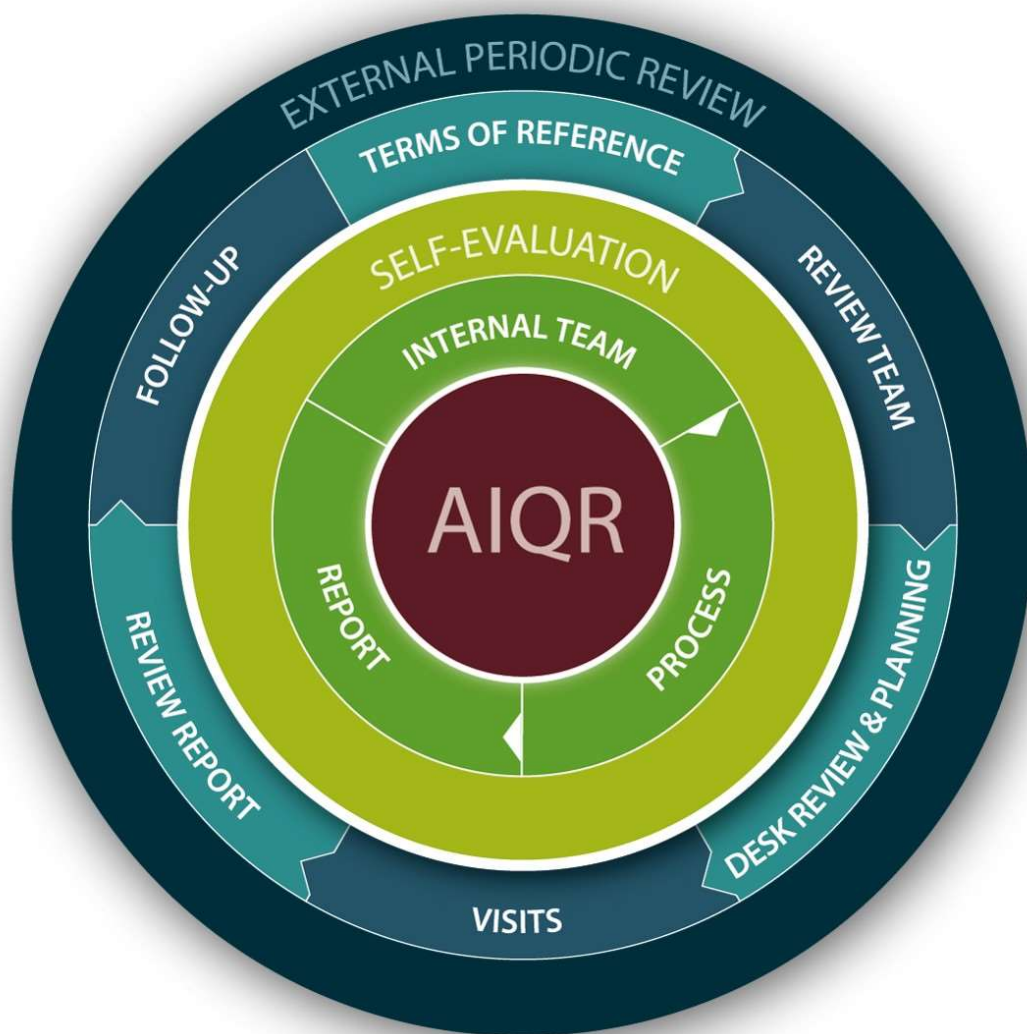


# Institute of Technology, Carlow

## Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report 2020

Based on the reporting period 1 September 2018 – 31 August 2019



The Cyclical Review Process

## Part 1

# Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures

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

### 1. Overarching Institution Quality Policy

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

Institute of Technology Carlow is an autonomous Institute founded in 1970, established under the Institute of Technologies Acts 1992-2006. Institute of Technology Carlow provides higher educational programmes, along with research and development opportunities through the southeast multi-campus structure in Carlow, Wexford and Wicklow.

Institute of Technology Carlow has been granted Delegated Authority (DA) by QQI, which empowers Institute of Technology Carlow to make awards up to Level 9 on the NFQ for, taught and research programmes. In addition, Institute of Technology Carlow has Delegated Authority to Level 10 in the research areas of Biological, Molecular and Environmental Science and research approval to Level 10 in Health Science, Engineering and Computing.

Institute of Technology Carlow's Strategic Plan 2019-2023 (<https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/ITCarlow-Strategic-Plan-2019-2023.pdf>) identifies key priorities that aim to contribute to regional and national economic, social and cultural development, informed and enriched by the Institute of Technology Carlow's growing activities and profile. It is this plan which guides the direction of the Institute and the programmes being developed, validated and delivered within it.

The Mission of Institute of Technology Carlow is to Engage, Learn, Innovate and Lead. This is articulated through an educational environment and context where learners pursue studies in higher education and research up to doctoral level. Through a culture of enquiry, innovation and

excellence, Institute of Technology Carlow challenges its learners, staff, global collaborative partners and other stakeholders to create, apply and share knowledge and values in a supportive and vibrant university-level Institute.

Institutional strategy is informed by wide-scale and regular consultation with learners, staff, graduates, employers and representatives of all of our stakeholders, as well as through periodic external strategic and academic reviews of faculties and external strategic reviews of professional services. This is formulated at senior management level, approved by Governing Body via Academic Council and at that stage it is communicated on an Institute-wide basis.

We are guided by national engagement and feedback initiatives, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), the technological higher education quality framework, the national forum for the enhancement of teaching and learning, professional bodies, national policy and national and international reports.

The Institute's Strategic Plan 2019-2023 is set out at

<https://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/strategic-plan-2019-2023.htm>

With learner experience as the focus, the central role of quality assurance and enhancement is explicitly articulated in our [Strategic Plan 2019- 2023](#) which affirms the contribution of quality assurance systems in achieving strategic objectives and maintaining and enhancing all elements of the organisation and the experience of those who engage with us. This is a plan by and for our community, our regions and country. It is the result of many months of information gathering, dialogue, analysis and careful thought by all members of the Institute across every discipline, function and activity. The resulting five strategic priorities encompass our learners, our research, our engagement, our campus community and our sustainable development. Goals developed under each of these themes are reinforced by key actions. These actions are further supported by detailed action plans and key performance indicators, including those contained in our new mission-based performance compact with the HEA, which defines our role in the achievement of key national objectives for higher education in the coming years. The five priorities are:

**1. Our Learners**

We will exemplify excellence in education and student life, provide opportunity, engage with all our learners and support them in their development as confident global citizens.

**2. Our Research**

We will build on our success in knowledge development, grow our research capacity, increase our collaborations and impact, and broaden our disciplines and funding streams.

**3. Our Engagement**

We will expand our local, regional, national and global partnerships, lead in knowledge creation and application, enterprise creation and socio-economic development.

**4. Our Campus Community**

We will support our community by strengthening our culture of inclusivity, demonstrating excellence in leadership and governance, developing our physical and virtual infrastructure, and by restructuring our organisation for further growth.

**5. Our Sustainable Development**

We will educate for sustainable development locally, nationally and globally, and we will lead by example.



Figure 1.1 Summary overview of the Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2019-2023

Our quality assurance and enhancement activities align with our strategic plan, are informed by the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area (ESG) and with QQI. In terms of linking our institute strategy to our quality policy and procedures, our [quality manual](#) is the guiding document. It provides a road map and overview of our overarching policy and procedures for quality assurance, our governance framework, procedures for quality assurance in teaching, learning and research, on-going monitoring and review, the learner voice, procedure for the design, development, validation and withdrawal of programmes, admission, progression and completion, staff development, learner supports and information management.

Our quality culture is supported by strong corporate governance and a commitment to ongoing organisational, resource and staff development and improvement. We firmly believe in accountability, transparency, and the public provision of information and our quality manual is available on our website alongside our policies on [collaborative provision](#), [joint awards](#), [research](#), [ethics in research](#), [assessment](#), and [academic standards](#). We also routinely [publish the](#)

[outcomes from quality review processes and reports including our annual institutional quality report \(AIQR\).](#)

Quality assurance and quality enhancement are therefore inter-related. In the Institute of Technology Carlow, this supports a quality culture that is embraced by all, from the students and academic staff to the institutional leadership and management.

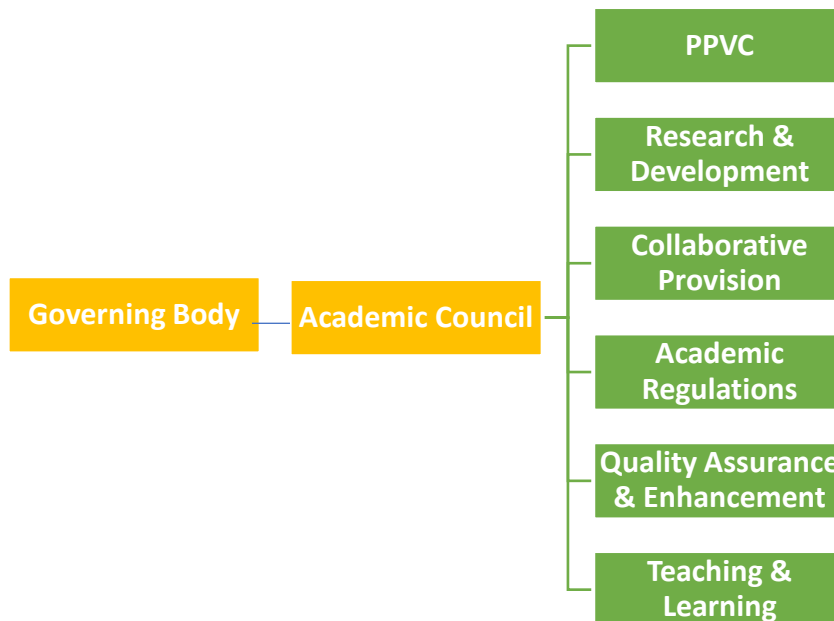
The Institute of Technology Carlow believe and engage in robust self-evaluation and peer review as a key component of our quality enhancement culture across all of our activities including faculty, professional support services and collaborative partner reviews. This philosophy has served us in maintaining a [high standard of achievement in recent formal quality assurance reviews.](#)

The ethos and values that drive the culture of our Institution are supported by strong corporate governance and a commitment to ongoing organisational, resource and staff development.

## 2. Quality assurance decision-making fora

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

At institute level, the Institute of Technology Carlow Governing Body [IT Carlow Governing Body](#) is the ultimate statutory authority which guides and oversees the strategic direction and management of the organisation including quality assurance. It is appointed for a five year term and includes representation from institute management, academic and professional support staff, and representative organisations, learners and stakeholders.



The executive management of Institute of Technology Carlow and its academic and administrative systems rests with [the senior executive team](#) which, through the President, is directly answerable to the Governing Body. Each member of the senior executive is responsible for and represents, at this forum, distinct academic or professional service faculties or departments. Overall responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement, academic standards and programme validation rests with the Registrar & Vice President for Academic Affairs and both the Quality Officer and Assistant Registrar functions assist in this. In addition, each Institute of Technology Carlow professional

learner and staff support service manager reports directly to a member of this senior executive team.

In terms of quality assurance and informed decision making, a key advisory and communication forum at Institute of Technology Carlow is the institute management group. Its membership includes the senior executive team and all heads of academic departments and professional services. The relevant Institute of Technology Carlow management reporting structures are outlined [here](#).

One of the main quality assurance functions of the Governing Body is the appointment of the institute's [Academic Council](#) to assist Governing Body in planning, co-ordination, overseeing and developing the educational work of Institute of Technology Carlow and to protect, maintain and develop academic standards. This responsibility is discharged by means of a series of six committees and associated working groups, each of which include representation from postgraduate and undergraduate learners, academic staff and institute management. In addition, professional support staff are routinely co-opted to these committees to provide expertise where necessary. The six committees are:

- Academic regulations which makes regulation governing the selection, admission, retention, awards, graduation and exclusion of learners
- Collaborative provision which has oversight of all aspects of collaborative provision
- Programme planning and validation is responsible for the development, monitoring and reviewing of all taught programmes
- Quality assurance and enhancement protects, enhances and develops academic standards for all programmes
- Research and development is responsible for the planning, approval and review of all postgraduate research programmes



- Teaching, learning and support services develops policies to support excellence in teaching and a quality learning experience.

Each committee has clearly defined terms of reference and each committee reports to Academic Council. Therefore, Academic Council has an explicit function in the development, validation and quality assurance of all programmes delivered by, approved by or validated by Institute of Technology Carlow. The ongoing academic management and review of programmes is the responsibility of the programme board or stream comprising the relevant academic staff and departmental management as well as learner representation and these boards or streams report to Academic Council.

At Institute of Technology Carlow, our quality focus and consultation in decision making extends to all aspects of the organisation. While academic quality processes are extremely well established, the institute has approved a [‘Professional Support Services \(PSS\) Strategic Review Policy’](#) (Appendix III Quality Manual) in line with the expectations of the Sector-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Institutes of Technology. This is recognition of the fact that maintaining and developing the quality of academic excellence is supported by a large number of professional services and functions providing a complex and coherent support structure and are key factors in the provision of the unique student centred and supportive environment of Institute of Technology Carlow which has been emphasised in the detailed strategic and programmatic reviews of each academic unit completed in 2016.

A diagram setting out the governance structure is at ([Appendix I Quality Manual](#)), where, ([Appendix II Quality Manual](#)) describes the roles and functions of the governance bodies and office holders. The day to day running of Institute of Technology Carlow may be delegated by the President to specific staff members with defined responsibility for policy implementation as the President deems appropriate.

## Confirmation of QA Policy and Procedures

### **1. Programme Design and Approval (ESG 1.2)**

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance policy and procedures for the design and approval of new programmes.

#### **Policy**

Programmes are designed with overall programme objectives which are in line with the Strategic Plan 2014 – 2018 and meet with the learner’s requirement and both Regional and National requirements in line with QQI Quality Assurance Guidelines, both topic and sector specific, and QQI Award Standards. This is additionally informed by International trends. Such programmes in meeting these requirements are reflected in their explicit intended learning outcomes and that lead to a coherent programme of study which facilitates learner progression.

The qualification resulting from a programme is clearly specified and communicated, with reference to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

Learners are involved in the design of all programmes and their representation on Academic Council and its Committees that approve all aspects of programme design.

