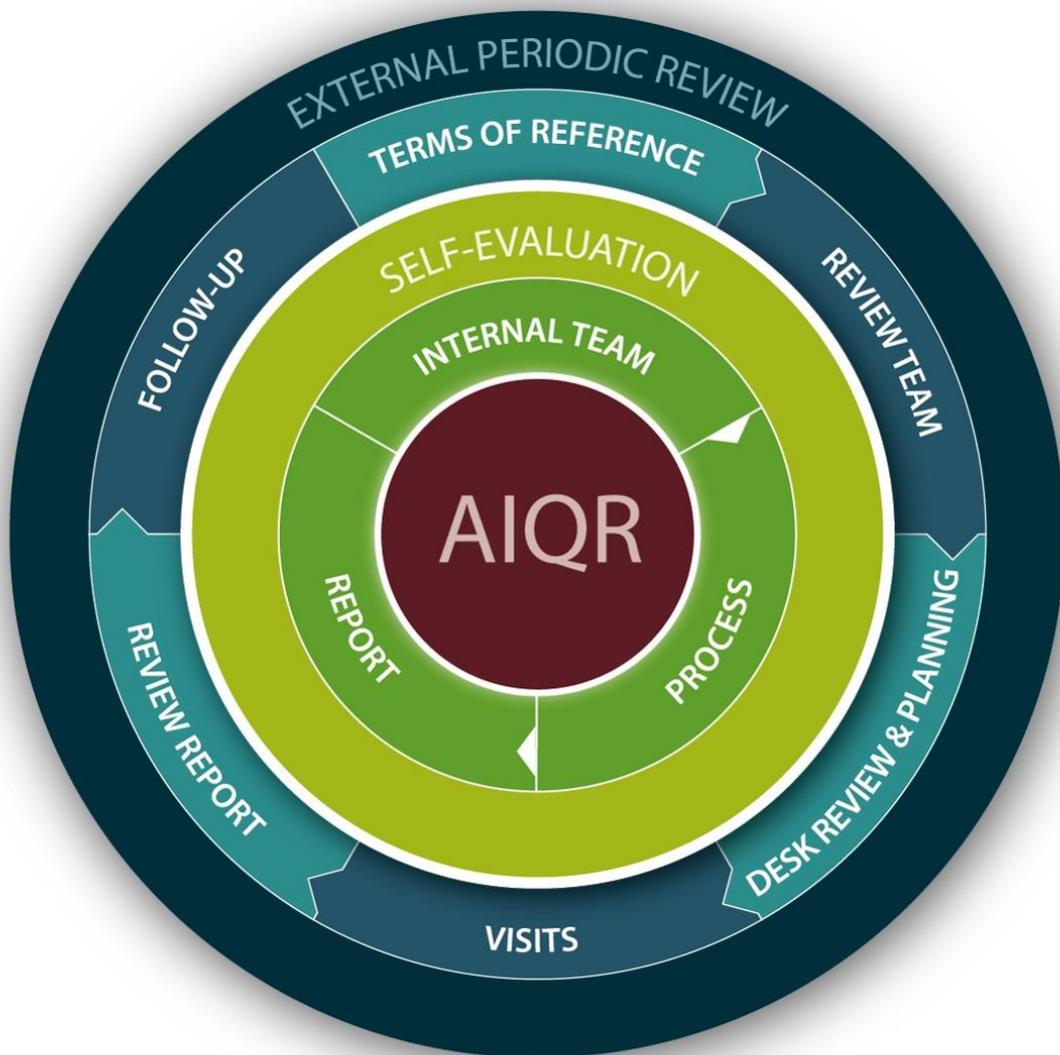


Athlone Institute of Technology

Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report 2017

Based on the reporting period 1 September 2015 – 31 August 2016



The Cyclical Review Process

Please enter 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 current Strategic Plan 2014-2018 of Athlone Institute of Technology gives particular attention to the character and quality of the Institution's provision. Quality is seen to be at the heart of AIT's mission and critical to its reputation. The policy is set out across a series of documents and is supported by matured processes; it also has the support of the staff from all areas of the institution.

The institute's academic, support, and administrative functions contribute to determining the quality of the overall learner experience. In order to assist in the achievement of its mission and vision for the future, the institute has established procedures for quality improvement and quality assurance. The Quality Assurance Manual exemplifies a verifiable expression of that contribution and the institute's academic quality assurance procedures operate at various levels. The Quality Assurance manual details systematic quality assurance procedures for a range of data collection and analysis, identifies the appropriate forum for monitoring the data, and requires both a recording of actions to be taken and a review of the effectiveness of these actions. The institute has developed rigorous procedures to ensure that the quality of courses is maintained and enhanced. These processes are continually monitored, reviewed, and updated in accordance with decisions by AIT's academic council, and in accordance with the requirements of appropriate national agencies. The manual, policies, and procedures for academic quality assurance are stored electronically on a password controlled intranet to facilitate staff access, transparency, and ongoing modifications. This quality assurance information is also made available to learners, prospective students, and the public. Quality assurance related information for learners is provided on the AIT Website.

