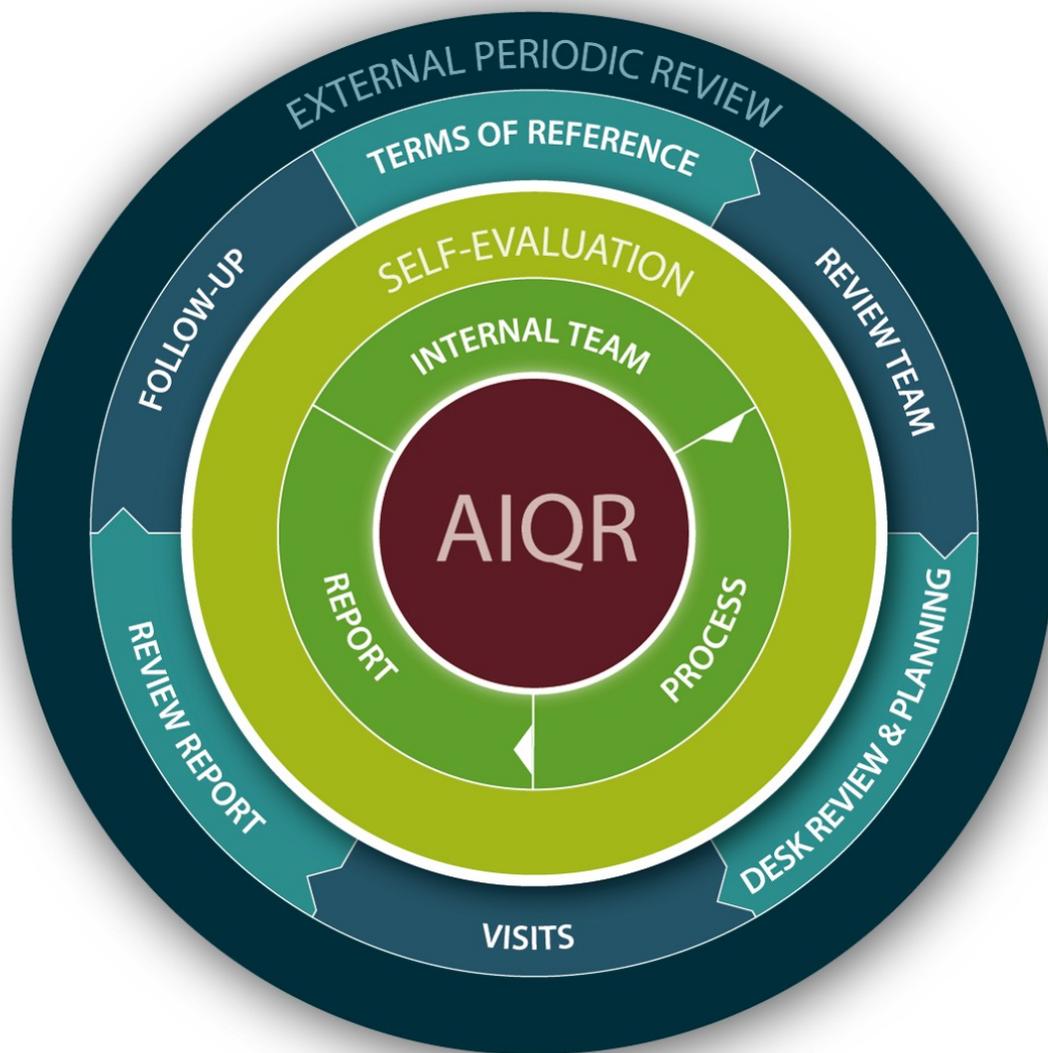


Institute of Technology, Tralee

Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report 2019

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



The Cyclical Review Process

Part 1

Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures

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

1. Overarching Institution Quality Policy

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

Institute of Technology, Tralee is a publicly-funded higher education institution established by statute. The Institute, originally designated Tralee Regional Technical College (Tralee RTC), was established in 1977 under the control of the Town of Tralee Vocational Education Committee (VEC). Tralee RTC became an autonomous institution in 1992 under the Regional Technical Colleges Act (1992) with its remit being:

‘To provide vocational, technical education and training for the economic, technological, scientific, commercial, industrial, social and cultural development of the State with particular reference to the region served by the college.’

Tralee RTC was designated as the Institute of Technology, Tralee in 1997. The new designation more closely reflected the modern mission of the Institution. The mission of the Institute is to ‘excel in teaching, research and development work for the benefits of students, industry and the wider community’.

In 2004, the Institute was delegated the authority, from Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI, then HETAC), to make awards for its undergraduate programmes and taught masters programmes. The Institute provides undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, full and part-time, at NFQ Levels 6-10. In 2017, the Institute was granted delegated authority from QQI in the making of Research Masters Degrees at NFQ level 9 in areas where the Institute already had approval. The Institute already had Research Approval by QQI to deliver Postgraduate Research Degrees at NFQ Level 10 in particular research areas. The range of programmes has led, not only to a wide geographic spread of Irish students, but to a Higher Education Institution with a broad international appeal.

The Institute has currently in excess of 70 nationalities pursuing programmes of study across the three Schools: School of Business, Computing and Humanities; School of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics; & School of Health and Social Sciences. The Institute is now home to approximately 400 staff (249 academic staff including academic management) and 3,000 students with programmes being offered across a range of disciplines. The Institute supports a thriving research community of over 150 researchers including academic staff, research professionals and postgraduate students. Linked to the Institutes three schools, IT Tralee has developed three research centres of scale, whose missions align with national and global research and innovation priorities-

Shannon Biotechnology Centre (Shannon ABC) and the **IMaR Research Centre** (both Shannon ABC and IMaR are co-funded under the Enterprise Ireland Technology Gateway programme), and the **UNESCO Chair ‘Transforming the Lives of People with Disabilities, their Families and Communities, through Inclusive Physical Education, Sport, Fitness and Recreation**. In addition, across the three schools, a number of research groups exist, for example the **Centre for Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Development (CEED)** and the **Irish Academy of Hospitality and Tourism (IAHT)**.

The Institutes sixth Strategic Plan was developed in 2017, the year of the Institutes 40th anniversary entitled: ‘Strategic Plan - A Vision to 2021’. This plan was developed cognisant of the overall national policy framework for the Higher Education sector as outlined in the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030. Recognising that the Institute by itself cannot facilitate the development of a dynamic and entrepreneurial region, in developing this plan the Institute incorporated the relevant aspects of county, regional and national development policies. In particular, the following plans significantly influenced this Strategic Plan:

County/ Regional:

- Kerry County Development Plan 2015-2021;
- Kerry County Council - Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021;
- South West Region Action Plan for Jobs 2015-2017.

National/ European:

- Winning Foreign Direct Investment 2015-2019 IDA Ireland;
- The Action Plan for Jobs 2017;
- Enterprise Ireland Strategy 2017-2020;
- National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019;
- National Skills Strategy 2025;
- Innovation 2020;
- Europe 2020.

In carrying out the Institutes activities, and in developing plans for the future, the Institute is guided by a number of core principles, which were re-stated in the new Strategic Plan:

- Excellence - aim towards excellence in all aspects of our efforts, inside and outside the classroom;
- Integrity - act as one in an open and transparent manner;
- Inclusivity - celebrate diversity and strive to ensure that our communities have access to our programmes, campus and facilities;
- Collaboration through connectedness - working together within and outside of the Institute to advance Knowledge and grow the organisations reach and impact;
- Creativity and Innovation - be a responsive, solution-driven institute that embraces change.

The vision for the Institute has been recalibrated within the new strategic Plan as ‘IT, Tralee will play a transformative role, within the region and beyond. This will be achieved through the creative pursuit of excellence in teaching, learning, research and innovation. This will be realised within an environment of sustainability, fellowship and inclusivity’. To ensure the Institute succeeds as a collective in realising this vision, the Institute has identified five key Strategic Goals:

- Sustainability and Growth;
- Teaching, Learning and Graduate Readiness;
- Research and Innovation;
- Fellowship and Inclusivity;
- Establishment of the Munster Technological University.

The Strategic Dialogue Cycle 4, and the Compact agreed with the HEA, informed this new Strategic Plan. The plan going forward will form the bedrock of the new strategic dialogue framework currently under development by the HEA.

A new Research and Innovation Strategic Plan 2017-2021 was developed in 2017, which firmly underpins the Institutes Strategic Plan 2017-2021 and builds upon the Institutes research performance over the period of the previous Research and Innovation Strategic Plan ‘Connecting Knowledge Globally’, which was published in 2013. The new Research and Innovation Strategic Plan established the following priorities to strengthen the Institutes reputation for excellence in research and innovation:

- Research Excellence: Internationally Benchmarked and Externally Evaluated;
- Research Impact through Innovation;
- Enhance Research Linkages and collaborative Research Activities;
- High Quality Research Degree Provision to Level 10;
- Enabling and Supporting Research Activity across IT, Tralee.

IT, Tralee is firmly committed to continuing to perform high quality research that will strengthen our relevance as a strong driver of economic and social growth. Only excellent research will secure IT, Tralee’s reputation as a high performing research engaged education provider.

In carrying out its activities, and in developing plans for the future, the Institute is committed to demonstrating the highest quality standards, to continuous quality improvement and enhancement and to the creation of a quality culture through a quality assurance system covering all of its operations. In the development of this quality assurance system, the Institute, as required by the Education and Training Act 2012, has regard to the QQIs Quality Assurance Guidelines, QQIs Policy on Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education area and the Technological Higher Education Quality Framework (published April 2017). The Institutes internal quality assurance and enhancement system is focused going forward on applying the Technological Higher Education Quality Framework (THEQF) Principles of Internal Quality Assurance and Enhancement:

- Academic and Student-centred Values;
- Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom;
- Quality Culture;
- Informed Practice and Stakeholder Engagement;
- Proportional Implementation;
- Comprehensive, Transparent and Publicly Accountable Procedures;
- Measurement;
- Consistency with Policy and International Effective Practice.

Refer to the Quality Assurance Manual Section A1: Introduction and Section A2: Mission and Vision, Governance and Management, Sub Section A2.1 Vision and Mission.

The Institutes Quality Assurance Manual (and supporting documentation) is available to both staff and students internally and publically via the IT, Tralee website at www.ittralee.ie

The Institutes Strategic Plan - A Vision to 2021 is available internally and publicly through the IT, Tralee website at <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/ProceduresPlansandReports/>

The Institutes Mission Based Performance Compact 2014 is available publicly through the HEA website at: www.heai.ie

The Institutes Research and Innovation Strategic Plan 2017-2021 is available internally and publically through the IT, Tralee website at <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/ProceduresPlansandReports/>

2. Quality assurance decision-making fora

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

Under the IOT Act 2006 and RTC Act 1999 (Baseline Act), the Institute is led by a Governing Body, the roles and functions of which are described in the IOT Act 2006. The Institutes Academic Council assists the Governing Body in the planning, co-ordination, development and over-seeing of the educational work of the Institute, and to protect, maintain and develop the academic standards of the programmes and activities of the college. The Academic Council is accordingly the primary statutory body with direct responsibility for academic quality. The President and Vice President of Academic Affairs and Registrar are respectively Chairman and Secretary of the Academic Council. Once adopted, relevant decisions of Academic Council meetings are tabled for discussion/decision at Governing Body meetings. The Academic Council has the following Sub-Committee structure:

- Quality Assurance and Enhancement Sub-Committee;
- Research and Development Sub-Committee;
- Programmes and Planning Sub-Committee;
- Student Affairs Sub-Committee.

All of the above Sub-Committees contribute to the development of quality assurance policies and procedures at Institute level. Student representatives are members of the Governing Body, Academic Council and all of the Academic Council Sub-Committees. In addition to Sub-Committees of Academic Council, working groups are established to scope out best practice and report back to Academic Council in advance of updates to policies and procedures. This practice ensures that quality assurance is relevant, current and embedded Institute wide.

The responsibility for ensuring implementation and compliance with these quality policies and procedures rests ultimately with the Executive and particularly within the remit of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar. The Executive ensures the activities undertaken by the Institute are in line with its Strategic Plan and that the elements of associated risk, governance and resource implications are approved before being undertaken. The President is the Institutes Chief Officer, and is assisted in the management of the Institute by three Vice Presidents (Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar, Vice President Corporate Affairs, Vice President Research, Development and External Engagement) and the broader Executive team which includes three Academic Heads of School and the Head of Strategy. The General Management Team is comprised of the Executive, Academic Heads of School and Departments, Academic management and Central Services management.

At School and Department level, Heads of School, Heads of Department and Course Boards have local responsibilities for implementing and monitoring of quality assurance policies and procedures. The academic management of the department's programmes is the responsibility of Head of Department and the Course Board. Opportunities for enhancement of quality assurance policies and procedures are frequently identified through Course Board feedback (student representatives from programmes are members of the associated Course Board ensuring the student voice is heard at this level) and

School Board feedback (which consist of academic staff, school management and school administration).

The service units of Human Resources, Estates Management, Information Technology and Systems, External Services, Academic Administration and Student Affairs, Library and Finance, all report to their line management within the Executive Team. Feedback received through the local staff teams contribute to management decisions with respect to quality assurance and quality enhancement.

The Institute, as a publicly funded body, is accountable to the HEA, and as such is subject to external audit of its finances and its activities. PwC, on behalf of THEA, have been engaged to carry out internal audits of the Institute activities at both local and national level.

A Quality Assurance Dissemination Strategy firmly embeds quality assurance and enhancement within all of the operations across the Institute and provides for an open, transparent and accountable system of quality assurance and enhancement. This system, co-ordinated by the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Registrar, records and tracks decisions of the Academic Council and Sub-Committees and provides for a facility to record when decisions are to be acted upon, by whom and when they have to be completed. It also provides a facility for managing agendas and minutes of meetings. The online publication of the Institutes Quality Assurance Manual and the Institutes Reports and Plans has contributed to this open, transparent and accountable system. All staff and students contribute to this quality culture within the Institute. Staff, students and all relevant stakeholders are formally updated with respect to new and updated quality assurance procedures, and are formally asked for their feedback on the operation of quality assurance procedures. Feedback received is processed formally through the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Sub-Committee.

The Institutes Quality Assurance Manual (relevant sections referred to below) describes the Governing Body, Academic Council and other governance, management and decision making fora with respect to quality assurance and enhancement.

Refer to the Quality Assurance Manual Section A2: Mission, Vision, Governance and Management, Sub Section A2.2: Governance , Sub Section A2.3: Management, Sub Section A2.4: Standing Orders of the Academic Council, Sub Section A2.5: Management of Agendas and Minutes of Meetings of Academic Council, Sub Section A2.6: Governing body Membership, Sub Section A2.7: Role and Function of the Academic Council, Sub Section A2.8: Role and Function of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Sub-Committee, Sub Section A2.9: Role and Function of the Research and Development Sub-Committee, Sub Section A2.10: Role and Function of the Institute Postgraduate Committee, Sub Section A2.11: Role and Function of the Programmes and Planning Sub-Committee, Sub Section A2.12: Role and Function of the Student Affairs Sub-Committee.

See <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>

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.

Programmes are designed in line with the mission, values, core principles and strategic objectives of the Institutes Strategic Plan and the Strategic Dialogue Compact with the HEA, involving students and other stakeholders, and in response to regional need and national policy objectives of government and governing bodies and in the context of the efficient use of resources. The programme design and validation process is carried out in accordance with the Institutes quality assurance procedures outlined below. Programme validation is granted for five years, after which time a review of the programme (Programmatic Review) is completed to establish eligibility for validation renewal and/or retirement. Programmatic Review is normally carried out per academic school, for all programmes of that school, in consideration of the programme, the department, school and Institute strategy. A formal register (Order in Council) of validated programmes is maintained by the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar.

Refer to the Quality Assurance Manual Section A4: Procedures for the Design, Validation and Modification of Programmes and Modules, Sub Section A4.1: Overview of Procedures for the Design, Validation and Modification of Programmes and Modules, Sub Section A4.2: Procedures for the Design and Validation of New Programmes, Sub Section A4.3: Procedures for Modifications to Validated Programmes, Sub Section A4.4: Procedure for Module Development, Modification and Validation and Sub Section A4.5: Appendices, including the following items: Item 1: New Programme Proposal Form for Major Awards; Item 2: New Programme Proposal Submission; Item 3: Assessors Guide for New Programme Evaluation; Item 4: Internal School Panel Review Report (New Programmes); Item 5: External Expert Assessors Report; Item 6: External Expert Assessors Report (Desk Review); Item 7: External Panel Review Report (New Programme); Item 8: Programme(s) Validation Report; Item 9: Programme Proposal Template for Minor/Supplemental/Special Purpose Awards; Item 10: External Expert Assessor's (Desk Review) guide for Evaluation of Proposed Major Modification-Restructuring of Validated Programmes; Item 11: Update to Module Descriptors-Major Changes; Item 12: Update to Module Descriptors-Minor Changes; Item 13.1: Desk Review/ External Panel Nomination Form; 13.2: Declaration of Interest Form; Item 14: Time Schedule for Planning of External Panels/Desk Reviews; Item 15: Tracking Log of Amendments to a Programme subsequent to External Panel/Programmatic Review; Item 16: Roles and Responsibilities for Desk Reviews/External Panels; Item 17: School Audit of Programmes Validation Process.

See <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>

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.

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 highlights areas for focus over the period to 2030. The mission of the Institute, along with the Institutes stated vision and values within the Institutes Strategic Plan, form the bedrock for the goals highlighted within the Strategic Plan which reflect the National Strategy with respect to the provision of quality student centred teaching, learning and assessment and a quality student experience. Excellent Teaching and Learning and the quality of the student experience is also an agreed strategic objective within the Strategic Dialogue Compact with the HEA.

Refer to the following Sections of the Quality Assurance Manual : Section A5: Assessment of Learners, Sub Section A5.2: Anti Plagiarism Policy and Procedure, Sub Section A5.3: Preparation and Production of Examination and Assessment Material, Sub Section A5.4a: Project and Dissertation Procedure, Sub Section A5.4b: Policy and Procedure for the Request for an Extension of an Assignment Submission Deadline, Sub Section A5.5: Access by Candidates to Relevant Examination and Assessment Material, Sub Section A5.6a: Procedures for the Marking of Examinations and Assessments and Recording of Results, Sub Section A5.6b: Entry of Examination Results, Sub Section A5.7: Pre Examination Board and Meetings, Sub Section A5.8: Board of Examiners and Meetings, Sub Section A5.9: Recording Decisions of Boards of Examiners Meetings, Sub Section A5.9a Progression with Credit Deficit, Subsection A5.9b: Classified Awards for Repeat Students, Sub Section A5.10: Amendment to a Results Broadsheet, Sub Section A5.11: Review of Provisional Examination Results, Sub Section A5.12: Recheck of Provisional Examination Results, Sub Section A5.13: Processing of Alleged Infringements related to Examinations organised by the Examinations Office, Sub Section A5.14: Processing of Alleged Infringements of Examination Regulations Relating to Continuous Assessment (CA) and Final Examination Other (FEO), Sub Section A5.15: Analysis of Examination Results, Sub Section A5.16: External Examiners Policy and Procedures (Taught Programmes), Sub Section A5.17: Assessment and Standards Revised 2013, Sub Section A5.18: Invigilator Guidelines, Sub Section A5.19: Procedure for the Management of Certified Absence relating to CA Events, Sub Section A5.20: Solas Assessment Regulations, Sub Section A5.21: Protocol for Students Representing the Institute, Sub Section A5.22: Application for Use of a Bilingual Dictionary During Exams, Sub Section A5.23: Student Feedback on Continuous Assessment (CA), Sub Section A5.24: Staff Student Meeting Guidelines for Students and Academic Staff, Sub Section A5.25a: Guide to Citations, Referencing and Avoiding Plagiarism, Sub Section A5.25b: Request for Approval to Depart from Institute Referencing System, Sub Section A5.26: Examinations and Assessments Review committee(EARC) and Examinations and Assessments Appeals Committee (EAAC).

Section A6: Procedures for Ongoing Monitoring of Programmes, Sub Section A6.1: School Boards, Sub Section A6.2: Course Boards, Sub Section A6.4: Course Programme Handbook; Sub Section A6.6: Students on Course Board.

Section A10: Complaints Procedure, Sub Section A10.1 Complaints Procedures

Section A13: Learning Resources and Student Support, Sub Section A13.3: Student Charter, Subsection A13.4: Reasonable Accommodations and Support for Students with Disability Policy and Procedures, Sub Section A13.6: Policy and Procedure to Support and Determine a Students Fitness to Continue in Study, Sub Section A13.7: Student Code of Conduct and General Discipline Policy, Sub Section A13.8: Fitness to Practice Policy and Procedures.

