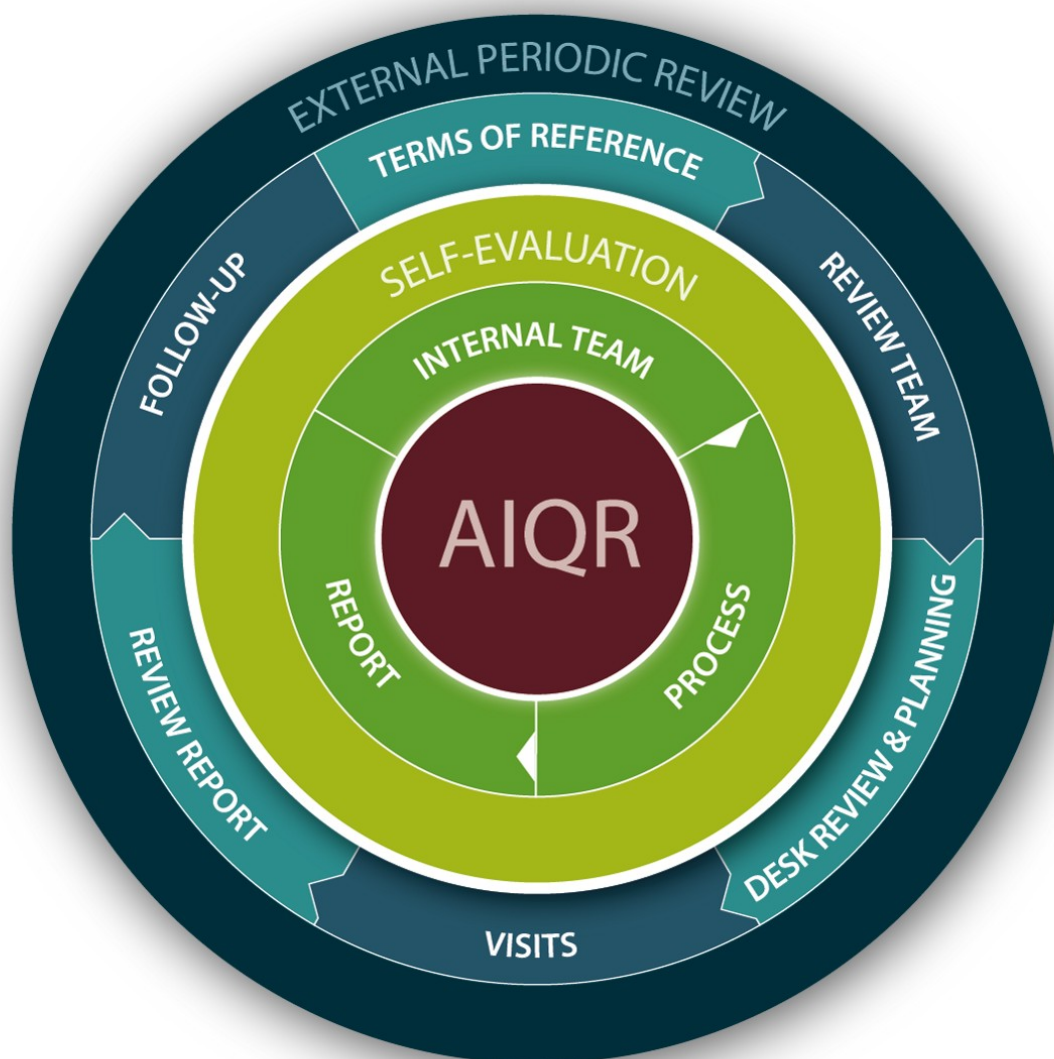


Waterford Institute of Technology

Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report 2019

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



The Cyclical Review Process

Part 1

Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures

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

1. Overarching Institution Quality Policy

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

The Waterford Institute of Technology Strategic Plan 2018-2021 sets out our vision to be a community of collaborative, inclusive and innovative educators. The Plan provides a direction for Waterford Institute of Technology that is focussed on those opportunities and outlines the organisation's strategic goals for the coming period, guided by our over-arching vision. The transformational agenda will ensure that by 2021 the Institute will be known:

1. For our provision of high quality educational experiences to students that are student centred and responsive to learner needs;
2. As an accessible new university that offers a wide range of learning opportunities, access and progression routes and flexible modes of engagement with learning that reflect learner needs and societal change;
3. As a research-led organisation with a demonstrably impactful, innovative, and dynamic research community;
4. For being deeply embedded in regional discourse, policy-making, economic, social and cultural activity and as a driver of regional change;
5. For our international profile that finds expression in the approach of our students and staff and in our extensive partnerships;
6. As an effectively governed and managed organisation that is strategically focussed and demonstrates quality in all its activities.

The overarching WIT philosophy and framework for Quality Assurance is set out in *Quality Assurance Framework for Waterford Institute of Technology (WQAF)* document ([link](#)). The purpose of the WIT quality assurance framework, as described in the WQAF, is to enhance the quality environment of the Institute, and to ensure the dual responsibilities of assuring that standards of awards and the ongoing improvement of activities are achieved. The framework is informed by the European Standards and Guidelines 2015 and by the statutory and regulatory environment in which Irish Education operates, including the application of QQI policies.

The Institute recognises that quality is delivered through all of the activities of the Institute and is committed to engaging all staff in articulating, understanding and delivering on its responsibilities. These responsibilities include:

1. Ensuring all graduates of the Institute meet the standards expected of their award;
2. Ensuring our teaching, learning and student support environments deliver appropriately for the diversity of our student body and that we support learners achieve their potential;
3. Ensuring the Institute is responsive to the needs of the stakeholder at regional and national levels.

The WQAF philosophy and framework is supported by, and expressed in, the Institute's policy, procedure and regulation documents. The [WIT Quality Manual](#) is issued on an annual basis and comprises 4 sections: Section A *Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes* (RTP); Section B *Programme Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy and Procedures* (RPA); Section C *Quality Assurance of Collaborative Programmes, including Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards* (RCP); Section D *Postgraduate Research Degrees: Regulations and Procedures* (RRD). The *WIT Quality Manual* is supported by a number of supplemental and subsidiary policy and procedure documents, which are available on the [Policies and Regulations](#) area of the WIT website, and will be referred to in later sections of this report.

2. Quality assurance decision-making fora

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

An organisational chart for the Structure of Responsibility for Quality is available in the WQAF ([link](#)). A description of the structure of quality assurance and improvement activities in the Institute is also provided in the WQAF along with a detailed assignment of responsibilities at key stages in the cycle. In terms of academic quality and standards, the Academic Council is the key decision-making body. The Academic Council is appointed by the WIT Governing Body, to assist it in the planning (including the strategic planning), co-ordination, development and overseeing of the educational and research work of the Institute, and to protect, maintain and develop the academic standards of the programmes and activities of the Institute. The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar has overall responsibility for co-ordinating the above processes and reporting to Academic Council and Institute authorities on progress and implementation. To ensure a link between Academic Council and Governing Body, a member of the Academic Council presents a report on the work of Academic Council to the Governing Body at least annually, but preferably once a semester.

The Academic Council has established the following committees: Academic Quality Committee (AQ); Academic Planning Committee (AP); Learning and Teaching Committee (LT); Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Committee (RIE); School Boards; Standing Committee; and the Agenda Setting and Correspondence Committee. The Academic Council will normally delegate responsibility for detailed consideration, analysis and drafting of policies, procedures and other matters to its committees. Reports from committees on such matters will be referred to Academic Council for consideration by the larger meeting. Academic Council may adopt or reject such reports or refer them back to committee. A detailed account of the terms of reference and responsibilities of the subcommittees for Academic Council is given in the WIT [Academic Council Constitution](#), which spells out the Terms of Reference, Code of Practice, Composition and Regulations, particularly section 5, and in the WIT Quality Manual 2018-19: Programme Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy and Procedures ([RPA](#)), section 1.

An Organisational Chart of the School and Department structure in the Institute, including service departments, and lines of responsibility is available on the [WIT website](#).

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.

1. Programme design and approval

The WIT policy and procedures for the design and approval of taught programmes are contained in Section B of the WIT [Quality Manual: Programme Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy and Procedures 2017-18](#) (RPA). In general, programmes are proposed and designed by an Academic School or Schools, subject to internal and external review, and approved via the Academic Council and its committees.

There are a number of processes set out in the RPA for validating new programmes or amending existing programmes:

The CE1 process is required to make the initial 'business' case proposal for a new programme to consider rationale need, demand, resources, capacity to deliver the programme, and the proposed outline of the programme. It is proposed by an Academic School and reviewed by the WIT Executive Board. The relevant regulations may be found in Section B of the WIT [Quality Manual: Programme Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy and Procedures 2017-18](#) (RPA), Sections 2.3-2.4, CE1 stage application

The CE2 process is required for a full new programme proposal (leading to Major, Minor, Special Purpose or Supplemental Awards). It is proposed by an Academic School and reviewed by a Panel (comprising an external chair, external academic and industry representatives, student representative (for major awards only), and Registry and Academic Council representative), with the panel report and School response being considered by the Academic Quality Committee and then by the Academic Council. The relevant regulations may be found in Section B of the WIT [Quality Manual: Programme Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy and Procedures 2017-18](#) (RPA), Sections 2.5-2.7, 2.10-2.11, CE2 stage application.