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/>

Please enter a brief description of institution-level quality assurance decision-making fora.

The responsibilities of the institute's academic council are set out in statute. It is supported in its work by the office of the Vice President Academic & Registrar and by the Quality Office. The academic council delegates responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement to the active academic strategy & quality committee which is chaired by the ViPAR and supported by the Quality Office. The Governing Body takes a particular interest in the quality agenda and periodic reports are made to it, both in writing and through direct presentation.

The Academic Strategy and Quality (ASQ) Committee, which is appointed by Academic Council, has the responsibility for identifying appropriate strategies and developments to facilitate the institute's achievement of its academic development objectives; and advising on the policies, processes, and procedures which impact on the academic standards of education and training which is provided, organised, or procured by the institute.

This committee is a sub-committee of academic council and has responsibilities for the following:

Monitoring and reviewing the institute's access, transfer, and progression policies and considering new or alternative qualification methods for facilitating students access onto institute programmes.

Making recommendations to academic council on the identification, achievement and enhancement of standards for the institute's programmes.

Identifying the requirement for, establishing, monitoring and reviewing procedures for quality assurance for the purpose of further improving and maintaining the quality of education and training which is provided, organised or procured by the institute in accordance with Section 28 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

Actively contributing to the major quality assurance instruments such as institutional and programmatic reviews.

Evaluating at regular intervals and as directed from time to time by academic council of the institute's programmes of education and training in relation to the development, validation and review of programmes; assessment of student performance; ongoing monitoring and evaluation of programmes; evaluation by learners of that programme; and evaluation of services related to that programme.

Recommending strategies relating to all aspects of the institute's strategy for the development of lifelong learning provision across all faculties, departments, and functional sections of the institute. This includes the provision of guidance on collaboration, the establishment of new courses, major changes to existing courses, and graduate programmes.

Leading on all elements relating to learning and teaching and assessment approaches.

Do you have a Policy/Procedure for Programme Design and Approval?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Programme Design and Approval

Please see link below under the Quality Section of the AIT Website to the Procedures and Guidelines document for the Design, Development, Evaluation and Withdrawal of Taught Programmes at Athlone Institute of Technology.

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/policies-procedures>

Do you have a Policy/Procedure for Programme Delivery and Assessment?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Programme Delivery and Assessment

Please see link below under the Quality Section of the AIT website which leads to the Institute Policy on Programme Delivery and Assessment.

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/policies-procedures>

Do you have a Policy/Procedure for Research Quality?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Research Quality

Please see link below under the Quality Section of the AIT website to Procedures and Guidelines for Postgraduate Research in AIT (including all issues relating to ethics in research).

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/postgraduate-research>

Do you have a Policy/Procedure in place for Student Lifecycle?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Student Lifecycle

Please see link below under the Quality Section of the AIT website to the Policies and Procedures relating to the Student Lifecycle in AIT (and all relevant supporting documentation);

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/student-lifecycle>

Do you have a Policy/Procedure in place for Teaching Staff?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Teaching Staff

In a knowledge community, our people represent our core asset and AIT is committed to providing its staff with clear guidelines and support. A range of documentation is available to staff and the professional development policy states that the institution recognizes that staff are a vital and valued asset and encourages and enables everyone to develop their potential. Support for professional development encompasses staff at all levels and in all categories of the institute.

A range of policy documents is provided here by way of example. Included is the Institute's Professional Development Policy and the Register of Professional Development undertaken by staff in the institute for the period January 2014 to date.

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/professional-development-recruitment>

Do you have a Policy/Procedure in place for Teaching and Learning?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Teaching and Learning

In development.

Do you have a Policy/Procedure in place for Resources and Support?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Resources and Support

Staff Resource Planning: AIT operates an annual resource planning process in tandem with the preparation of the annual Operational Programme and Budgets (OPB) whereby relevant managers (i.e. Finance, HR and Academic) review existing staff levels and competencies vis a vis existing and planned new modules and programs, additional years on existing programs and all other program, quality assurance and regulatory requirements to ensure maximum utilisation of existing staff resources and timely and effective recruitment of new staff to meet organisational needs.

AIT has an organisational and management structure (see link below)

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/ait-organisational-and-management-structure>

which is approved by the Governing Body to ensure the efficient and effective operation of the Institute to the highest national and international standards.

Non-Pay Budget Allocation Process: The resource planning and OPB process also involves review of existing non-pay budget (i.e. operational, equipment and minor capital) allocations by department and requirements for forthcoming year.