Learner representation within both programme design and the overall [Quality Assurance of Institute of Technology Carlow](#) is reflected in (Appendix IV) Quality Manual, Learner involvement in quality assurance.

External expertise and reference points are an integral part of programme design and form part of all programme validation panels.

The use of different modes of delivery is carefully planned in the design and scrutinised during the validation process and the expected learner workload is defined.

The formal approval of the programme is independent of the designing or teaching entity where the members of the validation panels have not been involved with any aspect of the programme design process. Such panel members are typically experts, either Industrial or educational.

### **Procedure**

The two phase procedure for Programme Design is described in Appendix VIII, Section 5, [Quality Manual](#), Policy and Procedure for the Design, Development, Validation and Withdrawal of Programmes at award levels 6-10 in the NFQ.

Additional Institute of Technology Carlow support documentation has been developed by the [Teaching and Learning](#) (T&L) Centre. These resources are directed towards both staff and students. Teaching and Learning resources to support the staff are available at <https://www.itcarlow.ie/study/teaching-learning-centre/tlc-resources.htm> . Information and resources for all students and staff are also available through blackboard at <https://www.itcarlow.ie/study/teaching-learning-centre/student-academic-support.htm>, through dedicated support sites – TLC\_Staff Hub and TLC\_Student Hub.

Resources include:

- Academic Integrity Support
- Academic Toolboxes (e.g. Guide to Writing Learning Outcomes, e.g. Rubrics, etc.)
- Guidelines for drafting programme assessment strategies
- Referencing Guides

| Support                               | Operation   | Enhancement  |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Online Support through the VLE</b> | In September 2016, in tandem with <i>TLC Staff Hub</i> , a dedicated learner course was further developed on Blackboard, and renamed <i>TLC Student Hub</i> . This was specifically designed to support all learners and acts as a central platform where learners can access resources and support material on academic skills, referencing, critical thinking, academic integrity, effective reading, note taking and the effective use of Blackboard and Turnitin.   | A Blackboard Survey for Students takes place on a biennial basis, in order to ascertain how the learners are engaging with the platform and to consider ways to further support them in their learning.  |
| <b>Online Induction Programme</b>     | At the same time, the Teaching and Learning Centre also rolled out the online Academic Success programme for all learners on all campuses. Comprised of three online modules, <i>Academic Success: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life</i> is a programme designed to help learners moving into higher education for the first time to prepare for the academic and social changes that come with the transition. The programme seeks to equip learners with the key skills and knowledge they require to fully take advantage of their time in higher education and succeed at undergraduate level and beyond. This self-directed programme, devised by Epigeum, can be accessed through <i>TLC Student Hub</i> on Blackboard and learners are eligible for an approved certificate of achievement upon successful completion of each module. | Since its introduction, there has been a consistent increase in its uptake, with many lecturing staff now embedding it in their programmes as part of their assessment strategies.   |
| <b>Academic Writing Centre</b>        | Since 2017, the Teaching and Learning Centre has also operated an <i>Academic Writing Centre</i> , which is learner-led and supports all learners in the Institute with their academic writing. The intention is that the centre itself is a 'learning centre' and not a 'teaching centre', thereby placing the learner at the heart of his/her learning, which is reflective of the Institute's overall mission and vision. Sessions on topics such as: sourcing documents, referencing, academic integrity and structuring assignments are offered. This is also a drop-in service for learners and is limited to ten learners per session. The centre is facilitated by an academic writing tutor and details of all sessions are posted weekly through Blackboard.  | Attendance at the Academic Writing Centre has continued to grow with a large number of mature learners availing of the service. A similar centre is now operating on the Wexford Campus and has also started on the Wicklow Campus to support the lifelong learners. |

| Support                       | Operation  | Enhancement  |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Maths Support Centre</b>   | The Teaching and Learning Centre also established a separate <i>Maths Support Centre</i> during the academic year 2017-18. One of the aims of Institute of Technology Carlow's <i>Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy</i> is to adopt and promote active and collaborative learning and the establishment of an Institute-wide Maths Support Centre is an example of this. This drop-in service provides free, additional, informal support to all undergraduate learners taking a mathematics/statistics-related module as part of their undergraduate programme.  | It supports peer learning and offers an alternative learning support to learners. Learners can drop in at a time that suits them. Scheduled times when the tutor is available are issued to the learners on a weekly basis through Blackboard and via email. |
| <b>Supplementary Academic</b> | Any learner experiencing difficulty with a particular discipline can also apply, through their class grouping, for additional academic support. This academic support scheme was designed to improve the learner's academic success and increase retention. Supplementary academic support is intended to complement class teaching and is not a substitute for it or a long-term intervention. It is usually put in place within six weeks of a programme commencing so as to act as an early intervention process for learners who are encountering difficulties in their learning. This is of particular importance for those in the first year of their programme.   | Learning Centre. In addition, the Teaching and Learning Centre works closely with Student Services to support learners with individual academic support needs and also coordinates staff training around helping learners with particular needs              |
| <b>Peer Assisted Learning</b> | Institute of Technology Carlow has also seen a rise in the number of peer-assisted learning initiatives available to support learners. <i>Peer Assisted Learning</i> (PAL) is essentially a system of learner-to-learner support in which learners from more advanced years of study are paired with first year learners and together they work on projects and support each other. PAL seeks to support first year learners through their transition to higher education by enabling them to develop their learning and study strategies such as exam and revision techniques and note-taking skills. The learners from the upper years facilitate the learning and guide the first years in their studies, supporting them in whatever way they can. | The PAL system has been in operation in the <i>Department of Aerospace, Mechanical and Electronic Engineering</i> for some years and was piloted in the Department of <i>Built Environment and Extended Campus</i> in the academic year 2016-17.             |

## 2. Programme Delivery and Assessment (ESG 1.3)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance policies and procedures for the ongoing delivery and assessment of programmes.

### Policy

The procedures and processes of programme delivery, assessment, internal and external examination, moderation and programme monitoring processes are modelled on the standard Institute of Technology Carlow institutional quality assurance procedures.

The Institute of Technology Carlow Quality Assurance Work plan set out at APPENDIX VI within the Quality Manual illustrates where this policy sits within the overarching Quality Assurance Framework.

<http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-policies-procedures.htm>

Institute of Technology Carlow in turn accepts similar requirements from its collaborative partners. For collaborative provision, quality assurance procedures fully describing the proposed provision, site visits, ongoing monitoring, assessment, examination and external quality assurance, and resource provision must be agreed by the consortium. These may be modelled precisely on the Institute of Technology Carlow procedures or may employ an agreed application of consortium QA principles and procedures.

Appendix IX of the Institute's Quality Manual Policy and Procedure for Teaching and Learning, Appendix XIV Recognised Methods of Assessment (extracted from the Academic Standards and Assessment Regulations Sept.2014), Appendix XV Double, Joint and Anonymous Marking and Appendix XVI Group Projects and Assessment- Fairness and Consistency set out policies in relation to Programme Delivery and Assessment.

### Procedure

The Institute of Technology Carlow Quality Assurance Work plan set out at Appendix VI within our [quality manual](#) illustrates where policies on programmes and awards and assessment of learners are placed within the overarching Quality Assurance Framework and the relevant policies and procedures themselves are presented as:

- Appendix IX: Policy and Procedure for Teaching and Learning
- Appendix X: Policy and Procedure for On-going Monitoring of Programmes
- Appendix XI: Policy and Procedure for Programmatic Review
- Appendix XII: Modes of Programme Delivery
- Appendix XIV: Recognised Methods of Assessment
- Appendix XV: Double, Joint and Anonymous Marking
- Appendix XVI: Group Projects and Assessment – Fairness and Consistency
- Appendix XXII: Policy and Procedure for External Examiner
- Appendix XXIV: Academic Integrity and Anti-Plagiarism Policy

Additional support Institute of Technology Carlow support documentation has been developed by the Teaching and Learning Centre. Publically available resources which cover a range of topics are available at <https://www.itcarlow.ie/study/teaching-learning-centre/tlc-resources.htm>. Information and resources for all students and staff are also available through blackboard at <https://www.itcarlow.ie/study/teaching-learning-centre/student-academic-support.htm>, through dedicated support sites – TLC\_Staff Hub and TLC\_Student Hub.

Resources include:

- Academic Integrity Support
- Academic Toolboxes (e.g. Guide to Writing Learning Outcomes, e.g. Rubrics, etc.)
- Guidelines for drafting programme assessment strategies
- Referencing Guides

**3. Research Quality (ESG 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.9)**

Links and/or text relating to any specific quality assurance procedures for the design, approval, delivery, assessment and monitoring of research programmes, if they exist.

**Policy**

As set out in the Institute's Policy Statement for Awards by Research, the scope of Institute of Technology Carlow's research programme provision is delineated by the terms of its delegated authority to make awards at NFQ Level 9 (by research and dissertation) and at NFQ Level 10.

Institute of Technology Carlow shall not offer programmes outside of the terms of its delegated authority. The limits to Institute of Technology Carlow's awarding authority, under delegated authority are its validated programmes at National Framework of Qualifications levels 6, 7, 8, taught and research programmes at level 9 and research programmes at level 10 in the area of Biotechnology and Molecular Environmental Science. Institute of Technology Carlow also has Approved Provider Status for Level 10 awards in Health Science, Engineering, Computing and Information Technology. The requirements, as set out in HETAC regulations regarding Research Degree Programme Policy and Criteria (2010) are noted.

All research programme activity leading to awards under NFQ Level 9 and NFQ Level 10 is subject to the academic quality assurance policies and procedures approved and adopted by Institute of Technology Carlow's Academic Council as well as those required by QQI. All research programme activity is subject to the approval of Academic Council which has statutory responsibility for the admission, retention, exclusion and examination of learners. The Institute of Technology Carlow Academic Council, with the approval of the Institute of Technology Carlow Governing Body, has established a Research and Development Committee of Academic Council and Postgraduate Research Programme Boards. The purpose of these bodies is to assist the Academic Council in the performance of its functions in relation to programmes of research leading to higher degree awards. Where research programme activity leads to an award it is also be subject to the oversight and approval of QQI. Any award that falls outside the scope of Institute of Technology Carlow's delegated authority is approved by QQI.



### **Procedure**

As set out in the Institute's Policy and Procedure for Postgraduate Awards by Research and Dissertation (<https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Policy-Statement-for-Awards-by-Research-NFQ-L9-and-L10-Version-5.pdf>) at NFQ Level 9 and Level 10, individual research programmes are assessed by a process of external review (Appendices C1 and C2). Validation of the research area takes place at discipline level. Application for validation for programmes of research in a new discipline area shall be made to the Registrar by the appropriate school or department using the New Programme Proposal Forms (PP1 and PP2). The form PP2 shall be supplemented by a self-assessment report form detailing how the proposed research area satisfies validation criteria (Appendix B3). Completed Programme Proposal Forms, together with Self Evaluation Reviews shall be submitted to the Office of the Registrar for internal assessment and review prior to the establishment of an external expert panel to review new research proposals. The panel shall have the appropriate expertise to benchmark the proposal against national and international comparators. Following review and site visit the panel shall make a recommendation to validate the proposed programme (or not). The Research & Development Committee shall then consider such recommendation. The Committee shall then make recommendation to Academic Council. Academic Council shall recommend approval of validation to Governing Body. Governing Body shall consider the recommendation and decide on approval. Reports and outcomes of the validation process shall be published. Validation of discipline areas shall be subject to cyclical review (see 7 below).

Institute of Technology Carlow's Academic Council maintains two registers of learners on programmes for higher degrees by research, as follows:

- A Register of learners attached to programmes toward an award of the Degree of Master (by research and dissertation) – hereafter referred to as “the Level 9 Register” and
- A Register of learners attached to programmes toward an award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy – hereafter referred to as “the Level 10 Register”.

Each individual application for registration is considered separately by the Research and Development Committee of Academic Council.

Institute of Technology Carlow offers two type of awards resulting from research programmes:

- Degree of Master (by research and dissertation). Candidates for this award shall be expected to meet the Standard for the relevant broad field of learning (Science, Computing, Engineering, Business, Art and Design) defined for awards at level 9 (by research and dissertation) on the NFQ (Appendices A9 and A 10 Postgraduate Policies and Procedures). The NFQ does not specify any minimum programme duration however national and international practice suggests that a learner registered on an NFQ Level 9 research programme shall require between one and two years of full-time study to achieve the required outcomes. In circumstances where a learner does not complete the programme within a four-year (full time equivalent) period from first admission to the Register, then registration will lapse. In circumstances where a learner wishes subsequently to present for the degree, application for re-registration shall be mandatory.
- Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Candidates for the Level 10 award shall be expected to meet the Standard for the relevant broad field of learning defined for awards at level 10 on the NFQ (Appendix A10 Postgraduate Policies and Procedures). The NFQ does not provide for any minimum programme duration however national and International best practice suggests that a learner working on a typical programme of research towards an award at Level 10 requires between three and four years of full-time study to achieve the required outcomes. In circumstances where a learner does not complete the programme within a period of six years (full time equivalent) of admission to the register, registration shall lapse. If the learner wishes subsequently to present for the degree, application for re-registration shall be mandatory. In circumstances where a learner has transferred from the Level 9 research Register to the Level 10 Register, the registration period shall run from the date of initial admission to the Level 9 Register.

A learner who wishes to transfer from the Level 9 research Register to the Level 10 Register shall make formal application to Academic Council using the appropriate application form with supporting documentation (Appendix C3 Postgraduate Policies and Procedures). Applications for transfer shall be supported by an independent evaluation by a recognised independent expert assessor in the field of the proposed research and accompanied by a substantial transfer report (Appendix C4 Postgraduate Policies and Procedures). The nomination of the External Expert Reviewer shall have been approved by the Research & Development Committee of Academic Council prior to submission of the proposed programme for review.

#### **4. Student Lifecycle (ESG 1.4)**

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures that are encompassed by the student lifecycle.

##### **Policy**

As set out in Section 4 of Institute of Technology Carlow's Quality Manual we ensure the smooth progress of learners in their academic career is in the best interest of Institute of Technology Carlow, individual learners, programmes, and systems.

