September 2020, a Working Group was established by the Registrar to consider issues in relation to academic honesty and integrity in the context of planning for academic year 2020/21. This included representation from both faculties, AnSEO – The Student Engagement Office, the Teaching & Learning Unit, Registrar’s Office, School of Graduate Studies, Assessment Infringements Board and Student Disciplinary Committee, Department of Technology Enhanced Learning, International Office, Students’ Union, and CIT nominees to the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN).

#### 2.1.2 Policy and Procedure

The CIT/MTU Cork [policy governing academic honesty, plagiarism and infringements relating to examinations and assessments](#) defines plagiarism and sets out the consequences of breaches of academic honesty, plagiarism included. The Institute’s Assessment Infringements Board, at the request of the Registrar, the Board reviewed both this policy and the associated [Procedure for formal inquiry by the Assessment Infringements Board](#) in the context of the Covid-19 crisis. The work of the Board in this regard resulted in a [Supplement to the CIT Policy governing Academic Honesty, Plagiarism and Infringements](#) and a [Supplement to the Procedure for Formal Inquiry by Assessment Infringements Board](#) being approved by Academic Council in May 2020. These supplementary provisions have provided clarity around policy and procedural matters in the context of the remote work and study arrangements for staff and students, including arrangements for the conduct of fair and secure remote infringements inquiries by the Assessment Infringements Board.

The integration of the supplemental policy and procedure documents into their respective parent documents will be considered in the MTU Academic Planning context.

The Working Group reviewed the draft guidelines developed by NAIN; overall, the consensus was the CIT policy was already in line with these guidelines. That said, policy and procedure will be reviewed again when the NAIN Principles and Lexicon have been finalised. Future reviews, likely in the MTU context, will consider assessment infringements on postgraduate research programmes, as current policy and procedure were designed more in the context of undergraduate taught programmes. Furthermore, given specific challenges identified in relation to computer coding, and building on the work done by the Department of Computer Science in developing local protocols in this regard, the area of source code plagiarism will be specifically considered in future policy and procedure.

Further development in the area of research integrity is also a priority for MTU, from both student and staff perspectives.

### 2.1.3 Detection and Reporting

Work commenced on the tender for plagiarism detection software, ahead of the expiration of CIT's licence for Turnitin, the current anti-plagiarism software package used. The work on the request for tender was undertaken by a Working Group of Academic Council.

Under current CIT/MTU Cork Procedure, assessment infringement matters may, in certain circumstances, be considered and addressed by the relevant Module Examination Board. Where this occurs, there is a requirement that the decision of the MEB be communicated to the Registrar's Office. The development of a systematic means of the central recording of these board decisions, preferably a digital system, will be progressed as a matter of priority.

There will also be an opportunity to undertake some qualitative research through the Building Assessment Literacy Initiative (BALI) and the student partnership in quality programme sparq@CIT ([now rebranded as Le Chéile](#)).

### 2.1.4 Challenges in the Covid-19 Context

Due to space considerations and the underlying prevailing public health considerations, the Institute's capacity to provide on-campus closed book assessment was very limited from March 2020 to the end of the reporting period. It was therefore necessary to reserve closed book assessment for programmes with evidenced PSRB requirements, and only on Academic Council approval. The default arrangement for closed book assessment was the on-campus invigilated examination hall format. However, it was also necessary to provide an online proctoring arrangement in each case, in order to facilitate cocooning students and/or provide a back-up in the event of a national/local lockdown. Issues which have been identified in the literature regarding online proctoring were reflected locally, with significant workload for both the relevant departments and central functions in terms of addressing these.

Particular challenges in relation to the design of open book assessment for fundamental level modules were noted. Within the modularised and semesterised academic framework, there are additional considerations regarding academic discipline and module level. An overall assessment strategy needs to be built up for and through a programme.

Collusion was identified as a recurring issue, from two perspectives. Firstly, with the increased number of online timebound assessments, the 'grey area' between collusion and collaboration during assessment was highlighted. Secondly, in instances where more than one student was involved in a given case, there was evidence of apparent collusion at the hearing stage.

### 2.1.5 Training and support for staff

While the move to remote teaching, learning and assessment prompted some concerns from the academic community in relation to open book assessment, it was also noted that open book assessment formats, when appropriately designed, offer many opportunities in relation to authentic and valid assessment. There are no guarantees that the traditional onsite invigilated examination hall provides a 'cheating-proof' environment. The Strategic Alignment of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education (SATHLE) calls issued by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning have had a focus on assessment and feedback, which has been most timely in this regard.

Through the Teaching & Learning Unit, Department of Technology Enhanced Learning, and the Academic Quality Enhancement Office, training and support is made available to staff in relation to assessment, though it is acknowledged that time is needed for staff training, and that staff have been extremely busy due to the current circumstances arising from the pandemic.

Students may be tempted to cheat if under time pressure due to bunching of assessments, and programme assessment strategies should take this into account. The importance of ensuring that the assessment schedule for a given programme is balanced has been highlighted to staff.

The Department of Computer Science has completed work in relation to source code plagiarism and this has been identified as work that can be developed further across departments.

### 2.1.6 Support and training for students

Feedback from the academic community suggested that there is a very significant ground shift for students when they move from post-primary school to higher education and that they need support as they come to grips with the requirements and expectations of them in relation to good academic practice. Overviews of assessment infringement hearings provided to the Working Group and to Academic Council suggest that some students are failing to understand the key principles. There are particular considerations in relation to international students.

Academic writing and referencing are covered in the [Creativity, Innovation & Teamwork module](#) which is a mandatory module in Stage 1 Semester 1 of all undergraduate programmes. The portfolio of structured modules for research programmes includes a [Research Integrity module](#).

CIT Library Support Services have developed an information hub at <https://library.cit.ie/supports/referencing-guides>. This includes a user friendly '[Student Guide to Plagiarism](#)' and this also directs the reader to the student regulations. The Library also runs training sessions for students.

Standard declarations of academic integrity have been made available to academic departments. Departments are requested to incorporate these into all submissions and online assessments. The student, in signing the declaration, confirms that they understand that where breaches are detected, these will be reviewed under the university's policy and procedures, and that any breach of academic honesty is a serious issue and may incur penalties.

In partnership with the Students' Union, guidance for students in the online context was prepared and issued. CIT Students' Union took a proactive approach in terms of increasing students' awareness of the risks and of their responsibilities. This partnership with the student body, with the Students' Union proving to be very effective advocates for academic honesty and integrity, is seen as key to prevention.

Training and support materials were also provided by the Department of Technology Enhanced Learning and AnSEO – the Student Engagement Office. The Reach Academic Mentoring Initiative and Academic Success Coaching have also afforded the opportunity to provide academic advice to students in relation to academic integrity. Student awareness is also being developed through the Academic Learning Centre, the Good Start Induction Programme, and related social media campaigns.

Options for online training for students and staff were surveyed in Semester 1 2020/21. Epigeum training modules will be made online to students and staff in 2021/22, across all MTU campuses. It has been suggested that all students should be mandated to complete this training; however, due to timing considerations in relation to the development of MTU Marks & Standards, this training will be completed on a voluntary basis in the short-term, but with students being actively encouraged to participate. Customisation is possible and the modules will be hosted in Canvas.

A bespoke course on information literacy is being developed by staff of Library and TEL, for launch in 2021-2022. The *Library Learning Community* (est. 2018) [secured funding](#) in November 2019 via CIT's Teaching and Learning unit under the "Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement Funding in Higher Education" funding call to develop an Open Education Resource which will deliver a series of interactive, online automated modules on information/digital literacy and critical thinking skills which will be launched Semester 1 2021/22. The new online information literary resource will be hosted on the university's virtual learning environment,



Canvas, and will provide quick reference guides on topics such as assignment writing, information search strategies, referencing, academic honesty and plagiarism.

As previously noted, there are specific considerations in relation to international students. For those who are not fluent in English, there are challenges in terms of understanding the lexicon. Orientation sessions for incoming international students include information on plagiarism. This includes a talk by an international alumnus on plagiarism from the student's perspective, particularly highlighting differences between what is accepted in some students' home countries and what is accepted in Ireland. The International Office has held information sessions and has set up a module for international students on Canvas. Work will continue on addressing specific issues identified. For example, the CIT module is not available to postgraduate students. International PG students, who comprise a significant proportion of this cohort, therefore do not have the opportunity to take this module, while the Research Integrity module for research students assumes that all the basics are covered.

The plagiarism detection software Turnitin has been in use for many years in what is now MTU Cork and MTU Kerry. In MTU Cork, Turnitin is integrated into the Canvas VLE. Resources related to the use of the software are [also available to students](#).

A central [Academic Honesty & Integrity webpage](#), already set up, was revised and augmented. This includes, in addition to links to all policy and procedure documents, clear and positive messaging about scholarship, the value of academic integrity, pride in one's own academic achievements, boundaries of collaboration, etc.

## 2.2 Impacts of Quality Measures

### 2.2.1 Assessment Appeals Process

In December 2019, the CIT Assessment Appeals Board presented a report on assessment appeals in the academic year 2018/2019. This was the first report issued by the Board following the decision of Academic Council in October 2018 to increase of membership, (along with that of the Assessment Infringements Board), to 10 members to increase board efficiency and minimize Conflict of Interest issues.

A total of 44 appeals were lodged under Individual Extenuating Circumstances (IEC), while a further 17 cited Procedural/Administrative reasons. Mental health issues, grief and complex family problems were the main reasons for IEC appeals. The main procedural issues related to submission of continuous assessment material; supervision arrangements for project/dissertation; and the allocation of marks for modules of a practical nature.

The Assessment Appeals Board made a number of recommendations arising from consideration of the assessment appeals. It found that the wait time for response on appeals, particularly in relation to Semester 2, needed to be addressed as a priority. It recommended that the centralised storage of continuous assessment material as well as terminal examination papers should also be considered by the institution, and that procedures for the hand-up of physical assessment material should be clearly communicated to students. The Assessment Appeals Board also advised that, in some instances, information relating to IECs could be shared more effectively, particularly where a module is subject to a Module Examination Board (MEB) in a department other than the student's 'home' department. It proposed the updating of the IEC Form to capture some additional information.

By the time the Assessment Appeals Board issued its 2019/20 report – in December 2020 – the IECs and Assessment Appeals landscape had changed significantly, arising from the pandemic and consequent move to online teaching, learning and assessment. The Executive Committee of Academic Council had, at the onset of the pandemic, relaxed the requirement for evidence to be submitted in respect of IEC claims. Academic Council subsequently approved a series of exceptional regulations and measures for the Summer and Autumn 2021

examination sessions. The IEC submission process was pivoted online during Semester 2. A total of 590 IEC claims were submitted online. The data showed that stress, anxiety, depression, and isolation were frequently referenced, while changes in working hours were also flagged in ca. 15% of claims. With assessment moving online, students now had ready access to their graded assessment material in Canvas. The number of appeals submitted over 2019/20 decreased significantly for each of the two categories (IECs to 24, procedural grounds to 7).

## 2.2.2 Supports and resources for learners

### a. Library services

*Koha* was upgraded to version 19.11 in November 2020. Some additional functionality in the Acquisitions module was included but overall it was felt the upgrade did not bring any significant improvements to the system. Shortcomings in *Koha* have been addressed in previous AQR reports. Much time has been invested by staff in attempting to improve the system but there is a lack of confidence that *Koha* will ever deliver the functionality and scalability to the levels required by a Technological University.

