

Institute of Technology, Carlow

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

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

Institute of Technology Carlow's Strategic Plan 2014-2018

(<http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/strategic-plan.htm>) identifies key goals that aim to contribute to regional and national economic, social and cultural development, informed and enriched by the Institute of Technology Carlow's growing activities and profile. It is this plan which guides the direction of the Institute and the programmes being developed, validated and delivered within it.

The Mission (<https://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/mission-statement.htm>) of Institute of Technology Carlow is to Engage, Learn, Challenge and Innovate. This is articulated through an educational environment and context where learners pursue studies in higher education and research up to doctoral level. Through a culture of enquiry, innovation and excellence, Institute

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

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

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

The Institute's Strategic Plan 2014-2018 is set out at <http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/strategic-plan.htm>

With learner experience as the focus, the central role of quality assurance and enhancement is explicitly articulated in our [Strategic Plan 2014- 2018](#) which affirms the contribution of quality assurance systems in achieving strategic objectives and maintaining and enhancing all elements of the organisation and the experience of those who engage with us. The plan is centred around five main goals and was formulated following a major institute-wide consultation process:

Goal 1. Learner Experience and Graduate Attributes: We will optimise the learner experience to support the development of graduate attributes that meet the needs of learners and of modern society.

Goal 2. Knowledge Creation, Application and Exchange: We will expand capacity and develop expertise within specific core domains. We will create, develop, apply and exchange knowledge to ensure highly skilled graduates and ideas to drive enterprise creation and development.

Goal 3. Strategic Collaborations and Partnerships: We will build upon our strategic collaborations and partnerships, both nationally and internationally. These enhance our capacity, extend our reach and maximise our impact.

Goal 4. Societal, Economic and Environmental Impact: We will strengthen our engagement with the regions, communities and sectors we serve. We shall ensure access and progression opportunities. We will share our knowledge and resources and we will learn from stakeholder feedback so that we will continue to enhance our contribution to the development of a creative, sustainable and fair society.

Goal 5. Reputation, Public Confidence and Sustainability: We will continue to develop an internationally- oriented organisation, with a robust self-evaluation, peer review and quality enhancement culture, as we strive to embody the highest international standards of provision, transparency and stewardship of resources

We are currently at the last year of our strategic plan and have engaged with all stakeholders in institute-wide consultation on the Strategic Plan 2019-2023. This has consolidated our approach to the next five years, building on our significant achievements and embedding the culture of engagement with all.

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

Our quality culture is supported by strong corporate governance and a commitment to ongoing organisational, resource and staff development and improvement. We firmly believe in

accountability, transparency, and the public provision of information and our quality manual is available on our website alongside our policies on [collaborative provision](#), [joint awards](#), [research](#), [ethics in research](#), [assessment](#), and [academic standards](#). We [also routinely publish the outcomes from quality review processes and reports including our annual institutional quality report \(AIQR\)](#).

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

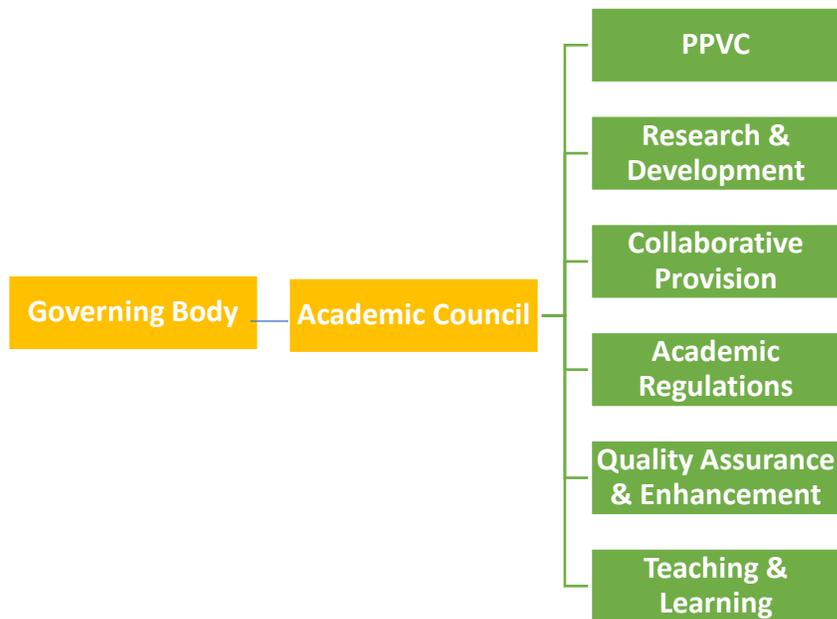
The Institute of Technology Carlow believe and engage in robust self-evaluation and peer review as a key component of our quality enhancement culture across all of our activities including faculty, professional support services and collaborative partner reviews. This philosophy has served us in maintaining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

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

2. Quality assurance decision-making fora

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

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



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

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

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

- Academic regulations which makes regulation governing the selection, admission, retention, awards, graduation and exclusion of learners
- Collaborative provision which has oversight of all aspects of collaborative provision
- Programme planning and validation is responsible for the development, monitoring and reviewing of all taught programmes
- Quality assurance and enhancement protects, enhances and develops academic standards for all programmes
- Research and development is responsible for the planning, approval and review of all postgraduate research programmes
- Teaching, learning and support services develops policies to support excellence in teaching and a quality learning experience.

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

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

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

Confirmation of QA Policy and Procedures

1. Programme Design and Approval (ESG 1.2)

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

Policy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Procedure

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

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

Resources include:

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

2. Programme Delivery and Assessment (ESG 1.3)

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

Policy

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

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

<http://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/IT%20Carlow%20%20Quality%20Manual.pdf>

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

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

Procedure

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

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

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

Resources include:

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

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

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

Policy

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

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

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

Procedure

As set out in the Institute's Policy and Procedure for Postgraduate Awards by Research and Dissertation

(<http://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/POLICY%20STATEMENT%20FOR%20AWARDS%20BY%20RESEARCH%20NFQ%20L9%20AND%20L10> at NFQ Level 9 and Level 10, individual research

programmes are assessed by a process of external review (Appendices C1 and C2). Validation of the research area takes place at discipline level. Application for validation for programmes of research in a new discipline area shall be made to the Registrar by the appropriate school or department using the New Programme Proposal Forms (PP1 and PP2). The form PP2 shall be supplemented by a self-assessment report form detailing how the proposed research area satisfies validation criteria (Appendix B3). Completed Programme Proposal Forms, together with Self Evaluation Reviews shall be submitted to the Office of the Registrar for internal assessment and review prior to the establishment of an external expert panel to review new research proposals. The panel shall have the appropriate expertise to benchmark the proposal against national and international comparators. Following review and site visit the panel shall make a recommendation to validate the proposed programme (or not). The Research & Development Committee shall then consider such recommendation. The Committee shall then make recommendation to Academic Council. Academic Council shall recommend approval of validation to Governing Body. Governing Body shall consider the recommendation and decide on approval. Reports and outcomes of the validation process shall be published. Validation of discipline areas shall be subject to cyclical review (see 7 below).