Admission, assessment, recognition and completion procedures, along with the actual academic programme and learner support provided, play an important role, particularly when learners are mobile within and across the higher education system. The admissions process is available in Institute of Technology Carlow's Prospectus and Student Handbook, both are reviewed annually and offer the learner guidance and alternatives during their student life. Additionally, Institute of Technology Carlow's Policy and Procedure for Access (Appendix XXV of Quality Manual), guides the learner through the process of application and the facilitation of such application and provides all prospective learners with information, including selection criteria that allows them to make informed decisions on applying to a programme. The Institute has a High Performance Entry Scheme (Appendix XXIX of the Quality Manual) recognising achievements outside of formal learning in Innovation/Entrepreneurship, Sport and Active Citizenship in consideration for entry.

To further support of the learner in choosing the correct programme, the Policy and Procedure on Transfer (Appendix XXVI of the Quality Manual) offers options and timeframes in the event of the learner requiring the option to change the direction of their study.

Following admission to Institute of Technology Carlow, induction sessions are conducted throughout the Institute by the President and Registrar, Senior Management within each respective Faculty / Campus, Academic staff and existing learners, providing an introduction to Institute of Technology Carlow and the respective programme of choice. This provides all prospective learners with as much information on the programme as possible to inform their choice. Additionally, information on

progression within programmes is available within Institute of Technology Carlow's Policy and Procedure for Progression (Appendix XXVII of the Quality Manual).

When choosing a programme, the method of assessment used within Institute of Technology Carlow and specifically for each programme, is also a factor in the learner's choice of programme, as assessment, whether formative or summative, has a profound effect on the learners' progress and on their future careers.

Institute of Technology Carlow ensures that:

- Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field. This is reflected in the Policy and Procedure for External Examiners (Appendix XXII) and External Examination – Foundations and Definitions (Appendix XXIII);
- The criteria for and method of assessment as well as criteria for marking are published within Institute of Technology Carlow's Academic Standards and Assessment Regulations and relevant abstracts available within this document, for ease of reference, within the following Appendices:
  - Recognised Methods of Assessment (Appendix XIV);
  - Double, Joint and Anonymous Marking (Appendix XV);
  - Group Projects and Assessment – Fairness and Consistency (Appendix XVI);
  - Policy and Procedure for Work Placement of Learners (Appendix XXVIII).

Additionally, Institute of Technology Carlow's Policy and Procedure on Late submission of Assignments (Appendix XVII), takes into account mitigating circumstances, while Academic Integrity & Anti-Plagiarism Policy (Appendix XXIII) offers clear direction to the learner of institutional standards of acceptability in conducting assignments to maintain Institute of Technology Carlow's exemplary academic reputation.

- As previously iterated, the achieved learning outcomes are compared to the intended learning outcomes, where learners are given feedback, which, as necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process. This is reflected on the Policy and Procedure for Teaching and Learning (Appendix III) and the Policy and Procedure for Programmatic Review (Appendix XI)

- At Institute of Technology Carlow, assessment is carried out by more than one examiner, specifically by, Internal Examiners, External Examiners and Examination Boards. This ensures that assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all learners, carried out in accordance with the stated procedures, documented and subject to checks within the quality process. This processes is iterated in Institute of Technology Carlow's Policy and Procedure for External Examiners (Appendix XXII)

Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components ensuring the learners' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility. As previously indicated, Institute of Technology Carlow's Policy and Procedure for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) (Appendix XIII) offers clear pathways to the learner to recognise previous learning conducted and offer every credit to the learner in completing such learning, while ensuring the practice for recognition is in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention <http://www.enic-naric.net/the-lisbonrecognition-convention.aspx>.

In doing so, Institute of Technology Carlow co-operates with other institutions and collaborative partners and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country.

Graduations, which occur annually, represents the culmination of the learners' period of study and Institute of Technology Carlow provides the learners with documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed. In 2016, Institute of Technology Carlow established an Alumni office to maintain and build on the Institute of Technology Carlow graduate network.

#### **Procedure**

The relevant appendices as indicated in the policy links are outlined in the Quality Manual at:

<http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-policies-procedures.htm>

### 5. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring the competence of teaching staff, including staff recruitment and staff development.

#### Policy

Institute of Technology Carlow has fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of all staff that allow them to assure themselves of the competence of their academic staff. A significant review of the Policies and Procedures related to the Human Resources area has been completed with all Policies and Procedures have been included in the Quality Management System and can be found at <https://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-policies-procedures.htm>

While higher education institutions have primary responsibility for the quality of their academic staff and for providing them with a supportive environment that allows them to carry out their work effectively, Institute of Technology Carlow embraces this responsibility and ensures that it:

- Follows clear, transparent and fair processes for staff recruitment, appointment, promotion and dismissal that recognise the importance of teaching and learning;
- Offers opportunities for and promotes the professional development of academic staff, which takes into account the outcomes of staff evaluation exercises, including peer review and learner feedback.;
- Encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research where staff and learners within Institute of Technology Carlow are regularly invited to research forums offering discussion on research methodologies and developments.;
- Encourage innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies where staff within Institute of Technology Carlow have successfully completed Institute of Technology Carlow's MA in Teaching and Learning;
- Provide opportunities and promotes professional development for all staff and postgraduate learners to undertake training through the Centre for Teaching and Learning.
- Recognise excellence in teaching through academic promotion criteria and public awards such as <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/awards/teaching-hero-awards>. These awards

were established by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in partnership with the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) and other student bodies to recognise and celebrate learners' experiences of great teaching throughout all higher education institutions and are presented to individuals who have made an impact at a key transition in a learner's journey in higher education. This award was presented to members of Institute of Technology Carlow teaching staff in 2014 as voted by their learners.

The role of academic staff is essential in creating a high quality learner experience and enabling the acquisition of knowledge, competences and skills. The diversifying learner population and stronger focus on learning outcomes require learner-centred learning where the role of academia is, therefore, also changing. Institute of Technology Carlow has measures in place to reflect such change, such as its Policy and Procedure for Learner Involvement in Quality Assurance (Appendix IV).

**Procedure**

All potential applicants are informed of the Institute's processes for recruitment and selection and all staff are informed of Institute of Technology Carlow's policy and procedures for Staff Development including and support of staff undertaking Level 10 qualifications. This policy has resulted in 45% of all staff a Level 10 qualification.



## 6. Teaching and Learning (ESG 1.4, 1.5, 1.6)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring the quality of teaching and learning.

[The Teaching and Learning Centre](#) works with colleagues across the Institute to continually improve the student learning experience.

They offer academic professional development through the MA in Teaching and Learning, ongoing workshops, seminars and resources. They provide informal consultancy to individuals and programme teams while also undertaking educational research projects and contribute to the development of institutional and national policy.

Institute of Technology Carlow offers opportunities for and promotes the professional development of academic staff, which takes into account the outcomes of staff evaluation exercises, including peer review and learner feedback. All potential applicants are informed of the Institute's processes for recruitment and selection and all staff are informed of Institute of Technology Carlow's policy and procedures for staff evaluation and development including pursuit and support of staff undertaking Level 10 qualifications.

Other policies in support of our academic staff are our [teaching, learning and assessment policy](#), and our [academic standards and assessment policy](#), as well as, within the [quality manual](#) our policy and procedure for teaching and learning (Appendix IX), our policy and procedure for child protection and welfare (Appendix XX).

The diversifying learner population and stronger focus on learning outcomes require learner-centred learning where the role of academia is, therefore, also evolving. Institute of Technology Carlow has measures in place to reflect such change, such as its Policy and Procedure for Learner Involvement in Quality Assurance ([quality manual](#) Appendix IV).

Institute of Technology Carlow encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research where staff and learners within Institute of Technology Carlow participate in key national and international forums offering discussion on methodologies and developments.

The Institute encourages innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies. This has resulted in the development of *A Roadmap for the Implementation of pilot blended learning programmes in Institute of Technology Carlow* and the initiation of a Pilot programme.

### **7. Resources and Support (ESG 1.5)**

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring funding and resources for learning, teaching and research. Also, links and or text relating to the quality assurance procedures for learning resources and student support.

Learners rely on a range of resources to assist their learning that vary from physical resources such as [library information services](#), [computing services](#), [learning supports](#), and [learner support services](#) around accommodation, transport, health, counselling, careers, finance, access and progression, clubs, sports and societies. All learners are informed about the resources and services available to them via the institute [web site](#).

Institute of Technology Carlow prides itself on being learner- centred and these support activities are provided by a number of professional support services through the departments of: including academic administration and student affairs, library and information services, learner support and student services, sport, teaching and learning centre, quality assurance and collaborations and computer services. These professional support services and functions are key factors in the provision of the unique student centred and supportive environment of Institute of Technology Carlow which has been emphasised in the detailed strategic peer reviews of each academic unit completed in 2015. They provide a complex and coherent support structure which consists of and involves a very large volume of activity and personnel. Like the academic faculties these professional support services are currently undergoing a quality self-assessment process as per our recently approved Professional Support Services (PSS) Strategic Review Policy available in our [quality manual](#), Appendix III.

All of this learner support activity is supported by the following policies and procedures in our [quality manual](#):

- Appendix IV: Learner involvement in Quality Enhancement
- Appendix XIII: Policy and Procedure for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
- Appendix XVIII: Student Disability and Learning Support Policy
- Appendix XX: Policy and Procedure for Child Protection and Welfare
- Appendix XXI: Code of Practice – Working with Students, Children and Vulnerable Adults

The Institute of Technology Carlow is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for students, staff and visitors in accordance with the Health, Safety and Welfare Act 2005. The Institute's [parent safety system](#) is available in hard copy at the reception in the Carlow Campus, the reception in the Wexford Campus, the Art and Design Campus and the Wicklow Campus and it incorporates quality assurance processes to ensure that all resources are fit for purpose, accessible and safe.

## 8. Information Management (ESG 1.7)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for collecting, analysing and using relevant information about programmes and other activities.

Reliable data is crucial for informed decision making. Institute of Technology Carlow collects, analyses and uses relevant information for effective management of programmes and other activities. There are processes in place to collect and analyse information about programmes and activities, feeding into Institute of Technology Carlow's internal quality assurance processes, such as identified within the Policy and Procedure for the On-going Monitoring of Programmes ([quality manual](#), Appendix X). This information is used to inform academic and professional support service reviews and strategic planning. The type of information routinely gathered and analysed at Institute of Technology Carlow includes the following:

Profile of the learner population

Learner progression, success and drop-out rates  
Learners' satisfaction with their programmes  
Learning resources and learner support available  
Employability of graduates

To comply with [freedom of information](#) legislation, Institute of Technology Carlow has appointed a freedom of information officer and operates both a [records management policy](#), and a [records retention schedule](#).

Information on Institute of Technology Carlow's activities is useful for prospective and current learners as well as for graduates, other stakeholders and the public. Institute of Technology Carlow provides information about their activities, including the programmes they offer, the intended learning outcomes of these programmes, the qualifications they award, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their learners, which are available within Assessment Standards and Assessment Regulations, the Teaching and learning Centre, the Registrar's Office and [our prospectus](#).

### **9. Self-evaluation and Monitoring (ESG 1.9)**

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for self-evaluation and internal monitoring.

Institute of Technology Carlow believes in robust cyclical self-evaluation and peer review as a major component of our quality enhancement culture assisting us in maintaining the highest standards of achievement in terms of quality assurance, informed by the QQI policy for cyclical review of higher education institutions. As part of this we have just completed a two stage quinquennial strategic and programmatic review of all of our academic faculties (outcomes are published [here](#)). We are undertaking a similar self- evaluation and peer review of all of our professional support services, as per our recently approved Professional Support Services (PSS) Strategic Review Policy available in our [quality manual](#), Appendix III.

As set out in the Institute of Technology Carlow's Quality Manual <http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-policies-procedures.htm> specifically Appendix X Ongoing Monitoring of Programmes and Appendix XI Policy and Procedure for Programmatic Review, Institute of Technology Carlow has detailed policies and procedures for self-evaluation and internal monitoring of programmes. The implementation of these is overseen by the Institute's Academic Council and its constituent committees. Quantitative and qualitative information is used to inform the ongoing monitoring, annual review and quinquennial review processes.

Included in self-evaluation and monitoring is the comprehensive review of all Institute of Technology Carlow policies and procedures. A document management system is in place where each policy and procedure incorporates its own revision control history in addition to a log which documents the revision status and reasons for change for each reviewed document, which can be seen in (Appendix V). To support this document management system, a comprehensive Quality Work Plan is reviewed, at a minimum, twice annually, to capture the ongoing review and evolving nature quality assurance and enhancement within the Institute. The Quality Work Plan can be seen in (Appendix VI).

### **10. Stakeholder Engagement (ESG 1.1)**

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for the involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.

External Stakeholders play a central role in Quality Assurance within the Institute. As set out in the Institute's Quality Manual, their roles encompass the programme lifecycle.

<http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-policies-procedures.htm>

This includes inter alia:

- Programme design and development (Appendix VIII)
- Programme validation (Appendix VIII)
- Ongoing Monitoring - external input (Appendix X)
- Programmatic Review (Appendix XI)
- External Examining (Appendix XXII)

**11. Engagement with Other Bodies (ESG 1.1)**

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

As set out in the Institute Quality Manual and guided by the Institute's strategic priorities, Institute of Technology Carlow has policies and procedures in place to maximise the opportunities available for learners on its programmes through engagement with the appropriate professional, statutory and regulatory bodies.

Where this occurs we generally adhere to the guidelines and regulations set out by those bodies. Examples include the Irish Aviation Authority, the Honourable Society of Kings Inns, Engineers Ireland and RIAI.

Institute of Technology Carlow maintains a register of programmes with or undergoing approval with professional bodies at [https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Professional-Accreditation-Register-ITCarlow\(1\).pdf](https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Professional-Accreditation-Register-ITCarlow(1).pdf)



**12. Provision and Use of Public Information (ESG 1.8)**

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for the provision of clear, accurate, up-to date and accessible public information.

Information on Institute of Technology Carlow's activities is useful for prospective and current learners as well as for graduates, other stakeholders and the public. Therefore, Institute of Technology Carlow provides information about their activities, including the programmes and modules they offer, the intended learning outcomes of these programmes, the qualifications they award, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their learners, which are available within Assessment Standards and Assessment Regulations, the Teaching and learning Centre, the Registrar's Office and <http://www.itcarlow.ie/study-at-itc/prospectus.htm>

As outlined previously, the Institute website has a detailed section on quality to include policies, procedures, publications and outcomes (including validation, review, learner feedback analysis), programmes and registers as well as contact details for the Institute Quality Office.