January 2020 saw the repurposing and refurbishment of the ground floor reference area and second floor study spaces in the Bishopstown library in order to boost footfall among existing patrons and create more flexible and inviting spaces for new users. The redesign included high table study spaces to enable students to 'hot-desk' for short periods in a more open area. In collaboration with CIT's DSS Service, the project also introduced a number of more inclusive and accessible spaces (motorised sit/stand workstations). The redesign led to a 3.5% increase of study spaces in the Bishopstown campus, bringing the total number of reading spaces available across CIT's four libraries to 853.

Following on from the 2017 upgrade of the RFID-based security solution and the installation of new self-service kiosks in the Bishopstown and CCAD libraries, this system was introduced to CSM Fleischmann library in October 2020. This has greatly improved the quality of customer service and user experience for students wishing to avail of self-service technologies.

The 2019/20 academic year saw e-Book usage and demand increase dramatically (almost 59%) on the previous academic year with more than 9,000 titles accessed. The top subject areas include Business/Management, Fine Arts, Psychology, Education and Computer Science. In parallel, acquisitions and e-book expenditure pivoted to e-purchase in early 2020 in response to rapid developments in blended learning approaches. E-book expenditure more than doubled compared to the previous financial period as demand levels by Faculty soared. In addition, the Library collaborated with the Careers Service in February 2020 on a refresh project of print and electronic holdings pertaining to career development. New titles were identified and sourced to meet student needs and also reflect the expectations from employers.

In December 2019 the library launched its first Artificial Intelligence support tool in the form of a 24/7 virtual assistant chatbot. Implementing [Watson Assistant](#) (IBM's AI product), allowed the library to build, train, and deploy conversational interactions in the guise of "Berkeley" the virtual librarian. This has enabled CIT/MTU Cork Libraries to provide immediate responses to the most frequently asked library queries, regardless of time and user location. Staff can regularly update conversation starter topics; a feature which has proved especially useful during the rapidly evolving pandemic crisis where the chatbot reflects operational changes such as opening hours and the introduction of new services like *Click & Collect* and online seat bookings. This recent innovation by CIT Library staff represents the latest frontier in the digitization of research tools and has already proven to be another popular mode of contact with over 1,600 messages received by the end of December 2020, stemming from almost 500 unique conversations. CIT Library is one of the first HEI Libraries to fully utilize this technology thereby enhancing the UX of library users.

During Academic Year 2019/20 the library ran almost 100 online and face-to-face presentations/workshops for students, staff, researchers and external stakeholders. This represented a growth of 12.8% in the number information sessions delivered, including a 16.4% rise in attendance by postgraduate students and a 36% increase by academic staff when compared to the 2018/2019 academic year.

#### b. Student services

The advent of Covid-19 restrictions has rendered this work more difficult, but also, if anything, more vital, and the services worked hard to retain their link with learners – and where appropriate staff – and to provide online alternatives for many of their annual events and services. Thus, for instance, a range of themed online resources for [Health & Wellbeing](#) created through a collaboration of several student support offices is now available on the MTU Cork / CIT website and social media. To remind and reassure learners in a more ‘tangible’ way that the different supports can still be accessed and continue to be interested in their wellbeing, the Student Services Team also initiated distribution of ‘Covid Care Packs’ to all students who had signed up to weekly Health & Wellbeing communications. Several packs were sent out over the course of the year, containing small useful items such as fluffy socks or journals, cards with personalised Christmas or motivational messages, and more.

#### 2.2.3 Open Science

Throughout the reporting period, the Library continued to promote and support scholarly communications and to actively develop Open Science infrastructures to support the data management needs and research integrity agenda of the research community. To this end, library staff delivered lectures on Open Science and Research Data Management during CIT’s inaugural Research Week in November 2019. Library staff were invited to present on these topics as guest speakers for the Research Skills Development Module for postgraduate research students. The library was also involved in delivering a series of classes to Level 9 and 10 students in the School of Business, centred on developing scholarly research skills, particularly in relation to the literature review process.

During this period the Library oversaw the institute becoming a member of the new [Irish ORCID consortium](#), further strengthening transparent and trustworthy connections between researchers, their work, and their institutions.

#### 2.2.4 SWORD (South West Online Research deposit)

The Library launched the first Institutional Repository, [SWORD](#) (South West Online Research deposit) at the beginning of Semester 2 2019/20. The repository records, preserves and disseminates the Institute’s research output and by the end of December 2020, 367 CIT affiliated works were posted and attracted 7,831 downloads from 538 recognised institutions, spanning 131 countries worldwide ([verified statistics available here](#)). SWORD’S publishing capabilities facilitated the transfer of the [Irish Business Journal](#) to a dedicated digital platform and supported the establishment of the Institute’s first undergraduate journal, the [International Undergraduate Journal of Health Sciences](#). In addition, SWORD’S conference hosting infrastructure allowed the outputs of the [Civil Engineering Research Ireland](#) 2020 conference, hosted by CIT, to be made openly available on the platform. Library staff of CIT collaborated with colleagues in IT Tralee, ahead of the establishment of MTU, on the consideration of funding models for MTU e-resource subscription services, and the strategic opportunities in relation to the support of teaching, learning, research and scholarship, including the launch of SWORD across MTU and the development of a shared approach to Open Science.

## 2.2.5 Public Information and communication

The website [www.mtu.ie](http://www.mtu.ie) operated as the primary repository of project information in the lead-up to the merger. It hosted a weekly update for staff and students (also circulated via email), information on key outcomes and upcoming plans, and minutes of the MTU Project Leadership Group meetings. It also contained a private section for staff and students only; this held documentation relating to the MTU working groups.

An interim marketing plan was developed for the period January to June 2021. At designation, the landing page and other key pages of the website [www.mtu.ie](http://www.mtu.ie) were redesigned to reflect the new MTU branding, on which there had been significant consultation with students, staff, alumni, and external stakeholders.

Various social media platforms were used to share information and increase awareness of the project. At designation, the “Succeeding Together” campaign was launched, and this theme gained significant traction, both internally and externally.

In September 2019, the first ever joint prospectus cover was launched for the CIT and IT Tralee prospectuses, in time for the CAO 2020 season. Mindful of the need to ensure that parents, graduates and a wide range of external stakeholders were kept informed of the development of MTU, the Presidents of CIT and IT Tralee took a leadership role, attending, together, CIT and IT Tralee Graduation Ceremonies in Autumn 2019, and briefing external bodies and groups on the status of MTU.

This reporting period saw the celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in CIT. A video and booklet summarising the development and achievements of the MTU Cork / CIT RPL Service may be accessed from the service’s [homepage](#).

Following the introduction of Covid-19 restrictions, a remote conferring ceremony had to be implemented in November 2020. Even though graduates, their families, and staff could not physically come together to celebrate, the remote ceremony still endeavoured to convey the sense of shared joy and pride of the academic community in the accomplishments of its newest graduating cohort.

## 2.2.6 Information and data management

As well as developing additional post-Covid-19 infrastructural supports for remote academic delivery and assessment, IT Services have been centrally engaged in the development of a single unitary IT System for MTU. As a result of this, it is planned to go live with the new MTU Identity & Access Management (IAM) Platform – encompassing amongst others payroll, finance and IT systems – in June 2021.

Work is also underway on the integration of the Student Records System and on a sectoral upgrade thereafter. This will entail significant change but will lead to enhanced student and staff experience in the area of academic administration.

Within MTU, preparations are currently underway to allow paper-based award records to be complemented by electronic credentials through the Digitary Secure Online Credentials solution. As Digitary does not articulate with MTU Cork’s present, older version of the Banner student record system, implementation will be dependent on completion of the planned upgrade to Banner 8.5 across the university. The creation of an MTU awards list is also being deliberated on, including the potential of the Banner 8.5 student system – in terms of access control, searchability and reporting capabilities – to function as a live awards database.

Several previously paper-based administrative processes related to the student lifecycle were facilitated to run online following the beginning of the Covid-19 restrictions. In collaboration with central functions and academic departments, the IT Applications Team was able to identify and implement online solutions for individual extenuating circumstances claims, module grade amendments, assessment appeals and module mark reviews, to name some processes. External Examiner engagement can now be facilitated remotely through Microsoft

Teams and Canvas, while Module Examination Boards (MEBs), Progression and Awards Boards (PABs), PhD viva voce examinations, hearings of the Assessment Infringements Board, and meetings of the Assessment Appeals Board have run remotely through MS Teams. Where called for, the process adaptations were accompanied by adoption of supplementary academic procedures (see esp. [Section B 1.1.4](#), [Section B 1.1.6](#), and [Section 4.1](#)).

Development of a new Data Hub commenced in Cork Institute of Technology as a key pillar of CIT's data provision strategy. At this point, the project has made significant progress in the area of MTU Cork student recruitment data, particularly for the CAO recruitment and application processes. New data sets will be added, as per the direction of the executive, and these will be made available in this central data hub. Strategies for integration of MTU Cork and MTU Kerry data sets are currently under consideration.

The reporting period has also seen collaboration between the Registrar's Office and the Department of Mathematics on additional analysis of the data from the Student Survey, focusing on comparisons with other HEIs and the technological higher education sector, and, internally, with interrogation of the data at school/department level. In relation to the latter, response rate is key to the reliability of the findings, hence a proactive campaign throughout the fieldwork period to monitor response rates and identify where specific encouragement may be needed.

### 2.2.7 BSc (Hons) in Global Business and Pilot Studies

Particular attention is paid to the alignment of module and programme outcomes with the award standards in programme design and review in the context of collaborations with providers whose education and training provision is not in itself aligned to the National Framework. An example would be the recently introduced [BSc \(Hons\) in Global Business and Pilot Studies](#), offered collaboratively with Atlantic Flight Training Academy (AFTA). The learning outcomes of the embedded flight training, leading to a Commercial Pilot's License regulated by the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA), have also been expressed in terms of NFQ-aligned levels of knowledge, skill and competence and mapped all the way through to the relevant MTU Cork / CIT award standards (in this case, the NFQ Level 8 Award Standards for Business and Science) to confirm that the programme and all its components meet the required standard.

### 2.2.8 EDGE Graduate Development Awards Framework

As noted in Section 1.2, AnSEO – the Student Engagement Office is working to implement a new Graduate Development Awards Framework entitled [EDGE](#). Launched in December 2019 and supported by HEA Performance Funding, the EDGE project adopts and adapts Birmingham City University (BCU)'s Advance HE-endorsed [Graduate Plus model of awards](#), which was identified by AnSEO's research as a model of best international practice. It is envisaged that EDGE will be piloted in 2021/22 and offer Bronze, Silver and Gold level awards in the areas of employability, entrepreneurship, effective citizenry and creativity. Working towards an award will promote the personal and professional development of MTU students by providing opportunities to gather, present and reflect on evidence of different aspects of their developing gradueness, such as interpersonal skills, teamwork, ethics and social responsibility. Activities recognised for an EDGE award may include career preparation, enterprise endeavour, staff/student partnership activities, development of transversal skills through engagement in teaching & learning projects, involvement in MTU clubs/societies and innovation activities, volunteering, global awareness and engagement with the Arts at MTU.