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

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

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

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

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

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

4. Student Lifecycle (ESG 1.4)

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

Policy

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

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

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

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

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

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

Institute of Technology Carlow ensures that:

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

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

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

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

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

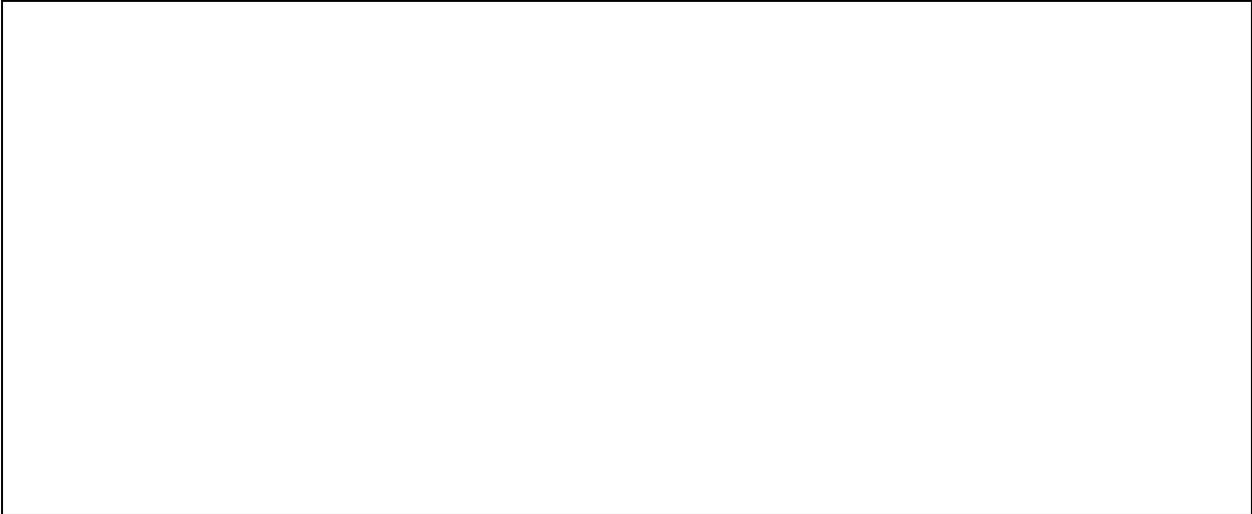
In doing so, Institute of Technology Carlow co-operates with other institutions and collaborative partners and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country.

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

Procedure

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

<http://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/IT%20Carlow%20%20Quality%20Manual.pdf>.



5. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

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

Policy

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

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

- Follows clear, transparent and fair processes for staff recruitment, appointment, promotion and dismissal that recognise the importance of teaching and learning;
- Offers opportunities for and promotes the professional development of academic staff, which takes into account the outcomes of staff evaluation exercises, including peer review and learner feedback.;
- Encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research where staff and learners within Institute of Technology Carlow are regularly invited to research forums offering discussion on research methodologies and developments.;
- Encourage innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies where staff within Institute of Technology Carlow have successfully completed Institute of Technology Carlow's MA in Teaching and Learning;
- Provide opportunities and promotes professional development for all staff and postgraduate learners to undertake training through the Centre for Teaching and Learning.
- Recognise excellence in teaching through academic promotion criteria and public awards such as <http://teachingandlearning.ie/priority-themes/student-led-teachingawards-2014>.

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

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

Procedure

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. Resources and Support (ESG 1.5)

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

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

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

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

- Appendix IV: Learner involvement in Quality Enhancement
- Appendix XIII: Policy and Procedure for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
- Appendix XVIII: Student Disability and Learning Support Policy
- Appendix XX: Policy and Procedure for Child Protection and Welfare

- Appendix XXI: Code of Practice – Working with Students, Children and Vulnerable Adults

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

8. Information Management (ESG 1.7)

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

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

Profile of the learner population

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

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

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

9. Self-evaluation and Monitoring (ESG 1.9)

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

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

As set out in the Institute of Technology Carlow's Quality Manual

<http://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/IT%20Carlow%20-%20Quality%20Manual.pdf>

specifically Appendix X Ongoing Monitoring of Programmes and Appendix XI Policy and Procedure for Programmatic Review, Institute of Technology Carlow has detailed policies and procedures for self-evaluation and internal monitoring of programmes. The implementation of these is overseen by the Institute's Academic Council and its constituent committees. Quantitative and qualitative information is used to inform the ongoing monitoring, annual review and quinquennial review processes.

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

10. Stakeholder Engagement (ESG 1.1)

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

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

<http://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/IT%20Carlow%20-%20Quality%20Manual.pdf>

This includes inter alia:

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

11. Engagement with Other Bodies (ESG 1.1)

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

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

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

Institute of Technology Carlow maintains a register of programmes with or undergoing approval with professional bodies at

<http://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register%20of%20Professional%20Body%20>

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

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

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

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

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

13. Link 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.



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

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

The Institute of Technology Carlow adopts for use QQI award standards as published at

<http://www.qqi.ie>.

The Institute of Technology Carlow through its policies and procedures set out in its Quality Manual

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

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

15. Collaborative Provision (ESG 1.1)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<http://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/IT%20Carlow%20-%20Joint%20Awards%20Policy.pdf>

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

At present, Institute of Technology Carlow has a range of partnerships, exchanges and collaborations of varying degrees of complexity and engagement. Institute of Technology Carlow's registers of Collaborative Partner Institutes are shown at <http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-programmes-registers.htm>

These registers are maintained by the Quality Assurance and Collaborations Officer within the Office of the Registrar.

16. Additional Notes

Any additional notes can be entered here.

17. Internal Review Schedule

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

Year	2016/17
Areas/Units	<p>Defence Forces Collaborative Review September 2016 An Cosán Collaborative Review October 2016</p> <p>Validation of various major, minor and special purpose programmes from NFQ levels 6- 9.</p> <p>Validation of new research degree programme with QQI in the area of Health Sciences</p>
Number	2
Link(s) to Publications	<p>Programme Registers: http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-programmes-registers.htm</p> <p>Programme Reviews and Outcomes: http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-publications-outcomes.htm</p>

Year	2017/18
Areas/Units	<p>Professional Support Services Reviews 2016-2018</p> <p>Validation of various major, minor and special purpose programmes from NFQ levels 6- 9.</p>
Number	3
Link(s) to Publications	<p>Programme Registers: http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-programmes-registers.htm</p> <p>Professional Reviews: http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-publications-outcomes.htm</p>

Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report

Year	2018/19
Areas/Units	Professional Support Services Reviews
Number	4
Link(s) to Publications	

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

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

Year	2022/23
Areas/Units	Professional Support Services Reviews
Number	1

Link(s) to Publications	
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AIQR - PART 1

Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures	AIQR Part 1 -IT Carlow -2017-2018.docx
PRSBs	17
Awarding Bodies	1
QA Bodies	1
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	First Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	Awarding Body
Name of the Body	Irish Aviation Authority (the National competent Authority recognised by EASA)
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	BEng in Aircraft Systems; https://www.iaa.ie/personnel-licensing/maintenance-engineer---amellicensing/part-147-approved-training-organisations-1
Date of last review or accreditation	17-02-2017
Next review year	2019
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Second Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	The Honourable Society of King's Inns
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	LLB; https://www.kingsinns.ie/cmsfiles/entranceexamination/ScheduleOfApprovedDegrees2015.pdf

Date of last review or accreditation	01-09-2008
Next review year	2019
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Third Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Engineers Ireland
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p>Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Civil Engineering; Bachelor of Engineering in Civil Engineering; Bachelor of Engineering in Mechanical Engineering; Bachelor of Engineering in Electronic Engineering; Bachelor of Engineering in Electronic Engineering (Military Communications Systems); Bachelor of Engineering in Aircraft Systems;</p> <p>http://www.engineersireland.ie/Services/Accredited-Courses.aspx</p>
Date of last review or accreditation	01-10-2014
Next review year	2019
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Fourth Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p>Bachelor of Science in Architectural Technology; Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Architectural Technology;</p> <p>http://www.riai.ie/education/careers/becoming_an_architectural_technologist/</p>
Date of last review or accreditation	01-06-2015
Next review year	2019
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Fifth Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists (CIAT)

Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Architectural Technology; https://ciat.org.uk/education/study.html
Date of last review or accreditation	01-06-2075
Next review year	2020
Collaborative programmes	4
Section: Collaborative Provision	First Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Collaborative programmes
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Defence Forces
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	MSc in Communications Technology Management; PG Dip in Science in Communications Technology Management; BEng in Electronic Engineering (Military Communications Systems); Higher Certificate in Engineering in Electronic Engineering; MEng in Weapons, Ordnance, Munitions and Explosive Engineering; Certificate in International Counter-Improvised Explosive Device/Device Disposal; MSc in Military Engineering Management; PG Dip in Science in Military Engineering Management; BA in Leadership, Management and Defence Studies; BA in Leadership, Management and Defence Studies (Logistics); Certificate in Leadership, Management and Defence Studies (minor award level 7 30 Credits); Higher Certificate in Arts in Leadership, Management and Defence Studies; https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-Provision-Version-5_2.pdf
Date of last review	14-09-2016
Next review year	2021
Section: Collaborative Provision	Second Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Collaborative programmes
Name of the Body (Bodies)	An Cosán

Programme Titles and Links to Publications	BA in Applied Addiction Studies and Community Development; Higher Certificate in Applied Addiction Studies and Community Development; BA in Leadership and Community Development; Higher Certificate in Leadership and Community Development; Special Purpose Award Certificate in Transformative Community Education; Special Purpose Award Certificate in Citizenship and Social Action (Level 7); Special Purpose Award Certificate in Community Leadership (Level 7); Special Purpose Award Certificate in Learning to Learn – (Level 6); Special Purpose Award Certificate in Technology Enhanced Learning –(Level 7) https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-Provision-Version-5_2.pdf
Date of last review	09-12-2016
Next review year	2021
Section: Collaborative Provision	Third Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Collaborative programmes
Name of the Body (Bodies)	The Irish Gestalt Centre
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	MA in Gestalt Psychotherapy; PG Dip in Arts in Gestalt Psychotherapy; Certificate in Gestalt Theory (Level 9 – 30 Credit Minor) http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-publicationsoutcomes/programme-validations-reports/programme-validation-reports-2016-2017.htm https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-Provision-Version-5_2.pdf
Date of last review	16-02-2017
Next review year	2022
Section: Collaborative Provision	Fourth Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Collaborative programmes
Name of the Body (Bodies)	The Tivoli Institute
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	MA in Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy (Clinical); PG Dip in Arts in Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy (Clinical); Certificate in Psychotherapy Theory (Level 9) http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-publicationsoutcomes/programme-validations-reports/programme-validation-reports-2016-2017.htm https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-Provision-Version-5_2.pdf
Date of last review	26-06-2017
Next review year	2022

Section: Collaborative Provision	Fifth Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Joint/double/multiple awards
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Hannover Fachhochschule
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	BB(Honours) International Business; https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Institute%20of%20Technology%20Carlow%20Order%20in%20Council%202018-2019%20MajorAwards(1).pdf
Date of last review	19-05-2016
Next review year	2021
Articulation Agreements	84
Section: 1 Articulation Agreements	First Set of Records
Name of the Body	Henan University of Economics and Law, Zhengzhou, China
Name of the Programme and Links to Publications	BA(Accounting); https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-Provision-Version-5_2.pdf
Date of last review of arrangement/agreement	13-03-2013
Next Review Year	2018
Section: Articulation Agreements	Second Set of Records
Name of the Body	Seaton Hall University, New Jersey, USA
Name of the Programme and Links to Publications	BSc(Sports Rehabilitation & Athletic Therapy); https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-Provision-Version-5_2.pdf
Date of last review of arrangement/agreement	23-01-2015
Review year for agreements	2020
Section: Articulation Agreements	Third Set of Records
Name of the Body	University of New Hampshire USA
Name of the Programme and Links to Publications	BSc(Sports Rehabilitation & Athletic Therapy); https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Register-of-Collaborative-Provision-Version-5_2.pdf

Date of last review of arrangement/agreement	27-11-2017
Review year for agreements	2022
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	19-02-2019

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 *Institute of Technology Carlow's Strategic Plan 2014-2018* and *Mid Term Review of the Strategic Plan 2014-2018*, conducted in 2016 (<http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/strategic-plan.htm>). The Strategic Plan 2014-2018 and the Strategic Plan 2019-2023, in development, affirms the contribution of quality assurance systems in achieving strategic objectives and maintaining and enhancing the Institute of Technology Carlow's reputation and position within Higher Education both nationally and internationally. The *Mid Term Review of the Strategic Plan 2014-2018*, conducted in 2016, confirms the Institute's progress in meeting and exceed the goals at set out in the *Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2014-2018* and demonstrates the central role of quality assurance systems in achieving strategic objectives.

The *Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2014-2018* establishes five key goals to contribute to regional and national economic, social and cultural development, informed and enriched by the Institute of Technology Carlow's growing activities and profile. This plan guides all Institute activities, including quality, engagement, research, learning & teaching and the programmes being developed, validated and delivered.

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

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

Institute of Technology Carlow continues to enhance the learning opportunities for staff through the provision of 10 credit modules on the MA in Teaching and Learning (MATL). Institute of Technology Carlow funds staff to complete these modules. There has been a strong uptake of these modules, in particular the Research Supervision Module.

Institute of Technology Carlow continues to support dissemination of quality assurance policies and procedures through its dedicated section of the website and newsletters to staff which detail all policy updates and decisions from Academic Council. Leading through self-review, Institute of Technology Carlow continues to enhance the learner experience by carrying out Professional Support Service Reviews by independent external panels.

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

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

Institute of Technology Carlow, in September 2017, appointed a Director of the Office of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. This new role reflects the Institute of Technology Carlow's continued commitment to quality enhancement in equality, diversity and inclusion, which informs the strategic direction of the Institute and ensures equality for all.

In adopting the ECU Athena SWAN principles and the Athena SWAN Charter, the Institute is clearly signalling its commitment to enhancing and promoting gender equality for staff and students across the Institute.

As a next step, an Institute wide application is intended to be made for an Athena SWAN Bronze award in November 2018. To ensure the application is completed and ready for submission for 2018, the appointed Director of the Office of Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) will lead, collate and submit this bronze application to Athena SWAN.

To facilitate the completion of the application, the establishment of an Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Team (SAT) and EDI Steering Committee was conducted in January 2018. The EDI Steering Committee is chaired by the President.

The work of the SAT involves the collection of data across the Institute relating to the Institute's gender profile, along with attitudes to and experiences of gender equality. This will allow the Institute to identify key issues and put an action plan in place to enhance the experience of and opportunities for, staff and students in the Institute.

Three Professional Support Services Reviews were successfully conducted in April, May and June 2018, via peer review panel, for Academic Administration & Student Affairs, Student Services & Learner Support and Estates.

The Technological University of the South East of Ireland (TUSEI) MOU was signed by the Presidents of both Institute of Technology Carlow and Waterford Institute of Technology and a new Joint Steering Group was established. Application for Technological University status for TUSEI Ireland has commenced with a funded call for Institutional project applications from staff between both Institutes, Waterford Institute of Technology and the Institute of Technology Carlow, to explore both Institutional cultures prior to merger.

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

In May 2018, the Annual Dialogue Meeting occurred with QQI where Institute of Technology Carlow continues their engagement with QQI. It was decided at that meeting to meet in this capacity biennially.

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

1.3 The schedule of QA governance meetings.

The Institute of Technology Carlow's Governing Body met on 9 occasions in 2017/2018.

The Institute of Technology Carlow's Academic Council met on 11 occasions in 2017/2018 Academic Year.