<http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality.htm>

**13. Linked Providers (for Designated Awarding Bodies) (ESG 1.1)**

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring engagement with linked providers including the procedures for approval, monitoring, review, withdrawal of approval and appeal for linked providers.

As a Delegated Awarding Body from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2020, this will be updated as required, in the next reporting periods.

**14. DA Procedures for use of QQI Award Standards (IoTs only)**

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

The Institute of Technology Carlow adopts for use QQI award standards as published at <http://www.qqi.ie>.

The Institute of Technology Carlow through its policies and procedures set out in its Quality Manual <http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-policies-procedures.htm>

Specifically Appendix VIII Policy and Procedure for the Design, Development & Validation of New Minor and Major Awards at level 6-10 NFQ; Appendix X Policy and Procedure for On-going monitoring of Programmes and Appendix XI Policy and Procedure for Programmatic Review integrates the QQI award standards in all of its programme activity.

**15. Collaborative Provision (ESG 1.1)**

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for engagement with third parties for the provision of programmes.

The development and provision of inter-institutional, regional, national and international collaborative programmes, joint awards, and transnational programme provision have become significant features of the higher education landscape.

Such programmes serve to enhance institutional research and teaching profile and they also contribute to the enhancement of capacity to develop and deliver programmes to a range of approved external partners and collaborators.

In engaging in collaborative provision Institute of Technology Carlow remains cognisant of all legislative requirements underpinning the various strands of collaboration engaged in.

Collaborative provision can take a number of forms. To date Institute of Technology Carlow has been involved in the following types of collaboration partnership:

- Accreditation
- Articulation
- Exchange
- Off-site delivery
- Validation

Institute of Technology Carlow's policies and procedures for Collaborative, Transnational and Joint Award provision are set out at:

[https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Collaborative-Provision-Policy-Version-5\\_2.pdf](https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Collaborative-Provision-Policy-Version-5_2.pdf)

These have been reviewed with reports shown at: <http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-policies-procedures.htm>



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

[Empty box for additional notes]

**17. Internal Review Schedule**

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

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Year                    | 2018/19   |
| Areas/Units             | Professional Support Services Reviews<br><br>Validation of various major, minor and special purpose programmes from NFQ levels 6- 9.  |
| Number                  | 2   |
| Link(s) to Publications | Programme Registers: <a href="http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-programmes-registers.htm">http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-programmes-registers.htm</a><br>Professional Reviews: <a href="http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-publications-outcomes.htm">http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-publications-outcomes.htm</a> |

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Year                    | 2019/20  |
| Areas/Units             | Cinnte Institutional Review  |
| Number                  | 1  |
| Link(s) to Publications |  |
| Year                    | 2020/21  |
| Areas/Units             | Strategic and Programmatic Reviews (Business, Science, Engineering and Lifelong Learning)<br><br>The Irish Gestalt Centre and the Tivoli Institute Collaborative Reviews |
| Number                  | 6  |
| Link(s) to Publications |  |

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|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Year                    | 2021/22   |
| Areas/Units             | Strategic and Programmatic Reviews (Business, Science, Engineering and Lifelong Learning) |
| Number                  | 4   |
| Link(s) to Publications |   |

|                         |                                       |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Year                    | 2022/23                               |
| Areas/Units             | Professional Support Services Reviews |
| Number                  | 1                                     |
| Link(s) to Publications |                                       |



## 18. Engagement with Third Parties Section

Details of engagement with third parties, including:

1. Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies
2. Collaborative Provision
3. Articulation Agreements

### 1. Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

| Type of Arrangement | Total Number |
|---------------------|--------------|
| PRSBs               | 18           |
| Awarding Bodies     | 1            |
| QA Bodies           | 1            |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| First Type of Arrangement (PRSB/Awarding Body/QA Body): | PRSB  |
| Name of Body:   | The Honourable Society of King's Inns   |
| Programme Tiles and Links to Publications               | LLB, BA (Hons) in Law;<br><a href="https://www.kingsinns.ie/cmsfiles/entrance-examination/ScheduleOfApprovedDegrees2019.pdf">https://www.kingsinns.ie/cmsfiles/entrance-examination/ScheduleOfApprovedDegrees2019.pdf</a> |
| Date of Accreditation or Last Review                    | 2019  |
| Next Review Year  | 2024  |

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|  |  |
|--|--|
| Second Type of Arrangement (PRSB/Awarding Body/QA Body): | PRSB   |
| Name of Body:  | Engineers Ireland  |
| Programme Tiles and Links to Publications                | Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Civil Engineering; Bachelor of Engineering in Civil Engineering; Bachelor of Engineering in Mechanical Engineering; Bachelor of Engineering in Electronic Engineering; Bachelor of Engineering in Electronic Engineering (Military Communications Systems); Bachelor of Engineering in Aircraft Systems;<br><a href="http://www.engineersireland.ie/Services/Accredited-Courses.aspx">http://www.engineersireland.ie/Services/Accredited-Courses.aspx</a> |
| Date of Accreditation or Last Review                     | 2019   |
| Next Review Year   | 2023   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Third Type of Arrangement (PRSB/Awarding Body/QA Body): | PRSB  |
| Name of Body:   | Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland  |
| Programme Tiles and Links to Publications               | Bachelor of Science in Architectural Technology;<br><a href="http://www.riai.ie/education/careers/becoming_an_architectural_technologist/">http://www.riai.ie/education/careers/becoming_an_architectural_technologist/</a> |
| Date of Accreditation or Last Review                    | 2018  |
| Next Review Year  | 2024  |

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|  |   |
|--|---|
| Fourth Type of Arrangement (PRSB/Awarding Body/QA Body): | PRSB  |
| Name of Body:  | Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists (CIAT)   |
| Programme Tiles and Links to Publications                | Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Architectural Technology;<br><a href="https://ciat.org.uk/education/study.html">https://ciat.org.uk/education/study.html</a> |
| Date of Accreditation or Last Review                     | 2015  |
| Next Review Year   | 2020  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Fifth Type of Arrangement (PRSB/Awarding Body/QA Body): | PRSB   |
| Name of Body:   | Royal Aeronautical Society   |
| Programme Tiles and Links to Publications               | Bachelor of Engineering in Aircraft Systems<br><a href="https://www.aerosociety.com/membership-accreditation/accreditation/academic-courses/">https://www.aerosociety.com/membership-accreditation/accreditation/academic-courses/</a> |
| Date of Accreditation or Last Review                    | 2019   |
| Next Review Year  | 2023   |

## 2. Collaborative Provision

| Type of Arrangement          | Total Number |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| Joint Research Degrees       | 0            |
| Joint/double/multiple awards | 1            |
| Collaborative Programmes     | 56           |
| Franchise Programmes         | 0            |
| Linked providers (DABs only) | NA           |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| First Collaborative Provision (Joint Research Degree or Joint/double/multiple awards or Collaborative Programmes or Franchise Programmes or Linked providers [DABs only]): | Collaborative Programmes   |
| Name of Body (bodies):   | Defence Forces   |
| Programme Tiles and Links to Publications  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MSc in Communications Technology Management</li> <li>• PG Dip in Science in Communications Technology Management</li> <li>• BEng in Electronic Engineering (Military Communications Systems)</li> <li>• Higher Certificate in Engineering in Electronic Engineering</li> <li>• MEng in Weapons, Ordnance, Munitions and Explosive Engineering</li> <li>• Certificate in International Counter-Improvised Explosive Device/Device Disposal</li> <li>• MSc in Military Engineering Management</li> <li>• PG Dip in Science in Military Engineering Management</li> <li>• BA in Leadership, Management and Defence Studies</li> <li>• BA in Leadership, Management and Defence Studies (Logistics)</li> <li>• Certificate in Leadership, Management and Defence Studies (minor award level 7 30 Credits)</li> <li>• Higher Certificate in Arts in Leadership, Management and Defence Studies; <a href="https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-ProvisionVersion-5_2.pdf">https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-ProvisionVersion-5_2.pdf</a></li> </ul> |
| Date of Last Review  | 2016   |
| Next Review Year   | 2021   |

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|   |   |
|---|---|
| Second Collaborative Provision:           | Collaborative Provision   |
| Name of Body (bodies):                    | An Cosán  |
| Programme Tiles and Links to Publications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BA in Applied Addiction Studies and Community Development</li> <li>• Higher Certificate in Applied Addiction Studies and Community Development</li> <li>• BA in Leadership and Community Development</li> <li>• Higher Certificate in Leadership and Community Development</li> <li>• Special Purpose Award Certificate in Transformative Community Education</li> <li>• Special Purpose Award Certificate in Citizenship and Social Action (Level 7)</li> <li>• Special Purpose Award Certificate in Community Leadership (Level 7)</li> <li>• Special Purpose Award Certificate in Learning to Learn – (Level 6)</li> <li>• Special Purpose Award Certificate in Technology Enhanced Learning –(Level 7)</li> </ul> <p><a href="https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-ProvisionVersion-5_2.pdf">https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-ProvisionVersion-5_2.pdf</a></p> |
| Date of Last Review                       | 2016  |
| Next Review Year                          | 2021  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Third Collaborative Provision (Joint Research Degree or Joint/double/multiple awards or Collaborative Programmes or Franchise Programmes or Linked providers [DABs only]): | Collaborative Programmes   |
| Name of Body (bodies):   | Gestalt Institute of Ireland - Irish Gestalt Centre  |
| Programme Tiles and Links to Publications  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master of Arts in Gestalt Psychotherapy</li> <li>• Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Gestalt Psychotherapy</li> <li>• Certificate in Gestalt Theory (Level 9 – 30 Credit Minor)</li> </ul> <p><a href="https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-ProvisionVersion-5_2.pdf">https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-ProvisionVersion-5_2.pdf</a></p> |
| Date of Last Review  | 2016   |
| Next Review Year   | 2021   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Fourth Collaborative Provision (Joint Research Degree or Joint/double/multiple awards or Collaborative Programmes or Franchise Programmes or Linked providers [DABs only]): | Collaborative Programmes   |
| Name of Body (bodies):  | The Tivoli Institute   |
| Programme Tiles and Links to Publications   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master of Arts in Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy (Clinical)</li> <li>• Postgraduate Diploma in Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy (Clinical);</li> <li>• Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Counselling (Clinical) - 3 years ab initio Honours Degree with Minor Award exit of Certificate after stage 1; Certificate in Psychotherapy Theory (Level 9 – 30 Credit Minor)</li> </ul> <a href="https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-ProvisionVersion-5_2.pdf">https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-ProvisionVersion-5_2.pdf</a> |
| Date of Last Review   | 2017   |
| Next Review Year  | 2021   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Fifth Collaborative Provision (Joint Research Degree or Joint/double/multiple awards or Collaborative Programmes or Franchise Programmes or Linked providers [DABs only]): | Collaborative Programmes   |
| Name of Body (bodies):   | Dublin Art Therapy College   |
| Programme Tiles and Links to Publications  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bachelor of Arts in Integrative Counselling and Art Therapy with exit award of minor Level 6 after Stage 1</li> <li>• Higher Certificate after Stage 2 and Bachelor degree after Stage 3</li> </ul> <a href="https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-ProvisionVersion-5_2.pdf">https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-ProvisionVersion-5_2.pdf</a> |
| Date of Last Review  | 2018   |
| Next Review Year   | 2022   |

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|  |  |
|--|--|
| Sixth Collaborative Provision (Joint Research Degree or Joint/double/multiple awards or Collaborative Programmes or Franchise Programmes or Linked providers [DABs only]): | Collaborative Programmes   |
| Name of Body (bodies):   | The Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport Ireland (CILT)  |
| Programme Tiles and Links to Publications  | Higher Certificate in Business in Logistics and Supply Chain Management (Level 6 Major Award)<br><br><a href="https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-ProvisionVersion-5_2.pdf">https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-ProvisionVersion-5_2.pdf</a> |
| Date of Last Review  | 2016   |
| Next Review Year   | 2022   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Seventh Collaborative Provision (Joint Research Degree or Joint/double/multiple awards or Collaborative Programmes or Franchise Programmes or Linked providers [DABs only]): | Collaborative Programmes  |
| Name of Body (bodies):   | Carlow College St Patrick's   |
| Programme Tiles and Links to Publications  | Research and Collaborative Development Initiatives<br><br><a href="https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-ProvisionVersion-5_2.pdf">https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-ProvisionVersion-5_2.pdf</a> |
| Date of Last Review  | 2019  |
| Next Review Year   |   |

## Articulation Agreements

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Articulation Agreements - Total Number</b> | 62 |
|---|----|

|  |  |
|--|--|
| First Articulation Agreement:                |  |
| Name of Body (bodies):                       | Hannover Fachhochschule  |
| Programme Tiles and Links to Publications    | BB(Honours) International Business;<br><a href="https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Institute%20of%20Technology%20Carlow%20Order%20in%20Council%202018-2019%20MajorAwards(1).pdf">https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Institute%20of%20Technology%20Carlow%20Order%20in%20Council%202018-2019%20MajorAwards(1).pdf</a> |
| Date of Agreement/Arrangement or Last Review | 2019   |
| Review Year for Agreement                    | 2024   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Second Articulation Agreement:               |  |
| Name of Body (bodies):                       | Henan University of Economics and Law, Zhengzhou, China  |
| Programme Tiles and Links to Publications    | BA(Accounting);<br><a href="https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-ProvisionVersion-5_2.pdf">https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-ProvisionVersion-5_2.pdf</a> |
| Date of Agreement/Arrangement or Last Review | 2015   |
| Review Year for Agreement                    | 2020   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Third Articulation Agreement:                |   |
| Name of Body (bodies):                       | Seaton Hall University, New Jersey, USA   |
| Programme Tiles and Links to Publications    | BSc(Sports Rehabilitation & Athletic Therapy);<br><a href="https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-ProvisionVersion-5_2.pdf">https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-ProvisionVersion-5_2.pdf</a> |
| Date of Agreement/Arrangement or Last Review | 2019  |
| Review Year for Agreement                    | 2022  |



## Parts 2-6

### Institution-led QA – Annual Information

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

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### Part 2: Institution-led QA – Annual

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

#### Section 1: Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Developments

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

The central role of quality assurance and enhancement is explicitly articulated in the *Institute of Technology Carlow's Strategic Plan 2019-2023* (<https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/ITCarlow-Strategic-Plan-2019-2023.pdf>). The Strategic Plan 2019-2023, affirms the contribution of quality assurance systems in achieving strategic objectives and maintaining and enhancing the Institute of Technology Carlow's reputation and position within Higher Education both nationally and internationally.