Capital Projects and Facilities Management (CP&FM): AIT operates a CP&FM committee to review short and long term capital projects and on-going facility management issues. The estates office seeks capital / projects requests from all departments for existing and planned new programs and developments to ensure infrastructure and facilities are fit for purpose and meet stakeholder needs.

All staff and funding allocations are planned and co-ordinated within the OPB process to ensure the Institute operates within its annual budget.

Supports Provided to Students: The AIT Student Resource Centre provides a range of supports and resources to all registered students of AIT including the Access Office, Student Assistance Fund, Careers Office, Health Centre, Counselling, Tutor Support, Academic Writing Centre, Disability and Learning Support. We support students who may have queries, challenges or problems during their time in the Institute. We pride ourselves on being friendly and welcoming and strive to do our utmost to help students. Through our work in facilitating the student experience we engage with fellow staff members throughout the Institute and external agencies, employers and stakeholders. The procedure for engaging with the Student Resource Centre to seek learning resources or student supports varies somewhat according to service area and the nature of the help sought. Details of these procedure documents can be accessed by following the link below which is located under the Quality Section of the AIT website.

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/student-lifecycle>

Do you have a Policy/Procedure for Information Management?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Information Management

Please see link below under the Quality Section of the AIT website to the Institute Policy and Procedure Governing Information Management and Public Information

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/policies-procedures>

Do you have a Policy/Procedure for Self-evaluation and Monitoring?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Self-evaluation and Monitoring

Please see link below under the Quality Section of the AIT website to the Standards, Assessment and Awards Policy document which outlines self-evaluation and monitoring undertaken in AIT;

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/standards-assessment-awards>

Do you have a Policy/Procedure for Stakeholder Engagement?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Stakeholder Engagement

Please see link below under the Quality Section of the AIT website which leads to the Institute Policy on Stakeholder Engagement

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/policies-procedures>

Do you have a Policy/Procedure for Engagement with other Bodies?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Engagement with other Bodies

Please see link below under the Quality Section of the AIT website which leads to the Institute Policy on Stakeholder Engagement

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/policies-procedures>

Do you have a Policy/Procedure for Provision and use of Public Information?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Provision and use of Public Information

Please see link below under the Quality Section of the AIT Website to the Institute Policy and Procedure Governing Information Management and Public Information

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/policies-procedures>

Do you have a Policy/Procedure for DA procedures for use of QQI award standards?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to DA procedures for use of QQI award standards (IoT's only)	Please link below to AIT Standards, Assessment and Awards Policy document: https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/standards-assessment-awards
Do you have a Policy/Procedure for Collaborative Provision?	Yes
Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Collaborative Provision	Please see link below under the Quality Section of the AIT Website in relation to Policy/Procedure for Collaborative Provision at Athlone Institute of Technology. The title of this Policy/Procedure document is: Supplementary Quality Assurance Procedure for Collaborative Provision, to include National and Transnational Programmes; https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/policies-procedures
Do you have any additional notes?	Yes
Additional Notes	This new policy document was implemented following a condition set out by the external evaluation panel at Institutional Review 2011. "The panel recommends that Delegated Authority granted to Athlone Institute of Technology be continued as provided for in the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 subject to the following condition: Athlone Institute of Technology must agree its quality assurance procedures for collaborative provision with HETAC. The Institute should not recruit new students to collaborative programmes prior to consultation with HETAC regarding the completion of this condition". These matters were successfully concluded and AIT acknowledges the support of QQI in this.
PRSBs	10
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	First Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Veterinary Council of Ireland
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Bachelor of Science in Veterinary Nursing; https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers

Date of last review or accreditation	04-12-2012
Next review year	2017
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Second Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Nursing & Midwifery Board of Ireland
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p>Bachelor of Science (Hons) in General Nursing; Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Psychiatric Nursing;</p> <p>https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers</p> <p>http://www.nmbi/Home</p> <p>Please note that the requirements and standards for nursing have changed and as a result the nursing curriculum in Athlone Institute of Technology will require change over the next year to match these requirements and standards. This process has already commenced in the Institute and a review from the National Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) will take place in the coming year for these programmes.</p>
Date of last review or accreditation	01-09-2014
Next review year	2017
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Third Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Engineers Ireland
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p>MEng in Energy & Communications Infrastructure;</p> <p>https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers</p> <p>http://www.engineersireland.ie/Services/Accredited-Courses.aspx</p>
Date of last review or accreditation	01-09-2014
Next review year	2017
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Fourth Set of Records

Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Association of Chartered and Certified Accountants Ireland (ACCA)
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Bachelor of Business Ab-initio (Honours) Level 8; https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers
Date of last review or accreditation	01-09-2012
Next review year	2016
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Fifth Set of Records

Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Tusla
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Bachelor of Arts in Applied Social Studies in Social Care; https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers
Date of last review or accreditation	01-09-2015
Next review year	2020

Collaborative programmes	8
Section: Collaborative Provision	First Set of Records

Type of arrangement:	Collaborative programmes
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Cavan Institute, Cathedral Road, Cavan. http://www.cavaninstitute.ie/

Programme Titles and Links to Publications	The two programmes of study where collaboration takes place are as follows: Higher Certificate in Business Level 6; Higher Certificate in Applied Social Studies in Social Care Level 6; The attached link on the AIT website provides details of this collaboration: https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers
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Date of last review	30-05-2013
Next review year	2018
Section: Collaborative Provision	Second Set of Records

Type of arrangement:	Collaborative programmes
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Gurteen College, Ballingarry, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary http://www.gurteencollege.ie/
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	The two programmes of study where collaboration takes place are as follows: Higher Certificate in Business in Equine Studies Level 6; Bachelor of Business in Equine Studies Level 7; The attached link on the AIT website provides details of this collaboration: https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers
Date of last review	25-05-2011
Next review year	2016
Section: Collaborative Provision	Third Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Collaborative programmes
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Zambia Centre for Accountancy Studies, P.O. Box 35243, Lusaka, Zambia; http://www.zcas.ac.zm/
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	The programme of study where collaboration takes place is as follows: Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Applied Accounting Level 8; The attached link on the AIT website provides details of this collaboration: https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers
Date of last review	18-09-2013
Next review year	2018
Section: Collaborative Provision	Fourth Set of Records
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Equal Ireland, Education Research and Related Services Co. Ltd., Building 8, 6d, Lisobaun Business Park, Tuam Road, Galway; http://equalireland.ie/

Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p>The programmes of study where collaboration takes place is as follows:</p> <p>Higher Certificate in Business Enterprise and Community Development Level 6; Bachelor of Arts in Business and Community Development Level 7; Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Social Enterprise, Leadership and Management Level 8;</p> <p>The attached link on the AIT website provides details of this collaboration:</p> <p>https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers</p>
Date of last review	30-04-2013
Next review year	2018
Articulation Agreements	134
Section: 1 Articulation Agreements	First Set of Records
Name of the Body	Dongbei University of Finance and Economics (DUFE), Dalian, China
Name of the Programme and Links to Publications	<p>Name of Programme: Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting Level 8;</p> <p>For further details please see the following link:</p> <p>https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers</p> <p><u>Dongbei University of Finance and Economics (DUFE), Dalian, China</u></p> <p>AIT recognises the Accounting curriculum of DUFE. More than 60 students have studied on the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting at AIT.</p> <p>Graduates of the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting at AIT have the option of studying for the remaining examinations of the Professional Accounting bodies or studying on the Master of Accounting at AIT.</p> <p>AIT receives 3-10 students from DUFE to the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting each year.</p> <p>Awarding Body: Students receive AIT award when they transfer to AIT:</p> <p>Title of Award: Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting Level 8.</p>
Date of last review of arrangement/agreement	12-11-2015
Next Review Year	2020
Section: Articulation Agreements	Second Set of Records
Name of the Body	East China University of Technology (ECUT)

Name of the Programme and Links to Publications

Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) in Software Engineering Level 8;
Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) in Mechanical Engineering Level 8;

For further details please see the following link:

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers>

East China University of Technology (ECUT), Nanchang, China

A Memorandum of Understanding between AIT and ECUT for Software Engineering was first signed in May 2008. Students complete the first three years of study at ECUT and transfer to the final year of Bachelor of Engineering in Software Engineering at AIT. Athlone Institute of technology recognizes the curriculum taught at ECUT.

ECUT received recognition of programme by the Ministry of Education in China for a joint Bachelor degree between AIT and ECUT for Software Engineering. Following the success of this programme a joint programme in Mechanical Engineering was launched in 2013 with an intake of 100 students. AIT recognizes the curriculum in Mechanical Engineering at ECUT allowing the students to transfer to the final year of Bachelor of Engineering in Mechanical Engineering (Honours) degree at AIT. The first group of 16 students will transfer to AIT in September 2016.

AIT receives 10-15 students per year for transfer to the Bachelor of Engineering in Software Engineering (Honours) degree at AIT.

Awarding Body: Students receive AIT award when they transfer to AIT.

Title of Award: Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Software Engineering (Level 8).

Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Software Engineering (Level 8):

Date of last review: 15 December 2014

Annual review meeting takes place at AIT or ECUT

Agreement expiry date is 03 December 2022.

Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Mechanical Engineering (Level 8)

Date of last review: 03 December 2013

Annual review meeting takes place at AIT or ECUT

Agreement expiry date is 03 December 2021.