The CE4 process is required for a full new programme proposal leading a Joint Award programme, or a programme which has collaborative delivery. It is proposed by an Academic School and reviewed by a Panel (comprising an external chair, external academic and industry representatives, student representative (for major awards only), and Registry and Academic Council representative), with the panel report and School response being considered by the Academic Quality Committee and then by the Academic Council. The relevant regulations may be found in Section B of the WIT [Quality Manual: Programme Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy and Procedures 2017-18](#) (RPA), Section 2.13 and Section C of the [WIT Quality Manual: Quality Assurance of Collaborative Programmes, including Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards](#) (RCP).

The CE3 process is required for a significant amendment to an existing approved programme, which necessitates a change in programme learning outcomes. It is proposed by an Academic School and reviewed by a Panel (comprising external academic and industry representatives, and Registry and Academic Council representatives) with the panel report and School response being considered by the Academic Quality Committee and then by the Academic Council. The relevant regulations may be found in Section B of the WIT [Quality Manual: Programme Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy and Procedures 2017-18](#) (RPA), Section 2.8.

The Minor Change Request process is required where the proposal is for minor change(s) to an existing approved programme, which does not necessitate a change in programme learning outcomes. It is proposed by an Academic School and reviewed by the Academic Quality Committee and then by the

Academic Council. The relevant regulations may be found in Section B of the WIT [Quality Manual: Programme Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy and Procedures 2017-18](#) (RPA), Section 2.9.

The Individual Module(s) Approval process is required where the proposal is to validate stand-alone modules. It is proposed by an Academic School and reviewed by an External subject expert(s), by the Academic Quality Committee and then by the Academic Council. The relevant regulations may be found in Section B of the WIT [Quality Manual: Programme Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy and Procedures 2017-18](#) (RPA), Section 2.12.

WIT's approach to quality assurance is based on an open, transparent and easily assessable set of regulations that are supported by appropriate training. The Institute publishes the quality framework annually, electronically and in hard copy. It maintains dedicated areas on sections of the intranet and Moodle for QA documentation and information. These areas also contain a number of resource files and guidance notes in key areas. In addition, the Office for Quality Promotion and Academic Policy Development has a specific remit in providing training in key QA processes and providing an individualised response to questions. The [Quality Promotion Information Area](#) also hosts a number of documents and videos available from preparing Learning Outcomes to the relevant NFQ (EQF: *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*.) The Quality Promotion Office also promotes and enables continuous quality improvement across the Institute's academic and administrative units, primarily by managing the Quality Review process for Schools and Units. This work includes support and guidance to Heads of Schools and Directors of Units, as well as academic and administrative staff; engaging and liaising with reviewers; advising on the implementation of recommendations in the review report; analysis of all review process findings.

Finally, the Institute has had a dedicated Continuous Professional Development week in February each year, since 2004, during which staff are offered training on a wide range of topics, including QA processes, such as new programme development/modifying existing programmes and creating NFQ-appropriate module descriptors.

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.

Programme delivery and assessment are the core of WIT's activities, so the quality assurance policies and procedures for programme delivery and assessment are present in multiple weblinks, both publicly and internally available. These links reflect the variety of students who attend WIT and their needs, offering flexible learning paths, including different modes of delivery and pedagogical approaches. consistency of standards across the University and adherence to all relevant University policies

The Academic Quality Committee, on behalf of the Academic Council) approves the appointment of all external examiners, both at undergraduate and postgraduate (taught and research) levels. The appointment of external examiners is an important part of the Institute's quality assurance. The Academic Quality Committee ensures that standards are uniformly applied across the Institute. Further information on the External Examiner reporting and setup can be found on the WIT webpage ([link](#)).

Information for Programme Specific Regulations are all contained in the Approved Programme Schedules, available on the WIT Moodle Intranet ([link](#)). Programme regulations are approved by the Academic Quality Committee and then by Academic Council.

Examination Regulations: The examination regulations are published on the WIT website ([link](#)).

The Institute has a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, which is published on the Institute [website](#) and is intended to enhance learning at WIT by establishing a common framework, aligned with the overall Institute strategy, for decision making across the Institute on the future development of learning, teaching and assessment.

Policies in respect of the programme delivery include:

1. WIT *Quality Manual 2017-18*, particularly Section A *Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Programmes* (RTP) which is available publicly on the WIT [webpages](#), the WIT [Intranet](#), as well as in the [Academic Council Information Area/Quality Manual](#) and the [Quality Promotion Information Area](#) on Moodle;
2. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy ([link](#));
3. External Examiner Policy ([link](#));
4. Policy on Electronic Examinations ([link](#));
5. Anti-plagiarism Policy ([link](#));
6. Policy on the Conferring of Aegrotat Awards ([link](#));
7. Approval of Minor, Special Purpose, Supplemental Awards ([link](#));
8. Policy on Exit Awards ([link](#));
9. Completing, Granting and Presentation of Awards Policy ([link](#));
10. The Code of Practice of the Disability Office Student Life and Learning ([link](#));

11. Recording Policy: on the Recording of Oral and/or Visual Presentations for Students Registered with the Disability Office ([link](#));
12. The Student Complaints Policy ([link](#)).

The Institute supports these policies in some cases with an operational procedure. For example, admission to WIT is defined in the *WIT Quality Manual*, but this is elaborated on in greater detail in a dedicated webpage:

Procedures

1. Admissions procedure ([link](#));
2. Procedures for external examiners ([link](#));
3. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) ([link](#));
4. Viewing of examination scripts ([link](#));
5. Recheck of Examination Results form available from the Office of the Registrar or [online](#);
6. Procedure to [appeal](#) examination results.

The RTP section of the *WIT Quality manual* makes specific reference to a range of delivery and assessment policies and procedures including *inter alia* the determination of awards, the balance of assessment, the assessment of group activities, progression criteria and the requirement to produce student handbooks detailing programme information.

Students are involved in programmes and assessment through

1. Membership of programme boards;
2. School boards;
3. Academic Council and Council committees;
4. Learner representatives on new programme review panels;
5. Membership of appeals panels.

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

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

The quality assurance procedures for the design, approval, delivery, assessment and monitoring of research programmes are captured in Section D of the WIT Quality Manual, *Postgraduate Research Degrees: Regulations and Procedures* (RRD), which is available publicly on the WIT [webpages](#), on the WIT Intranet on Q:\Public\Registrar\Quality, as well as in the [Academic Council Information Area/Quality Manual](#) and the [Quality Promotion Information Area](#) on Moodle).

The RRD sets out the regulations in respect of registration, enrolment, supervision, transfer and assessment of research candidates. In addition, the RRD is also supported by policies including:

1. The research strategy (being drafted)
2. Research Postgraduate Student Induction Handbook ([link](#))
3. Research Ethics policy ([link](#))
4. Data protection policy ([link](#))
5. The Intellectual Property policy ([link](#))
6. The student complaints policy ([link](#))

The Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship (RIE: [link](#)) committee advises and makes recommendations to the WIT [Academic Council](#) on matters relating to research. The responsibilities of this committee are defined in the Academic Council Constitution (section 5.3.4), available on [Moodle](#) and on the WIT [web-pages](#). The RIE has also created a number of subcommittees to ensure the diverse range of activities under its remit is fully considered. The subcommittees are:

1. The Research Postgraduate Enrolment Group (PGEG): considers postgraduate student ([Future Postgraduate](#) page) registration applications for enrolment (including a QQI Application, if relevant), Structured PhD applications PG_A1 and PG_A2, applications for transfer from the Masters to Doctoral registers (PG2 and QQI Application, if relevant), for confirmation of candidature for Structured PhD students (PG_C) and applications for confirmation of candidature for probationary traditional Doctoral students (PG4). A postgraduate may also apply to PGEG for a variation in candidature (PG3). A step-by-step guide has also been published for research postgraduates and for supervisors ([link](#)). New school-based research programme boards were established during 2017-18 to support the Research Postgraduate Enrolment Group and the ongoing training and progression of research students. A Sharepoint [site](#) or [link](#), accessible by everyone within the institute who has a WIT login, has been set up as the central repository for the various forms relating to management of research postgraduate students, the process specifications associated with the research postgraduate regulations and a schedule of relevant meetings.
2. The Institute's [Research Ethics Committee](#), scrutinises all research which involves humans and animals to ensure it is compliant with statutory requirements and is conducted to the highest ethical principles.

The Academic Council's Quality Committee also has a function related to research, and that is to oversee the standards in the appointment of external examiners for research activities. The examining process, panel membership and required examiner qualifications and experience are all detailed in the RRD. School Postgraduate examination boards approve the decisions of the examiners.

The WIT Human Resource Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) Action Plan continued to be executed, under the direction of the HRS4R's Operational Committee. As a recipient of the HR Excellence in Research Award ([link](#)) from the European Commission, WIT is committed to developing its supports for researchers, there are also a number of supports for students and supervisors, including

- Institute-wide Generic Skills training for Postgraduates (prior to the advent of the WIT Structured Doctorate, which will have its own Universal Path Modules) ([link](#));
- Institute-wide Supervisor Training via a module on the WIT MA in Learning and Teaching;
- WIT is also represented on the national Research Supervision Working Group and National Forum for Research Integrity.

The Institute's Research Support Unit developed a Data Management guidance [document](#) to assist researchers in developing a quality Data Management Plan, for European Union H2020 funding proposals and projects.

Other Research Quality highlights included:

- An updated Intellectual Property Policy was presented to and signed-off by Governing body in April 2018.
- A revised Research Day Policy was prepared, reviewed by Executive Board, Heads of Departments and sent for staff consultation.
- Annual reports were submitted to the Research Support Office by research centres, groups and individual researchers.
- An Annual Report is produced by the Office of Research, Innovation & Graduate Studies ([link](#))
- Research active staff and students are encouraged to engage with *Research Professional* (an online platform to facilitate staff and students in searching for research funding) ([link](#))

The WIT Library is also involved in promoting Research Quality and is actively involved in the formulation of the Institutional Research Open Access policy, provision of Institutional Repository services and awareness raising in relation to 'Plan S'. WIT Library is also actively involved in promoting and formulating Open Science and Open Data initiatives with the WIT Academic Council's Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Committee.