The *Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2019-2023* establishes five key priorities to contribute to regional and national economic, social and cultural development, informed and enriched by the Institute of Technology Carlow's growing activities and profile. This plan guides all Institute activities, including quality, engagement, research, learning & teaching and the programmes being developed, validated and delivered.

The development and provision of inter-institutional, regional, national and international collaborative research programmes, joint research awards, and transnational research programme provision have become significant features of the higher education landscape.

Institute of Technology Carlow has been granted delegated authority from QQI for all provision, including Collaborative and Joint Awards, up to and including taught and research level 9 and is working towards delegated authority for Joint Research at level 10 across a broader suite of areas.

Institute of Technology Carlow continues to enhance the learning opportunities for staff through the provision of a range of 10-credit modules as part of the MA in Teaching and Learning (MATL). Institute of Technology Carlow funds staff to complete these modules. There has been a strong uptake of these modules, in particular the Research Supervision Module, which was offered a number of times during the reporting period.

## Alignment to Professional Body CORU

The Institute of Technology Carlow, is committed to the highest standards of education and professional alignment of its programmes within all disciplines.

This commitment, by the Institute, to aligning programmes to Professional Body recognition and approval is at the heart of the Institute of Technology Carlow's Strategic Plan 2019-2023.

Alignment to Professional Body recognition and approval, is reflected with Social Care Education within the Institute and the accreditation of its suite of programmes on Social Care under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act, 2005, as amended.

The Act provides for the establishment of Registration Boards, specifically, the Social Care Workers Registration Board, to establish and maintain registers for a range of health and social care professions. CORU (Health and Social Care Professional Council and Registration Board) is the multi-profession health regulator for Ireland which includes the regulation of Social Care and the Social Care Workers Registration Board under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act, 2005, as amended. In order to ensure that graduates are recognised professionals in this space, Institute of Technology Carlow undertook a significant project to align its suite of Social Care programmes. A programme validation panel took place in April 2019 and we are awaiting a CORU visit for Professional recognition.

### **Social Care - Registration and Regulation**

Under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act (2005), Social Care Registration Boards have identified standards of proficiency which are the threshold competencies that Social Care Workers must meet in order to entry the register. The minimum level of qualification for entry to the register is a National Qualification Frameworks Level 7. In addition, these Registration Boards will approve and monitor Social Care Education and Training programmes. An objective of this process is to ensure that all graduates from Social Care degree programmes in the Republic of Ireland have achieved specific competencies/proficiencies thereby promoting high standards of conduct within the Social care sector. To support students in their journey towards the achievement of these competencies/proficiencies there are specific policies and procedures in situ within the Institute of Technology, Carlow.

The professional social care programmes in Institute of Technology Carlow require students to complete aspects of their learning in professional settings, placing them in direct contact with professional practitioners, service users and members of the public. The Institute of Technology Carlow has a duty to ensure that students are prepared to practice whilst undertaking education and training. It is a requirement of CORU *'that students, practice placement providers and practice education teams will be fully prepared and informed of the expectations of the practice placement, including the education/training provider's student preparedness to practice requirements.'* (CORU, 2017).

To ensure that this criterion is met amongst other documents the student handbook developed contained a summary of the Policies for the programmes and these are:

Appendix 1 – Approved Programme Schedule

Appendix 2 - Policy & Procedure for Preparedness to Practice for Social Care Students

Appendix 3 – Attendance Policy

Appendix 4 - Absence and reporting policy for students on Supervised Professional Practice

Appendix 5 – Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics (CORU)

Appendix 6 – Standards of Proficiency for Social Care Workers (CORU)

Appendix 7 – Assessment Policy

Appendix 8 – Student Placement Handbook

Demonstration of how the programme aligns to the CORU Criteria was also detailed in documentation relating to each criterion.

### **Policy Note**

The Institute of Technology Carlow shall ensure that the legislative requirements under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act, 2005, as amended, are adopted for approval of programmes pertaining to Social Care (Section 48) and for monitoring of said approved programmes (Section 49). In addition, the Institute of Technology Carlow shall ensure that such programmes align to the requirements of the Institute under Delegation of Authority from QQI, under the Quality and Qualifications Education and Training Act, 2012 as amended and CORU as the Regulatory Authority under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act, 2005 as amended. The Institute of Technology Carlow recognises that statutory registration is fundamental to the delivery of quality and accountability in the provision of professional services and that the objective of the statutory registration system is to protect, guide and inform the public by ensuring that health and social care professionals are properly regulated and qualified for the role.

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

Institute of Technology Carlow continues to support dissemination of quality assurance policies and procedures through its dedicated section of the website and newsletters to staff which detail all policy updates and decisions from Academic Council.

Leading through self-review, Institute of Technology Carlow continues to enhance the learner experience by carrying out Professional Support Service Reviews by independent external panels.

Institute of Technology Carlow maintains and enhances its Quality Management System (QMS), including the Institute Quality Work Plan, to reflect the requirements under ESG (2015).

In adopting the ECU Athena SWAN principles and the Athena Swan Charter, the Institute is clearly signalling its commitment to enhancing and promoting gender equality for staff and students across the Institute. An Institute wide application was made for an Athena SWAN Bronze award in November 2018. To ensure the application was completed and submitted for 2018, the Director of the Office of Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) led, collated and submitted this bronze application to Athena SWAN.

In May 2019, Institute of Technology Carlow was awarded the international Athena SWAN Bronze Award in recognition of the Institute's work in advancing gender equality in academia and in promoting diversity and inclusion for staff and students in higher education.

One Professional Support Services Review Peer Review Panel took place in June 2019. This was the Research, Development and Innovation section, which includes the International Department.

The Technological University of the South East of Ireland (TUSEI) joint funded projects are ongoing. These projects involve teams from both organisations who work together in areas such as equality, diversity and inclusion, promoting access to higher education in the region, international mobility, support for adult learners, socio-economically challenged students and other target populations. Network building projects amongst science, health, engineering, design, business and humanities academic and research staff, human resource staff, student support personnel, academic managers and finance departments also feature as do a number of projects to promote higher education connecting with industry and community groups across the South East. Other projects take a regional approach to teaching, learning and assessment, programme alignment and examining ways for higher education to contribute to sustainable development in the region. There are 28 projects funded through this initiative.

Institute of Technology Carlow continues to implement and review its QA work-plan which is available in Appendix VI of the Institute of Technology Carlow's Quality Manual.

### 1.3 The schedule of QA governance meetings.

The Institute of Technology Carlow's Governing Body met on 10 occasions in 2018/2019.

The Institute of Technology Carlow's Academic Council met on 14 occasions in 2018/2019 Academic Year.

The committees of Academic Council met as follows:

Programme Planning and Validation Committee - met 5 times (2018/2019)

Academic Regulations Committee - met 5 times (2018/2019)

Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee - met 5 times (2018/2019)

Collaborative Provision Committee - met 2 times (2018/2019)

Teaching, Learning and Student Support Committee - met 4 times (2018/2019)

Research & Development Committee - met 6 times (2018/2019)

Ethics Committee - met 4 times (2018/2019)

**Section 2: Reviews in the reporting period**

**2.1 Internal reviews that were completed in the reporting period.**

Professional Support Services Reviews

Sports Department Review peer review panel took place in February 2019  
 Research, Development and Innovation which includes the International Department peer review panel took place in June 2019.

Quality Assurance Reviews

External Review of Quality Manual and Work plan took place in July 2019.

Reports for all Reviews available at the following link:

<http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-publications-outcomes.htm>

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

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Number of new <b>Programme Validations/Programme Approvals</b> completed in the reporting year      | <b>30</b> |
| Number of <b>Programme Reviews</b> completed in the reporting year                                  | 0         |
| Number of <b>Research Reviews</b> completed in the reporting year                                   | 0         |
| Number of <b>School/Department/Faculty Reviews</b> completed in the reporting year                  | 0         |
| Number of <b>Service Unit Reviews</b> completed in the reporting year                               | 2         |
| Number of <b>Reviews of Arrangements with partner organisations</b> completed in the reporting year | 0         |

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

| <b>Composition of Panels</b> | <b>%</b>   |
|------------------------------|------------|
| Internal                     | <b>1.7</b> |
| National                     | 69.6       |
| UK                           | 1.7        |
| EU                           | 0          |
| Student                      | 2.5        |
| Other                        | 24.4       |

| <b>Chair Profile</b>  | <b>%</b>    |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Internal              | <b>11.8</b> |
| Similar Institution   | 77.9        |
| Different Institution | 10.3        |
| International         | 0           |

### Section 3: Other Implementation Factors

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

Key themes arising include:

- Research Approval for expansion of provision at Level 10
- Collaborative provision integration and enhancement to Level 9
- Work-based Learning (including enhancement of programme offerings which include Work Placement)
- Recognition of Prior Learning
- Enhancement of Lifelong Learning programme offerings
- Graduate Attributes
- Design Thinking (as part of Technological Gateway (Design +) implementation and integration)
- Professional and Regulatory Body Recognition and alignment to Programmes
- Learner Experience

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

- Preparations for the 2019-2020 Cinnte Institutional Review.
- Preparation and consultation on the Institute of Technology Carlow Research and Innovation Strategy.
- The HEA strategic dialogue process – informing current *Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2019-2023*
- The Institute of Technology Carlow's involvement in regional initiatives including the South Cluster of HEIs; Regional Skills Fora in South East, Mid East and Midlands and Regional Action Plans for Jobs.
- Institute of Technology Carlow's involvement in funding initiatives with the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning.
- National initiatives in research, teaching and learning and provision to include Springboard+

- Recognition of programmes- professional bodies, regulatory and Governmental
- Designated Awarding Body
- CORU - Social Care Registration Board requirements relating to Social Care Programmes.

**3.3** A description of other implementation issues.

Nothing to report. Institute of Technology Carlow is committed to investing in building capacity and expertise across all areas.



## Part 3: Effectiveness and Impact

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

### 1. Effectiveness

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

#### Strategic Context

In reviewing the activities in Institute of Technology Carlow, the *Strategic Plan 2019-2023*, finalised and adopted during the reporting period, clearly defines metrics and this data is continuously updated and evaluated in order to support the quality assurance and management of the learner learning experience.

The themes are derived from the *Strategic Plan 2019-2023* and centre on five strategic priorities:

Priority 1: Our Learners

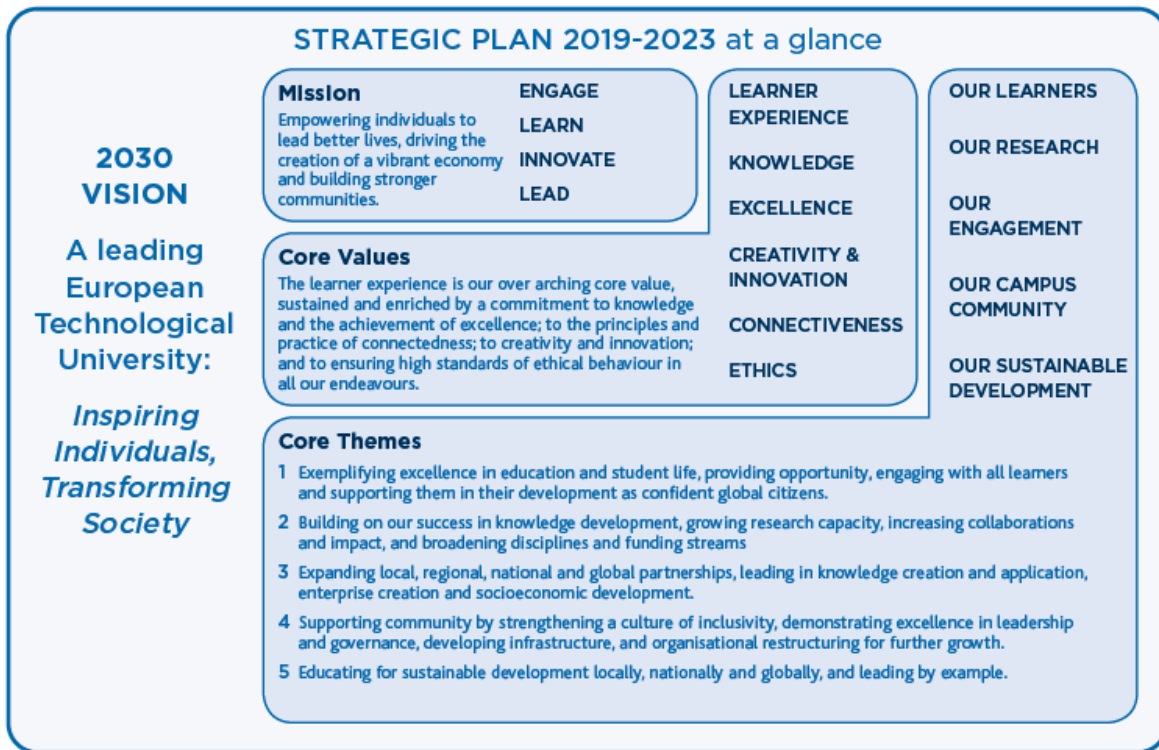
Priority 2: Our Research.

Priority 3: Our Engagement.

Priority 4: Our Campus Community

Priority 5: Our Sustainability.

These overarching priorities guide and inform all activities. The projects detailed below give evidence of the depth, detail, relevance across the institute and effectiveness of quality assurance policies and procedures. Developing the strategic plan involved an Institute-wide staff and learner engagement programme with stakeholder input captured, national and regional strategies and policies reviewed and considered, resulting in a detailed five year strategic roadmap as well as a longer term and ambitious 'stretch target' for the Institute. The timescale reflects the consultation processes and the commitment to ensuring that all stakeholders are engaged. The *Strategic Plan 2019-2023*, is available at <https://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/strategic-plan-2019-2023.htm>. This process is summarised in Figure 3.1.1.