Date of last review of arrangement/agreement

15-12-2014

Review year for agreements

2022

Section: Articulation Agreements

Third Set of Records

Name of the Body

Jiangnan University, Wuhan, China

Name of the Programme and Links to Publications

Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Design in Digital Media (Level 8);

For further details please see the following link:

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers>

Jiangnan University, Wuhan, China

Athlone Institute of Technology and Jiangnan University received approval from the Ministry of Education in China to commence a joint undergraduate programme for Visual Design Communication with an intake of one hundred students in September 2015. Students complete the first three years of Design programme in Jiangnan University and have the option to transfer to the final year of the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Design in Digital Media (Level 8) programme at AIT.

Awarding Body: Students receive AIT award when they transfer to AIT.

Title of Award: Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Design in Digital Media (Level 8)

Date of last review: January 2015

Annual review meeting to take place at AIT and Jiangnan University.

Date of last review of arrangement/agreement

31-01-2015

Review year for agreements

2023

Section: Internal Review Schedule

First Set of Records

Areas/Units

AIT Internal Audit Review

Number

1

Link(s) to Publication(s)

By following the link below you will be provided with details in relation to the AIT Internal Audit Reviews.

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/athlone-institute-of-technology-internal-audit-plan>

Section: Internal Review Schedule

Second Set of Records

Areas/Units

AIT's Academic Strategy and Quality Committee met monthly during the academic year 2015/2016 (dates of these meetings are outlined in Part 2). All new programme proposals were discussed at these meetings and following approval at this forum were passed to external panel for review. During the academic year 2015/2015 there were 12 new proposals brought to this committee for discussion and approval (see AIQR Part 2 for a listing of these proposals).

Number

12

Link(s) to Publication(s)

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/external-validation-panel-reports>

Submission

Final Submission

**PART 2 - Section 1:
Institution-led QA - Annual**

Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Developments

A piece in relation to the evolution of quality assurance and enhancement systems to support strategic objectives in the reporting period.

Athlone Institute of Technology has adopted an inclusive and reflective approach to quality assurance. There is an enhancement focus and the goal of initiatives in this area is to improve the student experience. This focus is informed by the attention that quality receives within the institution's current strategic plan <http://www.ait.ie/media/athloneit/publications/AIT-e-strategic-plan-2014-2018.pdf>. The introduction leads to the proposal that AIT is on a path with mission distinctiveness and quality enhancement as the lodestar. Over the recent years more members of our community, both students and staff, have become engaged with the quality discussion. This results from a conscious endeavour to embed enhancement and to have this supported by a strong quality office with informed and permanent support. The strategic objectives of the institution are delineated under seven pillars within the strategic plan and quality is the prerequisite for all. In addition, the implications of the recent legislative change and especially the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 has demanded greater responsibility from individual institutions as they assume increasing autonomy. Athlone Institute of Technology has responded with an increased emphasis on enhancement and on empowering its community to contribute to the fullest over the full lifecycle of the life of a learner. Our Learning & Teaching Unit has worked diligently to equip staff to foster a distinctive approach in respect of learning, teaching, and assessment, and further enhance opportunities for learner engagement and individual development. In addition, the institution has developed and promoted a distinctive set of AIT graduate attributes, thereby helping shape the professional growth of our learners and the holistic development of the individual.

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

There were no specific changes to QA within the institution during the reporting period, due to the fact that programmatic review had just taken place in the previous reporting period (2014-2015).

No further updates for this section.

The schedule of QA governance meetings for the period should be inserted here.

Schedule of AIT Governance Meetings for the Academic Year 2015/2016

Academic Strategy and Quality Committee Meetings (ASQ)

Academic Year 2015/2016

Schedule of Meetings

Meeting Number 1:	23 rd September 2015
Meeting Number 2:	22 nd October 2015
Meeting Number 3:	27 th November 2015
Meeting Number 4:	20 th January 2016
Meeting Number 5:	24 th February 2016
Meeting Number 6:	22 nd April 2016
Meeting Number 7:	26 th April 2016
Meeting Number 8:	05 th May 2016
Meeting Number 9:	11 th May 2016
Meeting Number 10:	09 th June 2016

Academic Council Meetings

Academic Year 2015/2016

Schedule of Meetings

Meeting Number 1:	18 th September 2015
Meeting Number 2:	06 th November 2016
Meeting Number 3:	29 th January 2016
Meeting Number 4:	11 th March 2016
Meeting Number 5:	20 th May 2016
Meeting Number 6:	16 th June 2016

Governing Body Meetings

Academic Year 2015/2016

Schedule of Meetings

Meeting Number 1:	13 th May 2015
Meeting Number 2:	17 th June 2015
Meeting Number 3:	16 th September 2015
Meeting Number 4:	20 th October 2015
Meeting Number 5:	9 th December 2015
Meeting Number 6:	3 rd February 2016
Meeting Number 7:	16 th March 2016
Meeting Number 8:	4 th May 2016
Meeting Number 9:	22 nd June 2016