The committees of Academic Council met as follows:

Programme Planning and Validation Committee - met 6 times (2017/2018)

Academic Regulations Committee - met 5 times (2017/2018)

Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee - met 8 times (2017/2018)

Collaborative Provision Committee - met 4 times (2017/2018)

Teaching, Learning and Student Support Committee - met 6 times (2017/2018)

Research & Development Committee - met 9 times (2017/2018)

Ethics Committee - met 4 times (2017/2018)

Section 2: Reviews in the reporting period

2.1 Internal reviews that were completed in the reporting period.

Professional Support Services Review – Academic Administration & Student Services
(April 2018)

Professional Support Services Review – Learner Support & Student Services (May 2018)

Professional Support Services Review – Estates (June 2018)

Reports for all Reviews available at the following link:

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

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

Number of new Programme Validations/Programme Approvals completed in the reporting year	57
Number of Programme Reviews completed in the reporting year	0
Number of Research Reviews completed in the reporting year	1
Number of School/Department/Faculty Reviews completed in the reporting year	0
Number of Service Unit Reviews completed in the reporting year	3
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.

Please provide a percentage breakdown of the composition of panels based on the location of origin for the reviewers.

Composition of Panels	%
Internal	0.6
National	57.3
UK	2
EU	0
Student	2.5*
Other – Industry Representation	37.6

*Policy has been updated to include student representation on all panels from the next reporting period.

Please provide a percentage breakdown of the profile of review Chairs.

Chair Profile	%
Internal	0
Similar Institution	78.6
Different Institution	21.4
International	0

Section 3: Other Implementation Factors

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

Key themes arising include:

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

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

- Ongoing QQI work on guidelines and Institutional re-engagement
- The HEA strategic dialogue process – informing current *Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2014-2018* and subsequent *Strategic Plan 2019-2023*
- The Institute of Technology Carlow's involvement in regional initiatives including the South Cluster of HEIs; Regional Skills Fora in South East, Mid East and Midlands and Regional Action Plans for Jobs.
- National initiatives in research, teaching and learning and provision to include Springboard+
- Recognition of programmes- professional bodies, regulatory and Governmental
- Legislative requirement pertaining to psychotherapy resulting in the Institute of Technology Carlow's engagement with two Collaborative Partnerships

3.3 A description of other implementation issues.

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

Part 3: Effectiveness and Impact

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

1. Effectiveness

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

Strategic Context

In reviewing the activities in the Institute of Technology, the *Strategic Plan 2014-2018* clearly defines metrics and this data is continuously updated and evaluated in order to support the quality assurance and management of the learner learning experience. This was reinforced in the Mid-Term Strategic Review, carried out in 2016 and is the basis for the development of the Strategic Plan 2019-2023.

The themes are derived from the *Strategic Plan* and centre on five goals:

- Goal 1: Learner Experience & Graduate Attributes
- Goal 2: Knowledge creation, Application and exchange.
- Goal 3: Strategic Collaborations and Partnerships
- Goal 4: Social, Economic & Environmental Impact
- Goal 5: Reputation, Public Confidence and Sustainability.

These overarching goals guide and inform all activities. The projects detailed below give evidence of the depth, detail, relevance across the institute and effectiveness of quality assurance policies and procedures. These projects have delivered the intended outcome. The timescale reflects the consultation processes and the commitment to ensuring that all stakeholders are engaged.

The *Midterm Review of the Strategic Plan 2014-2018*, available at: <https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/Files/institute-of-technology-carlow-strategic-mid-term-review-Feb17.pdf>, is a self-assessment and review of the effectiveness of the *Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2014-2018*. This is a robust study of the goals, achievements to date and priorities of the *Strategic Plan 2014-2018*. It highlighted the achievements and set out the priorities for the next two years. It forms the starting point for discussions on the *Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2019-2023*. This process is summarised in Figure 3.1.1.

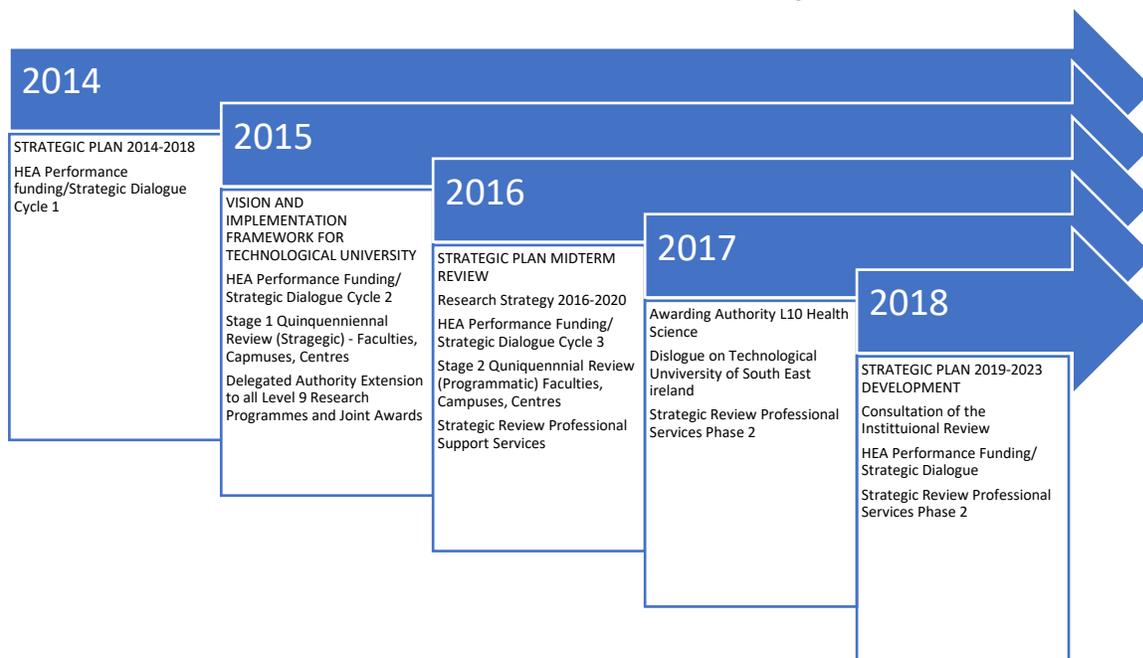


Figure 3.1.1 Strategic Plan 2014-2018

External Benchmarking through the HEA strategic dialogue process and *Irish Survey of Student Engagement* (ISSE) are detailed in the impact section below.

Evidence of the effectiveness

Quality Assurance Policy

Quality Assurance policies and procedures are updated on a cyclic basis in accordance with the Quality Management System and the Quality Work Plan is fundamental to this. An example of the review process of a Policy is described:

The Policy and Procedures for Research at NFQ Level 9 and 10 have been reviewed with regard to postgraduate teaching responsibilities. During this reporting period, the *Teaching, Learning & Support Services* committee of Academic formed a working group with the *Research & Development* committee to update the Postgraduate Teaching Policy regarding the teaching roles of the postgraduate learners. Postgraduate learners are provided with experiential opportunities to engage with lecturing. However, it is important that the postgraduate learner is supported by having training before taking on any lecturing responsibilities. . This provides an opportunity for the postgraduate learner to gain experience. The first phase has been implemented with the postgraduate learners will be offered a stand-alone Level 9, 10 credit, Certificate in Teaching and Learning to ensure that they are prepared for the environment of Teaching and Learning.

During this reporting period all policies in the Quality Manual were updated to reflect GDPR and gender neutral language.

The Professional Support Services Strategic Review Policy was updated as a result of feedback from the Professional Services Reviews carried out in this reporting period.