See <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>

Refer to the following sections of the Student Handbook: Section B: Student Rights and Responsibilities, Sub Section 2: Academic Conduct. See Student Handbook Academic Year 2017/2018 available at: <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/pdf/RightsandResponsibilites.pdf>

All new programme proposals, and the evaluation and validation of same, and reviews of existing programmes (Programmatic Review), require consideration of programme delivery, with particular focus on curriculum design and teaching, learning, assessment and feedback strategies. This serves to quality assure same and support a student centred approach to same. Statistics on student progression within programmes are reviewed annually and barriers to progression are reviewed at programme level by Course Boards. External Examiners in their roles are required to review the appropriateness of the programme assessment strategy and the assessment procedures, range and type, and flowing from this consider subsidiary module assessment strategies. External Examiners are also required to determine whether or not the applied procedures for assessment are valid, reliable, fair and consistent. External Examiners must report their findings to the Institute and the Institute must respond to same.

See Validation Reports available at:

<http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/ProceduresPlansandReports/>

See A5.16 External Examiners Policy and Procedures at:

<http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>

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.

The Institutes Research and Innovation Strategic Plan 2017-2021 sets out the key priorities and describes the goals to be achieved by IT, Tralee during this period. The strategy provides direction and guidance for researchers, staff and stakeholders on the Institutes research, development and innovation mission, values and targets. This strategy is in line with the mission, values, core principles and strategic objectives of the Institutes Strategic Plan 2017-2021 and the Strategic Dialogue Compact with the HEA. The new Institute Strategic Plan identifies ‘Research and Innovation’ as a core goal ‘enhancing the reputation of the Institute as a research engaged institution and continue to improve standards in our delivery of research excellence that will translate into economic growth and societal development in the region we serve’.

Linked to the three academic schools, the Institute has three research centres: Shannon Applied Biotechnology Centre (**Shannon ABC**); Intelligent Mechatronics and RFID (**IMAR**) and **UNESCO Chair Inclusive Physical Education, Sport, Fitness and Recreation**. The Institutes prioritised research themes are driven by the three research centres. In addition, across the three schools, a number of research groups exist eg. The Centre for Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Development (**CEED**) and the Irish Academy of Hospitality and Tourism (**IAHT**) and new research groups and alliances are emerging where staff are working jointly together across departments and schools and developing advanced competencies in multi-disciplinary areas of research. The Institute continues to identify and support emerging opportunity areas as well as supporting existing research areas. Each of the Institutes research centres has their own individual objectives and performance indicators, aligned with the Institutes Research and Innovation Strategic Plan. The Institute monitors its research centres to ensure each centre is on the correct trajectory to meet its annual research targets and metrics. The research centres are aligned to the National Research Priority areas and Horizon 2020.

The National Strategy of Higher Education to 2030 recommends that ‘every student should learn in an environment that is informed by research, scholarship and up to date practice and knowledge’ (2011, pg. 17). Embedding the research activities of the Institute within the individual academic departments is key to fostering and developing a spirit of curiosity and scholarship amongst the Institute’s undergraduate students.

Maintenance of the highest standards in research and research integrity is a recognised critical responsibility of the Institute. In 2013, IT, Tralee performed a self-evaluation of its validated research degree programmes which identified key areas for advancement to enhance the leadership, management and governance structures for post graduate research degree provision at the Institute. As a result, a Research Office, now managed by a Head of Research, and an Institute Postgraduate Committee (IPC) and an Institute Research Ethics Committee (IREC) was established in 2014. The IPC is responsible for reviewing research degree proposal applications and monitoring postgraduate student progress. The Head of Research is secretary to this Committee. The IPC reports to the Research and Development Sub-Committee of the Academic Council, which is chaired by the Vice President of Research, Development and External Engagement. The Institutes Research Ethics

Committee (IREC) facilitates the ethical review of all postgraduate research degree and professional research activities (any research not undertaken by students) of the Institute.

Ethical review of undergraduate and taught masters postgraduate research is managed at Department/School level in accordance with a minimal risk approach.

The Institute recognises the interplay between ‘research ethics’ and ‘research integrity’ in good research practice. The Institute subscribes to the National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research integrity in Ireland (IUA 2014). This policy outlines four commitments in respect of research activity:

- Standards: A commitment to the highest standards of integrity in all aspects of research;
- Education: A commitment to education and promotion of good research practices as the foundations of research;
- Collaboration for continuous improvement: A Commitment to working in collaboration to reinforce and safeguard the integrity of the Irish research system;
- Action to address misconduct: A commitment to using transparent, fair and effective processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct when they arise.

The Institute recognises the necessity to uphold animal health and welfare in its education and research activities. As part of this obligation, and mindful of the legal regulatory requirements, the Animal Welfare Body (AWB) was established in 2018 to oversee and enforce the protection of live animals. This body is tasked with upholding the principles of Scientific Animal Protection within the Institute. The Animal Welfare Body is assisted by the Institutes Research Ethics Committee (IREC) on the ethical issues relating to research projects and educational practices.

The quality assurance framework in respect of research ethics at the Institute is informed by legislation, policy, criteria and best practice guidance established nationally and internationally.

A number of undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes across the Institute have a Research Project component. Research Project Guidelines for students completing research projects within these programmes are provided to quality assure and enhance the completion of same.

Research Quality Assurance policies and procedures at the Institute are aligned with the QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for providers of Research Degree Programmes. The Office of the Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar retains responsibility for registration, examination and oversight of the implementation and compliance with all of the relevant research quality assurance procedures.

Refer to the following Sections of the Quality Assurance Manual: Section A2: Mission, Vision, Governance and Management, Sub Section A2.9: Role and Function of the Research and Development Sub-committee, Sub Section A2.10: Role and Function of the Institute Postgraduate Committee (IPC); Section A5: Assessment of Learners, Sub Section A5.4a: Project and Dissertation Procedure; Section A11: Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes, Sub Section A11.1: Introduction, Subsection A11.2: Project Proposal Approval and Student Registration, Sub Section A11.3: Research Degree Programme Supervision and Monitoring, Sub Section A11.4: Thesis Submission and Examination, Sub Section A11.5: Procedure for the Approval of New Research Areas; Section A12: Research Ethics, Sub Section A12.1: Research Ethics Policy, Sub Section A12.2: Ethical Review of Undergraduate or Taught Masters Postgraduate Research, Sub Section A12.3: Ethical Review of Postgraduate Research Programmes and Professional Research, Subsection A12.4: External Research Requesting Access to Research Participants at IT Tralee.

See <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>

Refer to the Institutes Research and Innovation Strategic Plan 2017-2021: See <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/media/ResearchandInnovationStrategicPlan2017-21.pdf>

Refer to the Institutes Strategic Plan- A Vision to 2021: See http://www.ittralee.ie/en/media/Strategic_Plan.pdf

Refer to the Institutes Mission Based Performance Compact with the HEA - available publicly through the HEA website at: www.heai.ie

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.

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 highlights areas for focus over the period to 2030. The mission of the Institute, along with the Institutes stated vision and values within the new Institutes Strategic Plan 2017-2021, form the bedrock for the goals highlighted within the Strategic Plan which reflect the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 and the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-19, with respect to priority areas of participation, equal access and lifelong learning. The HEA has reported on the Institutes performance through the Strategic Dialogue Cycle 4 and has provided feedback that the Institute is very strong in the area of equity of access. Refer to the Institutes Mission Based Performance Compact with the HEA and Strategic Dialogue Cycle 4 for detail on the Institute objectives agreed with the HEA with regard to Participation, Equal Access and Lifelong Learning at: www.heai.ie

The inclusion of Access and Lifelong Learning as one of the seven domains of the Strategic Dialogue Process has been an instrumental catalyst in the formation of IT, Tralee's response to the national priorities for access to higher education by under-represented groups. The process has raised the profile of access to higher education nationally, regionally and locally and is transforming what we do, how we do it, why we do it and how we track it. During the course of the strategic dialogue process significant progress in data processing and statistical analysis, Institute-wide, was realised together with greater alignment of Institutional priorities. In its pursuit of the specific key access commitments in Cycle 1 of this Mission-based Performance Compact, the Institute has realised a number of significant achievements and is focussing on enhanced external and internal partnership for continued success:

- To facilitate non-standard admissions: The Institute expanded its Pathfinder Access Programme to all 26 schools in County Kerry. This was informed by an evaluation of the existing Pathfinders programme and has led to the introduction of a new access programme for DEIS schools in collaboration with the Trinity Access 21 programme, which will eventually replace the Pathfinders Programme;
- To facilitate mature learners access to higher education: While the Institute continues to exceed the national targets for new full-time mature entrants, it is experiencing a year-on-

year decline in the intake of this cohort. Mature candidates who do not progress to registration are surveyed and IT, Tralee has committed to undertaking research in the wider community in collaboration with local partnership companies to inform relevant development;

- To support students with disabilities to participate fully in the academic life of the Institute: The Reasonable Accommodations and Support for Students with Disability Policy and Procedures, and the Equity of Access and Participation Policy were approved by the Academic Council in AY 2017/18, and their implementation was supported by a suite of staff CPD workshops. Through its enhanced pre-entry schools programme, the Institute is reaching out to students in a more meaningful and cohesive way;
- To develop teaching and learning practices that are effective in creating a positive learning environment: The Institute has developed a Draft Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Engagement Strategy in which it has embedded inclusive teaching practice and universal design;
- To provide fair, regular and ongoing support through the work of the ESF Student Assistance Fund: The Institute has developed an online application form for students use which has assisted with reporting requirements and streamlined the administration of the fund;
- To facilitate students from all ethnic minorities, especially members of the Travelling Community: A second Traveller Access Officer has been appointed to work with students in Junior Cycle;
- IT, Tralee's Access Service is collaborating with Cork Institute of Technology on pre-merger initiatives to develop a model of engagement that promotes a unified student experience;
- The Institutes Strategic Plan 2017-2021 continues to value Access and Lifelong Learning as a priority for the coming years, taking an Institute-wide approach to celebrating diversity and striving to ensure that our communities have access to our programmes, campus and facilities.

The Institutes new Strategic Plan 2017-2021, refers to integrating the goals and objectives of the national access plan into Institutional activities. It identifies the following as measures of the success of same being achieved:

- The Institutes Access Plan will be updated in line with the National Access Plan 2015-2019, specifically the following will be achieved: A bespoke access outreach programme targeting the socio Economic Groupings (Non manual worker group & semi and unskilled manual worker group) at second level; An access champion in each department; Specific monitoring of non-completion for access groups;
- Research to be completed to inform relevant Institutional Access Initiatives. Based on research outputs and demand, we will design and offer a tailored access Foundation Programme providing 20 new places annually;
- Track, monitor and support students of the access programme with the aim of facilitating progression and completion of a higher education award which exceeds the national target for this cohort.

During Academic Year 2016/2017, further to a review of the Pathfinders programme that had taken place the previous year, a new proposal (Access 21) was explored to replace the existing Access Pathfinders Programme. The new project explored was the Trinity Access 21 Project already running at Trinity College Dublin. Working in collaboration with Trinity College, this new project has been

rolled out at the Institute to address diverse societal and educational challenges by supporting schools to develop innovative approaches to formal and informal learning.

The Review Report and Proposal for the New Access Programme, commenced in September 2017, was noted at a Student Affairs Sub-Committee of the Academic Council. The Student Affairs Sub-Committee considers quality assurance and enhancement matters related to the student lifecycle. Terms of Reference for the Student Affairs Sub-Committee are available at the following link. See A2: Mission, Vision, Governance and Management, Sub Section A2.12: Role and function of the Student Affairs Subcommittee at <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>

Access21@ ITTralee is a project that has been running since last year between the Institute of Technology Tralee and three DEIS schools in Kerry.

As another DEIS school joined this programme this year, 2018 saw what is a strong multi-tiered programme with the key core practices of Pathways to College, Mentoring, Leadership through Service and 21st Century Teaching and Learning get more and more established in our partner schools. Staff and students from 2nd and 3rd years are deeply involved in the efficient running of this programme.

Access21@ ITTralee's overall objective to fulfil key goals set up in 2017 has been reached as:

- the educational aspirations and attainment of Irish second level students from geographical areas where attendance at third level is historically low has been raised;
- partner schools have been supported to develop and promote 21st Century Teaching & Learning environments;
- the STEM/CS capabilities of teachers across the Irish second level education system have been increased;
- an evidence base that informs policy and structural change is being built.

Furthermore, as the quality assurance in implementing this programme has been rigorously ensured, very noticeable improvements have been recorded in the:

- strengthening in the Access21@IT Tralee concept;
- structuring of the delivery of this programme;
- efficiency in the delivery of this programme;
- strengthening in staff involvement;
- quality of student involvement with key subjects;
- relationship between IT Tralee students and students from our partner schools.

Quality enhancement highlights during the year included:

- Planning Sessions with Participating Schools;
- Train the Trainer sessions with Schools (Mentoring & Leadership);
- Access21@IT Tralee Mentors Workshops;
- School Visits (Consultation/Troubleshooting with Teachers);
- Implementation of IT Tralee Access 21 Mentors mentoring in partner schools;
- Campus visits for participating schools;
- First Access21@IT Tralee Get Together.

Access21@IT Tralee strongly cemented its relationship with management, staff and students in partner schools by rolling out 5 major initiatives:

- The setting up and implementation of the ITT Getting College Ready Calendar of Events;
- The setting up of an Access21@IT Tralee budget which has been instrumental in ensuring the smooth running of the project;
- Access21@IT Tralee first Access 21 Experience Day with of 160 2nd year students from our partner schools in IT Tralee experiencing college life in IT Tralee and being treated to IT Tralee Final Year students showcasing their Final Projects;
- IT Tralee Access 21 Mentors setting up to mentor their mentees in our partner schools;
- IT Tralee Access 21 Student Ambassadors visiting partner schools and engaging with students by relating their own path to College and the many obstacles on the way particularly struck a chord with DEIS students as a noticeable engagement was recorded.

Furthermore, Access21@IT Tralee hosted our first Research Seminar with Trinity Access 21 research team presenting the findings of their work for 2017-2018 which reflected an increased improvement in the Access 21 students' confidence in key skills:

- Sense of purpose in education;
- Aspirations and goals;
- Active engagement with education;
- Wellbeing;
- Self-worth;
- Student voice;
- Student-teacher relationship.

The Institute consistently applies predefined and published regulations and procedures covering all aspects of the student lifecycle, from student admission through to certification. A quality student Induction Programme to the Institute, to the student's academic department and to the student's programme of study is also facilitated. The Institute makes and confers awards upon successful graduates in line with the QQI National Policy and Criteria for Making Awards.

The Institute does not have one overarching set of policies and procedures/source for all of these matters, but a range of published regulations, policies and procedures apply, as follows:

All information in relation to Admission, Transfer, Progression, Recognition and Certification is available to future and current students on the Institutes homepage:

See <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationFor/FutureStudents/> and select the heading Current Students at <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/> ,

the Institutes Prospectus See:

<http://www.ittralee.ie/en/media/IT%20Tralee%20Online%20Prospectus.pdf> , the Institutes Student Handbook, See : <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/media/StudentHandbookSectionA.pdf> and <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/pdf/RightsandResponsibilites.pdf>

Refer to the following sections of the Quality Assurance Manual: Section A14: Student Admissions, Progression and Recognition, Sub Section A14.1: Garda Vetting Policy, Sub Section A14.2: Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning, Sub Section A14.3: Admissions Policy, Sub Section A14.4:

Progression Policy-Policy for Determining the Order in which Eligible Candidates are made Offers on Add-On Ordinary/Honours Degree Programmes.

See <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>

The Banner System is the tool used to collect data with respect to student retention, progression and success. Under the management of the Head of Strategy and Institute Performance, a Central student Data Office was established in Academic Year 2016/2017, to centralise quality data collection, analysis and dissemination. The data is processed through the relevant Quality Assurance procedures in place to do so.

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.

High quality teaching is central to the success of higher education Institutes. IT, Tralee values all staff and recognises that their expertise, skills and commitment underpin the continuing success of the Institute and the accomplishment of its strategic goals. The Institutes Mission Based Performance Compact with the HEA reflects both the Institutes Strategic Plan and the National Strategy in Higher Education in this regard. The Irish economic and educational landscape are changing. Learners increasing demand for relevant higher education and training programmes delivered in traditional full time, part time modes, as well as in the case of certain programmes, delivery through blended learning mode to facilitate distance and lifelong learning.

The Institutes E-Learning Development and Support Unit (EDSU) was established in 2013. It supports staff in the following ways: Supports staff incorporating technology into their teaching; Provides staff training and user support for Blackboard, IT, Tralee's Learning Management System; Collaborates with staff on developing and delivering online and blended learning programmes. In AY 2017/2018, EDSU developed a module (blended delivery) for teaching staff on 'Teaching Online'. The module introduction session was scheduled within the CPD Events run across the AY 2017/2018 and due to staff demand, the introduction session module was facilitated on three separate occasions (approx. 25% of all academic staff attended the introduction session of the module).

The Employee Assistance Programme is an employee support service designed to support employees resolve personal or work related concerns, which are having an adverse effect on their health and well-being, their job or their relationships.

The Institute of Technology, Tralee is committed to a policy of encouraging and supporting the development of staff in a manner consistent with their career development goals and the strategic goals of the Institute. The level of funding available in any year will determine the extent of support which can be provided. The available budget will be apportioned between: (a) Institute-wide training organised by the Assistant Registrar and the HR Department; (b) an Institute wide competitive fund to enhance academic qualifications; and (c) Schools and Departments for individual staff training, conferences, etc. A Staff Training and Development Policy is in place which relates to staff participation in training programmes, staff attendance at conferences and the attainment of additional qualifications by individual staff. All training, courses of study or conferences must relate directly to the individuals work or be aligned to the anticipated future needs of the Institute. In order to keep up to date with developments in education and in the wider community, staff are encouraged to maintain links with their professional membership bodies which may include attendance at conferences and/or seminars. Of particular importance is the enhancement of professional status through the presentation of papers for publication in peer reviewed journals.

Similarly visits or links with other educational establishments and industry may be appropriate. Staff will be encouraged to share with their colleagues any interesting outcomes, research or new developments they encounter when attending.

The Institute provides a comprehensive range of continuing professional and pedagogical development (CPD) workshops each year. The workshops, co-ordinated by the Assistant Registrar, are based on recurring topics relevant to supporting the competence of academic staff and requested topics from academic staff. These workshops dates are built into the academic calendar. The Institute also provides regular workshops for postgraduate research supervisors under its Supervisor Training Programme. The Research Office co-ordinates same.

In December 2017, the Programmes and Planning Sub-Committee approved a proposal for the development of a part-time blended delivery MA in Learning and Teaching. The programme development team was put in place at the commencement of AY 2018/19. The plan is that, this programme (Single Subject Certification/ Postgraduate Certificate / Postgraduate Diploma and Masters Degree), when developed and approved, would be available from January 2019. The programme will be designed to develop the knowledge, skills and professional competence that those with a teaching role need, both within IT Tralee and beyond, to become effective teachers. The suite of programmes will make provision for applicants who aspire to gain a formal qualification in learning and teaching. In addition, it will also be for those who wish to develop and enrich their learning and teaching practices away from the busy work environment in the context of Continuous Professional Development.

The recruitment of staff and budget available for staff development has been impacted by the challenging fiscal environment in which the Irish HEI sector currently operates.

The following policies and procedures are in place around recruitment, support and development of teaching staff.

Refer to the following sections of the Quality Assurance Manual: Section A8: Procedure for Selection, Appointment, Appraisal and Development of Staff, Subsection A8.1: Recruitment and Selection Procedures; Section A10: Complaints Procedures, Subsection A10.2: Dignity and Respect Policy and Procedures. See: <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>

Refer to the following policies and procedures available to staff internally through the staff intranet: Induction Booklet for New Staff; Protected Disclosures; Code of Conduct; Child Protection Policy; Code of Practice for the Employment of People with Disabilities; Equality Policy; External Activities Policy; Grievance Procedures; Disciplinary Procedures; Preventing Bullying and Harassment; Working Against Racism; Employee Leave Arrangements; Employee Assistance Programme (EAP); Staff Garda Vetting Policy; Progression from Assistant Lecturer to Lecturer; Superannuation/Pensions; Staff Training and Development.