### 2.2.9 Teaching, learning and assessment

The video conference platform Zoom which was used previously in support of online programmes was rolled out across MTU Cork / CIT in its entirety to support Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT). Since then Zoom has become the key platform for live classes and other real time interactions and communications for staff and

students. A deep integration between Canvas and Zoom – based on a strategic partnership between the two providers – ensured a seamless transition between the systems as well as delivering integration features such as the automated publishing of any live recordings from Zoom to Canvas. The Zoom system was also used to live stream or record on-campus teaching and learning events.

Canvas and Zoom together have, finally, been a source of powerful learning analytics, giving lecturers and programme co-ordinators valid, reliable and actionable insight into online learner engagement and performance which has been particularly important in the ERT context.

In response to the increased disconnectedness and isolation experienced by many learners since the start of remote delivery post-Covid-19, AnSEO introduced the [REACH initiative](#), a proactive and resourced department-based system of academic mentorship for First- and Second-Year students with formal scaffolding provided by AnSEO and MTU Cork / CIT's [Teaching & Learning Unit \(TLU\)](#).

## 3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

### 3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

On 1 January 2021, Cork Institute of Technology became a constituent part of Munster Technological University (MTU) under the Technological Universities Act 2018, together with Institute of Technology Tralee. Drafting of AQR 2021, the final quality report for Cork Institute of Technology, coincided with the first few months of the transitional phase of MTU immediately post-designation. As previously noted, structures and processes are undergoing rapid development during this time period.

The strategic and academic trajectories of CIT's final Strategic Plan and Academic Strategy, together with other relevant documents and plans of CIT and Institute of Technology Tralee (IT Tralee), will inform the drafting of the initial Strategic Plan for MTU. This plan will specify the new university's objectives and strategies for the first three to five years post-designation.

At the time of writing, planning is well advanced on the expansion of the Academic Council as set out in [Section 1.1.2](#). The legacy councils will continue to be in place, but will deal only with legacy and operational issues and with significant delegated authority to manage quality assurance according to the existing QA frameworks of the two institutions. This 'transitional' Academic Council will establish six new 'integration and development' committees, aligned with the functions of the Academic Council under the TU Act (2018). These will focus on the development of a unified academic quality framework for the university as a matter of high priority and on planning for the 'steady state' Academic Council. The timeframe for this is envisaged to be 18 months, which broadly aligns with that provided by QQI for the instigation of the first CINNTE Review for MTU.

Given this context at the time of writing, no information is available for the table below, nor for Section B 3.2.

No.	<b>Relevant objectives</b> Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	<b>Planned actions and indicators</b>  <i>Note: Include details of unit responsible, and how planned action will address the relevant strategic priority and/or reengagement advice/CINNTE recommendation.</i>  <i>If the institution is preparing for cyclical review, include how the planned actions will address the relevant review objective(s).</i>



## 3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

### 3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review

Section 3.1 refers.

### 3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

Section 3.1 refers.

## 4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

### 4.1 Case Study: Academic Governance, March to June 2020

#### *Academic Council Executive Committee*

At its meeting on 11 March 2020, CIT's Academic Council discussed the implications of the Covid-19 crisis for the academic mission of the Institute. Given that the situation was evolving rapidly, with the closure of all HEI facilities imminent, it was agreed to delegate authority to the Academic Council Executive Committee (ACEC) to make decisions in relation to academic contingency planning in response to the Covid-19 crisis.

The decision of Academic Council was in accordance with the Executive Committee's approved remit, which provided for it to carry out certain functions as delegated to it, when necessary, by Council. As per its Terms of Reference, the membership of ACEC included the President, the Registrar & Vice-President for Academic Affairs, the Dean of Academic Quality Enhancement, the Institutional Review Facilitator, the chairpersons of the Committees of the Council, one student member, and five other members of the Academic Council, elected from the Council as a whole.

In these specific circumstances, ACEC agreed that the two Heads of Faculty would be invited to attend its meetings for this period. Furthermore, it was agreed that the Students' Union Vice President Education would join the SU President (already a member of the Committee) at all meetings, in order to ensure that the student voice was always present and accounted for. ACEC also invited the Institute's Communications Officer to all of its meetings during this period; this enabled the Committee to identify any points which needed to be clarified further with students and also ensured that the Institute's Communications team was fully briefed in terms of dealing with student queries.

Under normal circumstances, the Executive Committee met one week before each scheduled Academic Council meeting. In order to support a coherent, principled and timely response to rapidly evolving circumstances, the Committee met at least once per week over the period 12 March to 22 June inclusive, with a total of 23 ACEC meetings held during this period.

As per Institute policy, any delegation of Council's authority to its Executive Committee was of a limited nature and for a specific purpose only. The Committee was held to report by the Academic Council on the exercise of its delegated powers at regular intervals, and provided a formal report to each meeting of Council.

The Executive Committee reported to Academic Council at a special meeting held on 22 April and at the remaining two scheduled meetings for 2019/20 (13 May, 17 June). In excess of 80 members attended each of these plenary meetings, with all business conducted via MS Teams. ACEC submitted a formal report to each of these meetings, as per normal procedure. However, interim updates were also emailed to members of Academic Council so as to give members of Council a deeper insight into the issues arising and the thought processes behind the decision making.

Through the President and the Registrar, there was a communications channel from the Academic Council and its Executive Committee to the Institute Executive Board while ensuring demarcation between, for example, resource or IR matters, and academic governance.

#### *Continuity Plan for Teaching, Learning & Assessment*

From the outset, it was acknowledged that these developments entailed significant considerations in relation to academic quality assurance and the integrity of CIT's programmes. Therefore, a Continuity Plan for Teaching, Learning & Assessment was developed to inform staff of the ongoing efforts being made to facilitate positive student outcomes in this uncertain and dynamic situation and to inform the Institute's communication and

consultation with students on how they should adapt to this new situation and engage with their learning in these circumstances. The overall goal of the Continuity Plan was to provide students with the maximum opportunity to accumulate credit by 20 June 2020 in the first instance and subsequently by 31 August 2020, while adhering to all relevant CIT Academic Quality Assurance and Health & Safety standards. Staff were advised that the Plan was to be read in conjunction with and implemented in accordance with CIT's Quality Assurance Framework, including the Institute's CIT's [Regulations for Modules and Programmes](#).

Version 1 of the Plan was issued on 24 March. As events unfolded further, it was acknowledged that the document would be necessarily a dynamic one. Version 2 was approved by Academic Council on 12 May and issued to staff soon thereafter.

### *Departmental Plans*

Each academic department was tasked with producing a plan to achieve the overall goal of the CIT Continuity Plan for Teaching, Learning & Assessment, taking account of discipline- and department-specific factors. The Registrar's Office made planning templates available to departments. The Registrar's Office advised on requests for guidance and advice in relation to academic quality assurance considerations in relations to changes to delivery and the nature and weighting of assessment.

Departments were asked to make all efforts to deliver and assess all credits by 20 June 2020. Award stage classes were prioritised in cases where shortage of resources or other factors restricted a department's ability to provide full services to all student groups. A feasibility study for same was undertaken at school level.

Emergency changes to assessment breakdown were required for many modules; this was subject to the proviso that the weighting of any assessment component already completed by students would remain unchanged. All changes to the nature or breakdown of assessment which were necessary in these circumstances were recorded in the departmental plan, but the approved module descriptors remained unchanged. Departments were also asked to undertake a review of the revised assessment schedule so that the overall effect of changes in the assessment regime on the workload of students was considered.

'Exams Only' repeat students were advised to avail of the revised assessment scheme for that module, and were given full access to the learning material for the given module.

Each departmental plan was initially submitted to the Registrar's Office through the relevant Head of School, and was duly reviewed by the Academic Quality Enhancement Team who followed up with individual departments on any matters arising. Following this review, each plan was brought to ACEC (acting on behalf of Academic Council) for approval. All departmental plans were approved by early April. On the approval of each plan, the revised assessment arrangements were communicated to students through Canvas.

### *Approach to assessment for modules with terminal examination*

Each department was required to review the assessment breakdown of each non-100% CA module in order to evaluate, in the first instance, if and how the terminal examination could be replaced by continuous assessment instrument(s) in order to assess the learning outcomes. Where a coursework/continuous assessment approach was deemed not feasible, the department could opt to run a timebound examination online. In the circumstances, open book formats were favoured over closed book examinations. That said, some closed book examinations were held in Summer 2020 where PSRB requirements deemed this necessary. The number of such examinations was very small, and online proctoring arrangements were put in place for them for the Summer 2020 Examination Session.

A number of issues arose in relation to online proctoring including:

- a) Student access to computer/internet/webcam<sup>5</sup>.
- b) Student concerns in relation to privacy<sup>6</sup>.
- c) Some technical issues and gaps in individual cases as identified in the relevant proctoring reports. While a certain margin of error was accounted for, it was nonetheless necessary to address certain individual cases whether through deferring results and/or reconfiguring assessment.

By Autumn 2020, the prevailing public health restrictions allowed for limited onsite examination to be held for these modules.

### *Individual Extenuating Circumstances (IECs)*

At the onset of the pandemic, the Executive Committee of Academic Council agreed that the requirement for medical certification or other supporting documentation would be relaxed. Furthermore, the scope of the Institute's IEC Policy was extended to include IECs relating to Covid-19 and IT issues. A significant challenge throughout was the highly dynamic nature of the situation. As the semester progressed, the progression of infection was not at all as serious as had been initially feared. While this was most welcome, it did present challenges in terms of the messaging, particularly in relation to differentiation between students genuinely impacted by Covid-19 and those for whom its impact may have been less significant. Another complex issue to address was that of the demands of paid or unpaid employment, not normally considered to be valid IECs under institute policy, particularly in the case of full-time students. Long after it had become clear that our worst fears regarding Covid-19 were not going to be realised at that time, there were still some requests from students for consideration of circumstances arising from additional part-time hours in retail, deemed essential under government guidelines. In many instances, students referred to how they had had to accept additional hours in order to support their own families whose earnings were impacted by the pandemic.

### *Placement*

The rapid pace of developments in mid to late March made it difficult to plan and to communicate in relation to placement, a key feature of CIT programmes. This was exacerbated by the diverse range of the provision. Ultimately, the decision was to cancel placement unless a remote working arrangement was feasible and agreed with the workplace organisation. There were a few exceptions (e.g. cadets-at-sea, medical scientists). Under the Continuity Plan, students were not academically penalised through a remote working arrangement nor through the ending of a placement in these circumstances. Departments were asked to put replacement learning and assessment activities in place so that all impacted students could accumulate the total number of credits associated with the placement module. The Institute liaised, via school/department, with relevant Professional and Regulatory Bodies regarding any accreditation issues arising.

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<sup>5</sup> The Government Laptop Scheme and increase to the Student Assistance Fund ameliorated this in 2020/21.

<sup>6</sup> This matter was addressed in the student registration process at the start of academic year 2020/21. The *requirements*, as opposed to recommendations or advices, of the relevant PSRBs were key here.

### *Regulations for postgraduate research programmes*

The Dean of Graduate Studies and the Chair of the Postgraduate Research Board worked with the Academic Council Executive Committee and the Postgraduate Research Board to develop a set of supplementary regulations for postgraduate research programmes. These supplementary regulations were developed to enable the viva voce examination to be held remotely. The revised parent postgraduate research regulations, approved by Governing Body in September 2020, now include provision for remote viva voce examinations for research degrees.