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

Learner Engagement, Retention and Progression

At the core of Institute of Technology Carlow is the Learner Experience. The goal of providing an outstanding learner experience was supported by the setting up of a cross Institute working group to determine possible gaps in the learner experience. This committee has drawn on experience from all sections within the Institute and has provided a forum for the development of a *Learner Engagement, Retention and Progression Framework*. This will form the capstone for the policies and procedures in this area. The committee is chaired jointly by the Head of the Teaching & Learning Centre and the Assistant Registrar. This approach to the learner experience, which brings together Academic experts, Teaching and Learning experts, Learner Support and Student Services, and the Students Union ensures a coherent approach.

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

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

Other initiatives developed in previous reporting periods continue to be delivered. These include the Academic Success Programme and Peer Assisted Learning (PALS) programme. The success of these initiatives is evidenced in Institute of Technology Carlow having the highest retention rate in the sector.

The Graduate Attributes Framework is being implemented and embedded in all learning.

Collaborative Provision Policy and Procedures

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

International Collaborations

Institute of Technology Carlow continues to engage with international partners in the delivery of high quality programmes. This includes interacting with quality assurance and accountability in education agencies in other countries as required. In this reporting period Institute of Technology Carlow expanded the programme provision and MOUs with several new international partners. In order to facilitate transition to the Irish education system, Institute of Technology Carlow designed and delivered a three week orientation programme for Chinese students to familiarise prospective learners with third level education in Ireland.

Blended Learning

Institute of Technology Carlow is a long-established and respected higher education provider. The programmes on offer range from traditional to innovative, general to niche and span from NFQ Level 6 to Level 10. Institute of Technology Carlow's Academic Council adopted a new Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy which supports the use of technology throughout all programmes and activities across the Institute. *A Roadmap for the Implementation of pilot blended learning programmes in Institute of Technology Carlow* was developed in September 2017. Implementation planning for 2018-2019 was instigated and pilot modules identified with induction and workshops for staff. The requirement for a learning technologist to support staff in the roll out of the pilot phase was identified and this position was advertised.

Programme Design & Approval

Institute of Technology Carlow has successfully developed a new NFQ Level 8 Honours Degree Programme in Brewing and Distilling. This programme is the first of its kind in Ireland and it has received a huge endorsement by becoming one of only four in the world to achieve recognition

by the prestigious Institute of Brewing and Distilling (IBD). The first cohort of learners were enrolled in September 2017.

In collaboration with The Irish Gestalt Centre and the Tivoli Institute, Institute of Technology Carlow has developed two new NFQ Level 9 programmes in Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy and Gestalt Psychotherapy respectively. The first cohort of learners were enrolled in September 2017.

In the Wexford Campus the first cohort of learners were enrolled in September 2017 on the Higher Diploma in Business in Aquabusiness. This programme, the first of its kind in Ireland, was designed in partnership with Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM – The Irish Sea Fisheries Board) and offers opportunities for those interested in the seafood industry. One of the learners on this programme reached the National Finals of the Enterprise Ireland Student of the Year Awards.

Institute of Technology Carlow has successfully developed new NFQ Level 8 Honours Degree Programme in the reporting period 2017-2018. The first intake of learners on these programmes will be in 2019-2020. Providing new pathways for learners in the Wexford Campus has resulted in the development of the BSc (Hons) Creative Computing and Digital Innovation and the BSc Creative Computing and Digital Innovation. This new programmes will provide a local pathway into digital jobs. These programmes, developed in line with our [Policy and Procedures for New Programme Development](#), involved consultation with companies in the region and will help address the national shortage of suitably qualified graduates in this expanding area. The Programme Validation Reports from all programmes validated can be found [here](#).

2. Impact

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

Benchmarking

Institute of Technology Carlow agreed a Mission-Based Compact with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for 2014 to 2016. Through engagement with the HEA Compact, Institute of Technology Carlow has been able to benchmark itself against a set of core standards which have informed and enabled quality assurance policies and procedures. The self-assessment reports were generated under the following principal domains:

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

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

Engagement with the *Irish Survey of Student Engagement* (ISSE) has provided information on key areas of the learner experience and has resulted in changes across the Institute. Specifically, the Institute has listened to the learners and implemented changes based on information collected through ISSE. Analysing the responses from the 2018 ISSE data, Institute of Technology Carlow scored at or above the average ISSE score (for all institutions) in 7 of the 9 identified overarching fields of interrogation. Looking at the Student-Faculty interaction, the overall score is high above the average for all institutions. This is evidence that placing the learner at the focus of all interactions is an embedded practice in Institute of Technology Carlow.

The Office for Institutional Planning and Research has developed a strategy for benchmarking performance against the set of core criteria associated with the U-Multirank University and College ranking system. The application is being prepared during this reporting period.

'U-Multirank is a multidimensional, user-driven approach to international ranking of higher education institutions. It compares the performances of higher education institutions in the five dimensions of university activity:

- (1) teaching and learning,*
- (2) research,*
- (3) knowledge transfer,*
- (4) international orientation and*
- (5) regional engagement.*

The U-Multirank web tool enables comparisons at the level of the university as a whole and at the level of specific study programmes. Based on empirical data, U-Multirank compares institutions with similar institutional profiles ('like-with-like') and allows users to develop their own personalised rankings by selecting indicators in terms of their own preferences'¹.

Learner Experience

The *Institute of Technology Carlow's Policy and Procedure for Differential Validation* ensures the quality of the learner experience. Where there is a 'significant' change to the programme, which could include a new venue, Differential Validation is sought. In this reporting period, differential validation was sought for eleven programmes which included the BA in Applied Early Childhood Education & Care and several collaborative programmes, where new locations for delivery of these programmes were identified. The Register of Differential Validations can be accessed at: <http://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality/quality-programmes-registers.htm>

¹ <https://www.umultirank.org/>

3. Themes

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

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

Graduate Attributes Framework

Institute of Technology Carlow Graduate Attributes Framework was developed and published in May 2017, by the Institute's Head of Centre for Teaching and Learning. In December 2017, the framework was formally launched at an event in Institute of Technology Carlow, where past students spoke about what it meant for them to be Institute of Technology Carlow graduates.

An Institute of Technology Carlow graduate, is one who has had the holistic experience of being a learner at the Institute and who has, not only successfully achieved a set of programme learning outcomes, but has also had the opportunity to embody the Institute's values. While programme learning outcomes describe the knowledge, skills and competencies, which will result from undertaking a particular programme of study, the graduate attributes complement this by describing to stakeholders what they can expect from a graduate of Institute of Technology Carlow. The graduate attributes are learner-owned and are unique to every learner within the Institute.

To be effective as a framework, the graduate attributes need to be embedded into all curricula and this stretches beyond academic programmes to include all extra-curricular activities offered by the Institute, including sporting, social, community-based and voluntary activities. As such, all those involved in the design of any programmes or activities across the Institute now need to consider graduate attributes. Embedding the Graduate Attributes in the learner culture and informing stakeholders forms part of the next stage of this project.

Blended Learning

Institute of Technology Carlow is committed to enriching its learning and teaching strategies by 'drawing on international best practice in the use of learning technologies and blended learning'². This was clearly articulated in the *Strategic Plan 2014-2018 Mid-Term Review* which stated that one of the priorities of the Institute was to increase digital capacity. As a theme, the Institute continues to commit to implementing 'strategic pilot projects within existing programmes and cross-campus' and to developing 'an integrated institutional strategic plan for blended, flexible and distributed learning. As part of this goal to enhance the learner

² Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan, 2014-2018, p. 16

experience, the Institute has committed to increasing digital capacity and the introduction of strategic pilot projects, within existing programmes, in the area of blended learning.

A Roadmap for the Implementation of pilot blended learning programmes in Institute of Technology Carlow was developed in September 2017. Its focus was the design, implementation and evaluation of a blended learning approach within Institute of Technology Carlow. It was drafted in conjunction with the *QQI White Paper on Topic-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended Learning* (2017).