The new Institute Strategic Plan 2017-2021, identifies ‘Fellowship and Inclusivity’ as a core goal of the plan, to be achieved by:

- Working with and empowering staff to create a better work environment. It identifies the following as measures of the success of same being achieved: Identification of measurements to determine staff engagement rates, to be completed by the end of Academic Year 2017/2018; the Institutes communication strategy will be enhanced to include an internal communication strategy; training needs analysis to be undertaken to formulate an annual Training and Development Plan, to be completed by the end of December 2017; establishment of an Institute social club;

- Benchmark Human Resources supports to highlight good practice and to identify areas for additional focus. This will help ensure the Institutes staff are valued and supported accordingly. It identifies the following as a measure of the success of same being achieved: Enhancing the working environment to support staff in their work life;
- Enhancing the physical environment to better enable staff to administer their roles and responsibilities. It identifies the following as measure of the success of same being achieved: Utilise the campus infrastructure master planning process to enhance the physical environment to facilitate staff to administer their roles and responsibilities in a work friendly physical environment.

See Strategic Plan at http://www.ittralee.ie/en/media/Strategic_Plan.pdf

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.

High quality teaching and learning is central to the success of higher education institutes. It is imperative that strategically the Institute maintains a firm focus on quality teaching and learning as this will directly encourage educational innovation and excellence. 'Excellent Teaching and Learning and Quality of Student Experience' is identified as one of the seven domains of the Strategic Dialogue Process and the new Institute Strategic Plan 2017-2021 identifies 'Teaching, Learning and Graduate Readiness' as a core goal of the plan. The monitoring of teaching and learning and the students experience of teaching and learning is central to this focus, both internal and external monitoring, providing feedback from all of the stakeholders, primarily the student, to inform teaching and learning quality enhancements.

Refer to the following Sections of the Quality Assurance Manual: Section A5: Assessment of Learners, Sub Section A5.16: External Examiners Policy and Procedures (Taught Programmes); Section A6: Procedures for Ongoing Monitoring of Programmes, Sub Section: A6.1: School Boards, Sub Section A6.2: Course Boards, Sub Section A6.4: Course Programme Handbook, Sub Section A6.6: Students on Course Board; Section A7: Procedures for Evaluation of Programmes, Sub Section A7.1: Procedure and Guidelines for the Regular Evaluation of Programmes; Section A9: Feedback Mechanisms, Subsection A9.1: Surveys and Questionnaires.

See <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>

In Academic Year 2016/2017, it was decided by the Office of the Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar to pilot an amended version of the previously in place Annual Course Board Report Forms (CBA 1 and 2). The amendments were based on feedback from the Heads of Department. On the basis of the pilot in Academic Year 2016/2017, and the subsequent requirement of the new Strategic Plan for the completion of Academic Department Plans, a full review of the CBA 1 and 2 took place at the commencement of Academic Year 2017/2018, co-ordinated by the Office of the Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar. This review was focused on the establishment of centralised data informed department level decision making and planning which resulted in the development of the online tool-Academic Department Report/Plan. This online tool is centrally populated by the Central Student Data Office with the relevant data for analysis and interpretation by academic departments, to inform their development of an academic department action plan for the subsequent Academic Year. The plan is submitted to the Executive and subsequently to the Academic Council. The following are the headings included:

- Current Department Strategy;
- Current Programmes within the Department;
- Previous Annual Academic Department Report/Plan;
- Student CAO Data-Trends;
- Student Registration Data-Trends;
- Analysis of Examination Results and Progression Data –Trends;
- Student Withdrawals and Retention Initiatives;

- Student Graduation Statistics;
- Stakeholder Feedback (incl. ISSE Feedback, External Examiners Feedback, Industry Feedback, Graduate Feedback, Course Board Feedback);
- Use of Technology Enhanced Learning;
- New Programme Proposals;
- Quality Enhancements-Department activities which contribute to quality enhancements on teaching and learning;
- Annual Academic Department Plan for the next Academic Year (This section is a summary of the actions to be addressed, as outlined within each of the previous sections, and the indicators of success).

The External Examiner Policy and Procedures provide for the requirement of Course Boards to produce a 'Summary Report of Action Items/Recommendations for Improvement from External Examiners Reports and Responses by School/Department' to the Academic Council. Reference to this requirement quality assures that Course Boards consider and provide a response to external examiners recommendations for improvement in the teaching and learning experience. This requirement is embedded within the new Academic Department Report/Plan.

Student feedback on teaching and learning:

Refer to the following sections of the QA Manual-Section A6: Procedures for Ongoing Monitoring of Programmes, Sub Section A6.6: Students on Course Board.

Structured involvement by students on course board is through the following mechanisms:

Representation on Course Boards; Scheduled Joint Academic Workshops (JAWS); Scheduled Class Tutor/Class Representative meetings.

Refer to the following section of the QA Manual: Section A9: Feedback Mechanisms, Sub Section A9.1: Surveys and Questionnaires.

The nationally agreed QA 1 (Survey of Student Experience by Lecturer) and QA 3 (Survey of Students Course Experience) Questionnaires are disseminated at academic department level annually. Refer to the following section of the QA Manual: Section A9.1: Surveys and Questionnaires.

See <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>

The HEA-funded Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) initiative has effectively been in operation since 2014. The Assistant Registrar co-ordinates survey-related activity and, in particular, their outputs and response to the survey findings. During the Academic Year 2016/2017, a pilot process was proposed by the Assistant Registrar to the General Management Team and the Executive to embed ISSE as an integral student feedback mechanism within the Institutes quality assurance systems, with the proposal outlining an annual response at department, school and institute level, including both a feed-back mechanism to students/staff and a feedforward mechanism in terms of an action plan based on the feedback received. This pilot proposal was agreed for roll in the Academic Year 2016/2017, following receipt of the data from ISSE in May 2017. Due to the agreed strategic importance of the ISSE data, an executive decision was made that going forward the data analysis would be processed through the Central Student Data Office . This office was established under the management of the Head of Strategy and Institute Performance. ISSE feedback is now embedded within the new online tool-Academic Department Report/Plan.

In Academic Year 2017/2018, ISSE afforded HEIs the opportunity to embed the QA3 questions (Survey of Students Course Experience) within the ISSE Survey. IT Tralee accepted this opportunity and the questions were included within the February/March 2018 ISSE Survey.

The Student Open Forum was launched by the Office of the Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar in the Academic Year 2012/2013. A minimum of two fora are arranged in each academic year. Membership of the forum includes, Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar (Chairperson), Assistant Registrar, Academic Administration and Student Affairs Manager (Deputy Chairperson), Students' Union executive, Student class representatives, Admissions Officer, Examinations Officer, Students Services Officer (Secretary), Computer Services Manager, Librarian and Access Officer. The objectives of the forum are to provide an open discussion platform for student experiences of Institute services and facilities, and where particular issues can be presented for resolution where possible. Minutes and matters arising are reviewed at each subsequent forum meeting.

During Academic Year 2016/2017, the Institute became one of a number of HEIs nationally to engage with the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP). Student engagement is acknowledged by the Institute as a two-way process. Ultimately students are responsible for their own learning and level of engagement. However, student engagement is dependent on the Institutes culture and the Institute providing the conditions that will enable students to get involved. The Institutes implementation of this programme will have a direct impact on enhancing student engagement, and in particular student involvement in decision making processes in relation to governance and management, quality assurance and in teaching and learning.

As per the requirements of NStEP, the National Student Engagement Programme, the Institute in collaboration with the Institutes Students' Union, established an Internal Institute Student Engagement Working Group to progress the 3 work streams of the programme for the remainder of Academic Year 2016/2017 and for the new Academic Year 2017/2018:

1. National Student Training Programme;
2. Institutional Analysis; and
3. The five national projects, working to develop National Best Practice Guidelines.

In reference to 1 above, in Academic Year 2017/2018, the class representatives were trained by NStEP.

In reference to 2 above, on 17/01/2018, the NStEP Institutional Analysis was facilitated at the Institute by Cat O'Driscoll NStEP and Simon Varwell sparqs (Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland). Based on the feedback from the Institutional Analysis, the Institute Student Engagement Working Group agreed an action plan to respond to the feedback, the action plan is to be rolled out in Academic Year 2018/2019.

In reference to 3 above, the Institute is represented on all five of the national working groups as outlined below. The working groups progressed with their work across the Academic Year 2017/2018.

Project 1: The Role and Recruitment of Class Representatives (Lead by the National College of Ireland, with representation from IT Tralee's Students' Union).

Project 2: The Design, Review and Delivery of Programmes (Lead by NUI Galway, with representation from IT Tralee-Assistant Registrar/Head of Student Engagement Office).

Project 3: Student Feedback Opportunities, Data and Follow Up (Lead by Carlow IT, with representation from IT Tralee-Assistant Registrar/Head of Student Engagement Office).

Project 4: Students in Formal System Level Procedures, Strategy and Decision Making (Lead by Letterkenny IT, with representation from IT Tralee's Students' Union).

Project 5: Staff Roles and Capacity Building (Lead by CIT, with representation from IT Tralee-Assistant Registrar/Head of Student Engagement Office).

During Academic Years 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 general discussions had been held at a number of Academic Council meetings in relation to enhancement of the student teaching and learning experience to support the students transition to third level, their retention, progression and academic success and provide for a quality engaged student experience.

At a meeting of the Academic Council in November 2015, the decision was made to establish a Teaching, Learning and Assessment Working Group to develop an Institute Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy. After the initial meetings of this working group it was decided to widen the focus of the strategy to include Engagement and to focus initially on the Year 1 teaching and learning student experience. Subsequently, this working group was then tasked with the development of a Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Engagement (TLAE) Strategy.

At a meeting of the Academic Council in April 2016, a decision was made to establish a sub-group of the Academic Council to progress with developing Terms of Reference for a Review of Semesterisation with a focus on Year 1. At this same meeting it was agreed that progression with the development of the Terms of Reference for a Review of Semesterisation in Year 1 and the development of a TLAE Strategy with an initial focus on year 1 are inextricably linked. Therefore, it was agreed that both groups would progress on working together. This work progressed as agreed, and at a meeting of the Academic Council in June 2017, a pilot roll-out of a yearlong de-semesterised year 1 across the Institutes programmes was approved. It was decided that this option would be explored by all Course Boards/Departments in Academic Year 2017/2018, for implementation in Academic Year 2018/2019. It was agreed that all departments would commence with the exploration as an agenda item at an early Course Board meeting in Academic Year 2017/2018. It was also agreed that this work will include a review of the teaching and learning student experience in Year 1 and consequently will contribute to the ongoing co-development of an Institute Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Engagement Strategy. As agreed by this Academic Council, the joint Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Engagement Strategy Working Group and the Review of Semesterisation sub-group of the Academic Council would meet to draft the Terms of Reference to support the progression of the agreed work by all course boards. At the close of Academic Year 2017/2018, one Course Board (the Health and Leisure Department) made the decision to pilot a de-semesterised Year 1 in all of its programmes in Academic Year 2018/2019.

The TLAE Working Group progressed with the drafting of an Institute Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Engagement Strategy. At the close of Academic Year 2017/2018, a final draft of the agreed core principles, strategies and associated actions were forwarded to the Executive for consideration. The agreed principles are as follows:

- Excellence in teaching and learning is achieved through an Institute-wide collaborative approach which embraces the wide diversity of staff and students;
- The Institute is committed to the ongoing development and resourcing of an optimal teaching and learning experience, ensuring an inclusive, learning-centred and nurturing environment to support all to reach their full potential;
- The continuation of the historical Institute focus on the applied nature of teaching, and learning by doing, will ensure the academic, personal and social development of work-ready and civic-minded graduates;
- The Institute acknowledges the diverse prior educational experience of its students, and is committed to supporting their transition into the third level environment, particularly in their first year, through a scaffolded and developmental approach to teaching and learning;
- Lecturers are supported in their primary role as educators through the provision of continuous professional development opportunities and the promotion of a collaborative community of practice, where knowledge and reflection on practice inform the ongoing development of teaching excellence;
- Teaching and Learning practice is evidence-based and informed by stakeholder feedback, both from internal stakeholders (staff and students) and engagement with external stakeholders, so that the programmes provided and the learning achieved meets the needs of the student, industry and society.

The agreed goals are as follows:

- Goal 1: Learning Centred Practices (including Student Supports);
- Goal 2: Assessment for/of/as Learning and Student Feedback;
- Goal 3: Design Curricula to be Engaging and Relevant to the Student, Industry and Society;
- Goal 4: Support the Professionalism of Teaching through Academic Professional Development;
- Goal 5: Learning Environment and Teaching Spaces (Developing a Physical, Social and Technological Environment that Supports Learning).

The new Institute Strategic Plan 2017-2021 identifies 'Teaching, Learning and Graduate Readiness' as a core goal of the plan to 'enable our students to achieve their full potential and contribute to the development of society via the provision of a student centred educational environment which is under-pinned by excellence in teaching and learning. Our graduates will be distinctive by virtue of their educational experience and will possess essential skills and attributes relevant to both the workplace and civic society'. The plan identifies the following as measures of the success of the achievement of this goal:

- Enhancing the standard of teaching and learning through the implementation of the TLAE Strategy 2017-2021 and delivering upon the goals contained within;
- Establishment of a Centre for Educational Development, operational in the Academic Year 2017/2018 and supported by a five-year strategy;
- Development and implementation of a rolling five-year retention strategy focusing on the first year cohort;
- Leveraging work placement to facilitate graduate work readiness and to inform market led programmes.

At the end of Academic Year 2016/2017 a draft Year 1 Student Retention and Success Strategy was developed by the Assistant Registrar, in consultation with the Heads of Department. During Academic

Year 2017/2018, the draft was circulated for input by the Central Student Data Office, Student Services, Heads of School and Heads of Department for further feedback and input. The Strategy document evolved through this process to becoming the Draft Year 1 Student Retention and Success Policy. In May 2018, the draft policy document was forwarded to the executive for final consideration and approval.

Below are the key principles agreed guiding the policy:

- Retention, progression and the academic success of students and the enhancement of a quality engaged student experience is key to IT Tralee fulfilling its responsibility as a Higher Education Institution;
- Nurturing student belonging and improving retention and success should be a priority for all staff;
- The expertise and best practice already taking place in the Institute must be acknowledged and shared throughout the Institute;
- The academic sphere is the most important site for nurturing student participation and engagement. Research shows that ongoing improvement in the overall learning experience is the best route towards supporting student retention and success;
- Support from the Student Support Services is necessary in supporting student retention and success, including but not limited to: financial support; counselling support; chaplaincy support; and support from the student Medical Centre, Access Office and Office for Learning Difference;
- A particular focus is required on the first year student experience, while recognising all stages are important;
- Withdrawal is to be viewed as not necessarily a failure of the system or the student but sometimes through a journey of discovery the student reaches the conclusion that the programme they have chosen is not for them or with the necessary support concludes this is not the right time to undertake the programme of study and return at a later time (Institute needs to be responsive to student needs in this regard);
- Interventions are more effective if they address the issues of concern and are evidence informed (local and national evidence);
- The local context must be understood (Institution, discipline, programme, module, student cohort etc.) and followed by appropriate intervention. It is important to understand the context of disciplines, programmes and modules with lower than expected rates of success. One size does not fit all. Interventions must be tailored to address the issues experienced;
- High quality Institutional data collection, analysis, reporting and review is required at Institute, School and Department level, for each programme, to each module and cohort of students. This analysis should ideally include prior year comparatives and should seek to establish patterns;
- Listen to student feedback, in particular, to what first year students have said regarding their first year student experience through the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE), the Joint Academic Workshops (JAWS) and the Student Class Representative Open Forum etc.;
- Effective interventions will have the following characteristics: ongoing rather than once off; an explicit academic support focus; delivery through mainstream curriculum; proactive and developmental; relevant; encourage collaboration and engagement with fellow students and staff; and monitored for student engagement and quality;
- While primary interventions are located in the academic context, they must be enabled and facilitated by the Institute. A process to implement and manage change must be designed and utilised, with explicit goals and timelines. Establish a cross institutional team with clear roles

and an emphasis on working in a collaborative way, including students as partners. Accessible and user friendly data must be made available, and staff and students need to be supported to discuss and engage with the data to improve student retention, progression and success. An evidence informed programme of interventions must be developed, promoting and monitoring student engagement with same, and the programme of interventions evaluated. A clear focus on and review of student retention interventions will allow the Institute evaluate the success (or otherwise) of these interventions at an Institute and programme level.

This Year 1 Student Retention and Success Policy principles guide the strategies to be actioned at Institute level and department level to improve retention and progression and support student academic success and a quality engaged student experience for all students of the Institute. The development of the policy was informed by a review of relevant literature, with a particular focus on national best practice and evidence based research from the HEA, the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and UK based Liz Thomas et al through her What Works 1 (2012) and What Works 2 (2017) Student Retention and Success Programmes.

The successful progression and retention of students in higher education is at the forefront of national policy frameworks. Higher education faces many challenges and in particular the difficulties students can encounter with the transition into higher education. The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 emphasises the importance of a positive first year experience to achieving the goals of higher education, as ‘failure to address the challenges encountered by some students in their first year contributes to high drop out and failure rates with personal and system wide implications’ (DES, National Strategy, pg.56).

‘Every student that drops out of their higher education is a loss: a loss to their college, a loss to the future economy and, above all, a loss to the individual. Equally, students who don’t drop out but who fail to achieve their full potential also represent a significant loss to both themselves and society’ (Liz Thomas et al, 2017, pg.5).

Within the new Institute Strategic Plan 2017-2021, the Institute identifies one of its key goals to *‘enable students to achieve their full potential and contribute to the development of society via the provision of a student centred educational environment which is under-pinned by excellence in teaching and learning’*. One of the action items to achieve this goal has been identified as the *‘development and implementation of a rolling five-year retention strategy focusing on the first year cohort’*. The measures of success of this strategy have been identified as the setting of *specific ‘department targets for the improvement of retention and progression to be specified in academic department plans and an increase of a minimum of 10% in the Institute’s overall retention rate over the course of this strategic plan’*.

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.

Sources of Income and Budget allocation: The Institute as a statutory entity is primarily dependant on the core grant funding from the HEA, and student fees. The core grant funding is based on the student numbers returns through the Programmes and Budgets submissions.

The total annual income of the Institute is approximately €30m. There are a number of sources for this income. In order of value they are as follows -

- State Grants
- Tuition Fees & Student Contribution paid by the State
- Tuition Fees & Student Contribution paid by EU students
- Research Grants and Contracts
- Tuition Fees & Student Contribution paid by Non-EU students
- Other Income

Budgets are allocated on a bi-annual basis following consultation with the Executive. The budgets are continuously monitored using our Financial Management System Agresso.

The Institute provides a range of learning resources and student supports which meet the needs of the diverse student population:

- Access Office;
- Office for Learning Difference;
- Counselling;
- Medical Service;
- Pastoral Care Service;
- Careers Service;
- International Office;
- Sports and Recreational Facilities;
- Sports Office;
- GAA Games Development;
- Societies Office;
- Student Services Officer;
- Financial Support (Student Assistance Fund/Benevolent Fund);
- Sports Scholarships;
- Admissions and Examinations Office;
- Library Services;
- Students' Union;
- Student Orientation and Induction Programme;
- Academic department/programme support (including class tutor, peer mentoring, tutor support).

Categories of Generic Institute Supports for all first year students:

- Orientation and Induction Programme – Institute Orientation and Department/Programme Induction;
- Social Events;
- Family Information Evening;
- FYI 4-week Induction Programme.
- IT Skills Workshops;
- Sports Clubs and Societies Days;
- Refresher Student Support Information Days (pop-up stands in main student thorough fair (north and south campus) reminding students of services but also ‘Ask us anything’ theme);
- Student Handbook & ITT Study Skills Guide;
- Academic Writing – ‘You’re Actually a Good Writer’ (Ahead publication);
- Library Orientation;
- Time and Study Management in preparation for Examinations;
- Targeted academic department support;
- Live ITT Pilot Health Promotion and Retention Project, launched in April 2017.

IT, Tralee’s pilot Health Promotion and Retention Project was officially launched in April 2017. The project supports students (and staff) holistic health and wellbeing, promoting events and projects on campus, to ensure that the Institute as a place of study is health promoting and health enabling. Holistic health includes physical, sexual, mental, social, occupational, intellectual and spiritual health. Learning and wellbeing are inextricably linked. When students are well, they can better engage with their learning and living experience, embrace and enjoy the full student experience, both inside and outside of the classroom, and reach their full potential. Live ITT focuses on four main project areas covering all aspects of holistic health: Move ITT; Change ITT; Mind ITT; and Connect ITT.

The Institute Live ITT Health Promotion and Retention Project is working to the Institutes Strategic Plan as follows:

Section 4.2.1: ‘Enhancing the work environment to support staff in their work life’; and
Section 4.5 and 4.5.1: ‘Supporting the Health and Wellbeing of our student campus community through the establishment of an Institute wide Health and Wellbeing Working Group developing an operational plan for the roll out of key initiatives benchmarked against the Healthy Campus Guidelines (Healthy Ireland HSE Action Plan 2013-2025)’.