Finally, research activity of each school area is considered as a key strategic item for each periodic School Review. Schools were required to develop, or amend, their individual School research strategies and research implementation plans. The strategy and plan was to set School-wide priorities and goals for research, with an emphasis on the focus and quality of research, and identify clear metrics for their evaluation.

4. Student Lifecycle (ESG 1.4)

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

The WIT quality assurance procedures that encompassed the student lifecycle are primarily found in the WIT Quality Manual: Section A [Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes](#) (RTP) for taught programmes and Section *Postgraduate Research Degrees: Regulations and Procedures* (RRD) for research programmes. The Quality Manual is supported by a number of supplementary policies and process documents.

Admissions Policies ([link](#))

1. Admission to Programmes of Study Policy Document ([link](#));
2. Other School Leaving Examinations Policy Document ([link](#));
3. Mature Applicant Policy Document ([link](#));
4. Previous Higher Education Policy Document (under review and may not be implemented for 2020 intake) ([link](#));
5. Ardscoil na Mara Tramore Computer Studies Link Policy ([link](#));
6. Deferral First Year Entry Policy and Procedure ([link](#));
7. QQI Further Education and Training Awards Council Policy ([link](#));
8. Leaving Certificate Recheck Policy ([link](#));
9. Advanced Entry Applications (A4) Policy ([link](#));
10. Qualification Baccalaureat and Brevet Policy ([link](#));
11. Qualification GCE GCSE & BTEC Policy ([link](#)).
12. Qualification - BTEC Policy ([link](#)).
13. WIT Alert List 2019 Entry ([link](#)).
14. Undergraduate Full-time Independent Module Registration Policy 2018/2019 ([link](#)).
15. Qualification LCVP Policy ([link](#)).

Admission Processes

- [Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes](#) (RTP), Sections 2-4
- WIT Access, Transfer and Progression Policy
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy ([link](#))
- Admissions procedure ([link](#))
- The Code of Practice of the Disability Office Student Life and Learning ([link](#))
- Recording Policy: on the Recording of Oral and/or Visual Presentations for Students Registered with the Disability Office ([link](#))
- WIT Progression Scheme ([link](#))
- Deferral First Year Entry Policy and Procedure ([link](#))

Student Transfer

- Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes (RTP), Section 2.12 (transfer, [link](#))
- RTP, Section 2.13 (advanced entry, [link](#))
- Student Life and Learning information section on transfer ([link](#))

Student Progression

- Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes (RTP), Sections 7-11 ([link](#))
- External Examiner policy ([link](#))
- Computer Based Examinations policy ([link](#))
- Anti-plagiarism policy ([link](#))
- Regulations governing written examinations: RTP, Appendices 2 and 3 and ([link](#))

Recognition (qualifications, periods of study, prior learning)

- Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes (RTP), Section 6 ([link](#))
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy ([link](#))

Certification (qualification information, documentation)

- Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes (RTP), Section 12 ([link](#))
- Policy on the conferring of Aegrotat Awards ([link](#))
- Policy on Exit Awards ([link](#))
- Completing, Granting and Presentation of Awards Policy ([link](#))

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.

The appointment of teaching staff is based in the first instance on nationally agreed DoES circulars. WIT applies this standard as a baseline, but ordinarily appoints staff who have qualifications far in excess of the standard. Recruitment procedures are in place to define person specifications, minimum and desirable qualities prior to the initiation of recruitment. In general, the WIT HR policies are listed on the dedicated staff [webpage](#). In the reporting period, a Code of Conduct for the Responsible Practice of Research was drafted, reviewed by the Academic Council's Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Committee, the WIT Executive Board and sent out for consultation to staff unions and the students union. Two other policies that were drafted were the Conflict of Interest Policy and the Intellectual Property Policy (both sent for public consultation in August 2017).

Human Resource Policies are listed in the following, with the first two being policies introduced or revised in this academic year:

1. Annual Leave Policy ([link](#));
2. Career Break Scheme Administration & Clerical ([link](#));
3. Career Break Scheme For Academic Staff ([link](#));
4. Child protection policy ([link](#));
5. Cloud Storage Acceptable Usage Policy ([link](#));
6. Code of Conduct policy ([link](#));
7. Compassionate Leave policy ([link](#));
8. Computer and Network Security Policy ([link](#));
9. Conflict of Interest ([link](#));
10. Dignity and Respect policy ([link](#));
11. Disciplinary Procedure ([link](#));
12. Disclosure policy ([link](#));
13. E-mail policy ([link](#));
14. Force Majeure Leave policy ([link](#));
15. Garda Vetting policy ([link](#));
16. Institute safety policy ([link](#));
17. Intellectual Property Policy ([link](#));
18. Leave for Appointment policy ([link](#));
19. Marriage and Civil Partnership Leave policy ([link](#));
20. Maternity Leave policy ([link](#));
21. Parental Leave policy and Guidelines ([link](#));
22. Probation Policy ([link](#));
23. Procedure For Claiming Illness Benefit ([link](#));

24. Progression Policy ([link](#));
25. Procedures for the Resolution of Grievances Disputes ([link](#));
26. Recording Policy ([link](#));
27. Sick Leave policy ([link](#));
28. Staff Handbook ([link](#));
29. Staff training and development strategy ([link](#));
30. WIT Adverse Weather Policy ([link](#));

The Institute has a dedicated staff resource to training and development and an Institute-wide Training and Development Committee that develops policy and procedures in respect of training and development of staff (academic, administration and support), including the organisation of the annual training and development week in semester 2.

WIT offers opportunities for, and promotes, the professional development of teaching staff. The Training and Development Committee report to the WIT Executive Board and developed the Staff Training and Development Strategy Plan 2012-2017 ([link](#)), with a successor currently in preparation. WIT is committed to encouraging and facilitating staff to pursue professional and personal training and development both in the interests of performing their duties at the highest level possible for the accomplishment of the strategic objectives of the Institute and also for self-fulfilment. Key priorities include: an expansion of teaching and research at levels 9-10, with a corresponding improvement of developing knowledge competency of staff in both upper level occupational training and applied research; the further strengthening of networking with industry and community organizations in training and research; and an expanded international orientation and portfolio of international activity. The Training and Development Committee plan also included a number of areas such as teaching and learning (such as modules in Practical Pedagogy, Blended Learning, etc.), management training, academic management, leadership and supervision (including a popular Research Supervision module) and other relevant areas, which emerged after the all-staff consultation process, including health and safety, dignity and respect, course leader training, team building at administrative and support level.

The Institute's School of Lifelong Learning and Education provides development opportunities to staff, by providing modules from their portfolio of programmes, including the Masters in Education in Teaching and Learning ([link](#)), for continuous professional development, with modules offered in Adult Learning, Research Supervisory Skills, Blended Learning, Academic Enquiry, Educational Theory, Practical Pedagogy, Mentoring, Curriculum and Assessment, Reflective Practice in Education, Research Methods in Education, Perspectives on Further and Higher Education and Independent Learning.

Finally, the Centre For Technology-Enhanced Learning ([link](#)) run training workshops and a community of practice to support the development and utilization of the WIT eLearning infrastructure.

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 Learning and Teaching Committee of the WIT [Academic Council](#) is the policy formation and oversight committee tasked with the development of teaching learning and assessment policy. The Committee developed a Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategy ([link](#)) and has regulations regarding the delivery, assessment and progression of students embedded in its Quality Manual (RTP and RRD sections). The Committee are preparing to revisit the WIT Teaching & Learning Strategy in work plan; the learning, teaching and assessment strategy will support the Institute's strategic plan and will inform the continued development of the learner experience and learner environment. In the reporting period, the Committee also produced a paper on Assessment & Its Management, which was approved by Academic Council, as well as a Practical Guide to writing Learning Outcomes and a draft Green Paper on Computer-Based Exams.

Procedures in respect of teaching and learning strategy for each programme are established as part of the programme validation (RPA section) and through the periodic School Review process. For example, the School of Lifelong Learning and Education completed its Review process in the reporting year. This was a lengthy and comprehensive review of all School activities and School strategy and has resulted in an updated programme and module portfolio, an aligned vision for the strategic direction of the School and a clear implementation plan for quality enhancement that includes some new structures (School Board and School Research Programme Board) and greater alignment with the WIT Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

Quality assurance of teaching is provided via the School Review (most recent review reports are [publicly](#) available) and also through the external examiner process. The WIT [Policy](#) on External Examining can be found in the Academic Council Information Area on Moodle and also in the WIT Quality Manual: RTP section, which is available publicly on the WIT [webpages](#), on the WIT Intranet on Q:\Public\Registrar\Quality, as well as in the [Academic Council Information Area/Quality Manual](#) and also in the [Quality Promotion Information Area](#) on Moodle.

Quality assurance is also provided using student feedback through representation on programme boards, local course-specific feedback, the national Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and this year, via the standard surveying of QA3.

The Institute has a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, which is published on the Institute [website](#) and is intended to enhance learning at WIT by establishing a common framework, aligned with the overall Institute strategy, for decision making across the Institute on the future development of learning, teaching and assessment.