**Figure 3.1.1 Strategic Plan 2019-2023**

External Benchmarking through the HEA strategic dialogue process and *studentsurvey.ie* are detailed in the impact section below.

## Evidence of the effectiveness

### Quality Assurance Policy

Quality Assurance policies and procedures are updated on a cyclic basis in accordance with the Quality Management System and the Quality Work Plan is fundamental to this. To ensure that the Quality Manual is effective an external audit was completed in the reporting period and actions identified have been included in the updated Work Plan.

Further details on the Policies and Procedures updated in the reporting period with the associated version history, can be found in the Quality Manual Appendix V and the Quality Work Plan in the Quality Manual Appendix VI at <http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-policies-procedures.htm>

### Learner Engagement, Retention and Progression

At the core of Institute of Technology Carlow is the Learner Experience. The goal of providing an outstanding learner experience was supported by the setting up of a cross Institute working group to determine possible gaps in the learner experience. This committee has drawn on experience from all sections within the Institute and has provided a forum for the development

of a *Learner Engagement, Retention and Progression Framework*. This forms the capstone for the policies and procedures in this area. The committee is chaired jointly by the Head of the Teaching & Learning Centre and the Assistant Registrar. This approach to the learner experience, which brings together Academic experts, Teaching and Learning experts, Learner Support and Student Services, and the Students Union ensures a coherent approach.

In this reporting period, the *Learner, Engagement, Retention and Progression Working Group* reviewed good practice across the Institute and the collation of these practices will inform the development of the framework.

Work in the area of student success, which includes the Maths Learner Support Centre and the Academic Writing Centre, along with supplemental academic support, available to learners experiencing difficulty with their studies, has supported the retention of learners.

### Professional Body Recognition – CORU

As explained in detail in Section 1.1 a very detailed procedure was undertaken in relation to alignment of the Social Care programmes to the requirements of CORU.

Other initiatives developed in previous reporting periods continue to be delivered. These include the Academic Success Programme and Peer Assisted Learning (PALS) programme.

The Graduate Attributes Framework is being implemented and embedded in all Institute activities, and in particular in new programme development. In the research area, successfully applying for Health Research Board Funding is evidence of the commitment to excellence and the growth and diversity of the of our research profile.

### Collaborative Provision Policy and Procedures

Institute of Technology Carlow has a strong tradition of collaborative provision and, in conjunction with our collaborative partners, we have reviewed and updated the procedures associated with the *Policies and Procedures for Collaborative and Transnational Provision and Joint Awards*. As a learner-focused organisation, Institute of Technology Carlow has a rigorous quality assurance protocol to ensure that learners are supported on their education programme.

An important strategic Collaborative Partnership was formed with Carlow College in 2018 with a view to developing Research and Collaborative Development Initiatives.

Institute of Technology Carlow held its Biennial Seminar on Collaboration in Higher Education on the 22 March 2019 in conjunction with the Reform and Delivery Office in DPER and the Department of Education and Skills as part of 'Our Public Services 2020', a holistic Public Service initiative for development and innovation in the Public Service.

The theme was the improvement of public services through collaboration in education. The event featured addresses by David Denieffe (IT Carlow), Deirdre Goggin (Cork IT), Lt Col Rory McCorley (Defence Forces) together with speakers from the Department of Education and Skills (Grainne Cullen), the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Dr Lucy Fallon Byrne) and the VHI (Darena Finan). The Collaborative Provision Seminar Series highlights the successful programmes and pathways developed by Institute of Technology Carlow with key partners which are underpinned by strong Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policies and Procedures. This biennial Collaborative Provision Series is an opportunity for Institute of Technology Carlow to engage with our partners in developing quality assurance enhancements

for the programmes being delivered. It is also an opportunity for the collaborative partners to meet each other and share good practice.

### *International Collaborations*

Institute of Technology Carlow continues to engage with international partners in the delivery of high-quality programmes. This includes interacting with quality assurance and accountability in education agencies in other countries as required. In this reporting period Institute of Technology Carlow signed an agreement to develop the Sino-Irish College with Henan University of Animal Husbandry and Economy (HUAHE) in China and has expanded the programme provision and MOUs with several new international partners. In order to facilitate transition to the Irish education system, Institute of Technology Carlow designed and delivered a three week orientation programme for Chinese students to familiarise prospective learners with third level education in Ireland. This ensures that the students are familiar with Institute of Technology Carlow before coming to study here in the future.

### **Blended Learning**

Institute of Technology Carlow is a long-established and respected higher education provider. The programmes on offer range from traditional to innovative, general to niche and span from NFQ Level 6 to Level 10. Institute of Technology Carlow's Academic Council adopted the *'Roadmap for the Implementation of pilot blended learning programmes in Institute of Technology Carlow'* in September 2017. Implementation planning for 2018-2019 was instigated and pilot modules identified with induction and workshops for staff. A learning technologist was taken on to support staff in the roll out of the pilot phase.

## **2. Impact**

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

### **Benchmarking**

Institute of Technology Carlow agreed a Mission-Based Compact with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for 2018 to 2021. Through engagement with the HEA Compact, Institute of Technology Carlow has been able to benchmark itself against a set of core standards which have informed and enabled quality assurance policies and procedures. The self-assessment reports were generated under the following principal domains:

- Regional Clusters
- Participation, equal access and lifelong learning
- Excellent teaching and learning and quality of the learner experience
- High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation
- Enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge transfer

- Enhanced internationalisation
- Institutional consolidation.

In the initial cycles, where formal categorisation was given, Institute of Technology Carlow was one of four Institutes of Technology given a Category 1 rating Performance Evaluation. Institute of Technology Carlow continues to receive extremely positive feedback on its Compact.

Working on 2018 data, a pilot study on analysis at programme level of studentsurvey.ie data was carried out. This involved preparation of a report on a pilot programme, the BBS Marketing (Honours) programme. Engagement with the studentsurvey.ie has provided information on key areas of the learner experience and has resulted in changes across the Institute. Specifically, the Institute has listened to the learners and implemented changes based on information collected through studentsurvey.ie. Analysing the responses from the 2019 studentsurvey.ie data, Institute of Technology Carlow scored at or above the average studentsurvey.ie score (for all institutions) in 7 of the 9 identified overarching fields of interrogation. Looking at the Student-Faculty interaction, the overall score is high above the average for all institutions. This is evidence that placing the learner at the focus of all interactions is an embedded practice in Institute of Technology Carlow.

The Office for Institutional Planning and Research has developed a strategy for benchmarking performance against the set of core criteria associated with the U-Multirank University and College ranking system. Work in this area is ongoing.

### **3. Themes**

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

The themes arising during the reporting period are based on the ongoing work plans of the committees of Academic Council.

#### **Graduate Attributes Framework**

Institute of Technology Carlow Graduate Attributes Framework was developed and published in December 2017, by the Institute's Head of Centre for Teaching and Learning.

To be effective as a framework, the graduate attributes are now being embedded into all curricula and this stretches beyond academic programmes to include all extra-curricular activities offered by the Institute, including sporting, social, community-based and voluntary activities. As such, all those involved in the design of any programmes or activities across the

Institute now need to consider graduate attributes. Embedding the Graduate Attributes in the learner culture and informing stakeholders forms part of the next stage of this project.

### Collaborative Provision

As a key theme in the *Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2019-23* is extending the number of collaborative partnerships, these have been developed in line with the *Policies and Procedures for Collaborative and Transnational Provision and Joint Awards*.

### Blended Learning

Institute of Technology Carlow is committed to enriching its learning and teaching strategies by 'drawing on international best practice in the use of learning technologies and blended learning' (Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan, 2014-2018, p. 16). A learning technologist has been appointed to support the implementation of the Blended Learning Pilot Project and the rollout of the Roadmap, as previously mentioned

### Professional Body Accreditation

Institute of Technology Carlow has applied to CORU for accreditation of all its Social Care Programmes delivered across the three Campuses.

Other Professional Body accreditations are renewed annually and the Institute of Technology Carlow Professional Body Accreditation Register is maintained and available at:

<http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-programmes-registers.htm>

### Learner Engagement, Retention and Progression

This remains a key theme in the next reporting period as the framework is finalised and the supporting policies and procedures are included in the framework, providing a scaffold document. The Learner Engagement and Progression (LEAP) framework will also provide support to the learner through their educational journey.

### Accredited Professional Development

The Institute has expanded its provision of accredited professional development opportunities to staff and to collaborative partners, through the NFQ Level 9 MA in Teaching and Learning (and its embedded awards), in an effort to contribute to the enhancement of the learner experience. Within the reporting period, two stand-alone 10-credit modules from the programme were offered to participants from ETB Laois/Offaly, with over 35 participants enrolled. This was in addition to the standard offerings for internal staff of the Institute. Also, within the reporting period, a stand-alone 10-credit module on Research Supervision was offered to staff in Carlow College (June '19), along with another iteration of the module being offered to the Defence Forces in August 2019.

### Non-accredited Professional Development

In addition, pedagogical-related workshops continued to be offered to assist staff and collaborative partners with their professional development, further strengthening our collaboration with these organisations. Workshops on innovative teaching and learning strategies, Turnitin, academic integrity and Blackboard were some of those on offer within the reporting period. In addition, training was also provided to new, incoming external examiners, through the Teaching and Learning Centre, as part of their professional development.

### Academic Support

Through the Teaching and Learning Centre, the Institute continues to support learners through its Academic Writing Centre and its Maths Support Centre. Supplementary academic support continues to be offered within specific discipline areas should the learners and the academic staff identify a need for same. This is coordinated through the Teaching and Learning Centre. Within the reporting period, specific sessions on critical thinking and writing skills were also offered to learners on the MATL programme, and in particular to those who were in the final stages of their dissertation, through the formation of a Writing Circle, which supported peer review of draft work at various stages throughout the dissertation process.

### Academic Success Programme

Institute of Technology Carlow, through the Teaching and Learning Centre, continues to offer an online induction programme to all incoming learners across all of its campuses. The programme, Academic Success: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life comprises of three online modules and is designed to help learners moving into higher education for the first time to prepare for the academic and social changes that come with the transition. The programme seeks to equip learners with the key skills and knowledge they require to take full advantage of their time in higher education and succeed at undergraduate level and beyond. The programme is self-directed and covers approximately 10 hours of activities. It has been made available to all learners through Blackboard, the virtual learning environment, which means that it is accessible to all learners who can access their Blackboard account, irrespective of where they are located. Since its introduction, there has been a consistent increase in its uptake, with many lecturing staff now embedding it in their programmes as part of their assessment strategies.

### National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning - Funded Projects

Institute of Technology Carlow continues to be represented on a national scale in terms of teaching and learning and is actively involved with National Forum funded projects. In 2018-19, three of the projects concluded with the findings from the majority of projects being disseminated on national and international platforms. Within the reporting period, funding was also approved for the running of four National Forum seminars. The four seminars covered a range of areas, including: Action Research (Nov. '18); Understanding Student Anxiety and Building Resilience (Feb. '19) – organised in conjunction with Carlow College; Virtual Education Spaces (March '19); Assessing threshold crossing (April '19).

### Professional Support Services Reviews

Having initiated the Professional Support Services reviews in this sector, Institute of Technology Carlow successfully completed two reviews in this reporting period.

These are:

- Sport
- Research & Development (Including Marketing and International departments)

### Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2019-2023

Development of the Strategic Plan 2019-2023 commenced in this reporting period with discussions centred on identifying the Strategic Priorities for the Institute. This work continued with the *Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2019-2023* launching in January 2019.

In December 2018, the Institute finalised its Mission-based Performance Compact 2018-2021 with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) resulting from a process of strategic and

performance dialogue between the two bodies, and detailing the alignment of the mission, strategy and profile of Institute of Technology Carlow with national priorities. The Mission-based Performance Compact 2018-2021 is fully aligned and integrated with the Institute Strategic Plan 2019-2023 and it also considers the fact that the Institute is operating in a rapidly changing external environment with a strong economy, rapidly growing regional population, the Technological University project, national reviews, strategies and action plans, and geopolitical shifts including Brexit.

The compact itself details a series of twelve institutional priorities which were designed in order to contribute towards the successful delivery of six key national system objectives and targets and it maps and aligns each of these compact priorities to the Institute Strategic Plan 2019-2023.

### Research and Innovation Strategic Plan Development

In 2016, Institute of Technology Carlow published its *Strategic Plan for Research 2016-2020*, much of which has already been implemented and targets achieved. A new strategic plan for research and innovation is currently in development and is due for publication in autumn 2019. Building research capacity and impact is also a key pillar of the Institute's *Strategic Plan 2019-2023*, which includes a commitment to achieving awarding authority to NQF Level 10 across all discipline areas.

The establishment of a new centre of research, SocialCORE, within the reporting period has brought together researchers from amongst the staff and student body, with a few to increasing research output in the discipline area. One of the key objectives of SocialCORE is to prepare a submission for Delegated Authority in this area.



## Part 4: Quality Enhancement

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

### **4.1 Improvements and Enhancements for the Reporting Period**

Improvements or enhancements, impacting on quality or quality assurance, that took place in the reporting period.

Within the reporting period, there has been enhanced collaborative activity and programme development with the Defence Forces, An Cosán and The Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport Ireland (CILT), in addition to programme development in the area of psychotherapy with the Institute's most recent Collaborative Partners, The Irish Gestalt Centre, The Tivoli Institute and Dublin Art Therapy. Joint Quality Visits are an integral part of the collaborative quality enhancement process and are ongoing with all collaborative partners.

Across the institute, quality enhancement activities were enabled by a number of significant developments during the period including:

- Enhancement in staff profile with a greater number of staff with higher qualifications- Masters and Doctorates.
- Continuing staff development, both formal and informal, with a further cohort graduating with a MA in Teaching and Learning from the Institute.
- Enhancement and consolidation of internal QA/QE systems and processes to encompass supporting policies to facilitate professional support services in their roles and review process.
- Development of Work Placement opportunities across a wider range of programme offerings – supported by robust policy and placement agreements.
- The hosting of the bi-annual Collaborative Seminar in Dublin in March 2019 with a theme of *'Improving Public Services Through Collaboration in Education'*. This was an opportunity for existing Partners to speak about their experience in collaborating with the Institute, many years after forming their initial respective partnership.
- Seminars, conferences and exhibitions, such as Eureka, Research, Regional Skills and Science Week being conducted at the Institute as part of Regional engagement.
- External audit of the Institute of Technology Carlow's Quality Manual was conducted.
- A new Mission-Based Performance Compact (2018-2021) between Institute of Technology Carlow and the Higher Education Authority was signed.
- A new MoA was signed with Carlow College.
- The MoA with the Irish Defence Forces Military College was renewed.