The roadmap focused on the design, implementation and evaluation of pilot blended learning programmes within Institute of Technology Carlow. Within the context of a blended learning approach, it explored the following areas:

- the national and international context for blended learning approaches and the use of digital technologies;
- an exploration of the terminology used in relation to blended learning;
- an examination of Institute of Technology Carlow's current situation within the context of blended learning;
- a proposed Institute of Technology Carlow framework for the adoption of blended learning approaches;
- an action plan for the design, implementation and evaluation of blended learning;
- recommendations regarding the implantation and ongoing support of blended learning programmes.

The roadmap was presented to the *Teaching, Learning and Support Services Committee* of Academic Council in October 2017, before being presented to Academic Council for approval. It is envisaged that pilot blended learning programmes will be rolled out in the Institute during the academic year 2018-2019.

Professional Development

In the reporting period, the *Teaching and Learning Centre* in Institute of Technology Carlow was able to leverage funding through the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (Enhancement Fund) to work with other Teaching and Learning Centres across the technological sector. The aim of the *ATLAS (Aligning Teaching and Learning across the Technological Sector)* project was to align accredited provision in teaching and learning to the National Professional Development Framework. As one of Institute of Technology Carlow's key objectives is to enhance the overall learning experience, this collaborative work has ensured that the quality of teaching across the Institute (and the sector) has been further enhanced through teaching staff professional development.

Learner Engagement Admission, Progression & Transition

The setting up of a cross Institute committee to bring together all the stakeholders involved was completed and a *Learner Engagement*, The themes arising during the reporting period are based on the ongoing work plans of the committees of Academic Council.

The aim of this framework is to ensure a positive and supportive transition to higher education for the undergraduate and postgraduate learners, to promote learner engagement, to improve retention, and to facilitate the development of transferable life skills, thereby enhancing the learner experience at Institute of Technology Carlow and preparing our graduates for the

workplace and/or further study. The framework also sets out to capture the transitions learners make each year as they journey through their education. Many non-traditional learners find it difficult to adapt to higher education when coming from a world of work or home and this framework aims to provide a scaffold of supports available at all stages of their student experience. The framework will outline existing policies, procedures and supports in three stages and will make recommendations and offer guidance for progress under each stage.

The work plan of the *Research & Development Committee* of Academic Council has completed a review of the work undertaken by postgraduates who are involved in teaching-related duties. The framework for supporting the postgraduate teachers was formalised. The Teaching and Learning Centre now offers an intensive 10 credit module '*Teaching and Learning 1*' to all postgraduates. This support ensures that the research postgraduates have the opportunity to acquire formal accredited professional development on teaching, learning and assessment strategies, before entering the classroom or laboratory. Institute of Technology Carlow is the only Institute of Technology to offer accredited professional development opportunities to research postgraduates.

NStEP

Institute of Technology Carlow has engaged with The National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) programme. NStEP has two objectives. The first is to develop and support the implementation of a learner training programme. The second related objective is to build institutional capacity to provide high quality opportunities for learners to engage.

There are a total of five project topics in which Institute of Technology Carlow will be involved in different capacities. These include the following:

1. The Role and Recruitment of Class Representatives
2. The Design, Review and Delivery of Programmes
3. Student Feedback Opportunities, Data and Follow Up
4. Students in formal system level procedures, strategy and decision making
5. Staff Roles and Capacity Building

It is envisaged that greater learner involvement in governance, will lead to greater level of engagement, which should improve overall retention and enhance the learner experience. In this reporting period, Institute of Technology Carlow is involved in Project 1, Project 2 and Project 3, contributing to the development of national guidelines.

In the next reporting period, Institute of Technology Carlow will lead Project 3, Student Feedback Opportunities, Data and Follow-up.

External Examiners

Work is ongoing in ensuring that the primary Quality Assurance review of the examination process is continuously updated. Training for External Examiners takes place in Spring every year and the material is made available to all External Examiners for reference. Ongoing quality enhancement, including the use of technology to support the External Examiner process, is ongoing. This is an area of audit focus in this reporting period.

Collaborative Provision

As a key theme in the *Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2014-18* is extending the number of collaborative partnerships, these have been developed in line with the *Policies and Procedures for Collaborative and Transnational Provision and Joint Awards*.

Blended Learning

Institute of Technology Carlow is committed to enriching its learning and teaching strategies by 'drawing on international best practice in the use of learning technologies and blended learning' (*Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan, 2014-2018*, p. 16). As part of the goal to enhance the learner experience, the Institute has committed to increasing digital capacity and to introducing strategic pilot projects, within existing programmes, in the area of blended learning. This is clearly articulated in the *Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2014-2018 Mid-Term Review*, which states the one of the priorities of the Institute is to increase digital capacity. As a theme, the Institute commits to implementing 'strategic pilot projects within existing programmes and cross-campus' and to developing 'an integrated institutional strategic plan for blended, flexible and distributed learning'³

A roadmap for pilot projects focusing on the design, implementation and evaluation of a blended learning approach within Institute of Technology Carlow has been developed in this reporting period.

³ Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2014-2018 Mid-Term Review, 2016

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.

During 2017/2018, Professional Support Service Reviews continued to include the areas of Academic Administration & Student Affairs, Student Services & Learner Support and Estates. In adopting the ECU Athena SWAN principles and the Athena SWAN Charter, in addition to the appointment of the Director of the Office of EDI, with subsequent formation of the Institute SAT and Steering Committee, the Institute is committed to enhancing and promoting gender equality for staff and students across the Institute.

With the formation of two additional Collaborative Partnerships in the remit of psychotherapy in 2016/2017, this academic year (2017/2018), offered an opportunity to develop Joint Quality Visits between our respective Institutes in progressing the collaborative partnership.

Quality enhancement activities were enabled by a number of significant developments during the period including:

- Enhancement in staff profile with a greater number of staff with higher qualifications- Masters and Doctorates.
- The introduction of the role of Director of the Office of Equality Diversity and Inclusion offering Institute wide support on matters pertaining to EDI and collating and submitting the Institute of Technology Carlow Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan.
- Continuing staff development both formal and informal with a further graduating class from the Institute of Technology Carlow's MA in Teaching and Learning.
- Enhancement and consolidation of internal QA/QE systems and processes to encompass supporting policies to facilitate professional support services in their roles and review process.
- Development of Work Placement opportunities across a wider range of programme offerings – supported by robust policy and placement agreements.
- Institute of Technology Carlow Graduate Attributes Framework was published in December 2017 following extensive consultation with learners, staff, professional bodies and national and international public and private sector stakeholders. These provide a common language and purpose across a diverse community in a critical and

fundamental area, helping to further empower the Institute's collective approach for the benefit of individuals, the economy and society. The Institute of Technology Carlow Graduate Attributes will guide decisions and actions now and in the years to come.

- Seminars, conferences and exhibitions, such as Eureka, Research Week, Regional Skills Forum Events and Science Week being conducted at the Institute as part of Regional engagement.

Expansion and Enhancement of facilities and the physical environment including:

- Ongoing population of the Dargan Centre (the Institute's primary Research and Development Building to accommodate the continued expanding cohort of postgraduate researchers)
- Commencement of development of Sports Complex and land acquisition for further development including a Science Building.

Continued review and enhancement of programme offerings across all levels with a focus on Springboard+ programmes including Higher Diplomas.

Continued expansion of registered postgraduate learners on taught and research programmes at NFQ Level 9 and 10.

Enhanced collaborative activity and programme development with the Defence Forces and An Cosán, in addition to programme development in the area of psychotherapy with The Irish Gestalt Centre and The Tivoli Institute.

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.

In 2017/18, the Institute of Technology Carlow will continue to develop in line with its Strategic Plan 2014-18. In addition, with the recent consolidation of Institute of Technology Carlow Graduate Attributes – this will form a framework in the development of the *Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2019-2023*.