Minutes of the above meetings are available upon request

**PART 2 - Section 2:
Institution-led QA - Annual**

Reviews in the Reporting Period

**Area/Unit and links to
relevant publications**

Faculty of Science and Health

External Panel Reports for the following new programmes validated during the academic year 2015/2016:

BSc (Hons) in Microbiology

BSc (Hons) in Physical Activity and Health

Higher Cert in Hearing Aid Audiology (blended learning)

BSc (Hons) in Early Years Care and Education

BA (Hons) in Animation and Illustration

Link: <https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/external-validation-panel-reports>

**Links to published internal
reviews**

Second Set of Records

**Area/Unit and links to
relevant publications**

Faculty of Engineering and Informatics

External Panel Reports for the following new programmes validated during the academic year 2015/2016:

BSc (Hons) in Quantity Surveying

Higher Diploma in Science in Software Development (Cloud Application Development) Level 8

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/external-validation-panel-reports>

**Links to published internal
reviews**

Third Set of Records

**Area/Unit and links to
relevant publications**

Faculty of Business & Hospitality

External Panel Reports for the following new programmes validated during the academic year 2015/2016:

Bachelor of Business in Office Management and Administration Level 7

Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Culinary Entrepreneurship Level 8 (one-year add-on)

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/external-validation-panel-reports>

**Links to published internal
reviews**

Fourth Set of Records

Area/Unit and links to relevant publications	<p>Department of Lifelong Learning</p> <p>External Panel Reports for the following new programmes validated during the academic year 2015/2016:</p> <p>Certificate in Business Entrepreneurship and Certificate in Operations, Quality and Lean Management (Special Purpose Awards)</p> <p>Certificate in Management and Leadership Development Level 6 (Special Purpose Award)</p> <p>Certificate in Supported Self-Directed Living (Special Purpose Award)</p>
Links to published internal reviews	<p>Fifth Set of Records</p>
Area/Unit and links to relevant publications	<p>AIT Audit Review</p> <p>https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/athlone-institute-of-technology-internal-audit-plan</p>
Number of internal approval/evaluations and reviews completed in respect of Validation/Programme Approval	<p>12</p>
Number of internal approval/evaluations and reviews completed in respect of Research Accreditation/Validation.	<p>1</p>
Number of internal approval/evaluations and reviews completed in respect of Programme Review.	<p>12</p>
Number of internal approval/evaluations and reviews completed in respect of School/Department/Faculty Review.	<p>12</p>
Number of internal approval/evaluations and reviews completed in respect of Service Unit Review.	<p>0</p>
Number of internal approval/evaluations and reviews completed in respect of Review of arrangements with a partner organisation.	<p>0</p>
Composition of Panels: % Internal	<p>19</p>

Composition of Panels: % National	93
Composition of Panels: % UK	7
Composition of Panels: % EU	0
Composition of Panels: % Student	0
Chair Profile: % Similar institution	92
Chair Profile: % International	8

PART 2 - Section 3: Update on Institutional QA Overview Other Implementation Factors

This institution can use this section to set out the ways in which data is used to support quality assurance and the management of the student learning experience.

During the academic year 2015-2016 the main source of information with regard to the student learning experience was obtained by means of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) which was carried out over a three week period during February/March 2016. This survey was designed to ask students directly about their full experience of higher education. The number of questions asked in the survey was reduced considerably from the previous year in order to encourage participation rates. The cohort of students who participated in the survey were from first year, final year, and postgraduate taught masters programmes. A total of 55% of students from AIT participated in the survey which was excellent and the feedback obtained was analysed in detail and shared among all relevant parties throughout the institute by means of presentations to both staff and student body representatives. The most significant issue identified by the students during the previous years of the survey was the lack of timely written and oral feedback received from the lecturers. For an institution with a strong record in learning and teaching, this elicited a strong response. It has since been addressed at faculty level and considerable improvement has taken place and this has been documented by the students who participated in the survey in 2016. For first years the numbers who stated that they never received feedback has fallen from 19% in 2014 to 10% in 2016 which is remarkable. The data obtained from ISSE is used at faculty meetings and programme boards and areas for improvement are highlighted and continually being acted upon throughout the institute. Please see link below under the Quality Section of the AIT website which outlines detail in relation to the Irish Survey of Student Engagement for the reporting period. This also includes an analysis of the survey results for the 2015-2016 period which was presented to the Institute's academic council and shared also with other committees and student bodies.

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/irish-survey-of-student-engagement-isse>

The institution may choose to highlight in this section information relating to factors that have impacted on quality and quality assurance in the reporting period. These may be factors relating to national developments or initiatives, such as clusters/alliances/mergers, other external factors or intra-institutional factors.