Quality Assurance promotion occurs through workshops in the staff Professional Development week and through material available on [Moodle](#), to help staff engage with the following:

Programme development or alteration, the WIT Module Catalogue, Learning Outcomes, Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, QQI Documents and Policies, Award Standards, Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQN), European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), The Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The School of Lifelong Learning and Education, through the activities of the Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning (CTEL ([link](#))) has developed a support infrastructure for flexible modes of programme delivery including e and blended learning. The support structures put in place include designated academic instructional design support, professional development support for academic course teams in blended learning (two NFQ 10 ECTS L9 modules now available to staff), bespoke e-learning pods (3) installed to offer a suitable teaching and learning space and equipment for on-line delivery and the introduction of an Institute wide Community of Practice to support peer to peer engagement with TEL, shared knowledge of TEL pedagogies and to build expertise in TEL across WIT.

The WIT Educational Services Unit ([link](#)) supports video conferencing and web conferencing and also provides services to staff for installation, maintenance and booking of educational equipment.

Finally, the Institute has had a dedicated Continuous Professional Development week in February each year, since 2004, during which staff are offered training on a wide range of topics, including lecture delivery, QA processes, interview techniques, health and safety, child protection policy, etc.

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.

The student environment is composed of academic and welfare support activities, which, while separate, are strongly related. There are a number of functional units dealing with these areas. Broadly, they all come under the remit of the Office of the Registrar.

Academic support activities include:

1. Library resource ([link](#));
2. Computer services ([link](#));
3. Virtual learning (Moodle) [support](#);
4. Computing and Maths Learning Centre [support](#);
5. WIT Research Support [Unit](#);
6. Access support ([link](#));
7. Retention Office ([link](#));
8. International Office ([link](#));

In addition to Academic support there are a range of other services targeted at broad student welfare. These are generally coordinated by the Student Life & Learning ([link](#)); as are many of the above academic resources. The general support activities include:

1. Student Assistance Fund (SAF, [link](#));
2. The Waterford Adult Educational Guidance Service (REGSA, [link](#));
3. Student Counselling service ([link](#));
4. The Careers Centre ([link](#));
5. Disability Service ([link](#));
6. Induction support ([link](#));
7. Peer to peer support ([link](#)).

These activities are underpinned by a policy and procedures based approach to activities. Policies include:

1. WIT Quality Manual, particularly the RTP and RRD sections
2. REACH Programme (access) Policy ([link](#));
3. Access, transfer and retention policies set out in the RTP section of the WIT Quality Manual ([link](#));
4. Code of Practice for the Disability Office ([link](#));
5. Policy on recording of oral and/or visual presentation in WIT ([link](#));
6. Student Assistance Fund Policy and Procedure ([link](#));
7. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL, [link](#));

8. Additional points policy ([link](#));

Procedures and/or operating protocols include:

1. Induction processes ([link](#));
2. Student Handbook ([link](#));
3. Student Counselling ([link](#));
4. Retention, deregistration and programme transfer procedures ([link](#));

Student Finance is managed by the Office of the Vice President of Corporate Affairs and Finance.

Policies in respect of student finance and FAQs are available at [link](#).

The IT network and procedures receive ongoing investment and attention to improve the student experience, including an online student request facility to simplify student request for official documentation.

The WIT Library has also brought in changes to enhance the student experience:

- enhanced Wi-Fi access throughout library buildings
- offered an additional 40 hours library access during the exam periods
- provision of an additional 60 reader spaces
- provision of a student breakfast club and pet therapy for students during exam periods in conjunction with WITSU

Extra resources and support have also been put in place to support staff in terms of professional development and enhancing their research. For example, the School of Science staff are supported through the School to upskill to PhD and there is now a Grant Preparation Support Scheme to facilitate researchers to apply for research funding.

Finally, in 2017, the Waterford Institute of Technology started preparations to mark 25 years of doctoral graduates, a milestone which will arrive in the 2018-19 academic year. WIT was one of the first of Ireland's regional technical colleges to award PhDs, starting in 1993.

8. Information Management (ESG 1.7)

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

The primary policy and procedure documents governing information management include:

1. Data protection policy ([link](#));
2. Social Media Policy ([link](#));
3. E-mail policy ([link](#));
4. OneDrive AUP – acceptable usage policy ([link](#));
5. Computer and Network Security Policy ([link](#));
6. Staff File-Folder Access Form ([Intranet link](#));
7. WIT Computer Access Form ([Intranet link](#));
8. Email Proxy Access Form ([Intranet link](#));
9. Email Proxy Account Setup Form ([Intranet link](#));

WIT has a dedicated student record system (Banner), which records each student's progress from registration onto the completion of the programme of study. This system provides key data, such as establishing a profile of the student population and monitoring student progression, success and drop-out rates. This in turn has been used to inform decision-making and improvements to programmes. For example, the statistics on access, progression and awards were presented and analysed, by each school for their School Review. WIT's MIS team produce dedicated report writing and data analysis facilities under a request system.

As well as data policies, regulations exist to guide the collecting, analysing and using of relevant information. The quality assurance procedures for programme boards, who collect and use data in reports to the Academic Council are defined in Sections A (RTP) and B (RPA) of the WIT Quality Manual 2017-18, which is available publicly on the WIT [webpages](#), on the WIT Intranet on Q:\Public\Registrar\Quality, as well as in the [Academic Council Information Area/Quality Manual](#) and also the [Quality Promotion Information Area](#) on Moodle. Programme board responsibilities include collecting, analysing and using relevant information that range from reflecting on the outputs of teaching and learning strategies, examination performance, award distribution, and taking or recommending appropriate remedial action when required.

Student satisfaction surveys are a growing part of the information strategy. While currently sought through student representation on programme boards and local course-specific feedback, the Institute is strategically developing the use of the national Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE), and the initial roll-out of an electronic version of the nationally agreed QA3. The evaluation of the ISSE data is available through the Office of the Head of Quality Promotion and offered to each school for school-wide use.

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.

Internal review and monitoring is a central part of the overall WIT quality strategy and framework (see diagram in the Institution-Led QA Section). All activities are subject to review and enhancement in line with good governance principles. Monitoring is based upon:

1. Internal review of activities (i.e. programme management structures sections RRD and RTP of the Quality Manual) which may also include user feedback (i.e. students or employers)
2. External review of the activities, which are led from the Institute regulations (i.e. external examining in RRD and RTP sections of Quality Manual, [link](#)), the commissioned review of an activity (i.e. the enhancement review of international office admissions or the operation of the research scholarships) or from the production and evaluation of a self-evaluation report such as school and programmatic reviews ([link](#))

The quality of programmes is monitored on an ongoing basis. Programme Boards, which include student members, report annually to WIT Academic Council. External Examiners validate the quality of assessment activity and work with staff on the ongoing development of programmes. Annual reporting is primarily managed and administered by the School Offices. These regulations are set out in the appropriate sections of the WIT Quality Manual.

The WIT External Examiner Policy ([link](#)) is presented in the Academic Council [Policies](#) on Moodle and also in Chapter 8 (Examination Boards and External Examining) in Section A (RTP) of the WIT Quality Manual: *Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes 2017-18*, which is available publicly on the WIT [webpages](#), on the WIT Intranet on Q:\Public\Registrar\Quality, as well as in the [Academic Council Information Area/Quality Manual](#) and also in the [Quality Promotion Information Area](#) on Moodle.

Programme boards are key to internal monitoring at a programme level. The overall role and makeup of programme boards is laid out in section 3.2 of Section B (RPA) of the WIT Quality Manual ([webpage](#)). Every postgraduate is considered a programme in his/her own right, and progress is monitored annually by progression boards ([link](#)).

Students' expectations, needs and satisfaction with their programmes, the learning environment and support services, and their fitness for purpose, is sought through student representation on programme boards, local course-specific feedback, the national Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and, this year, via the standard surveying of QA3 (programmes). The evaluation of the ISSE data is available through the Office of the Head of Quality Promotion and offered to each school for schoolwide use.

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.

The Institute's Quality Manual has sections that deal with the engagement of stakeholders across a number of institutional activities. These include:

1. The design of programmes of study ([link](#));
2. The external validation of programmes of study ([link](#));
3. The evaluation of research proposals and activity (RSU, [link](#));
4. As part of strategic planning and development ([link](#));
5. As part of the School Review process ([link](#));
6. As part of industrial and work placement ([link](#));
7. Through industry partnerships and MOUs in teaching (e.g. Teagasc, renewed in the reporting period); and in research.

The Institute strategy emphasises our closeness to industry and the engagement of partnerships in teaching, learning and research.

Professional Body Recognition: Several WIT Programmes have Professional Body Accreditation. The [WIT Quality Manual](#) Section A *Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes* (RTP); spells out the required approach for dealing with Professional Bodies, for example, for individual modules that can be used to claim exemptions from professional examinations, or the status of professional accreditation of a given programme and, indeed the duties of Programme Boards to maintain the accreditation of the programme.

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).

WIT does not have dedicated, institution-wide, quality assurance procedures for engagement with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies and other quality assurance and awarding bodies. Notwithstanding this, each school area maintains professional accreditation in line with the discipline norms. It is the strategy of the Institute to support wide professional accreditation. The Institute does draw a distinction between types of external bodies:

1. Professional accreditation: a body that accredits the programme directly, such as CORU (Social Care), Engineers Ireland (Engineering), Bord Altranais agus Cnáimhseachais na hÉireann (Nursing), Psychological Society of Ireland, or the Catholic Hospital Chaplaincy Board (Religious Studies);
2. Professional standards: a body that recommends standards, but accredits graduates based on modules or content covered (Teaching Council).