- Following the development of a Roadmap for the Implementation of pilot blended learning programmes, implementation planning for 2018-2019 was instigated and pilot modules identified with induction and workshops for staff.
- Athena SWAN Bronze Award was achieved, and demonstrates Institute of Technology Carlow's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Expansion and Enhancement of facilities and the physical environment including:

- Ongoing population of the Dargan Centre (the Institute's primary Research and Development Building to accommodate the continued expanding cohort of postgraduate researchers).
- Expansion of the Institute of Technology Carlow's Centre for Aerospace Engineering.
- Completion of the Institute's Sports Campus and preparations for further development including a Science Building.

#### **4.2 Quality Enhancement Highlights**

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

Institute of Technology Carlow formally adopted its Strategic Plan 2019-23.

Developments in this reporting period include:

- Having been awarded the Expanded Athena SWAN Bronze Award, the next steps are achieving Athena Swan Bronze Awards for the Departments. Three departments have been identified for the first phase and these are the Faculty of Engineering, the Computing Department and the Department of Humanities. The first step in this process is appointing Athena Swan Project Managers in each of the Departments.
- Ongoing Quality Enhancement in the area of collaborative provision to prepare for being implementation of legislation relating to being a Designated Awarding Body.
- The Built Environment Department achieved accreditation with the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland for selected programmes.
- Continued Programme Development and Validation of new programmes across NFQ levels 6-10.

- Continued recognition and alignment of Professional and Regulatory Bodies to programmes developed, validated and delivered within the Institute of Technology Carlow.
- Enhancement of existing and development of new collaborative partnerships including subsequent programme development.
- Building research capacity and embedding enquiry based learning across all programme areas. This includes the development of the Institute of Technology Carlow Research and Innovation Strategy.
- Building work placement opportunities to a wider range of programmes throughout the Institute of Technology Carlow.
- Continued internationalisation of the institution both in terms of learners, staff profile and programme orientation.
- Preparation for the Institutional Review 2019-2020 is in progress following the completion of Strategic, Programmatic, Collaborative and Professional Support Service Reviews.
- Professional Support Services Reviews continue, with Sports and Research & Development completed.
- The Institute Quality Assurance & Collaborations Officer, the Director of Strategy and Research, the Assistant Registrar and the Head of Teaching and Learning Centre, under the direction of the Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar will continue the Institute of Technology Carlow's work in the area of quality enhancement.
- Completion of the construction of the Sports Complex and development of the site adjacent to the Institute's Carlow Campus to include a purpose built Science Development which will significantly enhance infrastructure, facilities and the learner experience within the remit of STEM.

## Part 5: Objectives for the coming year

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

### 5.1 Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Plans

Plans for quality assurance and quality enhancement relating to strategic objectives for the next reporting period.

In the next reporting period, the QQI Cinnte Institutional Review 2019/20 will take place.

Work on the Institute of Technology Carlow Research and Innovation Strategic Plan will be completed and the Plan published.

#### Accredited Professional Development

The Institute is committed to the provision of accredited professional development programmes for staff as this improves the overall learner experience. In that respect, the NFQ Level 9 MA in Teaching and Learning (and its embedded awards) will continue to be promoted and offered to all staff (academic and PSS). In addition, stand-alone modules and pedagogical-related workshops will continue to be offered to assist staff with their professional development.

Institute of Technology Carlow continues to support staff involved in ongoing professional development, including Level 9 and Level 10 programmes. In this reporting period, the Institute of Technology Carlow staff profile shows 96% of all academic staff, hold a Level 9 or above qualification and 45% of full-time academic staff, lecturing at Level 8 or above, hold Level 10 qualifications.

#### Academic Delivery Framework (ADF)

Work commenced on reviewing the yearlong programme delivery model based on a modularisation approach. The consultation process began with a Conference session for all staff on *Semesterisation and Modularisation* looking at how different delivery modes operate in other higher education institutions. Speakers from LYIT, Queens Belfast, USI and TU Dublin (IT Tallaght) talked about operational aspects of Semesterisation including assessment and learner experience. This provided a platform to open the debate on how Institute of Technology Carlow will deliver programmes. The consultation process will continue in the next reporting period, where a decision regarding continuing with the current modularisation approach or changing to a semesterised system will be taken.

## 5.2 Review Plans

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

Institute of Technology Carlow continues to carry out due diligence reviews of potential collaborative partners before entering into a collaborative provision partnership.

There are also Joint Quality Visits scheduled with all collaborative partners where an annual review of the programmes delivered takes place.

### Professional Support Services Reviews

The remaining first iteration of the Professional Support Services Reviews will continue. The Finance Department and Human Resources are scheduled for their first review in the next reporting period.

### CINNTE Institutional Review 2020

Preparations for the Institutional Review commenced in the reporting period 2018-2019. The International Panel visit is scheduled for March 2020.

## 5.3 Other Plans

Establishing a Technological University of the South East of Ireland (TUSEI) is a priority of Institute of Technology Carlow. Work is ongoing with Waterford Institute of Technology to establish a multi-campus TUSEI. This is enhanced by the collaboration projects funded by both Institutes to encourage engagement across all campuses.

A very successful TUSEI project is South East Research Sparks. The research SPARKS project aimed to build research centred collaborative networks between both Institutes by bringing researchers together to encourage interactions and to highlight the personnel, skillsets and technologies available at each. The success of the first conference in this reporting period has led to the funding of a second event in the Autumn of 2019.

U-Multirank is a European ranking system whose basic aim is to provide transparency about the diversity of higher education institutions. Compared to other global rankings, U-Multirank provides information on a wide range of higher education institutions and enables the user to identify and compare institutions with similar profiles and missions.

The system looks at five dimensions: teaching & learning, research, knowledge transfer, international orientation and regional engagement. It combines institutional ranking (comparing whole institutions) and field-based rankings, based on individual disciplines. In contrast to other rankings, U-Multirank is user-driven: it leaves the decision on the relevance of individual indicators to users. As a learner focused benchmark, U-Multirank was chosen, as it aligns to the dimensions prioritised by Institute of Technology Carlow and work on this will continue.

### Professional Body Accreditation

Institute of Technology Carlow has applied to CORU for accreditation of all its Social Care Programmes delivered across the three Campuses and is awaiting a site visit which is anticipated to take place in the next reporting period.

Other Professional Body accreditations are renewed annually and the Institute of Technology Carlow Professional Body Accreditation Register is maintained and available at:

<http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-programmes-registers.htm>

### Academic Delivery Framework

Institute of Technology Carlow currently operates a yearlong modular delivery system. This system is under review and an Academic Delivery Framework consultation process is underway. This has been informed by a Seminar in May 2019 which had speakers from IT Tallaght, QUB, LYIT and USI, each of whom outlined the semester systems in place in their HEIs.

### Designated Awarding Authority (DAB)

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019 was signed into law by the President on 23 July 2019. Section 36(a) of the new act amends Section 5 of the Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992 to enable Institutes of Technology:

‘to make awards, with the exception of doctoral degrees, to students where the college has satisfied itself that the students have acquired and demonstrated the appropriate standard of knowledge, skill or competence for awards that are included within the National Framework of Qualifications’.

Section 36(b) provides that such awards may

‘only be conferred, granted or given on the recommendation of the academic council of the college to or on persons who satisfy the academic council that they have attended or otherwise pursued or followed appropriate courses of study, instruction, research or training provided by the college, or that they have previously acquired learning in accordance with procedures established by the college under section 56 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, and have attained an appropriate standard in examinations or other tests of knowledge or ability or have performed other exercises in a manner regarded by the academic council of the college as being satisfactory’.

From 1 January 2020, all awards made by Institutes of Technology up to and including awards made at Level 9 of the NFQ, will no longer be subject to the provisions of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 in relation to the delegation of authority by QQI to providers to make awards (DA). These include the main provisions for DA set out in Sections 52-55 of the 2012 Act, which provide for providers requesting DA from QQI, QQI’s determination of such requests, reviews of DA (currently incorporated in Cinnte reviews) and withdrawal of DA. In addition, in relation to the same awards, the institutes will no longer be subject to the provisions of the 2012 Act relating to QQI’s awarding functions (Section 49),

which provide for QQI setting the standards for those awards that it makes itself, or those made by providers to whom DA has been granted<sup>1</sup>. In preparation for this, reference to DA up to and including Level 9 of the NFQ should be removed from parchments and other award related documents. This work has begun and is ongoing.

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<sup>1</sup> Establishment of Institutes of Technology as Designated Awarding Bodies: THEA Guidance Note

## Part 6: Periodic Review

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

### 6.1 The Institution and External Review

A description of the impacts of institutional review within the institution.

Following the *Institutional Review* in 2010 Institute of Technology Carlow put in place a Strategic Plan to review and enhance the quality assurance processes within the Institute. This began with a comprehensive self-evaluation and gap analysis. From this, a detailed plan was implemented.

This pathway is illustrated in Figure 6.1. Enacting this plan enables Institute of Technology Carlow to meet and exceed the criteria set.

Mindful of the CINNTE Institutional Reviews' schedule, Institute of Technology Carlow began the process of preparing for Institutional Review in January 2019. Following consultation with Academic Council in the form of briefings and workshops, the Senior Executive Team and Management teams, an Institutional Review Steering Committee, chaired by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs, was established in February 2019 to plan for the Institutional Review. The Steering Committee comprised members of management, key staff members and Students' Union representatives, and met on a regular basis throughout the project.

As the project progressed, Governing Body, Academic Council and its committees, the management team, staff representative bodies and the wider staff grouping have been briefed on an ongoing basis.

Following workshops which gave consideration to the objectives set out in the CINNTE Institutional Review guidelines and the Institute's Strategic Plan 2019-2023, the Steering Committee decided on seven themes for the Institutional Review as follows:

- The Learner Experience
- Collaboration and Engagement
- Learning and Teaching
- Research, Innovation and Enterprise
- Management and Governance
- Quality Assurance and Enhancement
- Communication and Information.



The Steering Committee selected a group to examine each theme and set out terms of reference. Each group prepared a chapter for the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report and a more detailed report to lead other quality enhancement work in Institute of Technology Carlow.

The Institutional Review was discussed regularly at Senior Executive Team meetings and Management meetings. The Vice- President for Academic Affairs presented progress updates to Academic Council several times throughout the project. At staff briefings at Institution, faculty, department and function level the progress and recommendations were outlined and discussed. Briefings were also provided to the Students' Union and Class Representative Council. The Institutional Self Evaluation Report and the Institutional Profile will be submitted to QQI in the first half of the next reporting period.

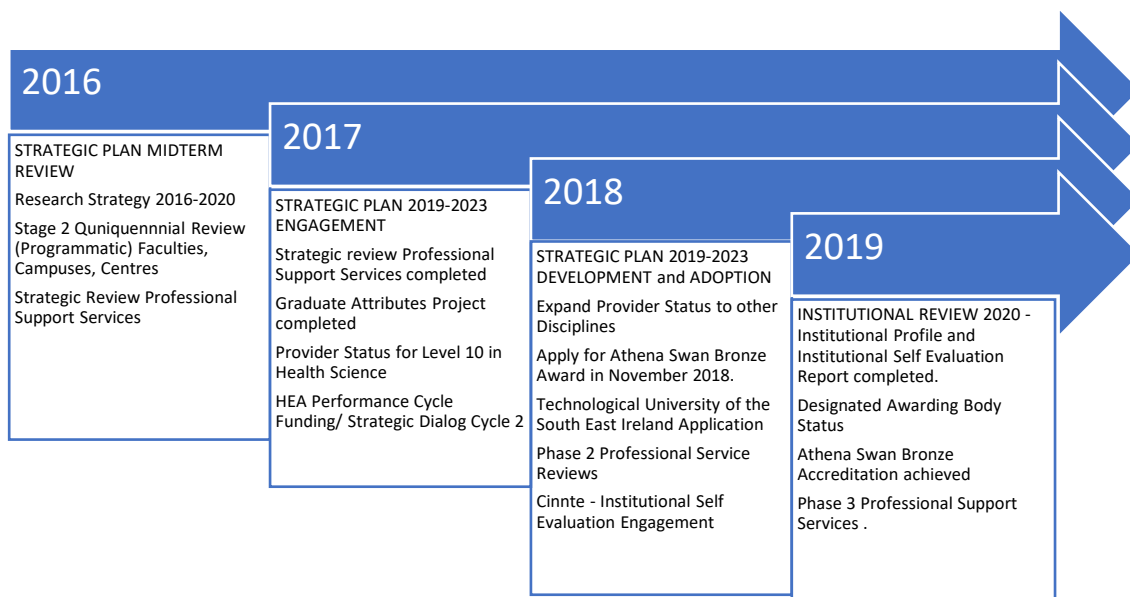


Figure 6.1 Planning cycle for Quality Assurance.

## 6.2 Self-Reflection on Quality Assurance

A short evaluative and reflective summary of the overall impact of quality assurance in the reporting period or, over a more extensive period, in the review.

In this reporting period, Institute of Technology Carlow focused on finalising the *Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2019-2023*, which has a significant quality assurance component. Work began on the Institute of Technology Carlow Research and Innovation Strategy. Led by the President, the Steering Committee consulted with all stakeholders throughout the drafting process.

With an Institutional Review scheduled in 2019/20, Institute of Technology Carlow is focused on demonstrating the impact of our culture of strategic thinking and transparency, which is marked by our connectivity with all our stakeholders. This has enabled the extension of a robust self-assessment model being applied to all professional services which compliments that undertaken by all academic units. The cyclic nature of these reviews will ensure that quality enhancement is core to all activities and that a quality-focused culture is embedded. Enhancing this quality assurance culture will form a basis for future development.

Institute of Technology Carlow will remain an excellent model for the sector and maintain our focus on providing an outstanding experience for our diverse learner population.