Categories of Generic Supports for Students of the following cohorts:

- (a) Student with Disability (SWD);
- (b) Student with Specific Learning Difference (SLD); and
- (c) Pathfinders.

All supports offered are in line with AHEAD recommended guidelines on good practice for providers of supports and services for Students with Disabilities in Higher Education. Operational practices are reviewed and discussed regularly at department and Institute level.

Students wishing to avail of supports in the categories above must in the first instance register with the respective service early. For students in (a) and (b) their specific needs can be assessed early and a programme of support put in place that will help the student settle, help them explore ways that they can learn – e.g., in class support (via Individual Learning Requirements Document), explore assistive

technology that will support and enhance the learning methods of the student, to provide where necessary and outside of the classroom Study Skills or Writing Skills as appropriate, to provide counselling e.g. time management, linking learning with career goals and provide suitable physical environment to support examination accommodation.

Specific support offered to Students registering with IT Tralee Support Services (Access Office and/or Office for Students with Learning Difference – i.e. (a) or (b) category above) include:

- Family Engagement;
- Promoted Ahead Student Toolkit and made it available to all students online;
- Students are offered group training sessions in assistive technologies to improve access to course reading materials - 24 students availed of the training;
- Students who are not eligible for ESF funding are provided with links to freeware for home use to support their proof reading of assignments - e.g. Orato and Grammarly software. This initiative aimed to bypass barriers to accessing Institute based Assistive Technology support experienced due to family/work/life demands;
- Students are referred to a dedicated Subject Librarian/support personnel to avail of support with research skills;
- Students are offered free access to an online study skills tool currently being piloted through the Institutes - New Frontiers Programme;
- Students identified as "at risk" due to reported subject specific difficulties are referred to the relevant Head of Department for additional subject specific support. The Academic Manager is provided with information on the impact of the students learning difference and, where appropriate, possible effective teaching strategies;
- Provision of an Occupational Therapist for specific support – study skills, time management, social skills, social groups (e.g. cinema, meeting friends for coffee);
- Engagement with academic staff on individual student cases around possible appropriate inclusive teaching methods to support the diverse learner;
- Students who are needs assessed as "at risk" due to difficulties with time management and/or study skills and/or academic writing are approved (by lecturer and/or Academic Administration and Student Affairs Manager) for one-to-one tutor support sessions;
- High needs students are offered regular mentoring to ensure early identification of arising issues with potential to negatively impact on the learning experience - e.g. students with ASD diagnosis, physical and sensory disabilities.

Enhanced generic supports Pathfinder Students - A parents/guardians and family information event:

- The introduction of a revised registration process and new student services materials to further facilitate greater, timely and direct engagement with support services;
- A study skills guide and academic writing guide is disseminated to students at registration;
- The use of assistive technologies and freewares is promoted to enhance access to course materials and the fulfilment of course assignments and thereby address barriers that some students were experiencing accessing Institute-based assistive technology support;
- Student Services is represented on the Institutes Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Engagement group promoting inclusive practices and Universal Design for Learning;
- Students are referred to the dedicated Subject Librarian to avail of support with research skills.

Specific student supports – Students with Disability, Students with Learning Difficulty:

- A suite of re-usable learning objects in the form of YouTube screen cast videos was developed with the aim of enhancing student engagement with the service for students with learning difference;
- Students with learning difference are offered access to a new online study skills tool currently being piloted by the Institutes New Frontiers programme;
- The Institute promotes the AHEAD Student Toolkit at orientation, needs assessment and via Blackboard, its eLearning portal;
- The Institute contracts an Occupational Therapist to work with students with disabilities in need of this support;
- A new electronic communication tool which interfaces with Banner was introduced to streamline the provision of information to academic staff on students teaching, learning and assessment needs. Individual Learning Requirements are now available in Self Service Banner and at a glance assigned academic staff can see their relevant students details, programme and module;
- In addition to the new first year orientation and the Pathfinders orientation, a group post-orientation session is facilitated at the end of week 4 to review the student experience, promote the group study skills workshop and remind students of the services available to them;
- After Semester 1 Examination results, Pathfinders and students with disabilities are issued an Examinations Survey Form by e-mail supported by a text message. The purpose of this form is to encourage students to become proactive in identifying their needs, to promote study planning and strategies for repeat exams and to facilitate individual meetings with support services as needed/requested;
- Pathfinders are directly targeted regarding the ESF Student Assistance Fund;
- Permission was sought by Student Services and in most cases granted by the student to furnish Heads of Department with the names, student numbers and programme details for new entrant Pathfinders.

The Access Office and Office for Learning Difference, in their provision of a range of supports and services to students with disabilities, students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, mature students and pathfinders students, are supporting and promoting equity of access and participation through the provision of responsive and appropriate supports.

Prospective students are informed of the resources available to them via Institute open Days/Information Sessions, the IT, Tralee website at www.ittralee.ie and the IT, Tralee Prospectus, See <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/media/IT%20Tralee%20Online%20Prospectus.pdf> and existing students are informed via their Orientation and Induction Programme to the Institute, the IT, Tralee website, internally via the Institutes VLE (Blackboard), and the Institute Student Handbook, See <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/media/StudentHandbookSectionA.pdf> and <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/pdf/RightsandResponsibilites.pdf>

The Institute library, based on both the North and South Campus, provides support to all students to support their learning experience. See the Institute library website: <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationFor/CurrentStudents/StudentLife/StudentFacilities/Library/>

The Institute Strategic Plan 2017-2021 identified the ‘development and implementation of a Student Services Plan benchmarked against National and International Comparators’ as a core goal of the plan. As a measure of the success of the achievement of this goal, the plan identifies an ‘External

review of student services to be completed within the Academic Year 2017/2018. Resultant recommendations to be implemented over the lifetime of the Strategic Plan'. The External Review did not progress in AY 2017/18, as the decision was made to postpone the review pending the MTU merger processes that are in progress. A review of the merged institutions, rather than a review of an individual pre-merger institution would be of greater value.

Refer to the following sections of the Quality Assurance Manual: Section A13: Learning Resources and Student Support, Sub Section A13.1: Bereavement Policy, Sub Section A13.2: Substance Abuse Policy, Sub Section A13.3: Student Charter, Sub Section A13.4: Reasonable Accommodations and Support for Students with Disability Policy and Procedures, Sub Section A13.5: Equity of Access and Participation Policy, Sub Section A13.9: Gender Identity and Gender Expression Policy; Section A10: Complaints Procedures, Sub Section A10.2: Dignity and Respect Policy and Procedures.

See <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>

Regional Cluster South - Access Strategy

The partner members of the Regional Cluster – South (Cork Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Carlow, Institute of Technology, Tralee, University College Cork and Waterford Institute of Technology) have a shared commitment to promoting access, widening participation and creating diverse and socially inclusive learning environments, that promote equality of opportunities for individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds.

As individual institutions, the Cluster members have demonstrable track records and substantial professional expertise in promoting equity of access. All of the partners are involved in the provision of services which address the needs of non-traditional learners through outreach, post entry support initiatives, scaffolding of transitions between second and third level and further education and third level and development of flexible learning pathways that suit part-time and mature students. Key to the development and delivery of these services is the extensive network of partnerships which partner HEIs have established with relevant community stakeholders in their own geographical area. The identification in the *National Strategy for Higher Education*, of a role for regional Clusters to address local needs through co-operation and co-ordination in relation to resources, programmes of teaching and learning and the creation of greater flexibility in student pathways and progression, provides opportunities and challenges for the Regional Cluster-South. Significant opportunities exist for strategic alliances which will allow for the sharing of learning and practice across and it is acknowledge among the partner HEIs that each has particular strengths and expertise in relation to various target cohorts and particular initiatives. The partners fully embrace the 'better together' philosophy in relation to the development of strategies and the planning and delivery of access related initiatives. They are also keenly cognisant of the challenges involved in engaging in formal activities, not least those associated with resource allocation and governance. The strategic objective and governance framework outlined below, reflect the commitment to access and to its promotion through a regional focus while acknowledging both the opportunities and challenges associated with working at Cluster level.

Strategic Objectives:

- To increase the capacity and responsiveness of the partner members to access and progression needs at regional level through shared strategic planning;
- To deepen partnerships, collaborations and strategic alliances among the Cluster partners;

- To build on and add value to existing expertise through the sharing of best practice in the area of access;
- To build on and learn from existing successful alliances with communities by expanding local networks across the wider region.

Governance:

The partner HEIs have begun the process of agreeing and implementing a framework for Cluster operation and governance to include:

- The establishment of a Cluster Steering Group;
- The creation of an MOU for operation of the Cluster; and
- Development of a co-ordinated work-plan for the implementation of agreed projects.

Targets:

- To undertake a regional mapping profile which outlines opportunities and pathways for non-traditional students and those from socio-disadvantaged backgrounds;
- To develop a Cluster wide strategic planning structure focused on responding to the delivery of national access priorities and capitalising on funding programmes; and
- To seek resources to establish the strategic co-ordination necessary to improve access practice and outcomes across the Cluster.

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.

The Institute has published a set of information management policy and practice documents to provide direction to the staff of the Institute in the use of, and the management and delivery of information and systems and services that hold information and data relating to the business of the Institute. These policies and practice documents are available to staff internally via the staff intranet within the icons of Computer Services, Data Protection and Finance.

In light of the General Data Protection Regulation in May 2018, IT Tralee is engaging in a review of the Institutes recording, processing, storing and deleting of personal data. The Data Protection Officer, who currently oversees the Institutes data protection procedures (including Freedom of Information requests), is due be deployed full time to the area of Data Protection. A dedicated GDPR information section is available to staff internally through the staff intranet which includes detail on the GDPR legislation, associated requirements and CPD with respect to same.

Under the management of the previously appointed Head of Strategy and Institute Performance, a Central Student Data Office was established in Academic Year 2016/2017, to centralise quality data collection, analysis and dissemination.

The Institute collects, analyses, and uses data for the effective management of its academic programmes and all other central services activities. The Institute uses a number of Management Information Systems to Manage Student Registrations and Academic Progress (Banner), Finance & Budgets (Agresso), Staff (Core), Library (Koha) and Timetabling (Syllabus+) as its information management tools.

The Banner System is the tool used to collect data with respect to student retention, progression and success. This data, and all other data sourced, is analysed by Institute Management, Service Units and Course Boards, in the context of the requirements of a number of relevant Quality Assurance policies and procedures, and this data used to inform quality assurance and enhancement.

At student registration the Institute carries out the HEA Equal Access Survey. The HEA through its National Access Office, promotes equality of access to higher education for people with disabilities, mature students who previously had not the opportunity to access higher education, those facing social and economic barriers and minority groups, including the Traveller community and achieving this full equality of access to higher education is a national priority. Each year the HEA invites us to collect Equal Access information at the point of registration on the students socio-economic background, disability and ethnicity and returns it to the Higher Education Authority.

With the information that is provided, the HEA is able to measure equality of access to higher education and allocate the resources needed to support students of all backgrounds and abilities. The information gathered during registration is protected by robust data protection policies in the ITT and in the HEA, and is in full compliance with data protection legislation. The data that is returned to the HEA is collective and students are not identified by name, address or ID number. All students are encouraged to respond to the Equal Access questions. The non-response will not affect the student's registration and enrolment, or their ability to be considered for financial support. However, it is highlighted that non-responses may have implications for the amount of State funding that is allocated to the IT, Tralee and as a result, we may then not be in a position meet the requirements of students with specific needs.

Each year the Careers Office surveys graduates using the Graduate Destination Survey. First Destination Survey offers a vision into the first destination of graduates nine months after graduation. Graduate surveys are produced to measure higher education output providing useful information to a wide selection of stakeholders such as higher education institutions, policy makers and prospective students. Results of surveys can also be used to benchmark institutional performance to similar institutions.

Section 1 of the graduate survey focuses on level 8-10 graduates whether graduates are in employment in Ireland or overseas, seeking employment, in work experience schemes or further study. Section 2 looks at the relevance or how graduates rate their qualification to the employment gained while Section 3 outlines salaries reported by graduates 9 months after graduation. Section 4 focuses on location by regional distribution of graduates with a level 8-10 qualification. Section 5 is an overview of employment sector by level, of working graduates in Ireland and overseas nine months after graduation. The final section reviews level 8-10 international graduate's first destination after graduation.

Presently the graduate surveys are created under the limitations of cross sectional data collection approach – a process which is under revision by the HEA currently. It is expected that the new survey (in early stages of longitudinal development) will include:

- Data on graduate qualifications and employment both within Ireland and overseas;
- Relevance of employment to area of study;
- Data on graduate further study;
- Data on graduate unemployment and unavailability for work; and
- Career progression of graduates through longitudinal data.

See: <http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/What-do-Graduates-do-2015.pdf>

Each year the library surveys students on their experience of the library services. This data is analysed by the library and used to inform enhanced service provision.

Each year Computer Services surveys staff and students on their experience of the IT services. This data is analysed by Computer Services, and used to inform enhanced service provision.

Each year student engagement and satisfaction is measured through the Irish Survey of Student Engagement.

Feedback is sought and provided from Industry to inform programme enhancement and new programme development. This feedback is sought and provided formally in the context of Programme Work Placement Guidelines and also through other engagements with industry.

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.

The Institute monitors and periodically reviews its programmes to ensure that they are achieving the objectives set for them and respond to the teaching, learning and support needs of the students and to the needs of society.

Refer to the following Sections of the Quality Assurance Manual: Section A6: Procedures for the Ongoing Monitoring of Programmes; Sub Section A6.1: School Boards; Sub Section A6.1: Course Boards; and Section A7: Procedures for Evaluation of Programmes; Sub Section A7.1: Procedures and Guidelines for the Regular Evaluation of Programmes (Programmatic Review).

See <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>

Programme Validation Reports, Programmatic Review Reports, Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Reports and Institutional Review Reports, Annual Reports are available publicly on the IT, Tralee website. See Reports section at:

<http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/ProceduresPlansandReports/>

Any major risk factors identified by the Executive are incorporated into the Risk Register and are monitored and reviewed. The purpose of the Risk Register is to provide a framework for management to identify, assess and rate risks, and to develop strategies to deal with risks so as to provide reasonable assurance that the Institutes strategic objectives will be achieved. In effect, the Risk Register will establish a framework to identify potential events that may expose the Institute to risk, to manage this risk, to keep it within the Institutes risk appetite and to provide reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of the Institutes objectives.

Overall responsibility for the management of risk within the Institute lies with the Governing Body. The President of the Institute has overall responsibility for ensuring that procedures and processes are in place to enable adherence to the Risk Register.

The Institutes Executive Board is responsible for:

- Implementing the Institutes Risk Register;
- Identifying and monitoring Risks;
- Ensuring that each risk has a 'Risk Owner' responsible for its management;
- Ensuring that controls identified are working, provide periodic positive assurance that they are working and/or report if they are not working;
- Ensuring that individuals understand what level of risk they are assigned to take on behalf of the Institute; and
- Ensuring local risks are appropriately managed.

The Audit Committee are a Sub-Committee of the Governing Body. The responsibilities of the Audit Committee currently include:

Financial Statements:

- To review the draft annual financial statements of the Institute of Technology, Tralee and consolidated statements, and their format, taking account of all relevant considerations and of accounting standards and legal requirements, before they are submitted to the Governing Body;
- To recommend to the Governing Body whether they should approve any accounts so reviewed by the Committee;
- To determine at least annually whether, in the Committees opinion, the Institute of Technology, Tralee has kept proper books of account.

External Audit:

- To review with the Comptroller and Auditor General, the nature and scope of the audit in progress or nearing completion;
- To discuss problems and reservations arising from the audit and any other matters requested by the external auditors;
- To review the external auditors Management Letter and all other audit letters from the external auditors and to consider management's response.

Internal Controls and Risk Management:

- To satisfy itself that the arrangements made for and resources available to Internal Audit are suitable, and to monitor performance of Internal Audit;
- To consider the system of internal financial controls and to satisfy itself that the control environment is adequate and that controls are operating effectively;
- To keep under review and advise on the operation and effectiveness of the Institute of Technology, Tralee's risk management systems;
- To provide an opinion annually on the proposed statement of internal controls and on any legal compliance requirements;
- To consider the Internal Audit annual audit programme, to review reports of the Head of Internal Audit and to consider major findings and managements response.

Other:

- To consider reports by the Comptroller and Auditor General and managements response;
- To satisfy itself that arrangements are in place to promote economy, efficiency and effectiveness;
- To consider other topics, as requested by the Governing Body or initiated by the Committee;
- To promote co-ordination between the Institute of Technology, Tralee's internal and external auditors.

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.

Engagement with external stakeholders is a central part of both the Institutes Strategic Plan 2017-2021 and the Research and Innovation Strategic Plan 2017-2021.

See: http://www.ittralee.ie/en/media/Strategic_Plan.pdf

and <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/media/ResearchandInnovationStrategicPlan2017-21.pdf>

Engagement with external stakeholders, namely academic and professional industry representatives and graduates/alumni, is embedded within the Institutes Quality Assurance policies and procedures, with respect to the procedures for the governance of the Institute, the procedures for the ongoing monitoring of programmes; the procedures for the design, validation and modification of programmes and modules; the assessment of learners; the procedures for the evaluation of programmes (programmatic review) and Institute Cyclical Reviews.

Refer to the following sections of the Quality Assurance Manual: Section A2: Mission, Vision, Governance and Management; Sub Section A2.2: Governance; Sub Section A2.6: Governing body Membership; Section A4: Procedures for the Design, Validation and Modification of Programmes and Modules; Section A5: Assessment of Learners; Sub Section A5.16: External Examiners Policy and Procedures (Taught Programmes); Section A6: Procedures for Ongoing Monitoring of Programmes; Section A7: Procedures for Evaluation of Programmes (Programmatic Review).

See <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>

Most of the programmes within the Institute now incorporate a work/practice experience component, in line with the Institutes Strategic goals *'Our graduates will be distinctive by virtue of their educational experience and will possess essential skills and attributes relevant to both the workplace and civic society'*.

In the context of same, academic departments have built established relationships with industry, with an embedded mechanism for ongoing two-way feedback between industry stakeholders and the programme/students/graduates which facilitates programme development and the enhancement of the required skill, knowledge and competency of the graduate.

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).

The Institutes ongoing engagement with both QQI and the HEA is governed by statutory requirements and government policy. The introduction to the Institutes Quality Assurance Manual refers to the requirement of the Education and Training Act 2012 that the Institute has regard for Quality and Qualifications Ireland in the development of the Institutes quality assurance system.

Refer to the following section of the Quality Assurance Manual: Section A1: Introduction.

See <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>

Specific engagements are included later in this section. The engagements listed are quality assured through the quality assurance arrangements agreed formally with the particular body. With respect to programme engagement with professional bodies, the Quality Assurance requirements of the professional body are articulated, adhered to and monitored with respect to the particular programme delivery. The Institute is focused on maintaining the required professional standards of its programmes to ensure programme recognition and/accreditation in order to allow graduates apply/obtain exemptions for professional examinations, to apply for professional membership/inclusion on a professional register and ultimately be provided with the maximum opportunities for graduate progression and employability. Information and consideration of the professional recognition of a programme is required by the quality assurance procedures in the context of both a new programme proposal and a programmatic review.

Refer to the following sections of the Quality Assurance Manual: Section A4: Procedures for the Design, Validation and modification of Programmes and Modules; and Section A7: Procedures for the Evaluation of Programmes (Programmatic Review).

See <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>

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

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

The Institute is committed to operating in a spirit of openness and transparency with our stakeholders, including staff, learners and the general public, through the provision of relevant and timely information in accessible formats. Refer to Quality Assurance Manual Section A2: Mission, Vision, Governance and Management; Sub Section A2.1 Mission and Vision.

See: <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>

The Institute publishes information about its activities which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible. In line with Section 9 of the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016) and Section 1.8 of the ESG (2015), the Institute publishes information about its activities including their programmes and programme validations, research and related services; about the Institute and its quality assurance policies and procedures; and about evaluation and findings from quality assurance evaluations. This information is available to staff, prospective and current students, as well as graduates, other stakeholders and the public. The primary repository for public information is the Institutes website.

Information is also available publicly through the following forums:

- Course Programme Handbooks;
- National publications, for example: HEA publications; ISSE publications;
- ITT Prospectus;
- ITT Student Handbook;
- ITT Promotional Material;
- Careers Office Publications;
- Social and print media;
- Freedom of Information Officer within the Institute to deal with FOI requests.

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.

Nothing to report.

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.