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

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

The Institute has a published policy on the range and extent of public information that it makes available. As part of this policy, it routinely provides, to the public, an extensive range of quality assurance and other documents including:

1. All of its quality policies and procedures
2. Outputs of quality processes including:
 - a. Programme validations
 - b. School Review reports
3. Operational and financial policies, including data protection and freedom of information policies
4. Statutory information such as annual reports and strategic plans
5. Advice and guides to students, including handbooks
6. Programme information including award levels, progression opportunities and indicative programme content
7. Minutes of Governing Body meetings
8. Information on complaints procedures
9. Contact information

Freedom of Information: In general, members of the public are entitled to obtain official information from WIT, provided it does not conflict with the public interest and the right of privacy of individuals. The Act, how it relates to WIT and the process of applying are all presented [here](#).

Data Protection aims to protect individuals' right to privacy with regard to the processing of their personal data by those who control such data. The Data Protection Acts of 1988 and 2003 lay down rules about the safeguarding of the privacy of personal data, in both manual and electronic format, covering such areas as the obtaining, processing, keeping, use, disclosure, accuracy, appropriateness, retention and an individual's right to access and correct their personal data.

The WIT Data Protection Policy document, which outlines our Data Protection responsibilities, the personal data we collect and information on how to make a request for access to personal records is all available [here](#).

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

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

Section C (RCP) of the WIT Quality manual, Collaborative Provision 2017-2018, collates and describes all the academic regulations of the Institute relating to collaborative programmes, including transnational programmes and joint awards, both undergraduate and postgraduate. This is available publicly on the WIT [webpages](#), on the WIT Intranet on Q:\Public\Registrar\Quality, as well as in the [Academic Council Information Area/Quality Manual](#) and also the [Quality Promotion Information Area](#) on Moodle. WIT has entered into collaborative provision, joint and double degrees, following the QQI policy entitled *Policy and Criteria for the Delegation of Authority to the Institutes of Technology to make Higher Education and Training Awards (including Joint Awards)*.

Current agreements in place are listed on the WIT website and include:

1. [The BA \(H\) in International Business and the BA \(H\) in International Management](#), which are double degree programmes with the Munich University of Applied Sciences;
2. The [Master of Science in International Business/Master of Business in Internationalisation Collaborative Programme](#), which is a joint degree programme with the École Supérieure de Commerce, Bretagne, Brest;
3. The [Higher Diploma in Arts in Television Production](#), which is co-delivered by WIT with Nemeton TV;
4. [Certificate in Radio Broadcasting and Presenting WLR FM and Beat 102-103](#), WIT Level 6 Special Purpose Award;
5. Double BSc degree with the Nanjing University of Information Science & Technology (NUIST) ([link](#));
6. MA in Social Justice and Public Policy, a collaborative provision with Social Justice Ireland (Collaborative provision, [link](#));
7. Higher Certificate in Arts in Custodial Care (with the Irish Prison Service) ([link](#));
8. Teagasc and WIT collaboration agreement to establish and deliver educational programmes, including the BSc in Agriculture, BSc in Horticulture etc. plus minor awards in Horticulture ([link](#));

14. DA Procedures for use of QQI Award Standards (IoT's 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 procedures for maintaining Delegated Authority in line with QQI awards standards are incorporated in the Quality Manual Sections B (RPA, Undergraduate), D (RRD, Postgraduate) and C (RCP, collaborative provision). WIT does not yet have approved procedures for full delegation at Level 9.

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.

Section C (RCP) of the WIT Quality manual, Collaborative Provision 2017-18, collates and describes all the academic regulations of the Institute relating to collaborative programmes, including transnational programmes and joint awards, both undergraduate and postgraduate. This is available publicly on the WIT [webpages](#), on the WIT Intranet on Q:\Public\Registrar\Quality, as well as in the [Academic Council Information Area/Quality Manual](#) and also the [Quality Promotion Information Area](#) on Moodle. WIT has entered into collaborative provision, joint and double degrees, following the QQI policy titled *Policy and Criteria for the Delegation of Authority to the Institutes of Technology to make Higher Education and Training Awards (including Joint Awards)*.

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

[Empty box for additional notes]

17. Internal Review Schedule

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

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Year | 2017/18 |
| Areas/Units | Structured Doctorate Applications from the Schools of Business, Engineering, Science and Health Sciences |
| Number | |
| Link(s) to Publications | https://www.wit.ie/about_wit/for_staff/quality_assurance#tab=panel-3 |

| | |
|--|---|
| Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures | AIQR-Part-1-Template.docx AIQR-Part-1-WIT.docx |
| Articulation Agreements | |
| Section: 1 Articulation Agreements | 4 |
| Name of the Body | Chengdu University of Information Technology (CUIT) |
| Name of the Programme and Links to Publications | BSc (Hons) in Software Systems Development |
| 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 | Shanghai Institute of Tourism (SIT) |
| Name of the Programme and Links to Publications | HDip in International Hotel Management |
| Date of last review of arrangement/agreement | 01-12-2012 |
| Review year for agreements | 2017 |
| Section: Articulation Agreements | Third Set of Records |
| Name of the Body | Shanxi Agricultural University (SXAU) |
| Name of the Programme and Links to Publications | BSc (Hons) in Software Systems Development |
| Date of last review of arrangement/agreement | 01-08-2013 |

| | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Review year for agreements | 2018 |
| 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 | 26-02-2019 |

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.

National strategy is to create Technological Universities (TUs) and Waterford Institute of Technology will pursue this goal together with the Institute of Technology Carlow. This will have an impact on the evolution of quality assurance and enhancement systems in both institutes and indeed has had some impact already in the reporting period. The WIT Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021 includes the TU goal, along with a number of other goals which help define how QA and QC will grow in the next few years.

The Strategic Plan clearly presents WIT's ambitions in educational and operational realms. Each Action has been drawn up following extensive consultation with stakeholders and in light of the national drive for Higher Education Institution mergers and in the face of severe financial challenges over several years at this point. All of this influences and shapes decision-making and the manner in which modernising and enhancement occur.

WIT has a strategic focus in its quality development activities, based on 5 strategic themes (ST), originally described in the 2015-16 AIQR, but with ST-TU being extended in the 2016-17 AIQR, at the request of students and staff to be more explicit about the student experience:

1. To increase the type and variety of **awards** and to enhance the process by which awards can be created as a means of being more flexible and responsive (ST-A);
2. To meet the QA performance criteria, across teaching & learning, research and the student experience, of the proposed Technological University (ST-TU);
3. To enhance **learning** opportunities across access and life-long learners (ST-L) and **international student** (ST-IS) markets,
4. To enhance **industry focus** by offering greater pathways for continuous professional development and up-skilling in industrial and commercial settings (ST-IF);
5. To improve the **effectiveness** and responsiveness of administration and quality assurance governance (ST-E).

This strategic focus to quality assurance and enhancement systems supports the Institution's strategic objectives. The Strategic Plan sets out targets, which are supported by the quality development activities' 5 strategic themes (ST). The WIT Strategic Plan envisages that WIT will be known:

- I. For our provision of high quality educational experiences to students that are student centred and responsive to learner needs (ST-A, ST-IS);
- II. As an accessible new university that offers a wide range of learning opportunities, access and progression routes and flexible modes of engagement with learning that reflect learner needs and societal change (ST-TU, ST-IS);
- III. As a research-led organisation with a demonstrably impactful, innovative, and dynamic research community (ST-TU);
- IV. For being deeply embedded in regional discourse, policy-making, economic, social and cultural activity and as a driver of regional change (ST-L, ST-IF);
- V. For our international profile that finds expression in the approach of our students and staff and in our extensive partnerships (ST-IS);
- VI. As an effectively governed and managed organisation that is strategically focussed and demonstrates quality in all its activities (ST-E, ST-A).

In order to instil confidence in the developments, policies, quality review reports and School Implementation Plans and regulations are all published publicly. All quality reviews involve panels that comprise a wide representation that include peers from outside the Institute to provide objectivity and to allow comparisons against external quality standards.

WIT aligns strategy and Quality Assurance through the Executive Structure, School Review process and programme design and development (via the Academic Council). Specific roles are defined for the Office of the President, Office of the Registrar and the various committees of Academic Council. The responsibilities are generally defined within the quality assurance framework document ([link](#)) and in the WIT Quality Manual ([link](#)), Academic Council *Terms of Reference, Code of Practice, Composition and Regulations* (constitution, [link](#)) and the Governing Body Code of Conduct for Governing Body Members ([link](#)).