The reporting period witnessed considerable strategic development in higher education. Athlone Institute of Technology is one of the four partners of what is termed the MEND cluster (Midland, East, and North Dublin). The Higher Education Authority undertook to assess the regional clusters in respect of their initial activity against the Authority's stated goals and reported accordingly to the institution presidents on same in November 2015. With respect to the MEND cluster, or what has been termed the Dublin II (i) cluster, comprising Athlone Institute of Technology, Dublin City University, Dundalk Institute of Technology, and Maynooth University, the report noted that considerable progress was made during 2014. The report proceeded to find that the cluster has both achieved the minimum outcomes and has moved beyond that to deliver more ambitious outcomes. In subsequent dialogue, the cluster partners had proposed to the Authority that the strands that had informed the initial phase of activity – namely those concerning access, transfer, and progression, the building of a FET HET network, the mapping portal for FET provision and progression within the region, the agreement on SRS protocols to facilitate collaborative programme development and potential for enhanced transfer within the region, and the demographic study and mapping of existing provision – constituted a significant basis for increasing collaboration and that modest additional funding should be considered to allow the partners to exploit further the secure basis that had already been realized. In the formal response dated 05 November 2015, the HEA identified a sum of €287,000 that was made available to support a specific project to be developed by the MEND cluster in respect of student pathways and academic planning. This project had four specific elements:

1. Maintenance and development of the FE/HE network.
2. Maintenance and extension nationally, if feasible, of the portal.
3. Continuance of the academic planning process and its role as exemplar for the sector.
4. The mapping of SMEs regionally and institution of a systematic engagement with enterprise.

The MEND partners were subsequently invited by the HEA to submit a project plan setting out the proposed approach to the project which was enabled by the investment mentioned above. That plan has been submitted and is being worked upon currently. It can be mentioned in the report for the year 2015. On a separate front, Athlone Institute of Technology has taken a lead role in the creation and operation of the Midland Regional Skills Forum. Of the nine national fora, the Midlands was the first to appoint a regional manager who is supported by an inclusive board comprising academia, agencies, and enterprise and one chaired by the Vice President Academic and Registrar. The inclusive educational engagement in this forum has strengthened the ties between the college and Further Education providers and notably the local ETBs. Athlone Institute of Technology has a number of initiatives in conjunction with FET that are focused on enhancing the coherence of provision and in providing clear pathways for learners. These can be further developed but the initial fruits are encouraging and this work is strongly supported through the FET-HE portal that was developed by the MEND cluster.

Any other implementation issues of interest can be noted here.

Athlone Institute of Technology welcomes this opportunity to update the Authority on its work over the period in question and compliments the format of this input to the annual dialogue. For the necessary information of the Authority, the institute has repeatedly indicated its ambition to achieve technological university status. The vision for the institute as recorded in the current strategic plan is that AIT will be a technological university distinguished by outstanding learner experience, international focus, distinctive regional contribution and high quality impact of its staff, teaching, applied research and innovation. In pursuit of this ambition, AIT has worked toward satisfying the criteria as set out in the governing legislation. The outstanding criterion, discovery of a partner with which to merge, has proved the most difficult for the institution. Various discussions – some in considerable depth and facilitated by external involvement – ultimately proved unsuccessful. It has proved difficult to discover a permanent alignment that is consistent with policy, one that does not dilute the metrics currently applying to AIT, and one that serves the very distinct ambitions of the Midlands region which requires specific supports to counter the strength of the capital. The programme for government offers some possibility in this regard and this matter is currently being explored with the DoES and the HEA. The outcome of such discussion again can be reported upon in a future submission to this Authority

PART 3

Effectiveness and Impact

A commentary about the effectiveness of QA policies and procedures in the reporting period may be inserted here.

The commentary from the three separate programmatic review panels in 2015 supports the proposal that the QA policies of the institute are effective. So too, the discussion attaching to changes to the institution's Standards, Assessment, & Awards document was heartening in that many people engaged and the original proposals benefited as a result. The quality conversations are now better informed and more engaging for all.

An evaluation of the impact of QA policies and procedures through their implementation in the reporting period should be inserted here.

The policies and procedures are consistent with good practice and the institution has worked diligently since the last institutional review to encourage greater consistency of implementation across the faculties and departments. The preparation for programmatic review in 2015 was managed in a manner that had the three faculties working closely together and that proved beneficial. Being self-critical, there is still some distance to go in this regard, but professional development approaches along with governance structures are fostering a greater consistency within the institution. The return from the Irish Survey of Student Engagement demonstrates improvement in the area of feedback which was the major focus of criticism from the previous survey. This led to considerable discussion and it is encouraging to see that the student opinion is effecting real change.

This section should highlight an analysis of the key themes arising within the implementation of QA policies and procedures, primarily through a thematic analysis of key recommendations, commendations and conditions for the reporting period.