### *Exceptional regulatory provisions and measures*

The Academic Council Executive Committee proposed a set of exceptional regulatory provisions and measures in relation to assessment for the remainder of academic year 2019/20. A discussion paper was prepared and taken to the special meeting of Academic Council held on 22 April. Arising from that meeting, Academic Council decided as follows:

- a) Each Module Examination Board (MEB) and Progression and Awards Board (PAB) would be required to carefully consider the impact of both the Covid-19 crisis and the changed format of teaching, learning and assessment during this period;
- b) The range for consideration of borderline cases by MEB and PAB was increased by 0.5 of one percentage point;
- c) Each PAB was required, when considering borderline cases at award stage specifically, to take the candidate's overall result for the preceding stage of the same programme into account if in said candidate's interest.
- d) The regulation for progression with credit deficit was relaxed for the Autumn 2020 sitting to allow candidates to carry 10 ECTS from the current to the next stage. The pre-requisite requirement that the candidate has passed all credits of the preceding stage continued to apply.
- e) For unsuccessful students, the Autumn 2020 repeat of any Semester 2 module failed in Summer 2020 would be on a 'no additional academic penalty' basis.
- f) 'Repeat for improvement' opportunity would be provided for all Semester 2 modules in Autumn 2020.

In determining these, the guiding principle was to mitigate as far as possible the extra challenges arising for learners while absolutely maintaining academic quality and standards.

Items e) and f) were enabled procedurally through the Institute's academic administration systems and processes. In order to initiate 'Repeat for Improvement', the student was required to complete an online registration form no later than 5 working days after release of examination results.

Items a), b), c) and d) were progressed through the [Supplementary Regulations for Modules and Programmes \(Marks & Standards\) for the academic year 2019/2020](#)<sup>7</sup> which were approved by Academic Council (13 May) and Governing Body (28 May). These supplementary regulations, relating to the assessment of modules and taught programmes leading to CIT awards at NFQ levels 6, 7, 8 and 9 applied during the lifespan of the Institute's *Continuity Plan for Teaching, Learning & Assessment* to the end of the academic year 2019/20. The provisions of the CIT [Regulations for Modules and Programmes \(Marks and Standards\), Version 6.0 \(1<sup>st</sup> September 2018\)](#) continued to apply in full except where specifically and explicitly varied or further detailed by this supplement. As stated in the Regulations, the Institute undertook to "make every effort to assist and support all learners, including those with learning difficulties"<sup>8</sup>. Notwithstanding this, all supplementary regulations and guidelines continued to fully comply with and uphold the fundamental principle that "marks (and consequently credit) are only awarded upon demonstration of learning achieved"<sup>9</sup>.

#### *Examination boards and external examiner engagement online*

IT Services, working with Registrar's Office, Examinations Office, the Department of Technology Enhanced Learning, and the academic units, put in system a place whereby external examiner engagement and Examination Boards pivoted online. Guidelines for MEB and PAB Chairs were amended to take account of the regulatory measures and the remote operation.

Feedback on the online examination boards was positive. This was particularly welcome given the additional complexity arising from the newly approved exceptional regulatory provisions and measures. Apart from the final stage of the examination results processing (the processing of signed examination broadsheets and final quality checks) for which the Examinations Office team was on site, the whole workflow ran remotely and has continued to do so since.

#### *Academic integrity*

Following a request from the Registrar, the Assessment Infringements Board considered the implications of the Covid-19 crisis and the changed format of teaching, learning and assessment and reported back to the Registrar and the Executive Committee of Academic Council. This resulted in the development of a [supplement to the Policy Governing Academic Honesty, Plagiarism and Infringements Relating to Examinations and Assessment](#)

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<sup>7</sup> At the time of writing, these have been superseded by [Version 2.0 of the Supplementary Regulations for Modules and Programmes \(Marks & Standards\) for the academic year 2020-2021](#), approved by Academic Council (18 November 2020) and subsequently by Governing Body (3 December 2020). Items a) and b) remained in place, but items c) and d) were revoked. Items e) and f) were discontinued for academic year 2020/21.

<sup>8</sup> [Regulations for Modules and Programmes \(Marks and Standards\), Version 6.0 \(1<sup>st</sup> September 2018\)](#) p.5.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

and a [supplement to the Procedure for Formal Enquiry by Assessment Infringements Board](#). At the time of writing, both the supplemental policy and procedure continue to be in force.

Guidelines on student declarations of academic integrity were made available to staff, with the exact arrangements for same being a departmental matter.

Under the Continuity Plan, the academic department reserved the right to request students to present for oral examination as part of the assessment regime for a given module.

Statements and guidance were issued to students on the need to maintain academic integrity in the changed assessment environment. These statements acknowledged the impact of the move to online assessment, informed students of all relevant policy and procedures, reminded them of their responsibility to ensure that they abide by same, and highlighted that appropriate action would be taken in relation to each and every instance of academic dishonesty detected.

#### *Admission to Level 8 Degrees (Post Level 7 Award) for 2019/20 Level 7 graduates applying in 2020*

Arising from a decision of Council, in light of the Covid-19 crisis and the unexpected move to remote teaching, learning and assessment midway through this semester, a [supplemental guidelines document<sup>10</sup>](#) was approved by ACEC (acting on behalf of Council) and by Governing Body. These [supplemental guidelines](#) concerned admission to Level 8 Degrees (Post Level 7 Award) for 2019-2020 Level 7 graduates applying in 2020. The key change was that the requirement for a Merit 2 or 50% average mark across the modules specified for the Level 7 Award stage in the approved programme schedule was adjusted to a Pass and 40% average mark across the modules specified for the Level 7 Award stage in the approved programme schedule, where the Level 7 programme was successfully completed in academic year 2019/20.

Noting concerns in relation to professional/regulatory body requirements, Council further agreed that a department may request a derogation in this regard. ACEC and Council subsequently approved a number of derogation requests in respect of certain Level 8 programmes. The key determining factor here was PSRB requirements.

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<sup>10</sup> These guidelines were revised for academic year 2020/21; [Version 1.1](#) was approved by Academic Council (18 November 2020) and subsequently by Governing Body (3 December 2020).



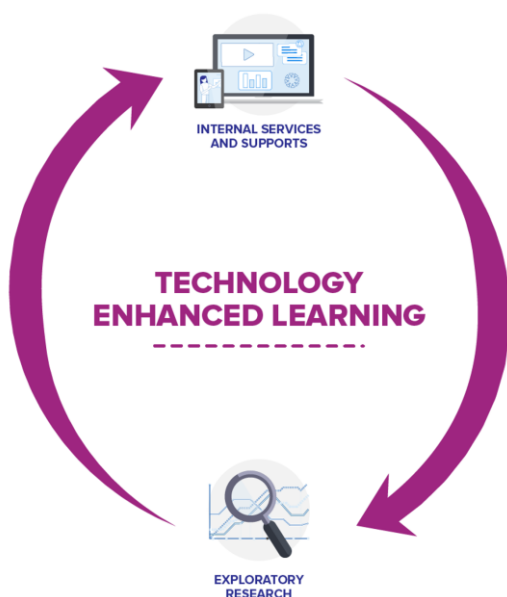
## 4.2 Case Study: Department of Technology Enhanced Learning and Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning

The Department of Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) of CIT/MTU Cork has a mission to create new learning opportunities and to enrich the learning experience of all students by providing world-class technology-enhanced learning solutions and services. During the pandemic, the department played a key role in helping the Institute respond to the requirement to transition quickly and effectively to “emergency remote teaching” (ERT) modes.

In its mainstream role in the Institute, the TEL Department supports a rich e-learning ecosystem, incorporating a modern Learning Management System (aka a “Virtual Learning Environment”), an integrated live e-learning system and various ancillary systems such as the university’s plagiarism detection system, a student attendance tool, a digital badging platform and a range of authoring tools for staff to use to create media-rich e-learning content. In addition, the department pilots and, based on staff and student feedback, mainstreams new ways to use technology to enhance and enrich learning, with work currently ongoing with respect to the rollout of student response and polling systems as well as a new e-portfolio solution. In addition to encouraging and supporting the use of technology as a complement to traditional on-campus learning, the department also supports and manages a suite of fully online and blended programmes. Prior to the 2019 pandemic, there were 25 such programme offerings.

Separate but foundational to such mainstream work, the TEL Department conducts ongoing research at national and international level into big trends and ideas in ed-tech and e-learning, with current funded projects relating to topics such as learning analytics, game-based learning, gamification, wearable tech, open educational resources and the use of augmented and virtual reality for learning. The department is also home to the E-learning and Ed Tech research group, a university-wide research group dedicated to pedagogically-orientated research into the application of new and emerging technologies to facilitate learning.

The interplay between mainstream services provided by the university’s TEL function and the department’s ongoing research work is best understood as a virtuous cycle, with ongoing research informing and “future-proofing” provision in the mainstream, while mainstream activity in turn provides insights and direction with respect to end user needs and emerging challenges and opportunities in the field.



When public health restrictions required higher education institutions to close campuses in March 2020 and to move to emergency remote teaching (ERT) modes, what was then the Cork Institute of Technology was better prepared than many other institutes to respond quickly and effectively to the crisis, owing, to a great extent, to the existing mainstream and research work of the Institute's TEL function. The Institute's e-learning infrastructure provided the technical basis for a strategic selection of a number of key ERT approaches, which were in turn underpinned by in-house expertise in online learning pedagogy and tried-and-tested in-house systems for the management and support of online programme delivery.

The TEL Department, in addition, led out in providing training and support to staff and students. The initial uptake of live training by staff in particular was very high, with a total of 798 staff engaging with an initial training session on one day alone, in mid-March, 2020. Over the course of the remaining year, some 49 live training sessions were delivered, online, with, at the time of writing, approx. 32 hours of edited recordings provided via [the department's YouTube channel](#) (see <https://www.youtube.com/TechnologyEnhancedLearningMTU>). Over this same period, the department also managed an ERT helpdesk system which received an average of 34 tickets a day from teaching staff and students. A knowledgebase of help articles and related resources was provided as well which, at the time of writing, contains some 172 original articles written by TEL staff on a range of ERT topics – analytics for same indicate 39,067 unique visits to this platform over the course of semester 1, 2020/21. Analytics associated with the use of technical components of the elearning ecosystem also reflect the scale of the transition to online over the year with, for example, a dramatic increase in use of the Institute's VLE, Canvas from an average of 715 interactions with the system per day in February and early March 2020 to an average of over 8,000 interactions per day from the start of the first lockdown to the beginning of June that year.

Learning platform and support system data, however, only provide a partial view with respect to the experience and practice of ERT in the Institute. To provide a richer insight into on-the-ground experiences of and insights into ERT, large scale surveys were conducted with staff and students at the end of each of the two ERT semesters covered by this report. A variety of presentations, reports and infographics were subsequently developed by the TEL Department and shared widely as a way to give value and voice to staff and student experiences while also fostering open and institute-wide discussion in the area. An indicative infographic showing student data from the December 2020 survey (n= 2,629) is attached as an appendix to this case study. Some key findings from a similar survey for staff (n=380) administrated at this same time are as follows:

- Live or recorded video training provided by TEL Department staff was the most commonly accessed form of ERT support or training -- 305 (81.3%) respondents -- with the TEL website -- 262 (69.9%) respondents -- and online knowledgebase -- 145 (38.7%) respondents -- following after that
- 358 (94.2%) respondents used the video conferencing system Zoom or other live systems to deliver class or provide other real-time student support
- The video conferencing system, Zoom received a mean rating of 3.8 out of 5 for its effectiveness as a teaching tool, with 66.2% of respondents rating it as effective or very effective.
- "Difficulties around communicating effectively at a distance" emerges as the most common ERT challenge -- indicated by 218 (58.4%) respondents -- with the closely-linked challenge of "dealing with student queries at a distance" following just a little behind -- indicated by 197 (52.8%) respondents.
- The average rating for support received from the institute in implementing ERT was 3.8 out of 5 with 247 (66.2%) respondents rating support at either a 4 or a 5.
- Of the 348 respondents who had delivered remotely in the previous semester, 262 (75.0%) respondents felt better prepared to do so in what was then their second ETR semester.