In 2017-18, WIT analysed and improved its systems in relation to education management, governance and quality in accordance with evolving national and international developments. In the reporting period the following specific improvements supported the implementation of WIT's Quality Framework and Strategic objectives, as follows:

- Governance and management structures

- The drafting of the Technological University application document with the Institute of Technology Carlow has been at the forefront of the strategic objectives for the academic year (ST-TU);
- The Institute continues to benchmark and report on its performance against the Technological University expected criteria, for example in the Self-Evaluation Strategic Dialogue Cycle 4 report, produced for the HEA (ST-TU).
- The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar continues to lead a project on Academic Governance at WIT, to increase institutional academic governance. This has since become a national project with THEA's support. (ST-E, ST-TU);
- To enhance the Governing Body's role in WIT academic governance, the Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR) is to be approved by the Governing Body, prior to submission to QQI (ST-E, ST-TU);
- Student engagement and feedback
 - enhancing access to WIT by moving completely online with registration. This had been piloted in the previous academic year with 1,500 new students availing of the online facility. In this academic year student registration went fully online and over 2,000 students were registered in this way;
 - student feedback in all of its possible forms is being strengthened via individual student voices (QA3 and ISSE surveys) and student representation (programme boards, School Conveners and elected Student Union Sabbatical officers) (ST-E, ST-L);
 - the national NSTEP programme continues to prepare student representatives to contribute effectively in the decision-making process of the Institute (ST-E, ST-L);
 - enhanced learning experience and opportunities continue to be reinforced through better student engagement online; facilitated access for students to obtain evidence of registration at the Institute; the generation of detailed retention reports and the continued roll out of P2P programmes (ST-L);
- External review of academic processes
 - the Academic Council's Quality Committee is to oversee the process for meeting the conditions within the committed timeframes (ST-A, ST-E);
 - three Schools (Business, Science and Health Sciences) applied successfully to offer Structured Doctorate programmes (ST-A, ST-TU);
 - A significant activity once again in this reporting period was the preparation for the periodic Quality Assurance, Quality Enhancement and Strategic Development of the final School (the School of Humanities) in our cycle of School Reviews. The School Review process was designed to review key (and evolving) organisational objectives such as the use of minor awards, external engagement and the strategic management of the academic portfolio (ST-TU, ST-A, ST-L, ST-IF);

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

- Developing the Institute's research and international agenda by approving a set of Research Regulations that incorporates the new Structured Doctorate, research Masters and the professional doctorate DBA degrees (ST-TU, ST-A, ST-IS);
- Enhancing the integrated approach to offering students as much flexibility in their choice by introducing more Common Entry programmes. WIT now offers at least one programme in each of our five academic schools (Business, Engineering, Health Science, Exercise Science, Humanities, Computing and Science) giving students an unprecedented level of choice across our portfolio (ST-A, ST-L);
- Review of processes for admitting International students, to ensure Quality Assurance and the correct recognition of qualification equivalency (ST-E, ST-IS);
- Clarifying access to the Institute by publishing a policy on the Currency of Learning (ST-A, ST-E);

1.3 The schedule of QA governance meetings.***Eighth Academic Council Meetings for Academic Year 2017/18 ([link](#) and [minutes](#))***

| <i>Agenda Setting</i> | <i>Academic Council</i> | <i>Academic Quality</i> | <i>Research</i> | <i>Academic Planning</i> | <i>Teaching & Learning</i> |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | 03/10/17 (JM) | | | | |
| 07/11/17 | 14/11/17 | 17/10/17 | 07/11/17 | 24/10/17 | 24/10/17 |
| 28/11/17 | 05/12/17 | 21/11/17 | 21/11/17 | 28/11/17 | 28/11/17 |
| 23/01/18 | 30/01/18 | 09/01/18 | 23/01/18 | 16/01/18 | 16/01/18 |
| 27/02/18 | 06/03/18 | 06/02/18 | 27/02/18 | 13/02/18 | 13/02/18 |
| 10/04/18 | 17/04/18 | 13/03/18 | 10/04/18 | 20/03/18 | 20/03/18 |
| 08/05/18 | 15/05/18 | 24/04/18 | 08/05/18 | 01/05/18 | 01/05/18 |
| 05/06/18 | 12/06/18 | 22/05/18 | 05/06/18 | 29/05/18 | 29/05/18 |

Standing Committee of Academic Council19th June 201820th August 20183rd September 201819th September 2018***Research Ethics Committee***2nd October, 20176th November, 20177th December, 201722nd January, 201829th January, 201815th March, 201830th April, 201831st May, 201811th June, 2018***Postgraduate Enrolment Group***22nd September, 201713th October, 201724th November, 201719th January, 201823rd February, 201823rd March, 20184th May, 20181st June, 2018

Section 2: Reviews in the reporting period

2.1 Internal reviews that were completed in the reporting period.

The final School Review (School of Humanities) was prepared in this period for a panel visit in 2018/19. Four Schools have completed all stages of their Reviews at this stage:

1. Business 13th June 2017
2. Health Sciences 7th March 2017
3. Science 16th May 2017
4. Education 20th August 2018

Other reports include:

- i. 27 new programme validations and 8 major programme changes were conducted through external peer review.
- ii. 61 minor changes (modules and programmes) submitted to the Academic Quality Committee of the Academic Council;
- iii. Review of the WIT Structured PhD Framework: Application for Participation by the Schools of Business, Engineering, Health Science, Lifelong Learning & Education and Science.

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

One review was also carried out on the Application for Participation in the WIT Structured PhD Framework by the Schools of Business, Engineering, Health Science, Lifelong Learning & Education and Science. The outcome of the review was that three Schools were approved and two deferred. One of the latter subsequently gained approval, while the final deferred School will reapply.

There were 4 panellists for the main part of the review, 1 from a university in England, 1 from an Irish University (UL), 1 Head of School from an Institute of Technology. The chair was a Vice-President of Academic Affairs (Registrar) from an Irish University.

| | |
|---|----|
| Number of new Programme Validations/Programme Approvals completed in the reporting year | 25 |
| Number of Programme Reviews completed in the reporting year | 35 |
| 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 | 0 |

| | |
|--|---|
| Number of Reviews of Arrangements with partner organisations completed in the reporting year | 0 |
|--|---|

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

| Composition of Panels | % |
|-----------------------|----|
| Internal | 20 |
| National | 78 |
| UK | 2 |
| EU | |
| Student | 12 |
| Other | |

| Chair Profile | % |
|-----------------------|----|
| Internal | 0 |
| Similar Institution | 51 |
| Different Institution | 49 |
| International | |

Section 3: Other Implementation Factors

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

Data is regarded as key evidence of good practice and therefore extensively used in quality assurance and the management of the student learning experience, in key processes, including annual and periodic monitoring, School reviews, programme reviews and programme annual reporting. The data considered related to student recruitment (CAO points, programme preferences, demographics and geographical origin) and student performance (progression, retention and award), student feedback and external examiner reports.

Formal and informal student feedback in relation to both programme and Institute-wide experience is a key component of data that informs WIT Quality Assurance. Opportunities for student feedback range from informal discussions with staff to more formal feedback through participation on programme boards, the Class Representative Council and surveys such as ISSE and the standard QA3 programme survey. All programme boards have student representatives from each year of the programme. Also, the Institute works closely with the Students' Union through NSTEP, in the development and training of student representatives (which should lead to greater engagement in future years' Class Representative Councils) and is also a participant in the national NSTEP Project designed to enhance student feedback across all Irish Higher Education Institutes.

Standard reports produced by the Institute and discussed at faculty level include:

1. Module mark ranges and award distribution for each programme for examination boards;
2. Programme board reports;
3. External examiner reviews;
4. Research centre annual reports.

A number of standard reports are also provided to Academic Council annually and these include:

1. External examiner statistics;
2. Reports on appeals and viewing of scripts;
3. School Committee reporting, informed by the School Programme Boards, has been enabled in post-School Review Schools, and will be presented to Council in the next Academic Year.

Regular management reports linked to QA also include:

1. Analysis of retention;
2. Analysis of CAO intakes and demand patterns;
3. Unit cost and performance data at programme levels;
4. Internal audit reports (specifically on the QA framework).

An integrated approach continues to be taken to promote key initiatives to enhance engagement with applicants, both to inform and also to support the applicant in choosing the right course. The initiatives included introducing more Common Entry programmes, to allow students choose specialisations later in the programme, Open Days and Campus Tours, in addition to Ask WIT Events to help students and give support to parents. The Ask WIT Events consisted of live online Q&As, drop-in centres, and phone support. The Institute also ran Online Live Q&A sessions, where WIT academics and admissions staff were on hand to answer questions live with a library of all Q&As tracked and made available to browse post these events. The Institute's Marketing Office also launched the [How to research your CAO options](#) booklet with worksheets to help all CAO applicants figure out their interests and choose the right courses. The success of the rollout of the booklet lead to a subsequent booklet being released to support the parent/guardian [The Parent's Guide – College Choices](#).

It is also policy that any initiatives undertaken by the Institute undergo evaluation, for instance research scholarships, peer-to-peer and other retention initiatives. These reviews aid the evaluation of the initiative and are generally a precursor to continued funding.

WIT uses the Banextra software to manage its student database, the Student Record System (SRS), and in terms of Quality Assurance, to track access, progression, retention, pass rates, etc.

Another national initiative, the First Destinations Survey, which surveys graduates 9 months after leaving college, is also used to inform internal decision-making in programme curriculum, continuous professional development minor awards, etc. The data is also used nationally by the Higher Education Authority for its annual composite report on the destinations of graduates. Locally it is used to improve employability, by identifying employment trends, and also both employers and positions that our graduates find fulfilling.

Research metrics are gathered and reported on by the WIT Research Support Unit that supports the quality enhancement of activities such as research funding, publications, research masters and PhD performance.

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

There are a number of different factors that have impacted on quality and quality assurance in the past year.

The decision to apply for Technological University status has provided opportunities and challenges, some of which have also led to Industrial Relation issues.

The comprehensive quality assurance and development framework for the technological sector (THEQF), which had previously been extended to include all IoTs and not just those who are seeking Technological University designation, was used as the basis for a joint scoping study between WIT and IT Carlow in the reporting year.

Since the previous reporting period highlighted the ongoing lack of investment in HE, very little has changed for the better. Such challenging financial constraint has heavily influenced the Institute in terms of both strategy and operation.

3.3 A description of other implementation issues.

In the previous reporting period WIT included a section on a project on academic governance begun in 2016, which included a best practice review from our legal experts on the practices of academic governance generally. This work has been further strengthened in the reporting year by introducing training for the incoming WIT Academic Council and the WIT Governing Body (in September 2017).

The WIT School of Business became the first School to be approved to offer embedded awards, which is an award that is generic to the overall School, based on the numbers of credits and learning achieved as the learner progresses (i.e. recognise a level 6 award after 120 credits of appropriately mapped learning) regardless of whether or not the learner exits.