Future developments include:

- Completion of the construction of the Sports Complex and development of the site adjacent to the Institute's Carlow Campus to include a purpose built Science Development, which will significantly enhance infrastructure, facilities and the learner experience within the remit of STEM.
- The appointment of a Director of the Office of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) for the Institute in September 2017 will enable further EDI developments including applying for the ECU Athena Swan Charter Bronze Award in November 2018.
- Continued engagement with the establishment of the multi-campus Technological University for the South East of Ireland following a merger with Waterford Institute of Technology.
- Accreditation of Institute of Technology Carlow Social Care Programmes by CORU
- Continued Programme Development and Validation of new programmes across NFQ levels 6-10.
- Continued recognition and alignment of Professional and Regulatory Bodies to programmes developed, validated and delivered within the Institute of Technology Carlow.
- Enhancement of existing and development of new collaborative partnerships including subsequent programme development.
- Building research capacity and embedding enquiry based learning across all programme areas with an enhancement of Delegated Authority to Level 10.
- Building work placement opportunities to a wider range of programmes throughout the Institute of Technology Carlow
- Continued internationalisation of the institution both in terms of learners, staff profile and programme orientation.
- Continued undertaking of area reviews of Professional Support Services. On completion of all Strategic, Programmatic, Collaborative and Professional Support Service Reviews, preparation for the Institutional Review 2019-2020 will ensue.
- The Institute Quality Assurance & Collaborations Officer, the Director of Institutional Research and Planning, the Assistant Registrar and the Head of Teaching and Learning

Centre, under the direction of the Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar will continue the Institute of Technology Carlow's work in the area of quality enhancement.

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.

Graduate Attributes Framework

The Graduate Attributes Framework continues to be a central theme for future development. The Graduate Attributes Charter will be integrated into the broader learner experience. Embedding the Graduate Attributes in the learner culture and informing stakeholders will be part of the next phase of this project.

Learner Engagement, Retention and Progression

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

Institute of Technology Carlow has engaged with The National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) programme. As part of this, Institute of Technology Carlow will lead the National Project- *Project 3, Student Feedback Opportunities, Data and Follow Up*. This project, which has partners across the HEI community in Ireland, will produce guidelines, case studies and a toolbox to assist HEI's in obtaining, using, and analysing data from learners, including feeding back on that data to learners. This approach ensures that the learner is central of every step in the process and informed of the outcomes and enhancements their engagement has produced.

It is envisaged that greater learner involvement in governance, will lead to greater level of engagement, which should improve overall retention and enhance the learner experience. As part of NStEP, Institute of Technology Carlow is looking forward to completing an Institutional Strategic Analysis Workshop. This workshop, which will be facilitated by NStEP and sparqs will provide a platform for discussion among all staff and learners on planning enhancement of the engagement of learners with the Institute at a strategic level.

Accredited Professional Development

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

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

Professional Support Services Reviews

Having initiated the Professional Support Services reviews in this sector, Institute of Technology Carlow successfully completed three reviews in this reporting period, *Academic Administration and Student Affairs*, *Student Services and Learner Support* and *Estates*. Mid-term reviews of *Computing Services* and *Library & Information Services* were also successfully completed. This process has ensured the maintenance of a Quality Enhancement approach across all activities within Institute of Technology Carlow, and the process of reviewing all Professional Support Services continues. In the next reporting period four Professional Support Services, are scheduled.

These are:

- Development
- Human Resources
- Sport
- Finance

Blended Learning

Institute of Technology Carlow Teaching and Learning Centre has developed a roadmap for the design, implementation and evaluation of pilot blended learning programmes within Institute of Technology Carlow. Within the context of a blended learning approach, it explores the following areas:

- the national and international context for blended learning approaches and the use of digital technologies;
- an exploration of the terminology used in relation to blended learning;
- an examination of Institute of Technology Carlow's current situation within the context of blended learning;
- a proposed Institute of Technology Carlow framework for the adoption of blended learning approaches;
- an action plan for the design, implementation and evaluation of blended learning;
- recommendations regarding the implantation and ongoing support of blended learning programmes.

It is proposed that pilot blended learning programmes will be rolled out in the Institute during the academic year 2018-2019.

Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2019-2023

This is the last reporting period for the *Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2014-2018*. Development of the Strategic Plan 2019-2023 commenced in this reporting period with discussions centred on identifying the Strategic Priorities for the Institute. This work will continue with the *Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2019-2023* launching in January 2019.

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.

The following Professional Support Service first cycle reviews are scheduled for the reporting period 2018/2019:

Phase 2 will conclude with the Sports Department

Phase 3 includes Development , Human Resources and the Finance Department

The Built Environment Department will be seeking accreditation with the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland for selected programmes.

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

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

5.3 Other Plans

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

As a learner focused benchmark, U-Multirank was chosen, as it aligns to the dimensions prioritised by Institute of Technology Carlow and an application will be submitted in the next reporting period.

Professional Body Accreditation

The following programmes, the NFQ Level 8 Bachelor of Science (Honours) Architectural Technology and NFQ Level 7 Bachelor of Science Architectural Technology are accredited by the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists (CIAT) and The Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI). The Bachelor of Engineering in Aircraft Systems is accredited by Engineers Ireland. These three programmes have renewed their accreditations.

Institute of Technology Carlow will be applying to CORU for accreditation of all its Social Care Programmes delivered across the three Campuses.

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

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

Part 6: Periodic Review

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

6.1 The Institution and External Review

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

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

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

Institute of Technology Carlow will undergo an Institutional Review in the period 2019/20. In preparation for this:

Professional Support Services Reviews first reviews will be completed in the next reporting period.

The *Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2019-2023* will be launched and implementation thereof will commence in the reporting period 2018/2019. It is during this latter reporting period that the bridging AIQR report will be produced showing the plans implemented and the pathway towards the *Institute of Technology Carlow Self Evaluation Report*, due to be submitted in the 2019/2020 reporting period.