While it is hard to say what success looks like in the face of such unprecedented challenge and change, this and other data serve to indicate just how much was achieved so quickly and effectively by the Institute over this period. Such work not only lays the foundation for further improvement of ERT and other related practices but it seems clear that teaching staff, in particular, will emerge from this crisis with a new repertoire of digital skills and strategies to draw from. The lived experience of teaching at a distance moreover has the potential to open up conversations about how learning happens and the role of digital and online now and into the future.

By way of conclusion and final reflection, a number of key take-away points are offered below:

- A TEL or ed-tech function has been shown to provide institutes with business/academic continuity in the face of disruption. This same capacity provides preparedness for a range of other future learning and performance challenges.
- TEL is a complex area. Even on the most practical level, the range of choice and options argue the need for HEIs to make a strategic selection of available technologies and pedagogical approaches based on their needs and those of their staff and students.
- A mainstream TEL function is best underpinned by ongoing research to improve practice and ensure the currency of provision.
- While the period of so-called emergency remote teaching may soon be reaching an end, HEIs need to plan for future possible public health emergencies and other disruptions. In that context, continued reflection and action with respect to key findings and experience from this period must be viewed as essential and important work
- Staff and student experiences of the pandemic suggest ways in which teaching staff need to become more familiar not just with digital pedagogies but with the complex ways in which pedagogical, technological, and subject matter knowledge and competences intersect and interact as HEIs look to develop forms and models of online learning that go beyond efforts to solely replicate familiar face-to-face pedagogical norms and practices.

## Appendix

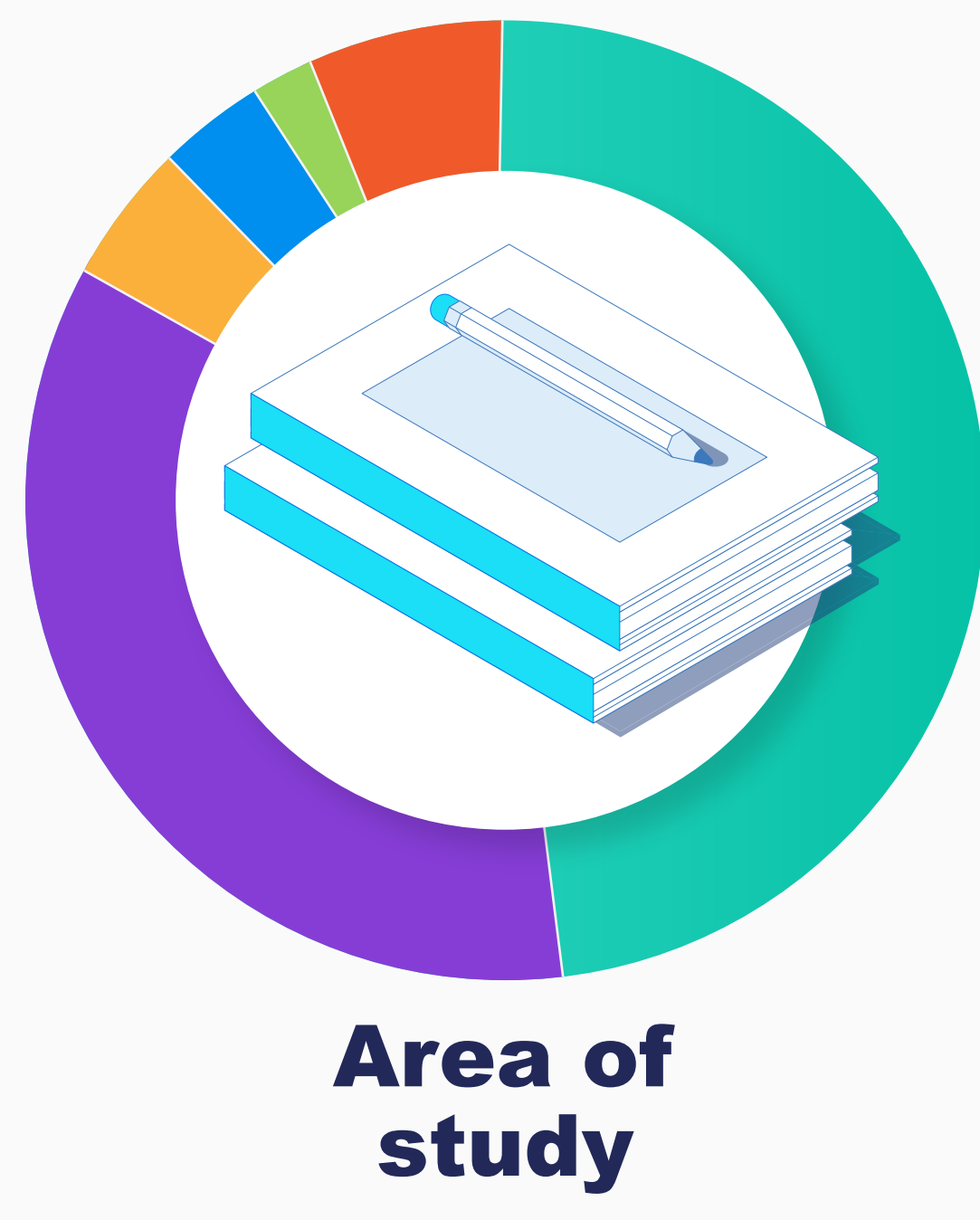


# STUDENT REMOTE TEACHING AND LEARNING SURVEY

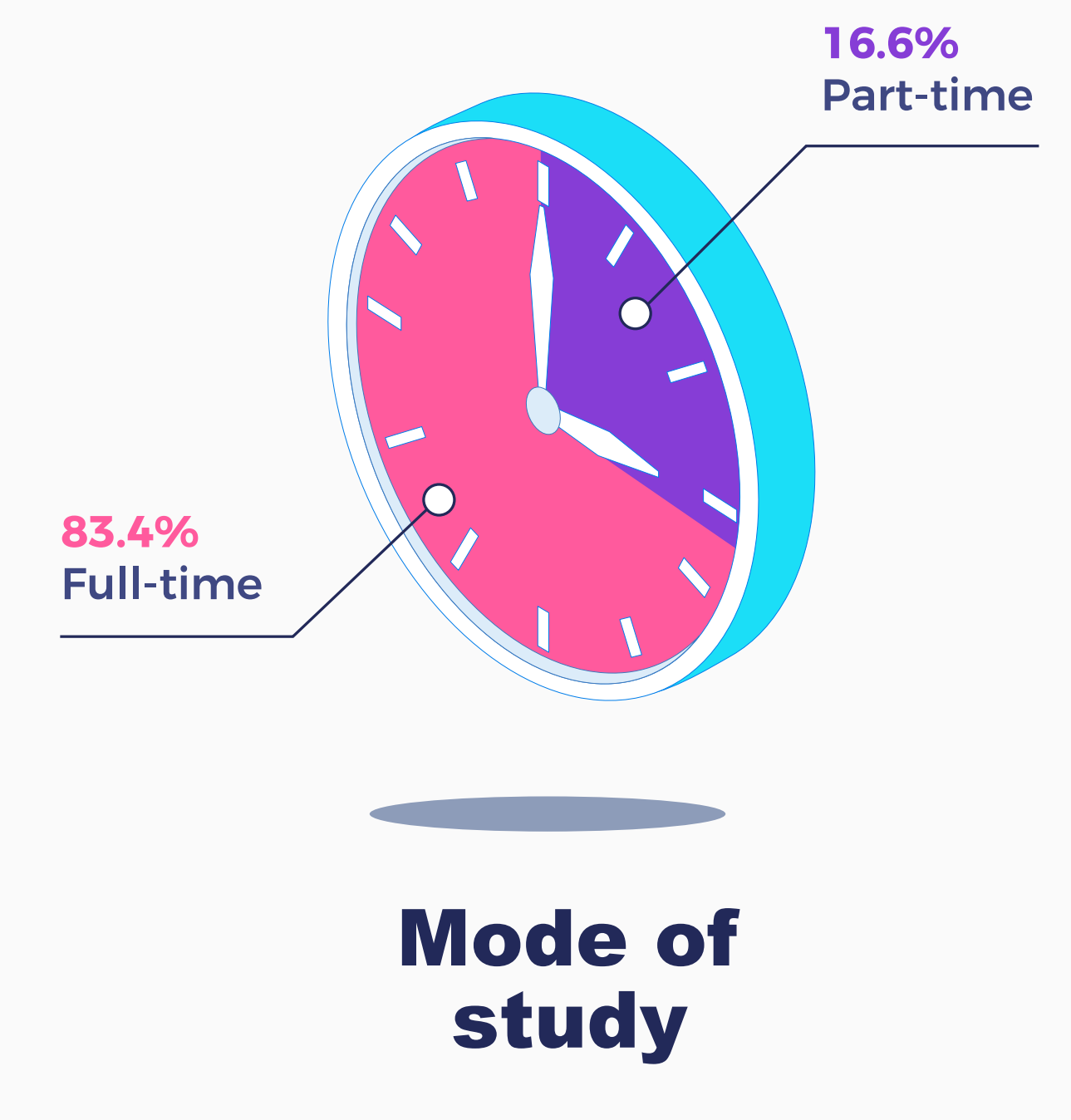
## SEMESTER ONE 2020/2021

This infographic presents findings gathered from 2,629 student responses in what was then the Cork Institute of Technology.