We have an ever-increasing cohort of part-time, lifelong learners coming from very differing backgrounds and, as we are delivering programmes through blended learning on and off campus locations, robust and detailed policies and procedures are essential to achieve this goal.

Recognising the diversity of the learner body is a theme which cuts across all areas and celebrating and supporting this diversity remains a key focus.

Central to all activities is the learner and Institute of Technology Carlow continues to provide a rich learner experience.

### 6.3 Themes

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

Learner Experience remains a central theme. The provision of an outstanding learner experience is core to all activities and the focus of all quality assurance policies and procedures.

#### Graduate Attributes

The Graduate Attributes Framework which was published in December 2017 and continues to be embedded in curriculum development.

#### Blended Learning

Institute of Technology Carlow is committed to enriching its learning and teaching strategies by 'drawing on international best practice in the use of learning technologies and blended learning' (Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan, 2014-2018, p.16) and this aligns with the strategic priorities of the National Forum as articulated in their *Professional Development Framework* (2016) and other publications. As a theme, the Institute commits to implementing 'strategic pilot projects within existing programmes and cross-campus' and to developing 'an integrated institutional strategic plan for blended, flexible and distributed learning' (Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2014-2018 (Mid-Term Review, 2016).

In 2018-19, Institute of Technology Carlow Teaching and Learning Centre appointed a Learning Technologist (half-time) to support the implementation of the Blended Learning Pilot Project and the roll-out of the Roadmap for the Implementation of pilot blended learning programmes in Institute of Technology Carlow which was developed in September 2017. Pilot modules identified with induction and workshops for staff.

A suite of web-based resources were devised for staff involved in the Blended Learning Pilot Project and all staff were invited to attend a series of face-to-face sessions, facilitated by the Learning Technologist. These sessions were supported by drop-in clinics. So that anyone with an interest in developing a blended approach to their teaching and learning, could avail of this support, a 6-session Collaborate Bootcamp was offered to all staff in May and June 2019. This was also offered in the evenings to accommodate staff from Lifelong Learning and Extended Campus. Following on from these sessions, a blended programme on Blended Learning was developed and launched on Blackboard, through TLC Staff Hub, so that staff could avail of the programme and follow it at their own pace.

The Learning Technologist has also been working with those in PSS functions, including the Library staff and Student Services to support them to use a blended approach in their information-provision contexts. This support has been very much welcomed, as it is adding to the enhancement of the overall learner experience.

## Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Having completed an External Review of the Quality Manual, the enhancements identified will be completed.

## Learner Engagement, Progression and Retention

As part of the Learner Engagement and Progression initiatives, Institute of Technology Carlow is participating in the national NStEP project, which is designed to increase meaningful learner engagement in quality assurance and enhancement processes. Institute of Technology Carlow is committed to the NStEP programme with staff involved in a number of the National Projects. Work is ongoing on the Learner Engagement and Progression Framework (LEAP) and this will be finalised in the next reporting period. This is a framework which provides learners and staff with an overview of engagement strategies and supports throughout the learner's time in the Institute.

Institute of Technology Carlow is proud of its diverse cohort of learners and is committed to supporting learners to achieve their potential. To ensure continuity and recognising prior learning, Institute of Technology Carlow interacts at a national level guiding policy in this area, through engagement with the RPL Practitioners Network. Lifelong learning programmes are integrated into the fabric of Institute of Technology Carlow. External Examiners ensure continuity of quality across the examination process, as they are common to programmes regardless of the delivery mechanism. The programme boards for Lifelong programmes include faculty from the full-time programmes. There are also specific staff training days, organised in conjunction with the Teaching and Learning Centre, which are provided for staff in the Lifelong Learning Faculty.

## Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2019-2023

*Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2014-2018* came to an end in 2018; therefore work will be carried out in the next reporting period on reviewing performance and developing the *Strategic Plan 2019-2023*. This Plan will build on the current strong foundations to enable Institute of Technology Carlow realise its vision to be a leading European Technological University – *Inspiring individuals and Transforming Society* by 2030.

## Case Study 1: Research Development

Institute of Technology Carlow is developing its research competencies centred in six **Centres of Research and Enterprise (COREs)** building research environments with critical mass, high ambition and strong international networks. These are:

**designCORE** (Product design and design thinking);

**engCORE** (Engineering systems-applied mechatronics, circuits and systems intelligent built environment);

**enviroCORE** (Bioenvironmental technologies);

**gameCORE** (Computer gaming and interactive applications);

**healthCORE** (Health, wellbeing and rehabilitative science);

**socialCORE** (Social and Human Sciences research, enhancing professional practice, policy development across early years education, social care and youth work).

Institute of Technology Carlow has Delegated Authority to Level 10 in the research areas of Biological, Molecular and Environmental Science and research approval to Level 10 in Health Science, Engineering and Computing. Expansion of Delegated Authority in all other COREs remains a priority.

In 2016, the Institute published its *Strategic Plan for Research 2016-2020*, much of which has already been implemented and targets achieved. A new strategic plan for research and innovation is currently in development and is due for completion in the next reporting period. Building research capacity and impact is also a key pillar of the Institute's *Strategic Plan 2019-2023*, which includes a commitment to achieving awarding authority to NQF Level 10 across all discipline areas.

In order to meet its ambitious research goals and provide a strong basis for securing Technological University status, the Institute has invested heavily in facilities, faculty and postgraduate research. Institute of Technology Carlow continues to deliver on its €150mn physical master plan that saw with the completion in 2014 of a dedicated research centre, the Dargan Centre for Research and Innovation ensuring an excellent learner experience. Targeted and strategically driven recruitment campaigns have attracted significant numbers of research-active staff to work alongside established researchers. The development of the Institute's research competencies is centred in six Centres of Research and Enterprise (COREs) whose thematic research foci range from product design, to bioenvironmental technologies, computer gaming, men's health and social care.

Investment in postgraduate student scholarships and bursaries has also attracted talented and committed students and it has served to develop staff supervisory capacity and experience. In September 2018, 97% of fulltime academic staff at Institute of Technology Carlow held a Masters / Doctoral qualification or equivalent (up from 83% in January 2012). There has been an increase in academic staff with doctoral qualifications from 18% in January 2012, to 45% in September 2018. The introduction of additional targeted supports for staff development has resulted in an increase in academic staff pursuing doctoral studies, from 2.6% to 14.1% during the same period.

The research programmes are supported by Institute of Technology Carlow's robust and well-established governance frameworks and quality assurance mechanisms. Clear institutional policies and procedures underpin the selection, admission, induction, supervision, monitoring and examination of postgraduate research. Postgraduate researchers have access to high-quality library services and attend structured modules to build their academic and professional skills. In addition, postgraduate researchers have access to an accredited module in the area of Teaching and Learning, which is offered to support them in terms of their personal and professional development.

The research programmes are informed by the National Framework for Doctoral Education and by the Irish Universities' PhD Graduate Skills Statement. Its aim is to advance knowledge through original research and, in doing so, to foster innovative, ethical and evidence-informed

practice in research programmes. Importantly, there is clear evidence of demand for research programmes which offer opportunities to students to gain qualifications locally.

### Case Study 2: An Innovative learning Partnership – UNUM and institute of Technology Carlow

The Project Ireland 2040 National Development Plan aims to build ‘a strong economy, supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills’ comprising ‘a competitive, innovative and resilient enterprise base essential to provide the jobs and employment opportunities for people to live and prosper in all regions.’ The plan also includes an objective to ‘generate the additional capacity necessary on a system-wide basis to support the projected increase in enrolments and to be fully responsive to skills needs at a regional and national level, including life-long learning.’

The Institute of Technology Carlow is a key driver of regional development and was a key consideration in the decision of US Fortune 250 company UNUM to establish their strategic software services centre in Carlow. UNUM’s investment announcement stated that ‘the Institute of Technology Carlow, are genuinely interested in partnering with UNUM to help us succeed’. Since then the development of the UNUM/Institute of Technology Carlow partnership has demonstrated the potential breadth of an industry/higher education partnership. Today almost one third of UNUM Irish employees are Institute of Technology Carlow graduates and the symbiotic relationship between the two organisations is based on co and joint learning and continues to evolve.

The partnership between UNUM and Institute of Technology Carlow is multi-faceted. UNUM have a well-developed corporate social responsibility and engagement strategy that has informed and promoted the interaction with the Institute. From their arrival in Carlow, the company has been interested in building mutually beneficial linkages with the Institute from the outset, providing them with access to potential employees with required skill sets and providing the Institute with access to the expertise of a major international corporation. In addition, the company has invested in software development facilities at the Institute, student placements and internships and graduate recruitment. A senior manager from UNUM is on the Institute’s Governing Body and also on the board of the InsurTech Networking Centre DAC. A bespoke solution for upskilling UNUM employees commenced on a pilot basis in 2018/19. This programme allows UNUM employees to remain in employment but gain new or additional level 8 qualifications with demonstrable impact for the economy and society through the fact that one third of UNUM employees in Carlow are Institute of Technology Carlow graduates. This adds to their personal skill set but also increases employee engagement in UNUM.

The partnership has been developed through the building of a relationship based on trust and respect where all parties input is welcomed and encouraged and the partnership is strategically important to both. Institute of Technology Carlow has aligned certain elements of computing modules to include areas of specific interest to UNUM and the company founded the UNUM Software Development Centre (SDC) at the Institute’s Carlow campus.

In 2015/16 the Institute announced a Research Fellowship Programme scholarship programme for employees of UNUM who are suitably qualified Masters or Doctoral candidates intending to pursue research in any discipline with one of the research centre at the Institute to enable and sustain a creative and collaborative research community between the partners.

Key transferable business skills along with technical knowledge, from IT systems management to software development to project management and research, are developed in partnership in a model that ensures graduates are prepared for employment in any international IT organisation.

A highly sought after MSc in Data Science has been developed by the Computing Department with UNUM input and launched. Technology based PhD and MSc graduates are highly sought after by industry for their intellectual capacity and applied skills. In March 2019 it was announced that UNUM were building their capacity in data analytics in Ireland and the statement from the board stated that 'Ireland will be our Data Science Incubation Hub. Institute of Technology Carlow is the collegiate feeder program to our Hub in Ireland'. This follows the successful inauguration of the InsurTech Networking Centre earlier in 2019 in which UNUM is a key industry partner and a member of the advisory board. The overall focus is always on learner enhancement, supporting programmes and research innovation.

At an institute level the engagement with UNUM is informing policy development regarding programme design and delivery, placement for learners and volunteerism. During the Institute programmatic review processes from 2015, the Institute has greatly increased the work based experiential placement opportunities for learners. Placement learning opportunities are required to adhere to basic general principles, regardless of the length of time spent in the placement. The formal placement opportunity offered by UNUM acts as a gateway to employment in addition to being a programme element.

From the commencement of the relationship the partnership has involved programme design, validation and delivery. The relationship between teaching faculty, professional services and UNUM staff has developed and grown through programme initiatives and also the provision of IT facilities by the company in the Institute.

The UNUM partnership has developed organically over the past 10 years. There is now a host of formal and informal relationships between the two organisations. One strong reason for the duration and enhancement of the partnership is that both are values led organisations. The Institute of Technology Carlow over-arching core value is the learner experience, sustained and enriched by a commitment to knowledge and the achievement of excellence; to the principles and practice of connectedness; to creativity and innovation; and to ensuring high standards of integrity and ethical behaviour in all of its endeavours.

### Case Study 3. Collaborative provision in the Public Sector: Defence Forces and Institute of Technology Carlow

Institute of Technology Carlow has formal collaborative relationships with six learning organisations, each differing in aspects of their provision but grounded in a quality assurance and enhancement structure that has been recognised nationally and internationally and aligned with the Institute's core learner-centric values. Beyond these formal arrangements, Institute of Technology Carlow has partnerships with public and private bodies that have been enabled to provide for the continuous professional and personal development of their staff building on the frameworks provided by the Institute.

Learning intensive organisations exist in both our public and private sectors. This presents the very exciting prospect of working closely with these organisations in new ways and leveraging collective resources towards a common goal. Institute of Technology Carlow's relationship with the Defence Forces is the primary example of how such a partnership can deliver for both the organisations and the individual learner. It recognises that, increasingly, education is not confined to the lecture hall or laboratory on a HEI campus. It is in the workplace, it is all pervasive and more and more innovative methods of leveraging this for the benefit of organisations need to be found, while better accommodating the responsibilities and aspirations of those individuals in the workplace.

The partnership has seen two public institutions, both with a commitment to education, research and training, to develop a relationship that has become recognised an exemplar of best practice nationally and internationally. In 2016 an international review panel described the collaboration as "unique and a hugely positive development for both organisations". Within this context, it is important to emphasise that programmes developed through collaborative provision are commonly shared and, while Institute of Technology Carlow has specific responsibilities, quality assurance and enhancement is a shared and integrated responsibility for all parties to the collaboration. The collaboration must be such that there is a full and collective commitment to the European and National (QQI) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance.

The partnership is focused on the principle of lifelong learning and includes the reciprocal delivery of lectures and presentations to the Institute of Technology Carlow student body by Defence Force personnel in areas such as Mechanical Engineering, Law, Leadership and Management, Human Resource Management, Logistics, IT Forensics and Sports Science.

To date over 1,600 Defence Forces learners have received awards from Levels 6 to 9 on the NFQ in the areas of Leadership, Management and Defence Studies, Communications and Information Services, Military Engineering Management and Weapons, Ordnance and Munitions Engineering. The partnership extends beyond advanced technology, management and leadership and has also seen the conferral of Master of Arts in Teaching and Learning to learners from the Defence Forces who are involved in the development, delivery, management and review of education and training.



Institute of Technology Carlow has witnessed first-hand the role of continuous professional development in the recruitment and retention of talent in organisations through its activities across the Private Sector, Regional Skills Fora and Regional Economic Development Offices. The model developed with the Defence Forces can be, and has been, adapted for use with many other organisations. The Institute's ongoing work with 'Our Public Sector 2020' particularly under Actions 13 and 14 also highlights the potential of the Carlow learning model for the wider public sector. The success of the Institute of Technology Carlow biennial seminar on Collaborative Provision, held in March 2019 in the Clock Tower in the Department of Education and Skills, demonstrates the appetite for learning models such as the ones which have developed by the Institute of Technology Carlow.