In 2004, the Institute was delegated the authority from Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI, then HETAC) to make awards for its undergraduate programmes and taught masters programmes. The Institute provides undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at National Framework of Qualifications Levels 6-10. The Institute has Delegated authority in the making of Research Masters Degrees at NFQ Level 9 in already approved areas of research (July 2017) and has approval by Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI) to deliver Postgraduate Research Degrees at NFQ Level 10.

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.

Refer to the following Section of the Quality Assurance Manual: Section A15: Collaborative Provision; Sub Section A15.1: Procedures for the Provision of Collaborative Programmes and for the Provision of Programmes leading to Joint Awards.

See <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>

16. Additional Notes

Any additional notes can be entered here.

None.

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	2016/2017
Areas/Units	School of Business, Computing and Humanities (Programmes)
Number	One
Link(s) to Publications	http://www.ittralee.ie/en/media/PR_Report_BCH.pdf

Year	2017/2018
Areas/Units	School of Business, Computing and Humanities (School Strategy)
Number	One
Link(s) to Publications	Published internally

Year	2018/2019
Areas/Units	School of Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics and School of Health & Social Sciences
Number	Two
Link(s) to Publications	Not applicable

Year	2019/2020
Areas/Units	None
Number	None
Link(s) to Publications	Not applicable

Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report

Year	2020/2021
Areas/Units	None
Number	None
Link(s) to Publications	Not applicable

Year	2021/2022
Areas/Units	School of Business, Computing and Humanities
Number	One
Link(s) to Publications	Not applicable

Year	2022/2023
Areas/Units	None
Number	None
Link(s) to Publications	Not applicable

AIQR - PART 1

Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures	AIQR Part 1.docx
PRSBs	1
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	First Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Nursing Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI)
Date of last review or accreditation	23-05-2017
Next review year	2022
Collaborative programmes	1
Section: Collaborative Provision	First Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Collaborative programmes
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Royal College of Surgeons Ireland (RCSI), Castel International
Date of last review	21-11-2014
Next review year	2019
Articulation Agreements	38
Section: 1 Articulation Agreements	First Set of Records
Name of the Body	University College Birmingham (UCB)
Name of the Programme and Links to Publications	MA in Culinary Arts Management; http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/Courses/ParttimeStudy/MastersinCulinaryArtsManagement/

Date of last review of arrangement/agreement	25-07-2017
Next Review Year	2022
Section: Articulation Agreements	Second Set of Records
Name of the Body	Methodist College Kuala Lumpur
Name of the Programme and Links to Publications	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Early Childhood Care and Education; http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/Courses/SchoolofHealthandSocialScience/SocialSciences/TL880-BAHonsinEarlyChildhoodCareandEducation/
Date of last review of arrangement/agreement	25-05-2018
Review year for agreements	2021
Section: Articulation Agreements	Third Set of Records
Name of the Body	St Lawrence College Ontario Canada
Name of the Programme and Links to Publications	Bachelor of Science in Health & Leisure; http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/Courses/SchoolofHealthandSocialScience/HealthLeisureStudies/TL771-BScHealthandLeisure/ ; Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Music Technology; http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/Courses/SchoolofBusinessComputingandHumanities/CreativeMediaandInformationTechnology/TL803-BAHonsMusicTechnology/ ; Bachelor of Arts in Culinary Arts; http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/Courses/SchoolofBusinessComputingandHumanities/HotelCulinaryTourism/TL719-BACulinaryArts/ ; Bachelor of Business (Honours) - Accounting Stream; http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/Courses/SchoolofBusinessComputingandHumanities/Business/BBsHonsAccounting/
Date of last review of arrangement/agreement	10-10-2017
Review year for agreements	2020
Do you wish to make a final submission?	Yes, this is my final submission
On behalf of the President/Provost/CEO I confirm that the information submitted in this AIQR is accurate and correct.	Confirmed
Overview of internal governance, policies and procedures (Word Template).	Confirmed

Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies.	Confirmed
Collaborative Provision.	Confirmed
Articulation Agreements.	Confirmed
Date of Final Submission	15-02-2019

Parts 2-6

Institution-led QA – Annual Information

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

Part 2: Institution-led QA – Annual

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

Section 1: Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Developments

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

The central role of quality assurance and enhancement is explicitly articulated in the Institutes Strategic Plan 2017-2021 which affirms the contribution of quality assurance systems in achieving strategic objectives and maintaining and enhancing IT, Tralee's position and reputation within Higher Education both nationally and internationally.

A system was developed and implemented in the Office of the Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar (VPAAR) over the course of the Academic Year 2015/2016 that records and tracks decisions of the Academic Council and its Sub-Committees. This provides a facility of recording when decisions are to be acted on, by whom and when they have been completed. It also provides a facility for managing agendas and minutes of meetings. This system based on ongoing review has been further developed and enhanced during Academic Year 2017/2018.

An ongoing review continued of existing Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures and the Quality Assurance Manual from the perspective of their alignment with ESG 2015, QQI Policy and QQI Quality Assurance Guidelines. The Quality Assurance Work Plan for Academic Year 2016/2017 was reviewed in preparation for planning the Quality Assurance Work Plan for Academic Year 2017/2018. Subsequently, the draft Quality Assurance Work Plan for Academic Year 2017/2018 was approved by the Academic Council. The system of dissemination with respect to Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures was also reviewed in preparation for planning for the dissemination of Quality Assurance procedures in Academic Year 2017/18. A decision was made then to further develop, and implement for the new Academic Year 2017/18, a comprehensive strategy of dissemination of the Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures. This updated strategy was rolled out in Academic Year 2017/2018 which included the following:

- As required by QQI, the publication on the Institutes website of the Institutes Quality Assurance Procedures, Institute Plans and Reports. The Quality Assurance Manual is only available to staff, students and the public alike through the Institute website.

See: <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>

- Use of a template for the development of new Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures;
- E-mail notification from the Office of the VPAAR to all relevant stakeholders (including students and the Students' Union) of new and/or updated Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures, reference to their location on the ITT Website and a request for feedback on the operation of the Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures (Template provided for this feedback). Heads of department are also asked to include any new/updated quality assurance procedures on the Course Board agenda. Feedback from individuals/Course Boards is logged in the Office of the Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar in the template provided. Editing issues are rectified immediately, major issues are referred to the relevant Sub-Committee and minor issues are recorded for consideration at the next scheduled review of the particular procedure;
- An academic staff CPD session on the Institutes Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures is held as part of each of the scheduled CPD events across the academic year (three CPD Events per year, consequently three Quality Assurance CPD sessions are scheduled each year for academic staff). Academic staff are asked and encouraged here to provide ongoing feedback on the operation of the quality assurance policies and procedures;
- Rolling agenda item placed on the agenda of each Quality Assurance Sub-Committee 'Stakeholder Feedback on the Operation Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures'. The feedback received through the Office of the VPAAR in the template document provided is processed through this agenda item. Feedback is in relation to the operation of quality assurance policies and procedures and quality enhancement of all service units across the Institute.

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

New Management Appointments and Retirements:

- Appointment of External Services Manager;
- Appointment of Head of Department within School of STEM;
- Acting Head of Department Social Sciences covering Semester 2 in AY 2017/2018.

The list below provides details of decisions and recommendations, which were made by the Academic Council during the Academic Year 2017/2018 and are presented here in chronological order. The recommendations of the Academic Council Sub-Committees are captured and given effect in the decisions of the Academic Council itself.

Academic Council

- Quality Assurance Procedures/updates to Quality Assurance Procedures approved by the Academic Council:
 - A4.1 Overview of Procedures for the Design Validation and Modification of Programmes and Modules;
 - A4.2 Procedures for the Design & Validation of New Programmes;
 - A4.3 Procedures for Modifications to Validated Programmes;
 - A4.4 Procedure for Module Development Modification & Validation;

- A4.5 Appendices;
- A5.9a Progression with Credit Deficit;
- A5.9b Classified Awards for Repeat Students;
- A5.16 External Examiners Policy and Procedures;
- A7.1 Procedure and Guidelines for the Regular Evaluation of Programmes (Programmatic Review);
- A10.1 Student Complaints Policy and Procedures;
- A10.2 Dignity and Respect Policy and Procedures (Noted by Academic Council, approved by IR Forums and Governing Body);
- A12.1 Research Ethics Policy;
- A12.2 Ethical Review of Undergraduate or Taught Masters Postgraduate Research;
- A12.3 Ethical Review of Postgraduate Research Programmes and Professional Research;
- A13.1 Bereavement Policy;
- A13.2 Substance Abuse Policy;
- A13.3 Student Charter;
- A13.4 Reasonable Accommodations and Support for Students with Disability: Policy and Procedures;
- A13.5 Equity of Access and Participation Policy;
- A13.6 Policy and Procedure to Support and Determine a Student's Fitness to Continue in Study;
- A13.8 Fitness to Practice Policy and Procedures;
- A13.9 Gender Identity & Gender Expression Policy;
- A14.1 Procedure for Vetting Students for Placement in Environments with Children and Vulnerable Adults Garda Vetting Policy;
- A15.1 Procedures for the Provision of Collaborative Programmes (National and Trans-national) and for the Provision of Programmes leading to Joint Awards;
- A15.2 Appendices.

- Academic Council Annual Report:
 - The Academic Council Annual Report AY 2016/2017 was adopted by the Academic Council in February 2018.

- Academic Calendar and Meeting Dates:
 - The Academic Calendar for Academic Year 2018/2019 was adopted;
 - Schedule of Academic Council and its Sub-Committees meeting dates for Academic Year 2018/2019 were adopted.

- Progression with Credit Deficit:
 - Progression with Credit Deficit was approved to be extended to the end of AY 2017/2018;
 - A review of the Progression with Credit Deficit Quality Assurance procedure, and associated statistics, to be undertaken annually by the Quality Assurance Sub-Committee going forward.

- Other Decisions:
 - Quality Assurance Work Plan AY 2017/2018 was approved;
 - Progression Regulation approved to be amended to 40% for students progressing to an add-on programme from September 2018;
 - A pilot scheme 'Second Chance Maths was approved to commence in August 2018;

- 1st Year Internal Transfer Form and procedure approved;
 - Revocation of Award procedure approved (Appendix to A5.26) ;
 - Agreed that each department would be required to develop and introduce rubrics for their department for the Winter Examinations for Academic Year 2018/2019 and subsequent examination sessions;
 - Agreed that going forward a brief update to be provided at each Academic Council meeting with respect to the decisions made at the most recent Sub-Committee Meetings.
- Examination Results AY 2017/2018:
 - Examination Results for AY 2017/2018 were approved.
 - Academic Calendar and Academic Council/Sub-Committee Meeting Dates:
 - The Academic Calendar for AY 2017/2018 was adopted;
 - Schedule of Academic Council and its Sub-Committees meeting dates for AY 2017/2018 were adopted.

Research and Development Sub-Committee

- The following items were approved by the Research and Development Sub-Committee and *were further approved by the Academic Council:
 - Nominations for Postgraduate External Examiners received in AY 2017/2018 were approved by the Research and Development Sub-Committee;
 - *'PG 11.2.2 Department Application Form to Validate a Self-Funded or Externally Funded Masters by Research Degree Programme' developed and approved for submission to the Academic Council;
 - *Revised and updated procedures for 'Leave of Absence or a Deferral from a Research Degree Programme' – section 10.2 of QA procedure A11.3, were developed and approved for submission to the Academic Council;
 - **Reviewed and updated the Terms of Reference for the Research & Development Sub-Committee;
 - *A new 'Student Application Form to register for a Master by Research Degree Programme' (now PG 11.2.1) was approved for submission to the Academic Council to support the request to remove PG 11.2.2 IPC Postgraduate Research Degree Programme Proposal Recommendation & PG 11.2.4 Evaluation and Admission to Postgraduate Register Form from the QA Procedural Manual.

** Pending Academic Council approval AY 2018/2019.

Student Affairs Sub-Committee

- The following items approved by the Student Affairs Sub-Committee were further approved by the Academic Council:
 - 'Second Chance' Maths for Leaving Certificate Students;
 - A13.1 Bereavement Policy;
 - A13.3 Student Charter;
 - A13.8 Fitness to Practice Policy and Procedures;
 - A13.6 Policy and Procedure to Support and Determine a Student's Fitness to Continue in Study;
 - A13.9 Gender Identity & Gender Expression Policy;
 - A14.1 Procedure for Vetting Students for Placement in Environments with Children and Vulnerable Adults Garda Vetting Policy;

- A13.2 Substance Abuse Policy;
- 1st Year Internal Transfer Application Form.

- The following items were also approved by the Student Affairs Sub-Committee:
 - Academic Writing Guidelines;
 - Quality Assurance Work Plan AY 2017/2018 as approved by the Academic Council.

Quality Assurance Sub-Committee

Note: Agreement to propose to Academic Council the re-naming of the Quality Assurance Sub-Committee to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Sub-Committee.

- The following items approved by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Sub-Committee were further approved by the Academic Council:
 - A10.1 Student Complaints Policy and Procedures;
 - A10.2 Dignity and Respect Policy and Procedures;
 - Revocation of an Award (appendix to A5.26);
 - A5.16 External Examiners Policy and Procedures;
 - A6.2 Course Boards;
 - A6.6 Students on Course Board;
 - A5.24 Staff student meeting guidelines for Students and Academic Staff;
 - A5.21 Protocol for Students Representing the Institute;
 - *A5.3 Preparation and Production of Examination and Assessment Material.

* Pending Academic Council approval AY 2018/2019.

- The following items were also approved by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Sub-Committee:
 - Feedback Mechanism Template for Feedback from Stakeholders on the operation of Quality Assurance Procedures;
 - Removal of QA procedures A6.3 Course Coordination Committee and A6.5 Student Liaison from the QA Procedures Manual.

Programmes and Planning Sub-Committee

- The following items approved by the Programmes and Planning Sub-Committee and further approved by the Academic Council:
 - A15.1 Procedures for the Provision of Collaborative Programmes (National and Trans-national) and for the Provision of Programmes leading to Joint Awards;
 - A15.2 Appendices;
 - A7.1 Procedure and Guidelines for the Regular Evaluation of Programmes;
 - A4.1 Overview of Procedures for the Design Validation and Modification of Programmes and Modules;
 - A4.2 Procedures for the Design & Validation of New Programmes;
 - A4.3 Procedures for Modifications to Validated Programmes;
 - A4.4 Procedure for Module Development Modification & Validation;
 - A4.5 Appendices;
 - *A2.5 Management of Agendas and Minutes of Meetings of Academic Council;
 - *Revised Terms of Reference for Academic Council and Sub-Committees.

*For approval AY 2018/2019 by Academic Council

- The following items were also approved by the Programmes and Planning Sub-Committee:
 - New and replacement External Examiners for taught undergraduate programmes;
 - Module descriptor changes as presented;
 - Minor programme amendments;
 - Academic Council and Sub-Committee Meeting Dates AY 2018/2019;
 - Academic Calendar Key Dates AY 2018/2019.

- The following Programmes were approved for development by the Programmes and Planning Sub-Committee (titles are as presented to the Programmes and Planning Sub-Committee and were subject to change within the development process):
 - Bachelor of Arts in Design for Interactive Media (Level 7 Exit Award);
 - Certificate in Front Office Skills;
 - Certificate in Food and Beverage Supervisory Management;
 - Certificate in Culinary Management and Innovation;
 - Certificate in Food Business Innovation;
 - Certificate in Supervisory Management;
 - Certificate in Managerial Development and Practice;
 - Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Automotive Manufacturing Engineering;
 - Certificate in Fitness Instruction;
 - Bachelor of Science (Honours/Ordinary) in Culinary Arts Apprenticeships;
 - Master of Arts/Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching & Learning;
 - Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Performance Sports Development;
 - Postgraduate Diploma in Business Analytics with Specialisms (Finance, Agriculture, Tourism);
 - Higher Certificate in Science – Pharmacy Technician Studies;
 - Certificate in Emergency Nursing;
 - Single Subject in Communications Planning and Management for Gaelic Development Administrators;
 - Certificate in Strategic Services Planning and Management;
 - Certificate in Validation;
 - Minor Award Certificate in Building Information Modelling with Revit;
 - *Special Purpose Award (Level 6) Irish Sign Language;
 - *Master of Science/Postgraduate Diploma in Agriculture;
 - *Specific Purpose Certificate in Farm Administration;

*For approval AY 2018/2019 by Academic Council

1.3 The schedule of QA governance meetings.

Governing Body Meeting dates:

- Monday, 18 September 2017 (note: section 12 meeting);
- Wednesday, 27 September 2017;
- Wednesday, 25 October 2017;
- Wednesday, 22 November 2017;
- Wednesday, 13 December 2017;
- Wednesday, 24 January 2018;
- Wednesday, 21 February 2018;
- Wednesday, 13 March 2018;
- Wednesday, 25 April 2018;
- Wednesday, 23 May 2018 - postponed to the 6th June 2018;
- Wednesday, 06 June 2018;
- Wednesday, 20 June 2018;
- Wednesday, 25 July 2018 (note: section 12 meeting);
- Wednesday, 22 August 2018 (note: section 12 meeting).

Academic Council Meeting dates:

The Academic Council meets six to seven times per Academic Year. Additional meetings are scheduled if required. Its four Sub-Committees has a number of meetings throughout the Academic Year. The schedules for all committee meetings are agreed in advance of the Academic Year. In addition to the scheduled meetings, a number of supplementary/special meetings are held to accommodate business as it arises. The following meetings of the Academic Council were held during the Academic Year 2017/2018:

- *Monday, 18 September 2017;
- Monday, 02 October 2017;
- Monday, 06 November 2017;
- Monday, 11 December 2017;
- *Monday, 22 January 2018;
- Monday, 05 February 2018;
- **Friday, 23 February 2018;
- Monday, 09 April 2018;
- Monday, 09 April 2018**;
- Monday, 14 May 2018;
- **Friday, 18 May 2018;
- Wednesday, 20 June 2018;
- *Wednesday, 20 June 2018.

* Joint meeting of sub-group of Governing Body and Academic Council

** Special Academic Council Meetings in accordance with QA procedure A2.4 Standing Order of Academic Council, section 1, sub-section 1.2

In the Academic Year 2017/2018 the **Programmes & Planning Sub-Committee** met on the follow dates:

- Monday, 09 October 2017;
- Monday, 13 November 2017;

- Monday, 04 December 2017;
- Monday, 15 January 2018;
- Monday, 12 February 2018;
- Monday, 12 March 2018;
- Monday, 16 April 2018;
- Monday, 30 April 2018;
- Wednesday, 13 June 2018.

The **Student Affairs Sub-Committee** met on the following dates in Academic Year 2017/2018:

- Monday, 18 September 2017;
- Monday, 23 October 2017;
- Monday, 22 January 2018;
- Monday, 16 April 2018;
- Monday, 21 May 2018.

The **Research and Development Sub-Committee** met on the following dates in Academic Year 2017/2018:

- Monday, 20 November 2017;
- Monday, 05 March 2018.

The **Quality Assurance Sub-Committee** met on the following dates in 2017/2018:

- Wednesday, 6 September 2017;
- Monday, 25 September 2017;
- Wednesday, 01 November 2017;
- Monday, 27 November 2017;
- Monday, 15 January 2018;
- Monday, 19 February 2018;
- Monday, 12 March 2018;
- Monday, 23 April 2018;
- Monday, 28 May 2018.

Section 2: Reviews in the reporting period

2.1 Internal reviews that were completed in the reporting period.

The following programmes were presented to and approved by Academic Council over the course of Academic Year 2017/2018 and have been added to the Institute's Order in Council.

- New Programme Validations approved in chronological order:
 - Bachelor of Science in Field Biology (Exit Award);
 - Certificate in Human and Personal Development;
 - Diploma in Counselling;
 - International STEM Foundation Programme;
 - Certificate in Acute Medicine Nursing;
 - Bachelor of Arts in Design for Interactive Media (Exit Award);
 - Certificate in Front Office Skills;

- Certificate in Food & Beverage Supervisory Management;
- Certificate in Culinary Management & Innovation;
- Culinary Supervisory Management;
- Certificate in Food Business Innovation;
- Certificate in Supervisory Management;
- Certificate in Managerial Development & Practice;
- Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Event Management;
- Higher Certificate in Early Childhood Care and Education;
- Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Automotive Manufacturing Engineering;
- Certificate in Fitness Instruction;
- Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Culinary Arts Apprenticeship;
- Bachelor of Arts (Ordinary) Culinary Arts Apprenticeship (abinitio);
- Higher Certificate in Culinary Arts;
- Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Coaching & Sports Performance (abinitio);
- Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Coaching & Sports Performance (add-on);
- Bachelor of Science (Ordinary) in Coaching & Sports Performance (abinitio & exit award);
- Higher Certificate in Science in Sports Performance with Coaching (abinitio & exit award);
- Higher Certificate in Science - Pharmacy Technician;
- Certificate in Emergency Nursing;
- Single Subject in Communications Planning & Management for Sports Development Officers;
- Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Youth and Community Studies with New Media;
- Bachelor of Arts (Ordinary) in Youth and Community Studies with New Media;
- Higher Certificate in Arts in Youth and Community Studies with New Media;
- Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Hotel Management (Trainee Manager Development Programme);
- Certificate in Strategic Services Planning & Management;
- Dance in Ireland - Historical and Cultural Perspectives;
- Certificate in Validation Science;
- Certificate in Building Information Modelling (BIM) with Revitt;
- Diploma in Restaurant Operations Management;
- Certificate in Culinary Skills;
- Certificate in Food and Beverage Operations;
- *Certificate in Social Media for Digital Marketing;
- *Higher Diploma in Science in Computing (Data Analytics).