WIT had experience of a complex joint programme with the Irish Prison Service (IPS), matching the demands of the IPS and the programme's validation requirements.

Also, in this reporting period, three WIT Schools successfully defended before an external panel, how the School proposes to operate the new WIT structured doctorate. This involved codifying for each applicant School:

- their discipline areas of strength;

- a well-articulated School research strategy;
- how the School can sustain a doctorate programme in terms of the research environment, training opportunities, as well as suitable Level 9 project path modules and the presence of a community of practice;
- evidence of research productivity, research collaborations, existing research supervisory capacity and submit a list of dissertations approved for higher degrees;
- a Research Programme Board to co-ordinate activities, including monitoring access and progression, examiner appointments and reporting to the School Board.
- New Postgraduate Regulations to include the Structured Doctorate were also drawn up and approved by Academic Council for implementation starting September 1st 2018

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.

WIT has established Quality Assurance policies and procedures, based on national and international best practice, including the Core Statutory Guidelines for Quality Assurance. In 2017-18 the effectiveness of QA policies and procedures at WIT was assessed in a number of ways, including:

- annual evaluation and revision of the WIT Regulations (Quality Manual);
- the performance of and feedback from peer review panels;
- engagement with the WIT students and Students Union;
- School and Central Office reports to Academic Council (including progression rates, pass/fail rates, etc.);
- Academic Council Committees reporting to Council;
- Professional Bodies reviewing WIT programmes;
- the evaluation of School responses to their Peer Review Group reports, through their Post School Review Implementation Plans.

WIT evaluates its quality assurance and enhancement policies continuously, in order to ensure that they are fit for purpose, primarily through the Academic Council and its committees. The Academic Council also reviews and revises the WIT Regulations (Quality Manual) on an annual basis and publishes the updated Regulations [here](#).

The effectiveness of quality assurance processes and their impact are evaluated through periodic reviews. The scope of such quality reviews is comprehensive and covers topics such as strategy, student perspective, research activity, learner engagement, stakeholders' perspectives and management of QA. Peer review panels are carefully selected nationally and internationally, with academic and industry expertise, and are a good source of guidance and support for both the programme teams and also the Quality Assurance team, who are coordinating the review, in terms of the effectiveness of the process.

The effectiveness of the Right Student Right programme initiative can be seen in the 3% increase in Registrations in the Summer of 2018 (up from 1,988 to 2,042), in spite of a 3% fall (down from 5429 to 5245) in the CAO first preference figures.

In 2017-18, a fourth School presented its formal response and planned actions to its Peer Review Group report, to the WIT Academic Council's Quality Committee.

The Office of the Registrar encourages strong communication with the WIT Students Union as a means to enhance student engagement with quality-related activity. This includes regular meetings with Student Sabbatical Officers. The student representatives participate in open dialogue and offer feedback from students, which in turn helps improve participation in quality-related activity.

In the reporting period 2,100 students successfully graduated with Major Awards, and a further 305 students graduated with Minor and Special Purpose Awards. Moreover, 26 students graduated with Level 9/10 awards (7 Research Masters, 17 PhD, 2 DBA), awards, while there were 34 new postgraduate student registrations.

Finally, the effectiveness of the Institute's QA is also visible in the realisation of the agreed goals in the Compact with the HEA, published in May 2017.

2. Impact

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

There has been a number of quality-led strategic initiatives in the reporting period, the implementation of which will have both immediate and also long-term benefit. Post School Review Implementation Plans have embraced the advice for the Peer Review Groups, set up School Boards and generated positive initiatives in admissions, recruitment and retention, student feedback, awards range, research QA, blended learning and lifelong learning and access. For instance:

1. post School Review Implementation Plans and the new School Boards have led to an increased consideration of non-major awards. This improves the opportunity for external engagement, including meeting industry's continuous professional development needs (ST-A, ST-IF);
2. more targeted approaches across the Institute to address the quality of the education experience, with a view also to enhance retention (ST-A, ST-E);
3. the promotion of peer-to-peer mentoring now via a dedicated 10-credit Special Purpose Award for students who complete a P2P cycle and wish to achieve formal recognition of their learning (ST-L, ST-TU);
4. student feedback at a programme level has been offered on all programmes across WIT, through the nationally recognised QA3 form (ST-L, ST-E);
5. student feedback at an Institute-level was also offered through the ISSE survey. This has the potential of more meaningful data to the WIT Schools (ST-L, ST-E);
6. WIT has been selected by the National Working Group of the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) to establish guidelines on Student Feedback Opportunities, Data and Follow Up, which has also started to feed back into the WIT approach to student engagement (ST-L, ST-E);

The activities completed by the committees of Council during the reporting year (2017-18) were as follows:

| Activity | No. of approvals | No. Referred, not approved or withdrawn |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| New programmes granted permission | 31 | 4 |
| New programmes/variations | 6 | 1 |
| Minor changes proposed | 30 | 31 |
| External Examiners Subject Areas | 85 | 5 |
| External Examiners Research | 66 | 8 |
| Ethical Approvals | 27 | 11 |
| Postgraduate Registrations | 34 | 0 |
| Collaborative programme validations | 0 | 0 |

3. Themes

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

There were a number of themes that arose during the reporting period. A key annual theme was the review and update of the academic regulations for WIT. Other themes relate to improving the flexibility of the experience offered to WIT students, modernising the curriculum and the academic structures, and the expansion of Technology Enhanced Learning.

i. School Boards continue to develop in strength, which was part of the post School Review strategy, so that quality assurance is adequately delegated and understood by the Schools' various boards, committees and individuals, to facilitate the implementation of a consistent quality assurance environment across the School. For example the School of Lifelong Learning and Education has continued to evolve its quality framework and explore new opportunities to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, the programme portfolio, research and engagement with external stakeholders during the Academic Year 2017/2018 and into the Academic Year 2018/2019.

ii. Reporting on longer term deadlines to meet School Review conditions: Some conditions and recommendations from School Reviews can take time to phase in and hence Schools are expected to report on progress to Academic Council on an annual basis.

iii. Online/Flexible Learning and Minor/Special Purpose Awards: Schools continue to be encouraged to make greater use of e-learning in their catalogues, to facilitate flexible learning (for example to encourage Springboard-funded, Continuous Professional/Personal Development students) and to increase the diversity of their offering through the creation of Minor and Special Purpose Awards. For example, an enhancement in the delivery of the Higher Diploma in Science in Computer Science was introduced to broaden access and aid student retention. WIT has now delivered 7 cycles of the ICT Skills Conversion Course; the Higher Diploma in Computer Science. The first 5 cycles of the course were very successfully delivered in an intensive classroom/laboratory mode. During 2017/2018 the course was re-orientated to facilitate access for those in employment. The course team re-designed the mode of delivery to a blended mode where both synchronous and asynchronous modes of engagement using technology are used to deliver the programme. This shift to a more flexible mode of delivery has resulted in a significant increase in student numbers and a higher rate of retention on the programme.

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.

WIT continued to focus on the Strategic theme work-packages for 2017-18.

1. To increase the type and variety of awards and to enhance the process by which awards can be created as a means of being more flexible and responsive (ST-A);
2. To meet the QA performance criteria, across teaching & learning, research and the student experience, of the proposed Technological University (ST-TU);
3. To enhance **learning** opportunities across access and life-long learners (ST-L) and **international student** (ST-IS) markets,
4. To enhance industry focus by offering greater pathways for continuous professional development and upskilling in industrial and commercial settings (ST-IF).
5. To improve the **effectiveness** and responsiveness of administration and quality assurance governance (ST-E)

The Quality Assurance, Quality Enhancement and Strategic Development cycle of School Reviews picked up on the operation of School Boards across WIT, as a challenge to be addressed. Academic Council has picked up on this and asked each School to report back via their School Board using a new, standardised template.

External examining is moving from a programme-based model to a model with School-level examiners and Subject Area (modular level) examiners. The transition to the new model is challenging, with the nomination of School-level examiners presenting difficulty.

Enhanced learning experience and opportunities

Waterford Institute of Technology's Academic Administration & Student Affairs (AA&SA) team introduced a number of key processes to enhance the opportunity for applicants to access the portfolio of full-time courses. The process included the introduction of an online facility for application to direct entry programmes, and the enhancing of a number of established policies to cover those applicants who had been overlooked.

Additionally the AA&SA team worked with Management Information Services team, to develop an online solution to facilitate ease of access for students to obtain evidence of registration at the Institute. The facility to request proof of registration online was implemented in April 2018.

Subsequent to a review instigated as a result of the significant increase in students who require separate exam centre provision the AA&SA team also worked collaboratively with the Disability Office and Academic Schools to develop and implement a new Shared Exam Centre facility. The facility has been extended to incorporate both Year 1 and Year 2 students and has led to an improved exam environment for the student, in addition to significantly reducing the demands on both School and Scribe/Reader resources.

The WIT Literacy Development Centre (LDC) launched a podcast series called 'Conversations in Adult and Further Education'. This podcast series explores theory, practice and policy in an understandable and accessible way. The podcast covers topics that are useful for tutors working in the Further Education and Training sector, studying on programmes in the LDC. Initial feedback from students indicate that this is a very approachable introduction to theories and concepts that they are studying. The podcast has been part of an overall move to enhancement of programme delivery using technology enhanced learning and more flexible modes of delivery of teaching & learning using online platforms.