That all faculties went through programmatic review during the previous reporting period has afforded valuable opportunity to focus on the common themes that emerged. Retention was noticeable as a theme through the three reports. In certain programmes the failure/non-progression rate was a concern. This led to interesting discussion on the optimal prerequisites for entry to certain programmes. It has also led to the establishment of a dedicated working group that is currently looking at minimum maths requirements for certain STEM programmes.

There was praise for the creative manner in which the institution has revised its approach to student induction. This has received a positive return from the students themselves on feedback. Where the institute has more to do is on pre-registration information for intending students and this matter is being discussed. It is also linked to the work currently underway on revitalising the website which has itself been a source of concern for some time. This work is in progress at the present time.

The work of the Learning & Teaching Unit has influenced a progressive approach to assessment within the institute. This is an ongoing discussion and there is evidence from some external examiners a concern that some learning outcomes are being over assessed. This matter has occasioned reflection on a number of occasions within the principal appropriate forum, the Academic Strategy & Quality Committee.

On a related point, the PR panels who visited AIT in 2015 advised standardized assessment approaches where feasible. Amongst the other themes that emerged and which on-going work is taking place on are the following:

1. Build programmes for flexible delivery based on targeted market need.
2. Review of programme portfolio.
3. Internationalisation
4. Placement
5. Continuous Professional Development.

PART 4

Quality Enhancement

A description of improvements or enhancements, impacting on quality or quality assurance, that took place in the reporting period, identifying the reasons for the improvements (for example an evaluation of effectiveness and impact from the previous period or objectives set out in strategic compacts).

Mention has been made previously of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement popularly known as the ISSE. AIT has consistently demonstrated its commitment to the importance of this initiative through the levels of engagement recorded. This reflects a commendable commitment from various bodies within the institute including the Students' Union and most especially from the student body itself which clearly values this opportunity to register an opinion. Mention has also been made of the desire from students, as evidenced from the return from previous iterations of the survey, to have more frequent and better quality feedback on their work from the lecturing staff. This was the catalyst for considerable internal discussion that ultimately led to a change in practice during the academic year under review. This has been reflected in a significantly higher satisfaction rate with respect to feedback during the most recent ISSE return.

An analysis of quality enhancement activities that were initiated by the institution. This could also include reference to any national or international quality assurance developments in which the institution is engaged. The institution is encouraged to highlight areas that may be of interest to other institutions and would benefit from wider dissemination.

During the reporting period 2015-2016 there were many improvements made in the institute which impacted on Quality Assurance. Some examples are outlined below:

1. All institute policy documents updated.
2. Presentations to all relevant committees following analysis of the ISSE survey and identification of ways to enhance the student experience as a result.
3. Review of the Standards, Assessment and Awards document.
4. External Examiners reports summarised and distributed to the faculties for actions.
5. Enhancements to Research within the institute, which can be accessed at the following link under the Quality Section of the AIT website.
<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/quality-enhancements>
6. There were a number of excellent initiatives undertaken by the Learning and Teaching Unit within the institute. Details of these can be viewed by accessing the following link
<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/learning-teaching-unit-key-activities-2014-2015>

PART 5

Objectives for the Coming Year

A piece in relation to strategic objectives in the coming period and plans for quality assurance and enhancement.

The institute's current strategic plan states:

Quality enhancement has been identified as the guiding principle in this plan. The institute will re-calibrate its resources to deliver this goal and to ensure that the existing strong infrastructure and culture is further strengthened in the interests of this and future generations of learners.

In support of this goal, the plan proceeds to make the following commitment:

In respect of the central focus on quality enhancement and the provision of an evidence base upon which performance might be monitored, the institute is determined to put in place the structures that can collect, analyse and publish data that will afford opportunity to benchmark the organisation both nationally and internationally. Concerning the above statements, the institute retains the ambition to put in place a revised quality office that will support its stated ambition to pursue technological university status. It has also recently further strengthened its Management Information System office to assist in delivering upon the determination better to collect, analyse, and utilize data to inform decision making.

Review Plans: Area/Unit and Number

All Collaboration/Articulation Agreements which are due for renewal will be reviewed with the partners and new Agreements signed.

All policies which are due for updating will be reviewed by working groups and brought before the Academic Strategy and Quality Committee for approval.

Further analysis of the ISSE data will be undertaken and the results discussed at all internal institute meetings to enable actions to be taken.

Any further information with respect to plans for the coming period.

In addition, the institute has been reflecting upon the burden that Programmatic Review places on the resources of what is a relatively small organization with dedicated but limited support capacity. Our sense is that there is merit in moving from the current major quinquennial review to a septennial pattern but with interim thematic reviews that might be calibrated to look more holistically at a given operation or element across the whole institute.