**For noting at Academic Council September 2018*

- Other Programme Validations:
 - Validation of Stage 1 programmes in the Department of Nursing and Health Care Studies, namely, BSc (Hons) in General Nursing and BSc (Hons) in Mental Health Nursing;
 - School of BCH School Strategy as per Programmatic Review;
 - De-semesterisation of Health and Leisure Programmes – Stage 1.

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

Number of new Programme Validations/Programme Approvals completed in the reporting year	41
Number of Programme Reviews completed in the reporting year	41
Number of Research Reviews completed in the reporting year	0
Number of School/Department/Faculty Reviews completed in the reporting year	0
Number of Service Unit Reviews completed in the reporting year	0
Number of Reviews of Arrangements with partner organisations 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.

Composition of Panels	%
Internal	
National	93%
UK	2%
EU	
Student	
Other (International)	5%

Chair Profile	%
Internal	
Similar Institution	74%
Different Institution	21%
International	
Other (External Industry Expert)	5%

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.

The Institute collects, analyses, and uses data for the effective management of its academic programmes and all other central services activities. The Institute is committed to the enhancement of the students experience and the Institutes quality assurance mechanisms include an emphasis on feedback from students. Data used includes data from the following: Application/Admissions data; Examinations data; Progression/Retention Data; National data on progression and retention and national/international research to enhance the student teaching and learning experience, in particular with respect to retention and what works to support the first year student experience in their transition to third level; Department level Student Surveys; Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE); Library Survey; Computer Services Survey; QA1-3 Surveys; Student Services Surveys; Graduate Employment Surveys; Joint Academic Workshops (JAWS); Student Forum; Feedback from Work Placement and Industry; External Examiners Reports; online tool-Academic Department Report/Plan. All of this data is used as a feedback and feed-forward mechanism to inform quality assurance and quality enhancement.

Under the management of the Head of Strategy and Institute Performance, a Central Student Data Office was established in Academic Year 2016/2017, to centralise quality data collection, analysis and dissemination. The Banner System is the tool used to collect data with respect to student retention, progression and success. This data, and all other data sourced, is analysed by Institute Management, Service Units and Course Boards, in the context of the requirements of a number of relevant Quality Assurance policies and procedures, and this data is used to inform quality enhancement. The following are the relevant Quality Assurance policies and procedures: Section A4: Procedures for the Design, Validation and Modification of Programmes and Modules; Section A5: Assessment of Learners, Sub Section A5.15 Analysis of Examination Results, Sub Section A5.16 External Examiners Policy and Procedures; Section A6: Procedures for Ongoing Monitoring of Programmes; Section A7: Procedures for Evaluation of Programmes; Section A9: Feedback Mechanisms, Form QA 1-Survey of Students by Lecturer, Form QA 2-Summary of Survey of students by Lecturer, Form QA 3-Course Survey Questionnaire. See <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>

In Academic Year 2016/2017, it was decided by the Office of the Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar to pilot an amended version of the previously in place Annual Course Board Report Forms (CBA 1 and 2). The amendments were based on feedback from the Heads of Department. On the basis of the pilot in Academic Year 2016/2017, and the subsequent requirement of the new Strategic Plan for Academic Department Plans, a full review of the CBA 1 and 2 took place at the commencement of Academic Year 2017/2018, co-ordinated by the Office of the Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar. This review was focused on the establishment of centralised data informed academic department level decision making and planning which resulted in the development of the online tool-Academic Department Report/Plan. This online tool is centrally populated (through the Central student Data Office) with the relevant data for analysis and interpretation by academic departments, to inform their development of an academic department action plan for the subsequent academic year. The plan is submitted to the Executive and subsequently to the Academic Council.

The following are the headings included:

- Current Department Strategy;
- Current Programmes within the Department;
- Previous Annual Academic Department Report/Plan;
- Student CAO Data-Trends;
- Student Registration Data-Trends;
- Analysis of Examination Results and Progression Data-Trends;
- Student Withdrawals and Retention Initiatives;
- Student Graduation Statistics;
- Stakeholder Feedback (including ISSE Feedback, External Examiners Feedback, Industry Feedback, Graduate Feedback, Course Board Feedback);
- Use of Technology Enhanced Learning;
- New Programme Proposals;
- Quality Enhancements-Department activities which contribute to quality enhancements on teaching and learning;
- Annual Academic Department Plan for the next Academic Year (This section is a summary of the actions to be addressed, as outlined within each of the previous sections, and the indicators of success).

The External Examiner Policy and Procedures provide for the requirement of Course Boards to produce a 'Summary Report of Action Items/Recommendations for Improvement from External Examiners Reports and Responses by School/Department' to the Academic Council. Reference to this requirement quality assures that Course Boards consider and provide a response to external examiners recommendations for improvement in the teaching and learning experience. This requirement is embedded within the new Academic Department Report/Plan.

At student registration, the Institute carries out the HEA Equal Access Survey. The HEA through its National Access Office, promotes equality of access to higher education for people with disabilities, mature students who previously had not the opportunity to access higher education, those facing social and economic barriers and minority groups, including the Traveller Community and is achieving this full equality of access to higher education is a national priority. Each year the HEA invites us to collect Equal Access information at the point of registration on the Students socio-economic background, disability and ethnicity and returns it to the Higher Education Authority. With the information that is provided, the HEA is able to measure equality of access to higher education and allocate the resources needed to support students of all backgrounds and abilities.

The information gathered during registration is protected by robust data protection policies in the ITT and in the HEA, in full compliance with data protection legislation. The data that is returned to the HEA is collective and students are not identified by name, address or ID number. All students are encouraged to respond to the Equal Access questions. The non-response will not affect the student's registration and enrolment, or their ability to be considered for financial support. However, it is highlighted that non-responses may have implications for the amount of State funding that is allocated to the IT, Tralee and as a result, we may then not be in a position meet the requirements of students with specific needs.

Each year the Careers Office surveys graduates using the Graduate Destination Survey. First Destination Survey offers a vision into the first destination of graduates nine months after graduation. Graduate surveys are produced to measure higher education output providing useful

information to a wide selection of stakeholders such as higher education institutions, policy makers and prospective students. Results of surveys can also be used to benchmark institutional performance to similar institutions.

Section 1 of the graduate survey focuses on level 8-10 graduates whether graduates are in employment in Ireland or overseas, seeking employment, in work experience schemes or further study. Section 2 looks at the relevance or how graduates rate their qualification to the employment gained while Section 3 outlines salaries reported by graduates 9 months after graduation. Section 4 focuses on location by regional distribution of graduates with a level 8-10 qualification. Section 5 is an overview of employment sector by level, of working graduates in Ireland and overseas nine months after graduation. The final section reviews level 8-10 international graduate's first destination after graduation.

Presently the graduate surveys are created under the limitations of cross sectional data collection approach – a process which is under revision by the HEA currently. It is expected that the new survey (in early stages of longitudinal development) will include:

- Data on graduate qualifications and employment both within Ireland and overseas;
- Relevance of employment to area of study;
- Data on graduate further study;
- Data on graduate unemployment and unavailability for work;
- Career progression of graduates through longitudinal data.

See: <http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/What-do-Graduates-do-2015.pdf>

Each year the Graduate Outcome Survey goes live from April to June as the Institute must have the data back to the HEA by July. The HEA then returns the data to the Institute in September/October. The Central Student Data Office at the institute has been working on putting the ITT data gathered through the survey on PowerBI which makes the data more accessible and user friendly for local Institute analysis. From next year, the programme will be set up in a way that PowerBI populates automatically so the data will be available immediately once the survey is closed. The Academic Year 2016/2017 data (captured in April - June 2018) was available in January 2019 and Academic Year 2017/2018 graduates will be captured April - June 2019 and available July 2019 and each July thereafter.

Each year the library surveys students on their experience of the library services. This data is analysed by the library and used to inform enhanced service provision.

Each year Computer Services surveys staff and students on their experience of the IT services. This data is analysed by Computer Services, and used to inform enhanced service provision.

The HEA-funded Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) initiative has effectively been in operation since 2014. The Assistant Registrar co-ordinates survey-related activity and, in particular, their outputs and response to the survey findings. During the Academic Year 2016/2017, a pilot process was proposed by the Assistant Registrar to the General Management Team and the Executive to embed ISSE as an integral student feedback mechanism within the Institutes quality assurance systems, with the proposal outlining an annual response at department, school and institute level, including both a feed-back mechanism to students/staff and a feed-forward mechanism in terms of an action plan based on the feedback received. This pilot proposal was agreed for roll in the Academic Year 2016/2017, following receipt of the data from ISSE in May 2017. Due to the agreed strategic importance of the ISSE data, an executive decision was made that going forward the data analysis would be processed through the Central

student Data Office. This office was established under the management of the Head of Strategy and Institute Performance. ISSE feedback is now embedded within the new online tool-Academic Department Report/Plan.

In Academic Year 2017/2018, ISSE afforded HEIs the opportunity to embed the QA3 questions (Survey of Students Course Experience) within the ISSE Survey. IT Tralee accepted this opportunity and the questions were included within the February/March 2018 ISSE Survey. IT Tralee welcomed also the inclusion of questions specifically focused on students completing a masters by research programme.

Feedback is sought and provided from Industry to inform programme enhancement and new programme development. This feedback is sought and provided formally in the context of Programme Work Placement Guidelines and also through other engagements with industry.

Student feedback on teaching and learning: The Joint Academic Work Shop (JAWS) forum, involving the student class representative, the class tutor and the Head of Department, provides students with the opportunity to raise feedback/concerns with respect to their teaching and learning experience, as does the student completion of the QA1 and 3 Forms. See section A9.1 at <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>

The Student Open Forum was launched by the Office of the Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar in the Academic Year 2012/2013. A minimum of two fora are arranged in each academic year. Membership of the forum includes: Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar (Chairperson); Assistant Registrar; Academic Administration and Student Affairs Manager (Deputy Chairperson); Students' Union executive; Student class representatives; Admission Officer; Examinations Officer; Students Services Officer (Secretary); Computer Services Manager; Head Librarian and Access Officer. The objectives of the forum are to provide an open discussion platform for student experiences of Institute services and facilities, and where particular issues can be presented for resolution where possible. Minutes and matters arising are reviewed at each subsequent forum meeting.

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

Internal and External factors that have impacted on quality include: The continuing funding restrictions and reductions ; the lack of investment in physical infrastructure and reducing staff resourcing despite the growth in higher education enrolments; National QQI Developments in Policy, Procedure and Best Practice; The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030; the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education area; the Technological Higher Education Quality Framework; National Higher Education landscape; Institute Compact with the HEA; ITT and CIT working towards the establishment of the Munster Technological University; National HEI Best Practices-learning from other HEIs; National focus on Student Engagement (Publication of 'Enhancing Student Engagement in Decision Making' April 2016 and the establishment of NStEP - the National Student Engagement Programme); National focus on the transition to third level for the year 1 student; HEA Studies of Progression in Higher Education-National Benchmarking; National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning; National Access Plan 2015-2019 with the national focus on the provision of inclusive and accessible third level education; National focus on Student Feedback-Irish survey of Student Engagement (ISSE); National focus and requirements on transparency and accountability in the public sector.

3.3 A description of other implementation issues.

Nothing to Report

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.

The Institute is committed to continuous improvement in the operation of its quality assurance policies and procedures, and in quality enhancement. The commitment to quality enhancement has been made explicit through the proposal to the Academic Council to rename the Quality Assurance Sub-Committee as the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Sub-Committee.

The further enhancement for the new Academic Year 2017/2018 of the strategy for dissemination of the Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures has in particular contributed to promoting engagement from staff and students with the policies and procedures, and consequently has contributed to ensuring the ongoing effectiveness of the policies and procedures. The enhanced strategy included the following:

- As required by QQI, the publication on the Institutes website of the Institutes Quality Assurance Procedures, Institute Plans and Reports. The Quality Assurance Manual is only available to staff, students and the public alike through the Institute website. See: <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>
- Use of a template for the development of new Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures;
- E-mail notification from the Office of the VPAAR to all relevant stakeholders (including students and the Students' Union) of new and/or updated Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures, reference to their location on the ITT website and a request for feedback on the operation of the Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures (Template provided for this feedback). Heads of Department are also asked to include any new/updated quality assurance procedures on the Course Board agenda. Feedback from individuals/Course Boards is logged in the Office of the Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar in the template provided. Editing issues are rectified immediately, major issues are referred to the relevant Sub-Committee and minor issues are recorded for consideration at the next scheduled review of the particular procedure;
- An academic staff CPD session on the Institutes Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures is held as part of each of the scheduled CPD events across the academic year (three CPD Events per year, consequently three Quality Assurance CPD sessions scheduled each year for academic staff). Academic staff are asked and encouraged here to provide ongoing feedback on the operation of the quality assurance policies and procedures;
- Rolling agenda item placed on the agenda of each Quality Assurance Sub-Committee 'Stakeholder Feedback on the Operation Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures'. The feedback received through the Office of the VPAAR in the template document provided is processed through this agenda item. Feedback is in relation to the operation of quality

assurance policies and procedures and quality enhancement of all service units across the Institute.

In reference to feedback from relevant stakeholders, amendments and updates to the existing quality assurance policies and procedures (referenced in Part 2. Section 1.1) were proposed and progressed through the Academic Council Sub-Committees and approved at the Academic Council. These amendments and updates were proposed and progressed to greater ensure the effectiveness of the policies and procedures. For example: A review of the Institutes Staff and Students Complaints Procedures (Section A10 of the Quality Assurance Manual) was progressed during the reporting year Academic Year 2016/2017, and was completed in Academic Year 2017/2018. This review resulted in significant changes to the Institutes Staff and Students Complaints Policies and Procedures, resulting in a Student Complaints Policy and Procedure (A10.1), and a separate Dignity and Respect Policy and Procedure (A10.2).

Ongoing and regular review of the quality assurance procedures, in reference to their alignment to ESG 2015, QQI Policy and QQI Quality Assurance Guidelines also contributes to ensuring the effectiveness of the policies and procedures, for example: Section A5.16: External Examiners Policy and Procedure was updated in alignment with the QQI Effective Practice guidelines for External Examining; Section A4 Procedures for the Design and Validation of New Programmes was updated in alignment with QQI Core Policies and Criteria for the Validation by QQI of Programmes of Education and Training 2017 and QQI Programme Validation Training for Evaluators 2017.

2. Impact

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

School of Business, Computing and Humanities (BCH) Programmatic Review Academic Year 2016/2017 - changes to policy and procedure based on the outcomes of the review process:

- Outcome condition of School of BCH Programmatic Review: Develop a School Strategy in the context of the Institutes Strategic Plan 2017-2021, to include detailed department level plans, to be completed by the end of calendar year 2017. This outcome condition of the programmatic review process contributed directly to amendments made when Section A7 Procedures for Evaluation of Programmes (Programmatic Review) were reviewed and approved in Academic Year 2017/2018. The Programmatic review process now includes the requirement to complete a 'high level review of school/department activities culminating in a School Strategic Plan for the succeeding five years';
- Outcome recommendation of the School of BCH Programmatic Review: The Institute mandatory 50% minimum requirement for progression on a number of add-on programmes from Year 2 to 3 and Year 3 to Year 4 (level 6 to level 8, level 7 to level 8) should be removed and replaced with a 40% Grade Point Average (pass). When raised by the panel with the programme teams, the panel noted that no strong justification was presented for maintaining such a barrier to progression.

School of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) *Programme Validations Academic Year 2016/2017 - changes to policy and procedure based on the outcomes of the review process:*

- Outcome condition of STEM Programme Validation process: The anomaly of the 50% GPA progression requirement going from the Level 7 to the Level 8 one-year add-on programme to be resolved. In Academic Year 2017/2018, this issue was referred to the Quality Assurance Sub-Committee and subsequently approved by the Academic Council. The Progression Regulation was approved to be amended to 40% for students progressing to an add-on programme from September 2018. (This new progression regulation allowed for the progression of 30 students to an add-on programme in Academic Year 2018/2019).

School of Health and Social Sciences (HSS) *Programmatic Review Department of Nursing and Health Care Sciences May 2017:*

- Outcome recommendation of HSS Programmatic Review process: Repeat assessment policy to be developed by the Institute and applied within the Schools/Departments/Programmes. The panel strongly recommends that all students have an opportunity to repeat all failed elements within the academic year. Only in exceptional circumstances should this opportunity not be available to students. 'Institute-wide approach to the repeat assessment of module components' was approved at the Quality Assurance Sub-Committee in May 2018 for referral for approval to the Academic Council.

New Quality Assurance Procedure: A5.9b: Classified Awards for Repeat Students- Students in the award stage(s) of a programme may repeat one 5-credit module and still gain a classified award based on the overall GPA achieved at the first attempt. A student's GPA will not change because of the repeat attempt. The repeat module must be taken at the next available opportunity on a repeat exam only or repeat and attend basis. This ruling applied at Examination Boards from Academic Year 2017/2018 onwards. (This new procedure resulted in 30 repeat students achieving a classified award in Academic Year 2017/18).

3. Themes

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

Key Themes:

- Strategy Development;
- Building a quality assurance and quality enhancement culture Institute wide;
- Enhancement of quality assurance policies and procedures and alignment with relevant QQI Policies and Procedures;
- Data informed decision making and planning, and learning analytics;
- Enhancement of the student experience through student engagement;
- Student Retention and Success focused on supporting the students transition to third level in year 1;
- Equity of access to third level and support for learners, in particular students with a disability and students with learning difference;
- Quality inclusive learning centred teaching and learning;
- Dignity and Respect for staff and students in the learning environment and in the workplace;
- Research Quality.

Internal Review Themes (41 Programme Validations and Programme Reviews):

- Assessment Strategy (including repeat assessment strategy) and Scheduling of Assessment;
- Student Assessment Workload and Class Contact Hours;
- Module Content and Delivery;
- Graduate Profile and Career Pathways;
- Quality Assurance of Work Practice Placement (including assessment of learning outcomes).

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.

Institute Led Improvements and Enhancements:

Enhancement of the Institute **strategy of dissemination of the Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures**. This strategy has resulted in greater staff engagement with and ownership of quality assurance and enhancement. The strategy includes the following:

- As required by QQI, the publication on the Institutes website of the Institutes Quality Assurance Procedures, Institute Plans and Reports. The Quality Assurance Manual is only available to staff, students and the public alike through the Institute website. See: <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/QualityAssurance/>
- Use of a template for the development of new Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures;
- E-mail notification from the Office of the VPAAR to all relevant stakeholders (including students and the Students' Union) of new and/or updated Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures, reference to their location on the ITT Website and a request for feedback on the operation of the Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures (Template provided for this feedback). Heads of Department are also asked to include any new/updated quality assurance procedures on the Course Board agenda. Feedback from individuals/Course Boards is logged in the Office of the Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar in the template provided. Editing issues are rectified immediately, major issues are referred to the relevant Sub-Committee and minor issues are recorded for consideration at the next scheduled review of the particular procedure;
- An academic staff CPD session on the Institutes Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures is held as part of each of the scheduled CPD events across the academic year (three CPD Events per year, consequently three Quality Assurance CPD sessions scheduled each year for academic staff). Academic staff are asked and encouraged here to provide ongoing feedback on the operation of the quality assurance policies and procedures;
- Rolling agenda item placed on the agenda of each Quality Assurance Sub-Committee 'Stakeholder Feedback on the Operation Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures'. The feedback received through the Office of the VPAAR in the template document provided is processed through this agenda item. Feedback is in relation to the operation of quality assurance policies and procedures and quality enhancement of all service units across the Institute.