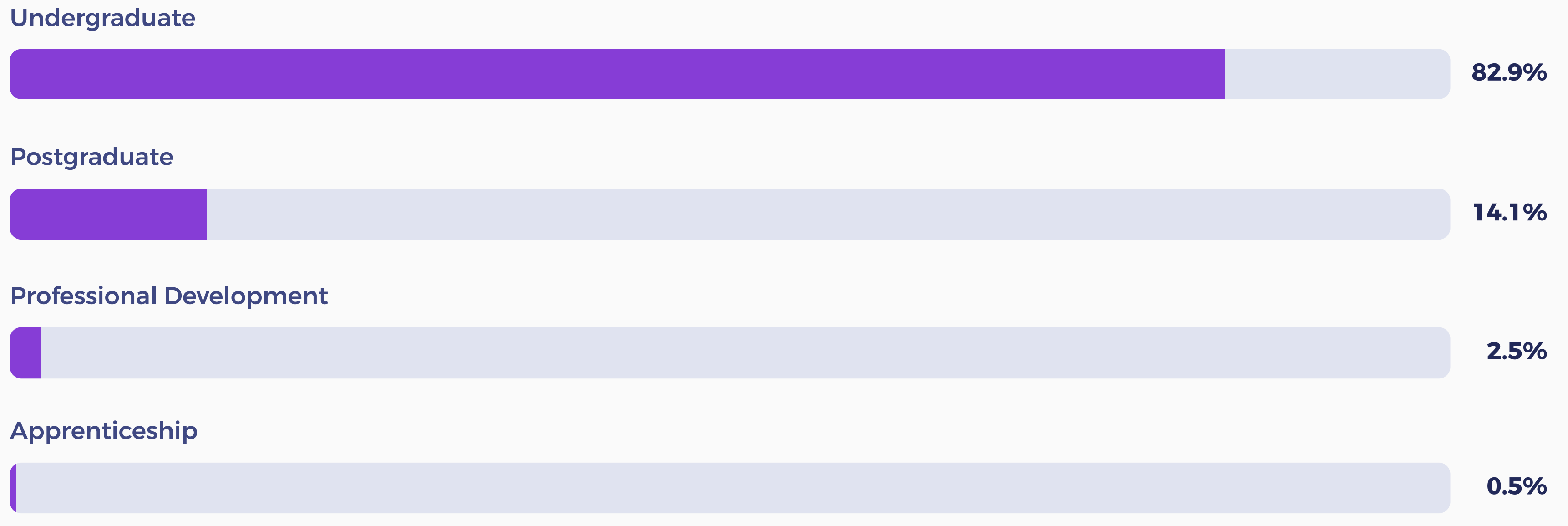
### STUDENT BACKGROUND



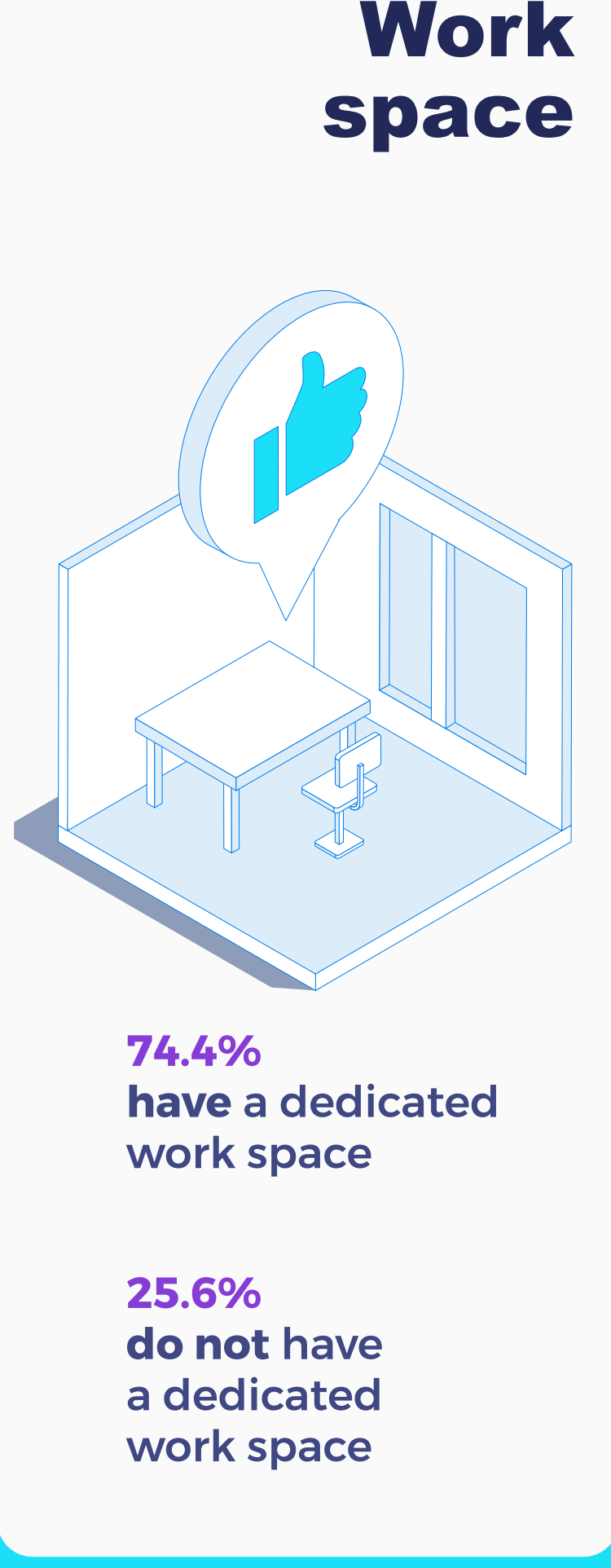
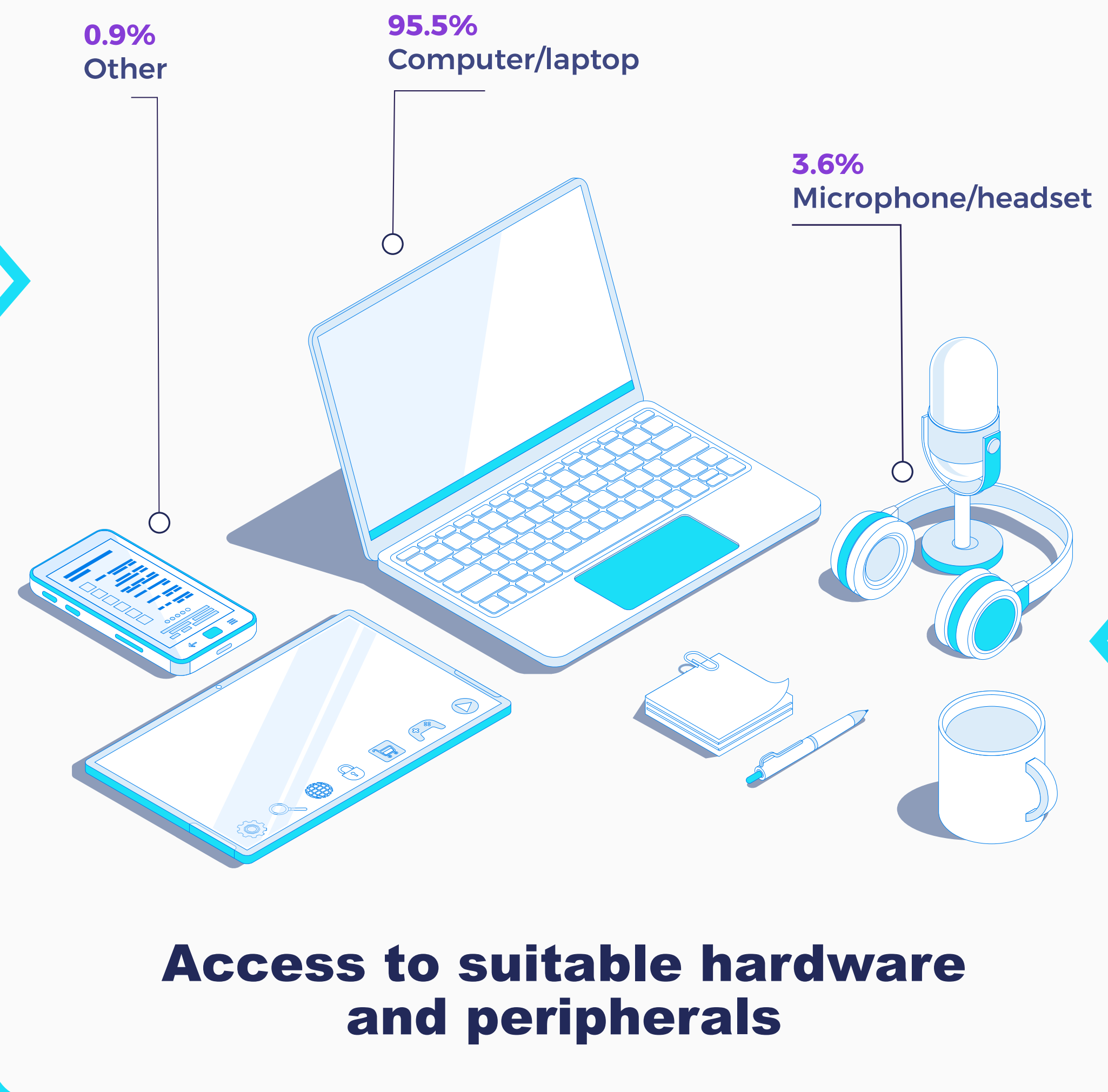
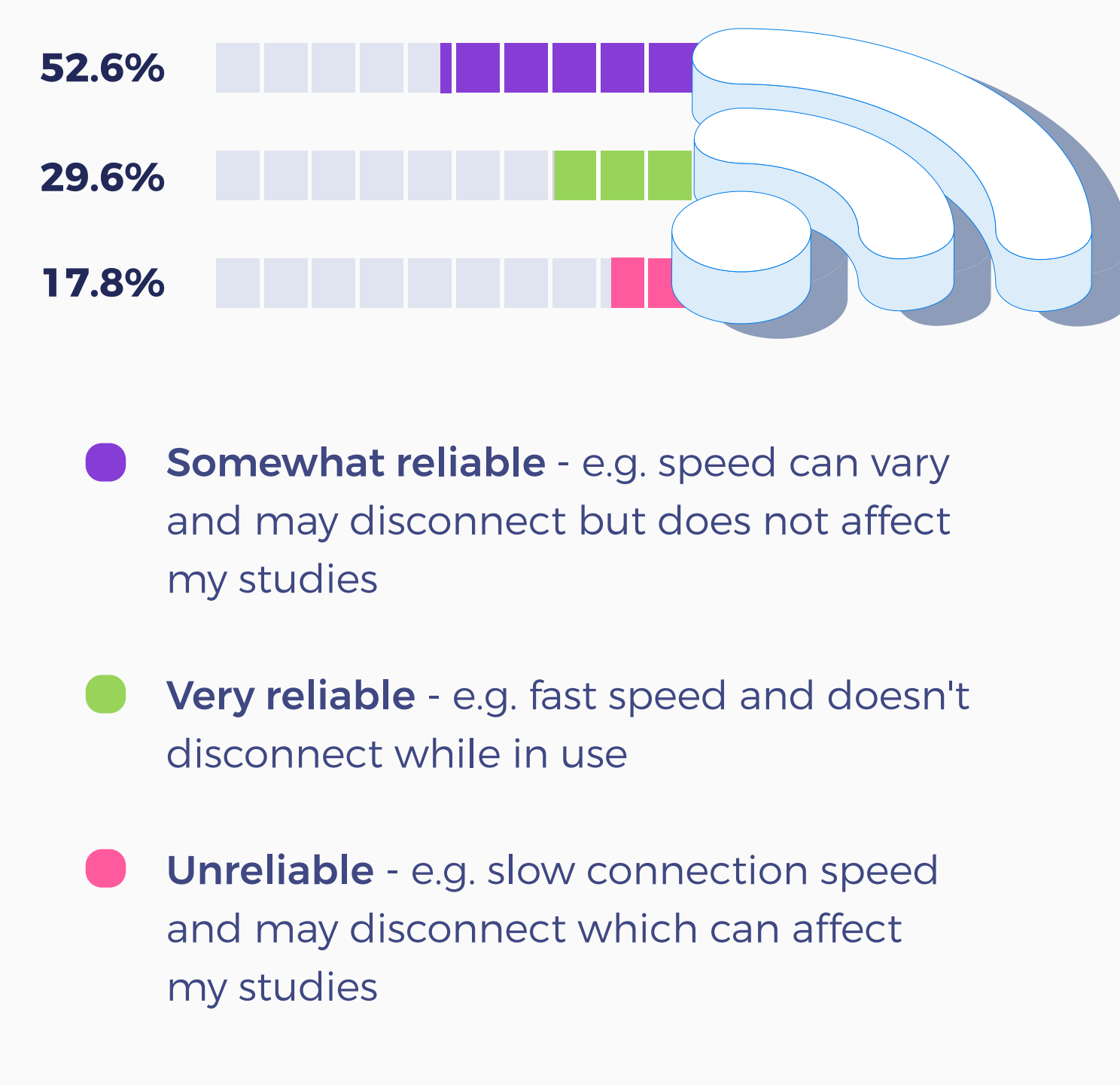
Engineering and Science	48.0%
Business and Humanities	35.0%
CIT Crawford College of Art and Design	4.6%
CIT Cork School of Music	3.6%
National Maritime College of Ireland	2.0%
Other	6.8%