The Literacy Development Centre (LDC) through its national partnership with the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) continues to engage with the Education & Training Boards (ETBs) across the country to support Access and open pathways for its staff to continue their educational journeys in a supportive, student centred environment. During 2017/2018 and continuing in AY 2018/2019 programmes in the Literacy Development Centre are now offered to the wider Further Education & Training (FET) sector (reflecting a shift in national policy and the National Professional Development Strategy for Further Education and Training 2016-2019, SOLAS, 2016). Undergraduate part-time programmes are now offered to tutors working across adult literacy, Youthreach, community education, language provision, back to education initiatives and apprenticeships. Through engagement with Adult Education Officers, Adult Literacy Organisers and CPD Co-ordinators in the ETBs the Centre continues to identify & respond to professional development needs across the FET sector.

Repeat Learner Category

WIT introduced a new category of Repeat Learner, to replace the old categories of 'exam only' and 'repeat attend', as these categories no longer reflected the realities of the Institute. The Institute introduced the Repeat Learner category to facilitate the provision of adequate, quality, engaged support to a learner for any module that they must repeat. The Repeat Learner category ensures that the student is a fully registered learner at the Institute with full access to the academic resources of the Institute including, Library and Moodle. The student also has the right to engage with lecturers as appropriate and additionally the right, but not the obligation, unless specified on the Approved Course Schedule, to attend lectures if practical to do so. This is proving to be popular within the Institute for this new category of learner.

Furthermore, the previous report highlighted the role WIT has played in developing the system-wide quality assurance framework for the technological sector serving as the project sponsor and leading significant work on the project. In this reporting period, this broad quality assurance and development framework for the technological sector (now known as the THEQF) was launched at the Envisioning the Technological Higher Education Sector event in April 2017.

WIT took on a role in the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) in collaboration with the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) to improve our engagement capacity and to develop student capabilities, through a student training programme and by providing high quality opportunities for learners to engage. This initiative has continued into this reporting period, with WIT being selected by the National Working Group to lead a national project for 18 months to establish guidelines on Student Feedback

Opportunities, Data and Follow Up, which will also feed back into the future WIT approach to student feedback. This project will continue on through 2017/18.

Right-student right-programme initiative

WIT recognises the important of information to prospective applicants to the Institute, particularly in their need to make informed decisions about programmes and programme choices. In that regard, the Institute initiated and continues to develop an academic recruitment strategy, designed to better engage students and create a better fit between the student and the career choices they select. More informed decision-making should, in the long run, improve student satisfaction, increase retention and better empower achievement by individual learners. This strategy is the *right-student right-programme* initiative, a set of interrelated activities that is designed to support learners selecting the right programme (for them) by ensuring that they can:

1. Access the right information (including the use of specialist guides, social media and on-line Q&A facilities);
2. Know the right questions to ask (research options guide and parent guides, all downloadable from the website);
3. Have open access to WIT to explore their thinking and to clarify choices;
4. Have a range of options for entry that allows flexibility and places the learner in control of their degree choices. This includes the proposed introduction of a second semester transfer opportunity that permits students to transfer to a nominated programme, subject to certain conditions;
5. Have a common entry option in each academic area that permits students to make degree choices at the end of their first year of study or later;
6. Have a range of level 6, 7 and 8 options to enable them to select the most appropriate entry route for them. All level 6 or 7 students will have the option of achieving a level 8 award through progression opportunities;
7. Have the opportunity to get awards for the learning they have achieved as they progress through their studies (embedded awards).

This strategy is underpinned by a strong, focused communication and engagement process, and by a unified institutional curriculum design strategy.

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.

There were a number of quality enhancement activities, initiated by the institution in the reporting period and these include:

1. completing the ongoing work regarding School Reviews, including closing off another review (School of Lifelong Learning & Education) in the reporting period (ST-E);
2. continuing to improve the Module Catalogue by making it searchable (ST-L, ST-E);
3. embedding a structured doctorate award (ST-TU, ST-A);
4. implementing the new external examining system (ST-L);
5. student feedback implemented Institute-wide at QA3 and enhanced responses on ISSE (ST-L);
6. continuing the Academic Governance initiative now a national THEA project (ST-E);
7. continue to be open in publishing evaluations of performance at module, programme, School and Institution levels (SL-E).

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 2018 – 31 August 2019).

5.1 Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Plans

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

WIT will primarily work on the Technological University application with IT Carlow. The TU project will be the principle activity, including the development of a merge change programme. However, in parallel WIT will also continue to focus on some Strategic theme work-packages for 2018:

1. To increase the type and variety of awards and to enhance the process by which awards can be created as a means of being more flexible and responsive (ST-A);
2. To meet the QA performance criteria, across teaching & learning, research and the student experience, of the proposed Technological University (ST-TU);
3. To enhance **learning** opportunities across access and life-long learners (ST-L) and **international student** (ST-IS) markets;
4. To enhance industry focus by offering greater pathways for continuous professional development and upskilling in industrial and commercial settings (ST-IF);
5. To improve the **effectiveness** and responsiveness of administration and quality assurance governance (ST-E).

In tandem with the phased roll-out of the new approach to external examining, WIT will examine systemic approaches to QA in this area, including better monitoring of the process flow, uniform approach to the exam paper layout and improved monitoring of external examiner reporting

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 final School Review (Humanities) will take place in 2018/19. This is the largest and most complex School in the Institute. As a consequence, the Review period will be extended from the standard three days to four days.

WIT School of Humanities has also been invited to apply to participate in the WIT Structured Doctorate programme, by showing research capacity in terms of supervisory capacity, expertise (based on peer indicators, including papers published, PhDs graduated, funds raised, etc.).

WIT student service areas will undergo review in the coming period. These will include initiatives to enhance supports to both students and applicants in the following areas:

1. De-registration request process;
2. Access to evidence of Proof of Registration letters (Digitary);
3. Access to exam result letters (Digitary);
4. Access to repeat exam requirements (Online);
5. Application and approval process to undertake Taught Postgraduate Independent Modules.

5.3 Other Plans

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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.

While the Institute is committed to a path of improvement and meeting the expectations of an Institutional Review, it also recognises that an application to merge with IT Carlow and to submit a joint Technological University proposal would impact the proposed Institutional Review. The two institutes are committed to the joint development of the Technological University of South East Ireland (TUSEI), which would mean that WIT would cease to exist.

Nonetheless, in this section there is a brief synopsis of work that will continue to be carried out, where these improvements had been suggested in the previous WIT Institutional Review. The improvements are typically too multi-faceted to spell out in detail, so examples only are offered here:

1. Public confidence in the quality of WIT Education & Standards of Awards: This has been addressed in several ways, including the redevelopment of the Institute's website to enhance the communication of relevant information to defined audiences and through a commitment to openness and transparency, captured in the policy on the Provision and use of public information related to academic processes;
2. Strategic Planning & Governance: As recorded earlier in this report, the Institute, through its Governing Body and Committees, and in light of national strategy for Higher Education, is actively engaged in a process of structured consultation with internal and external stakeholders. The Institute continues to engage with the HEA and other national bodies regarding evolving national strategy;
3. Policy & Procedures for Quality Assurance: School Boards have been established in all Schools with devolved responsibility for monitoring implementation of quality policy. School Boards should report to Academic Council on issues arising and actions taken arising from the annual QA monitoring processes in the previous academic year and on progress regarding enhancements recommended in the periodic School Reviews;
4. Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes and Awards: Academic Council has published guidelines for Schools that set out the documentation that must be sent to external examiners as well as best-practice guidelines for the consideration of continuous assessment, examination scripts, and other aspects of the external examiner process;
5. Criteria, Regulations and Procedures for Assessment: The School Quality Review Committees in the School Reviews are tasked with considering assessment strategy within each School. Evaluation of the impact of these actions arising from the School Review process indicates that additional work is required;

6. Quality Assurance of Teaching Staff: The Institute's draft revised Staff Training & Development Strategy & Plan was completed through staff and committee consultation and published in 2012. It was extended for one more year while a new plan is being drawn up;
7. Learning Resources & Student Supports: The Student Handbook, referencing all supports available and how to access them, is provided for all incoming students. All student services information is available on the website ([link](#)), on designated notice boards, via text messaging, social media and at helpdesks. The Student Life and Learning unit also contribute to training for student class representatives;
8. Public Information: The Marketing Office has engaged with stakeholders and maintains and continues to develop an active presence on behalf of the Institute in key social media environments. Institute policy has evolved to include the publication of a wider range of quality documentation including the results of quality assurance reports;
9. National Framework of Qualifications / Access, Transfer and Progression: The national drive towards Continuous Professional Development has been underpinned in the Institute by a robust RPL policy.

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 2016-17 a new process was introduced for approving the WIT AIQR. The report was sponsored by the Academic Council's Planning Committee and then approved by both the WIT Academic Council and the WIT Governing Body.

However, an Industrial Relations dispute, arising from a grievance lodged by the TUI, has in turn resulted in the TUI withdrawing members from Academic Council. Subsequent Academic Council meetings have not been able to make the quorum necessary to meet. As a result the AIQR for 2017-18 has not followed the process envisaged in the 2016-17 AIQR, particularly in that the WIT Academic Council has had no input nor approved the document.

6.3 Themes

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

The proposed merger and joint application with IT Carlow for Technological University designation will occupy much of the developmental themes in the coming year. Nonetheless, academic governance will continue to be developed, within the Institute's Schools, Executive Board, Academic Council and Governing Body, as well as sectorally, outside of WIT.

Reflections

2017-18 has been a difficult year given the financial constraints under which the Institute has operated. These have led to problems in the operation and capital development needs of the Institute.

New challenges also must be prepared for arising from the decision to merge and apply for Technological University status. This will require preparation time, including the development of academic governance and the integration of two diverse QA systems.

Changes in flexibility and responsiveness create challenges in meeting compliance requirements.