The development of the **online tool-Academic Department Report/Plan**, to support data informed decision-making and learning analytics. This online tool is centrally populated (through the Central Student Data Office) with the relevant data for analysis and interpretation by academic departments, to inform their development of an academic department action plan for the subsequent academic year. The plan is submitted to the Executive. The following are the headings included:

- Current Department Strategy;
- Current Programmes within the Department;
- Previous Annual Academic Department Report/Plan;
- Student CAO Data-Trends;
- Student Registration Data-Trends;
- Analysis of Examination Results and Progression Data –Trends;
- Student Withdrawals and Retention Initiatives;
- Student Graduation Statistics;
- Stakeholder Feedback (including ISSE Feedback, External Examiners Feedback, Industry Feedback, Graduate Feedback, Course Board Feedback);
- Use of Technology Enhanced Learning;
- New Programme Proposals;
- Quality Enhancements-Department activities which contribute to quality enhancements on teaching and learning;
- Annual Academic Department Plan for the next Academic Year (This section is a summary of the actions to be addressed, as outlined within each of the previous sections, and the indicators of success).

As per the requirements of **NStEP, the National Student Engagement Programme**, the Institute in collaboration with the Institutes Students' Union, established an Internal Institute Student Engagement Working Group to progress the 3 work streams of the programme across Academic Year 2017/2018:

1. National Student Training Programme;
2. Institutional Analysis;
3. The five national projects, working to develop National Best Practice Guidelines.

In reference to 1 above, in Academic Year 2017/2018, the class representatives were trained by NStEP.

In reference to 2 above, on 17/01/2018, the NStEP Institutional Analysis was facilitated at the Institute by Cat O'Driscoll NStEP and Simon Varwell sparqs (Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland). Based on the feedback from the Institutional Analysis, the Institute Student Engagement Working Group agreed an action plan to respond to the feedback, the action plan to be rolled out in Academic Year 2018/2019.

In reference to 3 above, the Institute is represented on all five of the national working groups as outlined below. The working groups progressed with their work across Academic Year 2017/2018.

Project 1: The Role and Recruitment of Class Representatives (Lead by the National College of Ireland, with representation from IT Student Union).

Project 2: The Design, Review and Delivery of Programmes (Lead by NUI Galway, with representation from IT Tralee-Assistant Registrar/Head of Student Engagement Office).

Project 3: Student Feedback Opportunities, Data and Follow Up (Lead by Carlow IT, with representation from IT Tralee-Assistant Registrar/Head of Student Engagement Office).

Project 4: Students in Formal System Level Procedures, Strategy and Decision Making (Lead by Letterkenny IT, with representation from IT Tralee Student Union).

Project 5: Staff Roles and Capacity Building (Lead by CIT, with representation from IT Tralee-Assistant Registrar/Head of Student Engagement Office) .

The Teaching Learning Assessment and Engagement Working Group progressed with the drafting of an **Institute Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Engagement Strategy**. At the close of Academic Year 2017/2018, a final draft of the agreed core principles, strategies and associated actions were forwarded to the Executive for consideration. The agreed principles are as follows:

- Excellence in teaching and learning is achieved through an Institute-wide collaborative approach which embraces the wide diversity of staff and students;
- The Institute is committed to the ongoing development and resourcing of an optimal teaching and learning experience, ensuring an inclusive, learning centred and nurturing environment to support all to reach their full potential;
- The continuation of the historical Institute focus on the applied nature of teaching, and learning by doing, will ensure the academic, personal and social development of work ready and civic minded graduates;
- The Institute acknowledges the diverse prior educational experience of its students, and is committed to supporting their transition into the third level environment, particularly in their first year, through a scaffolded and developmental approach to teaching and learning;
- Lecturers are supported in their primary role as educators through the provision of continuous professional development opportunities and the promotion of a collaborative community of practice, where knowledge and reflection on practice inform the ongoing development of teaching excellence;
- Teaching and Learning practice is evidence based and informed by stakeholder feedback, both from internal stakeholders (staff and students) and engagement with external stakeholders, so that the programmes provided and the learning achieved meets the needs of the student, industry and society.

The agreed goals are as follows:

- Goal 1: Learning Centred Practices (including Student Supports);
- Goal 2: Assessment For/Of/As Learning and Student Feedback;
- Goal 3: Design Curricula to be Engaging and Relevant to the Student, Industry and Society;
- Goal 4: Support the Professionalism of Teaching through Academic Professional Development;
- Goal 5: Learning Environment and Teaching Spaces (Developing a Physical, Social and Technological Environment that Supports Learning).

In May 2018, the draft policy document ‘**Year 1 Student Retention and Success Policy**’ was forwarded to the executive for final consideration and approval.

Below are the key principles agreed guiding the policy:

- Retention, progression and the academic success of students and the enhancement of a quality engaged student experience is key to IT Tralee fulfilling its responsibility as a Higher Education Institution;
- Nurturing student belonging and improving retention and success should be a priority for all staff;
- The expertise and best practice already taking place in the Institute must be acknowledged and shared throughout the Institute;
- The academic sphere is the most important site for nurturing student participation and engagement. Research shows that ongoing improvement in the overall learning experience is the best route towards supporting student retention and success;
- Support from the Student Support Services is necessary in supporting student retention and success, including but not limited to: financial support; Counselling support; Chaplaincy support; support from the Student Medical Centre; Access Office; and Office for Learning Difference;
- A particular focus is required on the first year student experience, while recognising all stages are important;
- Withdrawal is to be viewed as not necessarily a failure of the system or the student but sometimes through a journey of discovery the student reaches the conclusion that the programme they have chosen is not for them or with the necessary support concludes this is not the right time to undertake the programme of study and return at a later time (Institute needs to be responsive to student needs in this regard);
- Interventions are more effective if they address the issues of concern and are evidence informed (local and national evidence);
- The local context must be understood (Institution, discipline, programme, module, student cohort etc.) and followed by appropriate intervention. It is important to understand the context of disciplines, programmes and modules with lower than expected rates of success. One size does not fit all. Interventions must be tailored to address the issues experienced;
- High quality Institutional data collection, analysis, reporting and review is required at Institute, School and Department level, for each programme, to each module and cohort of students. This analysis should ideally include prior year comparatives and should seek to establish patterns;
- Listen to student feedback, in particular to what first year students have said regarding their first year student experience through the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE), the Joint Academic Workshops (JAWS) and the Student Class Representative Open Forum etc.;
- Effective interventions will have the following characteristics: ongoing rather than once off; an explicit academic support focus; delivery through mainstream curriculum; proactive and developmental; relevant; encourage collaboration and engagement with fellow students and staff; and monitored for student engagement and quality;
- While primary interventions are located in the academic context, they must be enabled and facilitated by the Institute. A process to implement and manage change must be designed and utilised, with explicit goals and timelines. Establish a cross-institutional team with clear roles and an emphasis on working in a collaborative way, including students as partners. Accessible and user-friendly data must be made available, and staff and

students need to be supported to discuss and engage with the data to improve student retention, progression and success. An evidence informed programme of interventions must be developed, promoting and monitoring student engagement with same, and the programme of interventions evaluated. A clear focus on and review of student retention interventions will allow the Institute evaluate the success (or otherwise) of these interventions at an Institute and programme level.

This Year 1 Student Retention and Success Policy principles guide the strategies to be actioned at Institute level and department level to improve retention and progression and support student academic success and a quality engaged student experience for all students of the Institute. Interventions are considered under the following headings: Pre-entry activities; activities provided to engage and support students through the Institute Orientation and Department Induction Process; activities to monitor students transition to third level; learning-centred teaching and learning to meet the needs of a diverse student population; student supports and activities to support student health and wellbeing; development of staff expertise and awareness; activities to support student engagement and listen to student feedback. The interventions identified will be actioned through the following action plans: *Institute Strategic Plan; Institute Marketing Plans; Institute Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Engagement Strategy; Service Unit Plans; Academic Department Plans; Course Board plans.*

The Institute, through the **LIVE ITT Working group**, continued to work towards becoming a Health Promoting Campus (Healthy Ireland HSE Action Plan 2013-2025). IT, Tralee's pilot Health Promotion and Retention Project supports student health and wellbeing, promoting events and projects on campus, to ensure that the Institute, as a place of study, is health promoting and health enabling. Learning and well-being are inextricably linked. When students are well, they can better engage with their learning and living experience, embrace and enjoy the full student experience, both inside and outside of the classroom, and reach their full potential. Live ITT focuses on four main project areas: Move ITT (initiatives to enhance physical health and physical activity); Change ITT (initiatives to support students to change lifestyle habits that are negatively impacting on their health, and consequently their learning); Mind ITT (initiatives to support mental health, personal safety, informed sexual consent, sexual health); Connect ITT (initiatives to support social connectedness and belonging, student volunteering, and connecting students with their future careers). The Health Promotion and Retention Project and its initiatives are introduced to Year 1 students during their Induction Programme in the context of Health and Wellbeing Sessions, which include the topic of sexual consent. In Academic Year 2017/2018, having reviewed these sessions on an annual basis and updated them accordingly, the sessions were attended by almost 100% of the incoming first year students.

Academic staff CPD: EDSU in Academic Year 2017/2018, developed a module titled 'Online Teaching' to support academic staff capacity in online teaching. Staff receive a certificate of completion. The module is for academic staff planning to/ delivering blended or online learning in the Institute. Having completed this module, EDSU provides ongoing support to academic staff during their online teaching.

The Teaching Online CPD module is delivered in four sessions as follows:

- 1: Introduction to Blended Learning (Face-to-face session-4 hours);
- 2: Fostering an online community (Synchronous & asynchronous session- 2 hours);
- 3: PowerPoint for synchronous delivery (Asynchronous session- 1 hour);
- 4: Online Assessment (Asynchronous session-2 hours).

Total learner effort-9 hours.

Central Services Led Improvements and Enhancements:

Student Support Services-Access and Disability

Access21@ ITTralee is a project that has been running since Academic Year 2016/17 between the Institute of Technology Tralee and three DEIS schools in Kerry.

As another DEIS school joined this programme this year, 2017/2018 saw what is a strong multi-tiered programme with the key core practices of Pathways to College, Mentoring, Leadership through Service and 21st Century Teaching and Learning get more and more established in our partner schools. Staff and students from 2nd and 3rd years are deeply involved in the efficient running of this programme.

Access21@ ITTralee's overall objective to fulfil key goals set up in 2017 has been reached as;

- the educational aspirations and attainment of Irish second level students from geographical areas where attendance at third level is historically low has been raised;
- partner schools have been supported to develop and promote 21st Century Teaching & Learning environments;
- the STEM/CS capabilities of teachers across the Irish second level education system have been increased;
- an evidence base that informs policy and structural change is being built.

Furthermore, as the quality assurance in implementing this programme has been rigorously ensured, very noticeable improvements have been recorded in the:

- strengthening in the Access21@IT Tralee concept;
- structuring of the delivery of this programme;
- efficiency in the delivery of this programme;
- strengthening in staff involvement;
- quality of student involvement with key subjects;
- relationship between IT Tralee students and students from our partner schools.

Quality enhancement highlights during the year included:

- Planning Sessions with Participating Schools;
- Train the Trainer sessions with Schools (Mentoring & Leadership);
- Access21@IT Tralee Mentors Workshops;
- School Visits (Consultation/Troubleshooting with Teachers);
- Implementation of IT Tralee Access 21 Mentors mentoring in partner schools;
- Campus visits for participating schools;
- First Access21@IT Tralee Get Together.

Access21@IT Tralee strongly cemented its relationship with management, staff and students in partner schools by rolling out 5 major initiatives:

- the setting up and implementation of the ITT Getting College Ready Calendar of Events;
- the setting up of an Access21@IT Tralee budget which has been instrumental in ensuring the smooth running of the project;
- Access21@IT Tralee first Access 21 Experience Day with of 160 2nd year students from our partner schools in IT Tralee experiencing college life in IT Tralee and being treated to IT Tralee Final Year students showcasing their Final Projects;
- IT Tralee Access 21 Mentors setting up to mentor their mentees in our partner schools;

- IT Tralee Access 21 Student Ambassadors visiting partner schools and engaging with students by relating their own path to College and the many obstacles on the way particularly struck a chord with DEIS students as a noticeable engagement was recorded.

Furthermore, Access21@IT Tralee hosted our first Research Seminar with Trinity Access 21 research team presenting the findings of their work for 2017-2018 which reflected an increased improvement in the Access 21 students' confidence in the following key skills:

- Sense of purpose in education;
- Aspirations and goals;
- Active engagement with education;
- Wellbeing;
- Self-worth;
- Student voice;
- Student-teacher relationship.

The Institute together with its South Cluster partner HEI's (CIT, UCC, WIT, IT Carlow) applied to the HEA for the **PATH 2 1916 Bursaries** and the **PATH 3 Access Initiatives**. This collaboration:

- presented an opportunity for the 5 HEI's in the South Cluster to share practices;
- brought about the development of a regional Access Strategy;
- was instrumental in synergising experience, expertise and resources towards shared goals and minimising duplication of effort across the region and ultimately nationally;
- pools the respective experience and knowledge in each HEI of the most under-represented groups and builds capacity across the region to identify and respond efficiently and effectively to the needs of these students;
- The 1916 Bursary Fund provides financial support through bursaries to first-year undergraduate students identified as meeting the eligibility criteria for the Fund: The objective of the proposed new Bursary Fund is to encourage participation and success in Higher Education by students who are socio-economically disadvantaged. 7 bursaries were awarded to IT Tralee students in Academic Year 2017/18. These students will receive up to €20,000 over the course of their studies;
- PATH 3 aims to fund objectives associated with Goal 5 in the National Access Plan, namely developing regional and community partnership strategies for increasing access to higher education by under-represented groups. The HEA intends that the funding will help 2,000 new access students from under-represented groups to get into Third-level education and stay there. Proposals will target sub-groups mentioned in the National Access Plan, namely lone parents and ethnic minorities (including recently arrived refugees). At least 10% of all places should target lone parents;
- IT Tralee with its Southern Cluster partners (CIT, WIT, IT Carlow, and UCC) is working on three initiatives:
 - **Travellers in Education:** IT Tralee is the lead on this project with the aims of the project as follows: Accredited TCAT Train the Trainer on QQI framework; Enhance Traveller cultural awareness and inclusion in schools; Improve Traveller access to third level; Develop models of best practice for Traveller support.
 - **Enabling Transitions:** The project aims to promote effective study skills and the use of assistive technologies (both licensed and free wares) among students with literacy difficulties as a means of enabling their future transition from the second to third level learning environment.
 - **Connecting Communities, Connecting Curriculum** – W.I.T are the lead on this project and this project was in the very early stages in Academic Year 2017/18.

Joining the **HEAR** and **DARE** programmes:

- enhances equity of access to IT Tralee for under-represented groups of students through this common, national entry scheme;
- expands our reach beyond linked schools;
- contributes to a recognised, established process with built-in measurement and reporting instruments facilitating access to reliable, validated, comparable statistics to inform the national and regional access agenda;
- provides a platform for disseminating and sharing good practice.

The Institute's Strategic Plan 2017-2021 committed to undertaking research to inform its direction on the development of an Access and Foundation programme. This research reached out to the potential and prospective mature learners in the community in collaboration with our community partners, Obair, Kerry Network of People with Disabilities, South Kerry Development Partnership and North, East, West Kerry Development, to identify the needs of prospective mature learners in terms of access to higher education, methods of delivery, access to resources and perceived and real barriers to progression thus contributing to the body of knowledge, identifying gaps and informing the Institute's plans to promote and facilitate lifelong learning.

A 'Student Success Plan: Students with Disabilities' was approved by the Student Affairs Sub-Committee of the Academic Council. This plan:

- will provide an over-arching, co-ordinating framework for the Institute of Technology Tralee as a whole to support the achievement of best outcomes for the Institute's students with disabilities;
- identifies all resources available to IT Tralee from both within and externally that are available to deploy in supporting this student group;
- outlines the current role of each Department and provides for the development and enhancement of Disability Support across the Institute.

The Student Affairs Sub-Committee of the Academic Council also approved the Institute's '**Reasonable Accommodations and Support for Students with Disabilities Policy and Procedure**', which was further approved by the Academic Council. This policy and procedure provides for an equitable, consistent and transparent approach to the provision of reasonable accommodations across the Institute. It is a practical guide for lecturers and other academic support staff in the Institute which is to be consulted when requested to provide help to a student with a disability. It provides guidance as to what is expected of staff and the provision of reasonable accommodation. It evidences the Institute's commitment to access, transfer and progression for students with disabilities, to providing a quality student experience and to modelling good practice on campus. The development of this policy and procedure was facilitated by an extensive inter-departmental dialogue facilitated by both the Academic Council and both the Student Affairs and Quality Assurance Sub-Committees. This dialogue process in itself provided valuable spaces in which to enhance a shared understanding of what is reasonable accommodation and how IT Tralee can implement this policy and procedure.

The Institute's commitment to the provision of an inclusive teaching and learning environment which embraces all learners is embedded in its Draft **Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Engagement Strategy**. Lecturers are encouraged to embrace inclusive teaching methods and to strive towards the principles of Universal Design to address learner variability through the use of appropriate materials and through flexible methods and assessments. IT Tralee is a member of AHEAD, the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability, and is represented on its Board

of Directors, and embraces AHEAD's Charter for Inclusive Teaching and Learning and its seven principles of Universal Design and is actively promoting AHEAD's Digital Badge for Universal in Teaching and Learning.

Upon the launch of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019, the Institute commenced its review of its **Equity of Access and Participation Policy** and a revised version was approved by the Academic Council in December 2017. The process of reviewing the original policy in conjunction with the national access plan has resulted in a policy that is wider in scope but also a deep commitment to our students and their right to education, equity and opportunity.

The Institute participated on behalf of the IOT sector in the **ESF Fund for Students** with Disabilities Review Task Force which presented a very important opportunity for education providers and the HEA to harness the wealth of knowledge and experience across the FE and HE sectors to create a funding model that meets the needs of students with disabilities in modern society. The Institute continues to engage on behalf of THEA in on going developments.

The Institute also participated in the **ESF Student Assistance Fund Review Focus Group** and grasped the opportunity provided for the first time in 2017/18 to open the fund to part-time students and to students who are lone parents with a proportion of SAF funding ring-fenced for this cohort.

The **Access Office** is participating in additional, selected community-based initiatives to progress the widening participation agenda: PEIL Moving On programme for women in the home, Tralee Access Network of People with Disabilities, and the NEETs working group aimed at developing a county-wide response to the needs of young persons aged 16-24 years Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs).

The Disability Support Services at IT Tralee evidenced a gap in **college readiness** amongst some of our new entrants, particularly in the area of career guidance, access to mainstream services and assistive technology. IT Tralee subsequently hosted CPD with the Guidance Counsellors in September 2017 focusing on providing a career guidance service to second level students with disabilities. The Institute then approached the Progressive Pathways group, co-ordinated by the Children and Young People's Services Committees, an interagency group, regarding the Institutes interest in collaborating on a county-wide information fair aimed at second level students and their families to bridge the gaps that students are experiencing by bringing together mainstream service providers and information on access, transfer and progression. This fair went ahead on 30th January 2018 and was the first of its kind in Kerry. Over 300 people were registered as having attended and due its success, the event is planned for a second time on 30th January 2019. Specific presentations were made on the day in the use of AT in education.

Student Support Services: Careers and Alumni Office

The graduate outcome survey was reviewed and updated to be conducted going forward using an ICT tool. The Willing Able Mentoring (WAM) programme was initiated to link ITT graduates and industry in county Kerry. Willing Able Mentoring (WAM) is a work placement programme which aims to promote access to the labour market for graduates with disabilities and build the capacity of employers to integrate disability into the mainstream workplace. A Big Breakfast Event was held during study week in Semester 2 for final year students. Alumni operations were initiated within Student Services.

Student Support Services: Office for Learning Difference

In line with the 'Student Success Plan- Students with Disabilities' and following a review of **Study Skills** delivery for Semester One, Disability Services contracted a Study Skills Facilitator (ESF funded) to provide Study Skills training to students with disabilities during Semester Two.

Pre-Easter Session: Review your Study Habits; Post- Easter 4 week programme offered across both campuses: Procrastination and getting in the Study Zone; Organising Time and Information; Active Study Techniques; Preparing for Exam Day. Two drop in workshops, 18 hours delivery. Disability Services commissioned the Study Skills Facilitator to develop these materials into four video tutorials, which are now available for mainstream student viewing on Blackboard.

Following on from the Study Skills Programme the Study Skills Facilitator compiled a report which served as core focus for planning regarding future enhancements of the study skills offering within Disability Services and the potential to universally design such future offerings to reach learner variability Institute wide. The development of further video tutorials are planned for the academic year 2018/19 with a particular view towards piloting the integration of academic writing support videos to complement particular academic writing requirements within a course module where high registration levels of students with learning difference are noted.