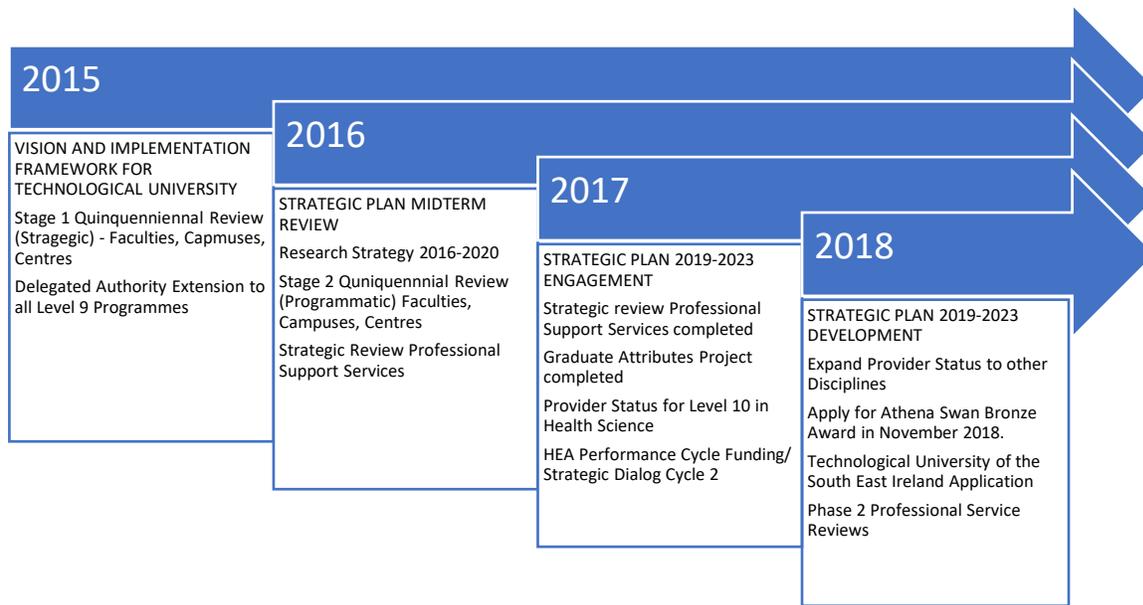


Figure 6.1 Planning cycle for Quality Assurance

6.2 Self-Reflection on Quality Assurance

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

In this reporting period, Institute of Technology Carlow focused on achieving and exceeding the Goals set out in the *Strategic Plan 2014-2018*, all of which have a significant quality assurance component. Under Goal 5, Institute of Technology Carlow has completed the quality assurance work plan set out in 2012, which has resulted in a quality assurance framework and a Quality Management System, aligned to best practice both nationally and internationally. This has enabled the extension of a robust self-assessment model being applied to all professional services which compliments that undertaken by all academic units. The cyclic nature of these reviews will ensure that quality assurance is core to all activities and that a quality focused culture is embedded. Enhancing this quality assurance culture will form a basis for future development.

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

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

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

As this is the last reporting year for the *Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2014-2018*, the next reporting period will consolidate the achievements, milestones and innovations over the past four years and plan to achieve the goals of *Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2019-2023*. Since most of the milestones have been achieved, as demonstrated in the Mid-Term Review, Institute of Technology Carlow is looking forward to the next phase of development. These achievements will inform the Institutional Review process and aid in identifying the key themes.

With an Institutional Review scheduled in 2019/20, Institute of Technology Carlow is focused on demonstrating the impact of our culture of strategic thinking and accountability, which is marked by our connectivity with all our stakeholders.

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

6.3 Themes

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

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

Accredited Professional Development

The Institute is committed to the provision of accredited professional development programmes for staff as this improves the overall learner experience. In that respect, the *NFQ Level 9 MA in Teaching and Learning* (and its embedded awards) will continue to be promoted and offered to all teaching staff.

Non-accredited Professional Development

In addition, stand-alone modules and pedagogical-related workshops will continue to be offered to assist staff with their professional development. In addition, Institute of Technology Carlow applied to host two seminars as part of the *National Forum Seminar Series '17/18* and was successful on both counts. With the funding received, two guest lecturers were invited to present on issues around assessment and this has since led to further collaboration and a review of assessment practices by the teaching staff involved. Institute of Technology Carlow will continue to apply for funding as part of this Seminar Series call.

Staff development workshops on the theme of innovation teaching and learning strategies were also hosted for staff in the Defence Forces, An Cosán, Tivoli, Gestalt and for staff in the Local Authority Services National Training Group (LASNTF) further enhancing our collaboration with these organisations. Sessions were also provided for staff in Carlow College on assessment practices and writing learning outcomes.

Academic Success Programme

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

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

Institute of Technology Carlow continues to partner on a National Forum funded project entitled '*Technology Enhanced Assessment Methods*' (TEAM) within the area of Science and Health. A further enhancement fund call was raised in 2016 and Institute of Technology Carlow submitted four project proposals, in conjunction with other Institutes of Technology. The maximum number to gain approval from any one HEI was three. In September 2016, the National Forum announced the approval of three of Institute of Technology Carlow's projects. The approved projects cover a wide range of discipline areas, including pedagogy, library and information systems, and social care. These projects are currently in progress, and are being continuously assessed in terms of their impact and their sustainability, by the National Forum, through project review presentations and reports.

In a bid to support the professional development across the sector, Institute of Technology Carlow, along with 4 other institutions from across the sector, has been involved in a national project – ATLAS (Aligning Teaching and Learning across the Technological Sector), aligning accredited professional development provision in the area of teaching and learning to the *National Professional Development Framework*. This has involved extensive collaboration with other institutions and together the project partners have identified gaps in the area of teaching and learning provision, which they are currently addressing in a collaborative manner. A strong community of practice in the area of teaching and learning has developed, as a result of this collaboration. It is envisaged to apply for funding for the next phase of the Enhancement Call in 2018/2019.

Graduate Attributes

The Graduate Attributes Framework was published and that completes this phase of the project, which underpins the quality assurance framework. This will be key to the development of our *Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2019-2023*.

Development of a *Strategic Plan for Research* has enhanced the research environment and provided the postgraduate learner with attributes. This foundation underpins our application for Provider status to Level 10 in areas recognised for their excellence in research.

Lifelong Learning

Institute of Technology Carlow is a leading provider of lifelong learning opportunities in the State with almost 39% of learners drawn from this sphere. Lifelong learning at Institute of Technology Carlow provides programmes from Levels 6 to 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Goal 3 of the Strategic Plan outlines the Institute's commitment to the development of Strategic Collaborations and Partnerships. This goal led to the creation of the *Extended Campus* as an element of its lifelong learning commitment, with the defined aim of developing collaboration opportunities with local and national employers.

The creation of an *Extended Campus* followed the Institute Strategic Review conducted in 2010, which identified the requirement to create closer links with industry, education and collaborative partners. A significant proportion of the Institute's lifelong learners are now registered through the *Extended Campus*, which is part of the Faculty of Engineering.

The *Extended Campus* currently links the fields of aviation, transport, emergency services and defence studies, and develops the leadership, management and technological capabilities of linked organisations and individuals. It builds on collaborative programme development with partners such as the Defence Forces (DF), Dublin Fire Brigade (DFB), Dublin Airport Authority (DAA), Irish Aviation Authority (IAA) and more recently with organisations such as Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport (CILT), Lloyds Pharmacy Group and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) and now the Local Authority Services National Training Group (LASNTG). In addition, through the Lifelong Learning Faculty, a significant relationship with An Cosán in West Tallaght, Dublin, one of the leading providers of community education in the country, has been developed, whereby a range of their programmes have been validated by the Institute.

The provision of validated programmes with the above organisations extends nationally, with programmes provided at the Institute's main campuses at Carlow, Wexford and Wicklow, and in a number of other locations nationwide. Providing such quality education across multiple campuses has enabled learners engage with third level education at a local level. Strategic development of collaborative partnerships with other public and private organisations is ongoing, and is underpinned by a proven record of accomplishment in the areas of work-based learning, recognition of prior learning and flexible provision.

Learner Engagement, Progression and Retention

As part of the Learner Engagement Progression and retention initiatives, Institute of Technology Carlow is participating in the national NStEP project, which is designed to increase meaningful learner engagement in quality assurance and enhancement processes. Institute of Technology Carlow is committed to the NStEP programme with staff involved in a number of the National Projects. As part of this commitment, Institute of Technology Carlow will undertake its

Institutional Strategic Analysis workshop in the next academic year. This will be an opportunity to engage learners and staff together to evaluate the next steps. Work is ongoing on the Learner Engagement and Progression Framework (LEAP) which will be finalised. This is a roadmap which provides learners and staff with an overview of engagement throughout the lifecycle of the learner.

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

Institute of Technology Carlow Strategic Plan 2019-2023

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

Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Institute of Technology Carlow is committed to the enhancement of the learner experience and this is evidenced by robust self-evaluation processes. All academic units have been completed in 2016 and each faculty will produce a mid term report in the next reporting period, which will update the achievements of the plans set out in 2016. The Professional Support Services which completed their first review in 2016, Library and Information Services and Computer Services, will also produce a mid-term report to update on progress. The second phase of the Professional Support Services Reviews will conclude with the Sports department undergoing its first review. The third phase will start in 2019 with Development, Finance and Human Resources scheduled for their first review in this phase. This will complete the Professional Support Services first reviews.