#### Programme type

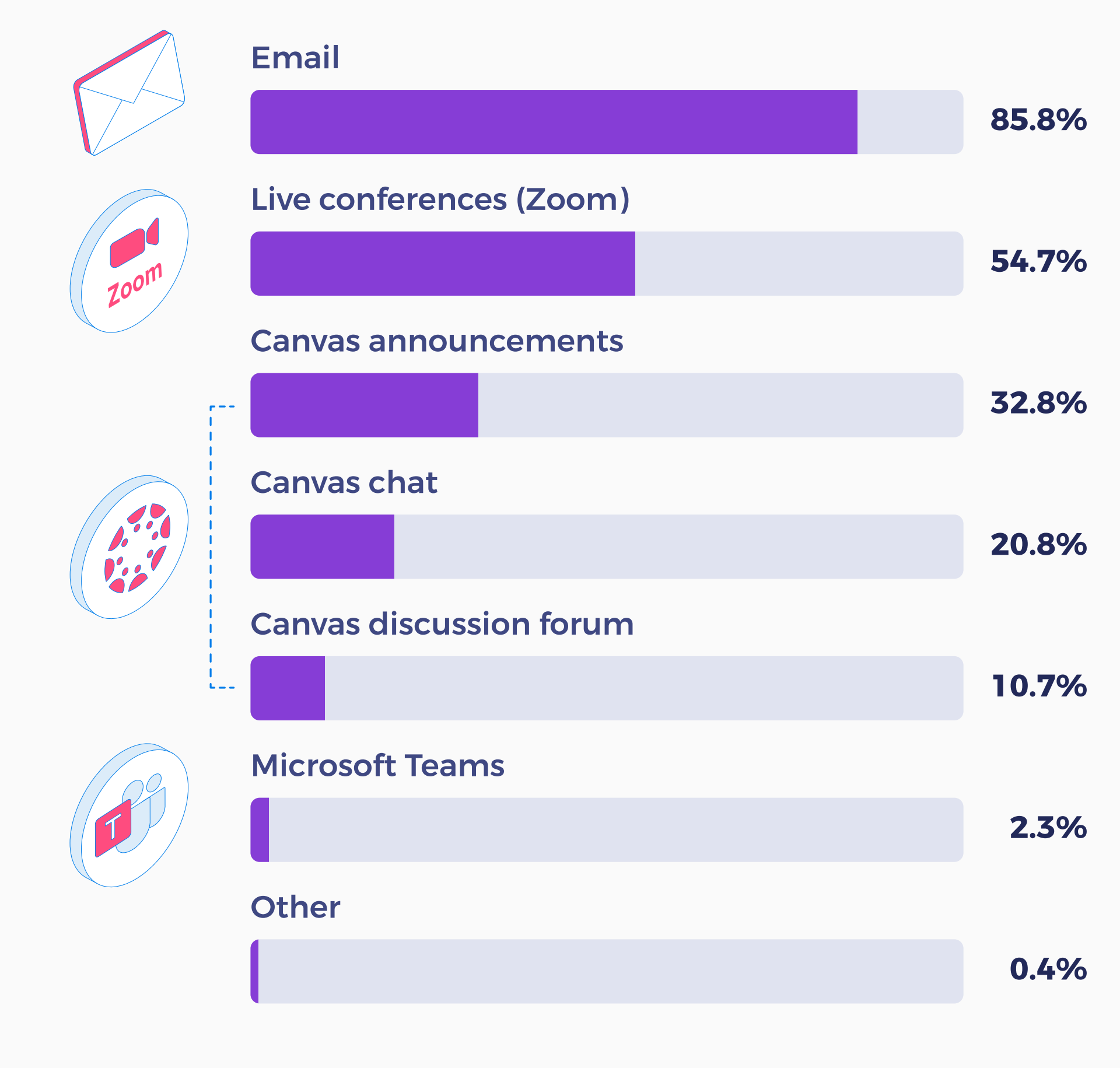


#### Internet reliability

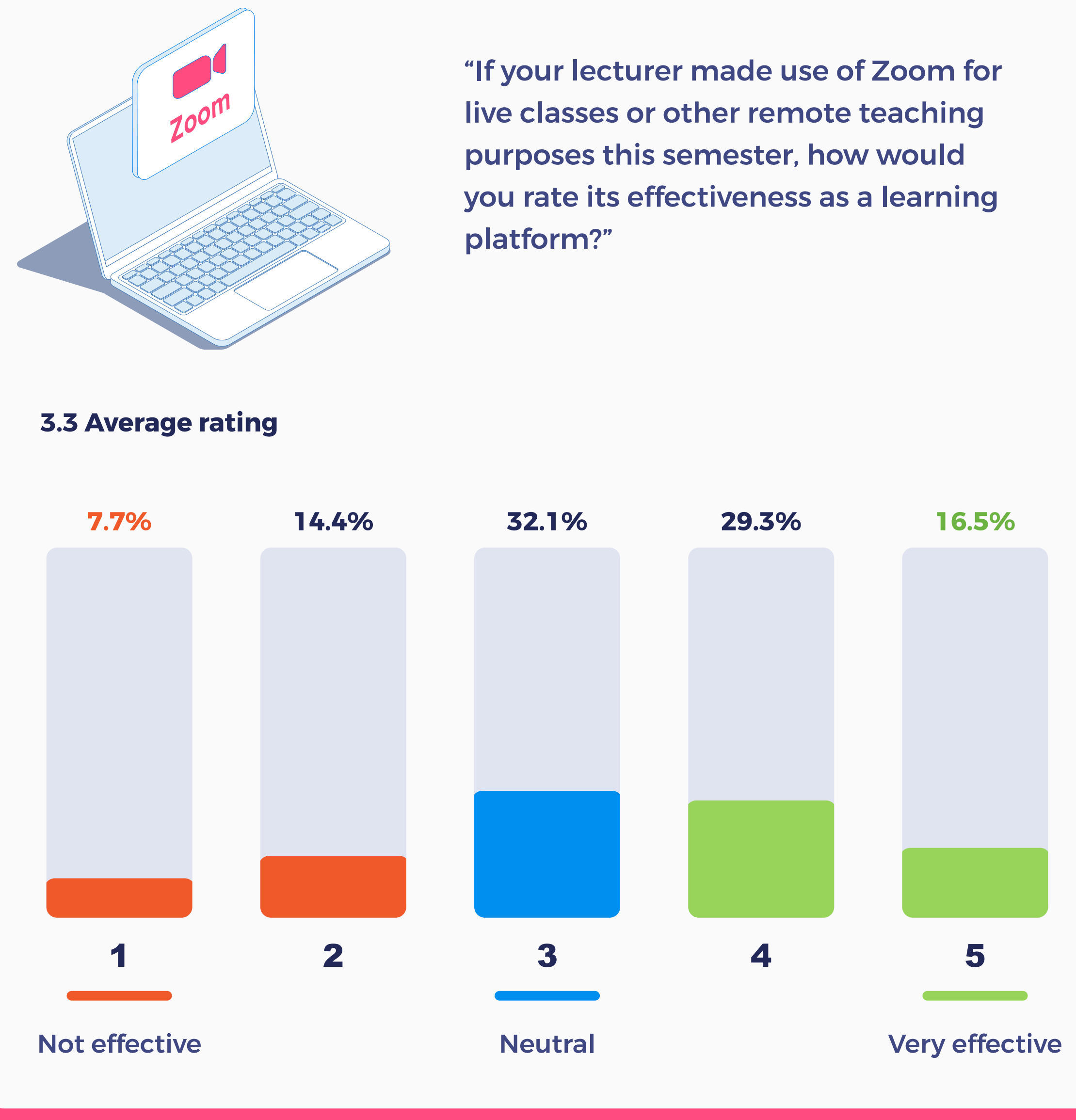


### STUDENT REMOTE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

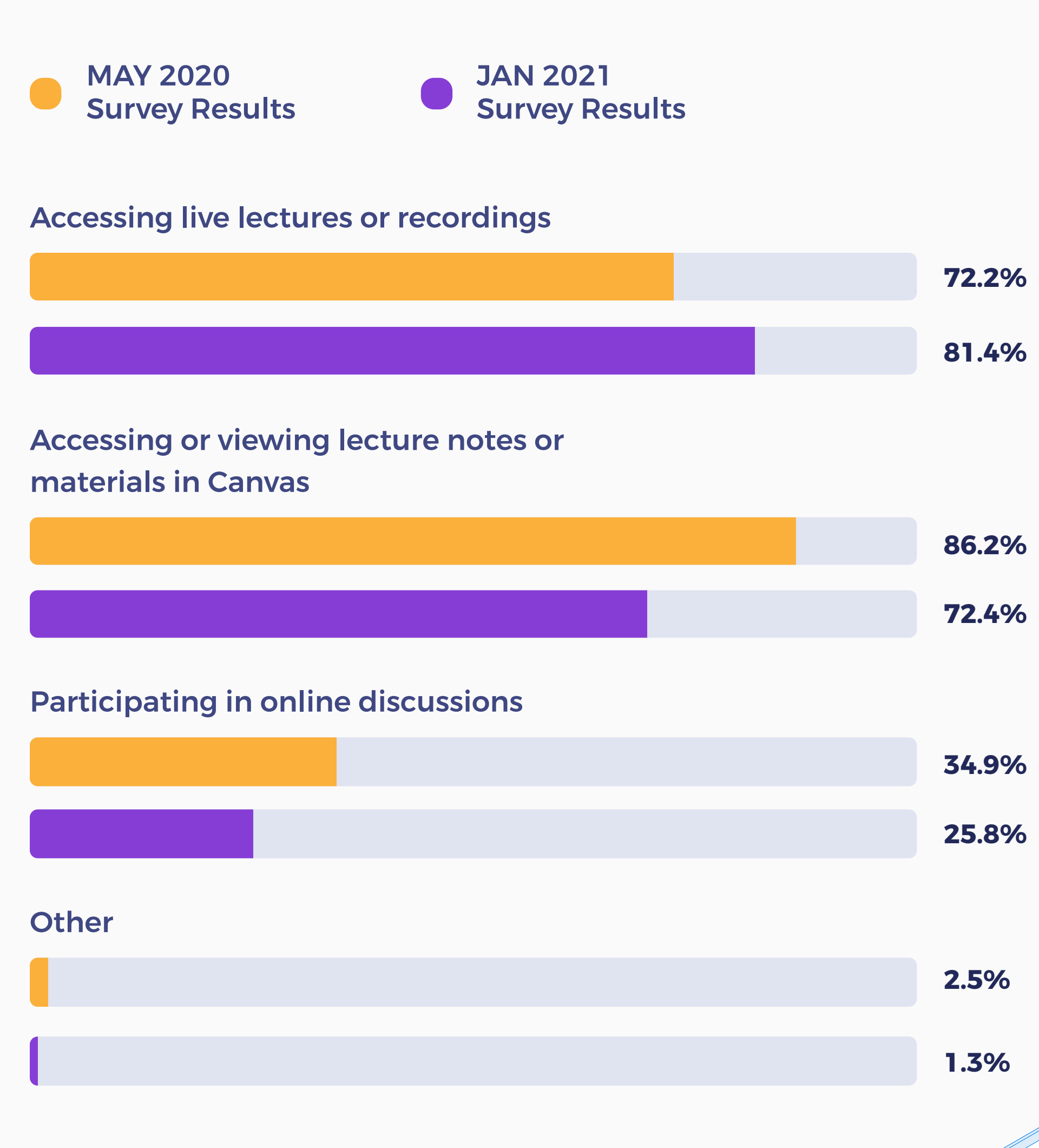
#### Main tools used to communicate with lecturer