In line with the 'Student success Plan-students with Disability' the Officer for Students with Learning Difference acted as driver to the development of an **Assistive Technology (AT)** survey which included input from across Disability Services. The survey aimed to measure: awareness of AT and previous use; engagement with training and barriers to same; use of AT to support course work; use of Disability Resource rooms; collection of AT equipment; student voice. It is intended to administer the survey annually to track and measure student usage and engagement and identify possible patterns in factors impacting on engagement. First findings of the AT Survey offer insight and guidance regarding those aspects of AT Service provision which appear to be yielding positive outcomes and those which do not. Of particular note is that 74% of respondents are interested in learning more about how AT could benefit them – this confirms an appetite for development of the current service provision model.

The survey findings confirm positive levels regarding suitability of training to student need with 82% of respondents finding training helpful/very helpful. The survey also recorded a marked improvement in perceived user confidence when students were questioned regarding their confidence levels before and after training. Both of these findings endorse the quality of training provided through ATAC (Assistive Technology Advocacy Centre) and endorse the continuance of the Service Level Agreement with ATAC.

Reasons quoted for not continuing assistive technology training, despite a requirement for further training, included busy student time tables and the stress experienced in setting up training. Both these findings highlight the need to devise a more student friendly training schedule and student friendly booking/reminder system. Bearing in mind that the majority of students using AT do so to support literacy it is recognised that the provision of regular group Text Help Read Write Gold training sessions earlier in the semester would serve to provide students with timely training to ensure optimal use of this multifaceted licensed literacy software. Disability Services are currently upskilling personnel to ensure availability of an Institute based competent trainer to support the ATAC provision and ensure early access to AT training for incoming first year cohorts.

The Officer for Learning difference drafted an adapted version of the **PATH THREE, Initiative Two-Enabling Transitions Project, for IT Tralee**. The adapted version was presented to the PATH Three Southern Cluster group and was well received. The Officer for Students with Learning Difference anticipates overseeing the project roll out during the Academic Year 2018/2019. The project aims to promote effective study skills and the use of assistive technologies (both licensed and free

wares) among students with literacy difficulties as a means of enabling their future transition from the second to third level learning environment. While the project is designed to target students with disabilities/low literacy there will be an emphasis on spreading the news to the wider school community – peers, teachers and families. Learning Support teachers will be given a valuable opportunity to refresh/upskill/grow in confidence in terms of their promotion of the use of AT to support student learning both within the classroom and the home environment. The tone of the project is about facilitation and support and a desire to reach out to low literacy households who may find the literature and application processes attached to third level education intimidating. There will be an emphasis on the use of mobile apps to support text read aloud with the student undertaking the role of Teacher and Ambassador demonstrating newly acquired AT knowledge and skill set to peers, school staff and family members. The project will target DEIS schools. While pre-entry in design and nature, the project will also address the initial transition period into third level through the provision of a bespoke specialist HEAR/DARE Orientation Programme facilitated by the Enabling Transitions Schools Facilitator.

The Officer for Learning Difference was delegated responsibility for the compilation of the ITT response to the **Audit of Apprentice Support** initiated by the Heads of Apprentices across the IOT sector. Individual lecturers were consulted prior to the compilation of the response and recommendations were made in the light of information received. Recommendations made on the audit reflect universal design principles and promote funding allocation for timetabled support sessions to meet the variable learner within the mainstream setting, where possible. Following from the completion of the Apprentice Support Audit the Officer for Learning Difference engaged with DAWN representatives (Disability Advisors Working Network) regarding the development of a model of support for apprentices. The Officer for Learning Difference promoted the IT Tralee model as a positive example of how the provision of needs assessment and access to internal funding (ITT Disability Fund) coupled with inclusive teaching techniques serve to provide apprentices with a positive learning experience and strong success rate. This model has been well received by DAWN colleagues. The Officer for Learning Difference will keep abreast of DAWN developments within this area.

The Officer for Learning difference attended five **Autism Awareness Training Sessions** with the Middletown Centre for Autism: Autism and the Transition to Adulthood; Autism and the Promotion of Positive Behaviour; Autism, Relationships and Sexuality; Autism and Sensory Processing; Autism and Anxiety Management. The five training events facilitated by the Middletown Centre for Autism were of excellent quality and value to the Service. The course notes/resources/access to relevant research publications all serve to inform and enhance the continued development of the ASD support model within the Institute. The training has proved timely in light of the anticipated rise in ASD student numbers in future years.

Disability Services engaged with the drafting of the Institutes Teaching Learning Assessment and Engagement Strategy and promoted the principles and elements of **Universal Design** within this mainstream strategy. This contribution has been well received and the outcome of such engagement resulted in the provision of an excellent Staff CPD, facilitated by Athlone IT, on the move towards universally designed programmes. It is anticipated that the benefit of this CPD in terms of link ups with key professionals in the field will continue to positively affect progress towards UDL within this Institute in the longer term.

Computer Services Department: Information Technology Systems & Infrastructure

Despite the lack of significant ICT Investment the Institute has made a number of enhancements to both Infrastructure and systems over the Academic Year 2017/18. In terms of infrastructure, 6

computer labs were upgraded in the period, network storage capacity was increased in addition to some server upgrades and audio visual upgrades.

The **Student Attendance system** has been further enhanced and attendance information is available to students through the attendance portal where they can view their own information on a mobile device. On our **E-Learning** environment further enhancements have been made through applying the latest functionality and features via service pack upgrades. The Institute also purchased the Mobile App for students, who in the past had to pay for this, so it is now freely available to students on the app stores with a significantly larger uptake of the app.

The use and growth of the Institutes collaborative platform, **Office 365**, continues to grow in terms of the number of students using where they can share and collaborate on project work. The Institute rolled out Windows 10 campus wide so that students can use the latest technologies throughout the Institute and in their computer lab practicals combined with the latest versions of application software.

The Computer Services Department also facilitated in the upgrade of the new Library system upgrade to **Koha** and **HR system** upgrade in addition to deploying a new digital signage application to push out more timely information to students.

Finally, the Computer Services Department also under took its **bi-annual survey** with over 14% of the student population responding to it.

Human Resources Department

Child Protection Policy improved with Garda Vetting of all staff. Dignity and Respect - New Policy developed and training of staff and contact persons provided. Equality & Diversity Online Training offered to all staff.

Academic Department Led Improvements and Enhancements:

School of Health and Social Sciences: Department of Health and Leisure

Decision made to de-semesterise year 1 of the Health and Leisure programmes as a pilot to determine how year-long first year format influences student adjustment to higher education. This pilot was approved at Academic Council for implementation in Academic Year 2018/2019.

A sub-committee of the Health and Leisure Course Board was established to provide greater coordination of community engagement opportunities, communications and research links. The Course Board agreed a draft Academic Writing Guidelines to benchmark skills development against programme stages. Course board also agreed to draft an Assessment Guidelines document to provide for a consistent NFQ level-appropriate approach to assessment type and workload load.

School of Health and Social Sciences: Department of Nursing & Health Care Sciences

The number of staff with QQI Level 10 studies completed have increased from 6 to 8, with 2 pending completion in Spring 2019 and another 4 staff at different phases of their PhD/Doctorate journey.

The delivery of the new Bachelor of Arts in Counselling with Addiction with 12 students commenced in September 2017. This is a collaborative venture between the education service provider at Galilee House of Studies, Cuan Mhuire, Athy, Co. Kildare and the Institute of

Technology, Tralee. Quality Assurance procedures of the Institute provide the umbrella procedures for the Galilee House of Studies collaborative programme and their campus processes in Athy.

The strong partnership between the practice placement providers including the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Bon Secours Hospital is maintained. This partnership has extended since the 2017 report to include HSE mental health practice placement sites.

In May 2017 the first Master Class to be hosted in IT Tralee for the SIA (Scholarship Innovation Achievement) Honor Society in Nursing took place in the Sólás building. Nurses from counties Kerry, Cork, Waterford and Limerick attended the Masters class that hosted two main speakers, one from IT Tralee and the other from Sacred Heart University, Connecticut, USA.

School of Health and Social Sciences: Department of Social Sciences

Course Programme Handbooks were updated to include links to the IT Tralee QA Manual for matters directly affecting students, and the Department's marking grid, assignment cover sheet and feedback form, and the policy on late submissions.

Through putting examination proctoring in place, International students from Canada attending our BA (Honours) in Early Childhood Care and Education programme were able to take their winter examinations in their home college which allowed them to travel home for Christmas (examination proctoring).

The CORU accreditation process commenced and is ongoing for the BA in Social Care (level 7 and level 8). This means that there is a thorough review of the programme in terms of its capacity to deliver a programme that can equip graduates with a suite of professional standards that have been laid down by CORU as the minimum requirement to practice as a Social Care worker. These standards are as follows: Professional Autonomy and Accountability; Communication, Collaborative Practice and Team-working; Safety and Quality; Professional Development; Professional Knowledge and Skills.

School of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths: Department of Biological and Pharmaceutical Science

The Wildlife Society ran a number of initiatives over the course of Academic Year 2017/2018. These included a guest lecture from an outside agency responsible for marine research. Also, Third and fourth year Wildlife Biology and Field Biology with Wildlife Tourism students ran seminar events where students made presentations on both their formal work placement experience and their voluntary summer work experience in wildlife conservation settings. These were particularly valuable to 1st and 2nd year students in providing insights into what was ahead of them in their programmes.

First year Agricultural Science students were supported to attend the Great Agri-Food Debate held at WIT, which stimulated their interest to participate in the event in AY 2018/19.

Based on stakeholder feedback, and in support of maximising student engagement, a number of programme structure and content modifications were made across the Wildlife Biology and Field Biology with Wildlife Tourism and the Agricultural Science programmes.

School of Business, Computing and Humanities

A Weekly School Engagement Session (SES) was timetabled for School staff and students to engage in specific enhancement activities to support the Institute's goals with respect to the staff

and student experience. A total of 28 activities were undertaken across Academic Year 2017/2018 to improve and support a quality working and educational experience across the school.

An SES was held to present national programme provision for the purpose of benchmarking. New programme development arose from this initiative and also new department plans were agreed to be implemented to assist in the development of a demand led programme portfolio.

16 companies presented to staff and students throughout the academic year to share industry insights, to enhance students 'work readiness', and to inform market led programmes. Academic staff CPD sessions on 'Enhancing student engagement in the classroom' as well as 'Blended Learning and Online delivery' were delivered to staff in the school. Three SES events were scheduled where staff members who have just completed or are in the process of completing their PhD presented to the school. This activity enabled and supported research activity across the Institute and allows staff to share their experience as well as encourage other staff to pursue research. Three networking events were scheduled to engage with external stakeholders. This improved the schools relationship with stakeholders as well as enhancing staff awareness of stakeholder issues. An SES was scheduled for staff and students on 'Careers & Lifestyles - work/life balance' from a heart transplant survivor, as part of our supporting the health and wellbeing of our student and staff campus community. Presentations of Final Year Projects was scheduled as an external stakeholder event which showcased the quality of our students work to the public. It is planned for Academic Year 2018/19 that projects will be displayed across the academic year in a dedicated space in the Institute for public viewing.

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.

The development of the **online tool-Academic Department Report/Plan**, to support data informed decision-making and learning analytics. This online tool is centrally populated (through the Central student Data Office) with the relevant data for analysis and interpretation by academic departments, to inform their development of an academic department action plan for the subsequent academic year. The plan is submitted to the Executive and subsequently to the Academic Council. The following are the headings included:

- Current Department Strategy;
- Current Programmes within the Department;
- Previous Annual Academic Department Report/Plan;
- Student CAO Data-Trends;
- Student Registration Data-Trends;
- Analysis of Examination Results and Progression Data –Trends;
- Student Withdrawals and Retention Initiatives;
- Student Graduation Statistics;
- Stakeholder Feedback (incl. ISSE Feedback, External Examiners Feedback, Industry Feedback, Graduate Feedback, Course Board Feedback);
- Use of Technology Enhanced Learning;
- New Programme Proposals;

- Quality Enhancements-Department activities which contribute to quality enhancements on teaching and learning;
- Annual Academic Department Plan for the next Academic Year (This section is a summary of the actions to be addressed, as outlined within each of the previous sections, and the indicators of success);
- Access21@ ITTralee (as detailed in the previous section).

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.

Refer to the Institutes Strategic Plan 2017-2021-See www.ittralee.ie

The following quality assurance and enhancement plans are to be progressed in Academic Year 2017/2018 (Ref. Institutes Strategic Plan 2017-2021):

- Ongoing review and enhancement of existing Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures and the Quality Assurance Manual, and the development of new Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures where required, from the perspective of alignment with ESG 2015, QQI Policy and QQI Quality Assurance Guidelines;
- Continued execution of the campus masterplan to achieve a single integrated campus (including progressing with the completion of the Institutes Sports Academy Building);
- In support of a focus on data informed decision making, delivery of Annual Academic Department Reports and Plans (to include specific departmental targets for the improvement of retention and progression targets);
- Enhancement of inclusive teaching and learning through the approval and implementation of an Institute Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Engagement (TLAE) Strategy;
- Development of a part time blended Master of Arts in Learning and Teaching;
- Approval and implementation of an Institute Year 1 Student Retention and Success Policy;
- CPD focus on building staff capacity and engagement with digital/online teaching and learning, to support the development of modules/awards across all schools in blended learning formats;
- CPD focus on building staff capacity and engagement with inclusive teaching and learning;
- Integration of the goals and objectives of the National Access Plan 2015-2019 into institutional activities (including the roll out of the Access21@ITTralee Project);
- Enhancement of the Institutes reputation as a research engaged Institution and continue to improve standards in the delivery of research excellence;
- Enhancement of the health and wellbeing of the Institutes student community through the work of the Institute-wide Health and Wellbeing Working Group (LIVE ITT), benchmarked against the 'Healthy Campus Guidelines' (Ref. Healthy Ireland HSE Action Plan 2013-2025)
- Work in partnership with the Student Union to roll out within the Institute the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP);
- Enhance both student and staff engagement with the Irish survey of Student Engagement (ISSE). Further embed ISSE as an integral student feedback mechanism within the Institutes quality assurance systems, with an annual response at department, school and

institute level, including both a feed-back mechanism to students/staff and a feedforward mechanism in terms of an action plan based on the feedback received;

- Progress with a formal application to the HEA, with the objective to merge with Cork Institute of Technology and create the Munster Technological University by January 2020.

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.

Programmatic Review Plans:

1. Programmatic Review of the School of Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics:
 - Department of Biological and Pharmaceutical Sciences;
 - Department of Technology engineering and Mathematics.
2. Programmatic Review of the School of Health and Social Sciences:
 - Department of Social Sciences;
 - Department of Nursing and Health Care Sciences;
 - Department of Health and Leisure Studies.

5.3 Other Plans

Academic Council and Sub-Committee Plans for meetings in Academic Year 2018/2019:

Academic Council Meeting Dates in Academic Year 2018/2019: Monday, 17 September 2018; Monday, 05 November 2018; Monday, 10 December 2018; Monday, 04 February 2019; Monday, 25 March 2019; Monday, 13 May 2019; Monday, 17 June 2019.

Programmes & Planning Sub-Committee Meeting Dates Academic Year 2018/2019: Monday, 08 October 2018; Monday, 19 November 2018; Monday, 17 December 2018; Monday, 28 January 2019; Monday, 04 March 2019; Monday, 29 April 2019; Monday, 27th May 2019.

Quality Assurance Sub-Committee Meeting Dates Academic Year 2018/2019: Monday, 24 September 2018; Monday, 22 October 2018; Monday, 03 December 2018; Monday, 14 January 2019; Monday, 25 February 2019; Monday, 08 April 2019; Monday, 27 May 2019; Monday, 10 June 2019.

Research & Development Sub-Committee Meeting Dates Academic Year 2018/2019: Monday, 15 October 2018; Monday, 26 November 2018; Monday, 11 February 2019; Monday, 11 March 2019; Monday, 20 May 2019.

Student Affairs Sub-Committee Meeting Dates Academic Year 2018/2019: Monday, 01 October 2018; Monday, 12 November 2018; Monday, 21 January 2019; Monday, 18 February 2019; Monday, 01 April 2019.

Plans for Academic Council:

- Ratification of Examination Results (Summer and Autumn);
- Quality Assurance Work Plan for Sub-Committees of the Academic Council;
- Academic Council Annual Report;
- Academic Calendar;
- Analysis of Examination Results;
- External Examiners Summary Reports;
- Programme Approvals;
- Items approved and/or referred from Programmes and Planning Sub-Committee for Academic Council Approval;
- Items approved and/or referred from Quality Assurance Sub-Committee for Academic Council Approval;
- Items approved and/or referred from Research and Development Sub-Committee for Academic Council Approval;
- Items approved and/or referred from Student Affairs Sub-Committee for Academic Council Approval.

Note:

In the context of progressing with the process of merging with CIT, it was decided that any review of existing Institute quality assurance procedures would be considered with respect to the alignment between CIT and ITT quality assurance procedures, and only high priority new quality assurance procedures would be considered for development.

Plans for Programmes & Planning Sub-Committee:

- Plan implementation of Quality Assurance Work Plan;
- Consideration and approval of Academic Calendar Key Dates (incl. Academic Council and Sub-Committee dates for AY 2019/20);
- Review and approval of New Programme Proposals;
- Review and approval of plans for Programmatic Review;
- Review and approval of proposed amendments to module descriptors;
- Review and approval of minor amendments to Approved Course Schedules;
- Approval of undergraduate External Examiners;
- Review of Quality Assurance procedure A1.1 Introduction.

Plans for Quality Assurance Sub-Committee:

- Plan implementation of Quality Assurance Work Plan;
- Review of stakeholder feedback on the operation of QA procedures;
- Review and inclusion of a postgraduate appeal mechanism within Quality Assurance Procedures;
 - o A11.4 Thesis Submission and Examination (for Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes);
 - o A5.26 Examinations and Assessments Review Committee (EARC) and Examinations and Assessments Appeals Committee (EAAC);
 - o A10.1 Student Complaints Policy and Procedures;

- Review of Quality Assurance procedure A5.9 Recording Decisions of Boards of Examiners Meetings;
- Review of Quality Assurance procedure A5.9a Progression with Credit Deficit;
- Development of Quality Assurance procedure A5.9b Classified Awards for Repeat Students.

Plans for **Research & Development Sub-Committee:**

- Plan implementation of Quality Assurance Work Plan;
- Approval of post-graduate External Examiners;
- Review of Research & Development Sub-Committee Terms of Reference.

Plans for **Student Affairs Sub-Committee:**

- Plan implementation of Quality Assurance Work Plan;
- Review of Quality Assurance procedure A13.7 Student Code of Conduct & General Discipline Policy;
- Review of Quality Assurance Procedure A14.2 Recognition of Prior Learning;
- Drafting Guidelines for Posters and Promotional Materials.

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.

The Institutes last Institutional Review took place 2004-2009. See <http://www.ittralee.ie/en/InformationAbout/ProceduresPlansandReports/>

Published IT Tralee Institutional Review Schedule

ISER:	Q4 2018
Panel Visit:	Q1 2019 (week of February 18 th 2019)
Main Review Visit:	Q2 2019 (April 8 th -12 th 2019)
REPORT	Q3 2019 (July 1 st -15 th 2019)

In March 2018 IT Tralee established the Institutional Self Evaluation Team and progressed on April 12th with an initial planning meeting of the team with QQI. At this meeting, IT Tralee placed as an agenda item the value of progressing with the completion of Institutional Review at the same time as the Institute and Cork Institute of Technology were working towards merging and becoming the Munster Technological University. As Institutional Review is focused on the completion of a quality enhancement plan for the Institute going forward, the institute questioned the value of progressing with same in the context of progressing towards becoming the Munster Technological University. The Institute expressed the view that Institutional Review post the establishment of the Munster Technological University would yield the maximum value. QQI advised that the preparations for Institutional Review were to continue until there was documented evidence that the TU process had formally commenced via a Section 29 application to the Minister. If and when that application was made, QQI advised that they would then enter into discussion with the Institute and CIT about the next appropriate date for a review of the merged institution. In September 2018, the Institute President made contact with QQI confirming that the Institute was progressing with a formal application to the HEA in Q4 2018, with the objective to merge and create the MTU in September 2019. In light of the Institute progressing with the formal application, the President requested of QQI that Institutional Review be deferred and aligned with Cork Institute of Technology post-merger in the context of the MTU. QQI agreed that Institutional Review should happen at a time when it can have the greatest impact on the future quality provision of the Institution. QQI concluded that that this matter would be best addressed through consultation with all of the Institutes of Technology, resulting in a revised schedule of reviews, within the same overall timeframe, to accommodate the merger processes and the potential for the review of the merged institutions, rather than individual pre-merger institutions.

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.

Not applicable as Institutional Review on hold.

6.3 Themes

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

Not applicable as Institutional Review on hold.