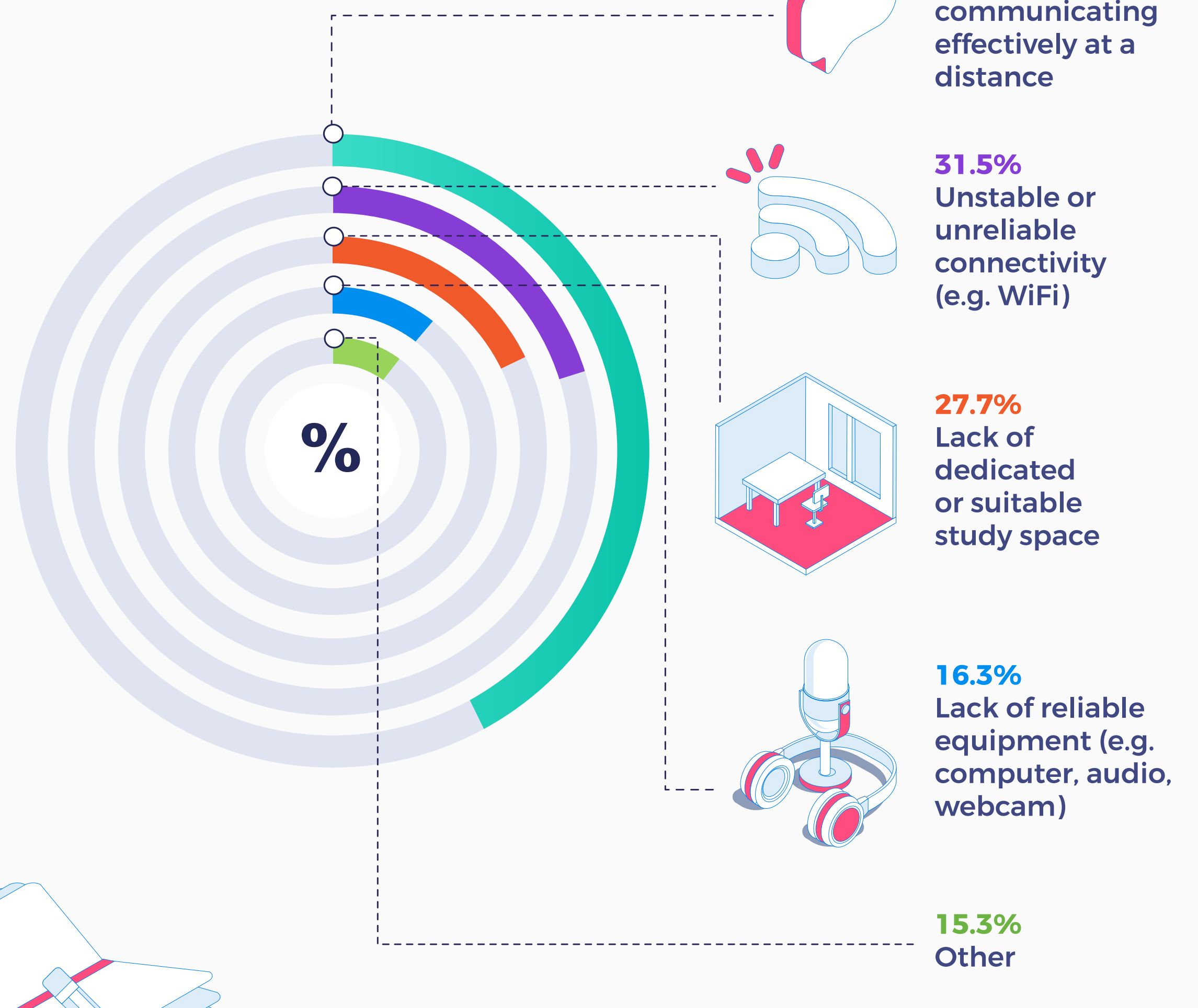
#### Zoom as a learning platform



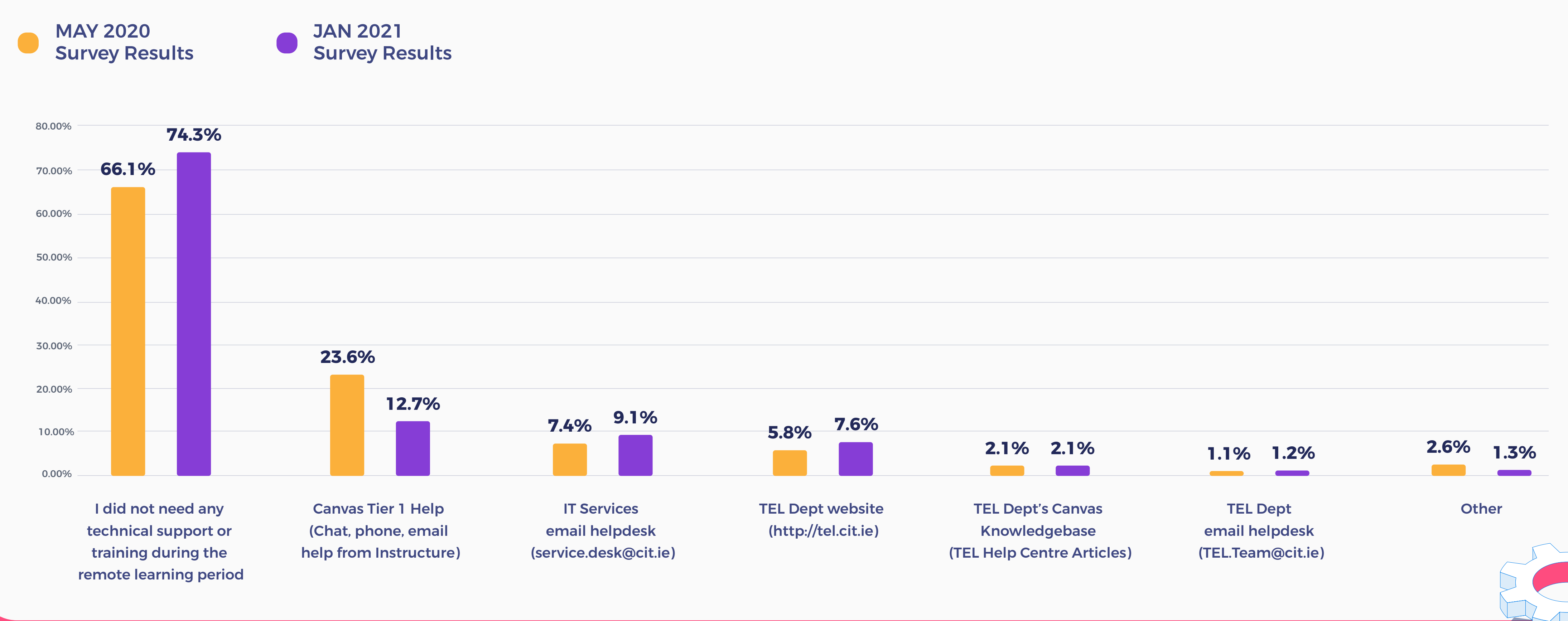
#### Main ways of engaging with classes and modules during the remote teaching period



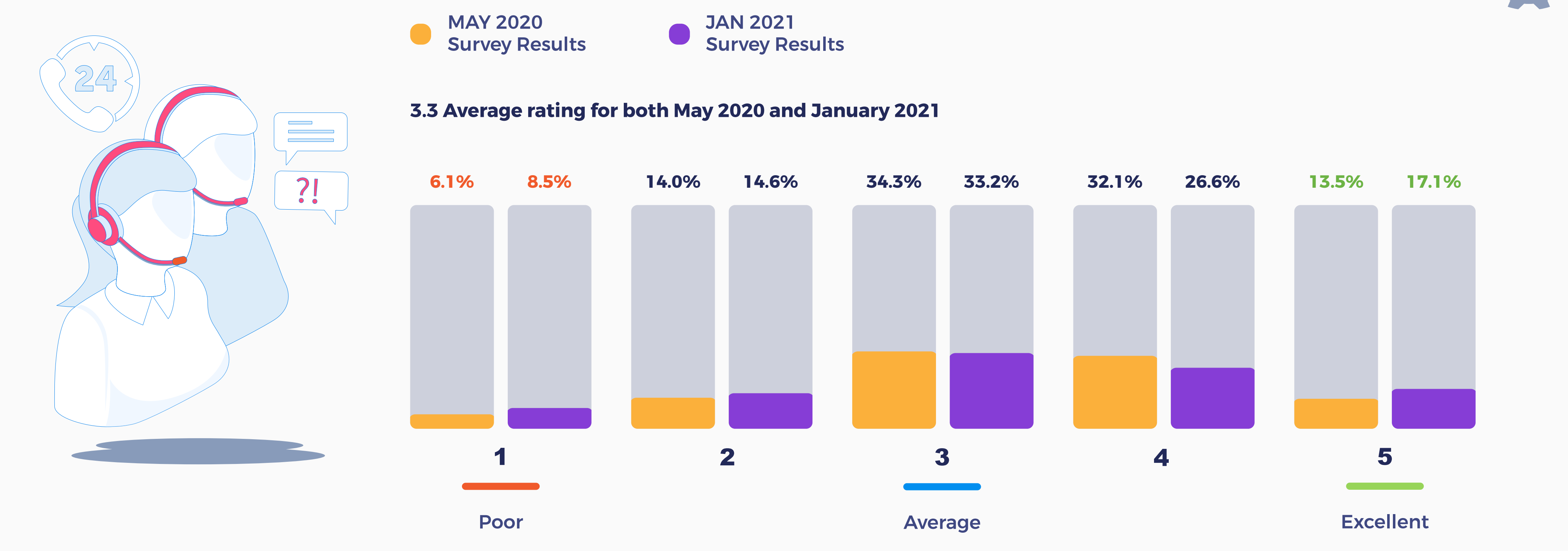
#### Main challenges involved in learning remotely



#### Technical support or training used



#### Support received from the institute/Canvas



#### Possible improvements

