

Athlone Institute of Technology

Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report 2018

Based on the reporting period 1 September 2016 – 31 August 2017



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.

Athlone Institute of Technology is a Higher Education Institute which was established in 1970 as Athlone Regional Technical College. It became a self-governing entity in 1993 and underwent a name change by Statutory Order to Athlone Institute of Technology in 1998. The Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) granted the institute delegated authority in 2004 to develop, design and validate its own courses, to conduct examinations, and to confer its own academic awards up to and including Level 9 and a number of Level 10 disciplines.

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/>

2. Quality assurance decision-making fora

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.

Please see link below under the Quality Section of the AIT website to the Institute Committee Structure:

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

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.

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>

In keeping with QQI requirements a rigorous and consistent process to the design and review of programmes has been developed and agreed by the relevant stakeholders. This process must be adhered to when developing new programmes within the institute. A detailed process flow chart was devised by the Quality Office which assists programme design teams by outlining the steps involved and can be accessed at the following link on the website:

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/summary-of-new-programme-proposal>

In addition, the Quality Office in consultation with the Learning and Teaching Unit devised a [Programme Development Support Document and Checklist and Sign-off by the Faculty Heads](#).

This document is a tool to support the programme development process. It aims to give the programme development team (PDT) a guide to the key areas for consideration and inclusion in advance of submitting a programme proposal to the Academic Standards and Quality (ASQ) committee. In addition, it includes a checklist and sign off sheet. A copy of this document can be accessed on the quality section of the AIT website at:

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/summary-of-new-programme-proposal>

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.

Please see link below under the Quality Section of the AIT website which leads to the Institute Policy on Programme Delivery and Assessment. A link is also provided to the AIT Standards, Assessment and Awards document.

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

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

These documents were devised to outline the Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures for the ongoing delivery and assessment of programmes.

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.

Quality Assurance for Research

The Procedures and Guidelines for Postgraduate Research document provides a common point of reference for all staff and postgraduate research candidates in the institute and relevant funding agencies. Quality Assurance for research practices in AIT is also influenced by the series of booklets produced by the Irish Universities Quality Board on 'Good Practice', 'In the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Higher Education'.

The Management of Postgraduate Research

Research is managed by many facets, but at its core is the support of the research candidates and their supervisors. As per the institute's statutory frame, the institute has an Academic Council appointed by the Governing body. The Academic Council has appointed a Research, Innovation and Enterprise (R,I&E) sub-committee to advise on, and coordinate, research in the institute. There are

two postgraduate research candidate representatives on this committee (the terms of reference of the group are set out in Appendix 1 of the AIT [Procedures and Guidelines for Postgraduate Research](#) document. A Postgraduate Review Group (PRG) has been established by the R, I&E Committee to assess and advise on any research postgraduate matter as set out in Appendix II of the *Procedures and Guidelines for Postgraduate Research* document.

A graduate research school is linked to the registration department of the institute and reports directly to the Academic Registrar. It is responsible for the registry of all postgraduate research candidates from admissions to graduation including, periodic reviews, progression, transfers and examinations. It is responsible for postgraduate research policy development, regulations and operational matters. It also works to facilitate the early resolution of any complaints or conflicts that may arise by providing open discussions and clarity with respect to expectations and realities. The Graduate School is supported by the Academic Registrar, Postgraduate Review Group, the schools and research institutes, and the Office of Research.

Evaluation of the Quality of Programmes and Research Performance

Reviewing and Evaluating Research Applications

The Postgraduate Review Group (PRG) reviews the suitability of all research applications for Masters and PhD programmes.

Research and Professional Development Plan (RPDP)

A RPDP has been developed as a process by which the candidate can manage the development, advancement and completion of his/her research and forms an integral in monitoring progress. The RPDP comprises five main parts, each with its own specific objective to support the successful completion of the research degree:

- (a) *Student Summary* – the record of personal details along with details of the programme of research and any funding information.
- (b) *Research Plan* - developed in conjunction with the supervisor to reflect intellectual vision and aspirations. It will provide a mechanism for the monitoring of the students' progress and should be updated to reflect progress.
- (c) *Professional Development Plan* - enables the student to have a clear understanding of what skills, abilities, competencies and knowledge he/she actually has and should audit skills and identify the

further development of skills by highlighting any future courses necessary to support the successful completion of the research programme.

(d) *Meetings* - involves the formal documentation of regular meetings between the student and their supervisor. Such meetings are key elements in motivating progress, identifying problems early and avoiding indecision

(e) *Achievements* - allows for the recording of the student's entire achievements during his/her research programme at AIT. These can include attending and/or presenting at a conference or seminar, academic tutoring and mentoring, demonstrating of practical classes, poster display, journal publication, organising of event, etc.

Monitoring Research Progress – formal six-monthly progress and satisfaction reports by both candidate and supervisor.

As well as the RPDP and regular progress meetings between supervisor and candidate, both the candidate and each of their supervisors, submit separate formal progress reports to the Research Innovation and Enterprise Committee, through the Postgraduate Research Coordinator and the Postgraduate Review Group. This process is required to take place every six months and is usually carried out in December and June. A report is generated and presented to the PRG for consideration and recommendations. The candidate and supervisor each receive a copy of each other's progress reports and the reports are filed in the Postgraduate Research Office. Full details on the monitoring of the candidate's progress are outlined in Section 7.3 of the ['Procedures and Guidelines for Postgraduate Research at the Institute'](#).

Stage 1 Progression Report

All postgraduate research candidates must comply with this Stage 1 procedure in order to progress with their studies. The purpose of the exercise is to enable postgraduate candidates to demonstrate that they have made sufficient progress to-date and have the potential to continue.

This review is undertaken after the first 12-month study period and examined by an Independent Panel of Assessors.

External Organisation Reviews and Reports

- When a company is involved in a research project, the supervisor(s) ensure that appropriate arrangements are put in place at the outset of the research project between the candidate, the supervisor(s) and the company. This is to ensure that the research candidate's progress continues to be carefully monitored and focused towards the ultimate objective of the project.
- Interim Reports are frequently required to assess the technical progress of innovation partnership projects. The main focus of this report is to gauge progress against the deliverables promised for the project mid-term, as defined in the proposal document previously submitted prior to project approval.
- Should a company require the candidate to work for periods in the company then it is the responsibility of the supervisor(s) to guarantee that these periods will be dedicated to the work of the research candidate.
- Careful records of such visits/placements/discussions are maintained by the supervisor. If the collaboration involves an extended period of placement in an industry/organisation then a supervisor should be appointed from the industry/organisation to aid the candidate. The responsibilities of the supervisor within the external organisation are equivalent to that of the internal supervisor. The external supervisor is also provided with a copy of this document to allow them to familiarise themselves with their responsibilities.
- In some cases, it may be necessary for the supervisor(s) and candidates to sign a non-disclosure/confidentiality agreement put together by a collaborative external organisation.

Candidate Presentations

Research candidates are required to participate in the Research Presentation Programme within the institute i.e. make a minimum of one presentation to a group of - candidates and staff from within the institute and occasionally external experts, during their postgraduate studies. The candidate will also be required to answer questions on their project at the end of the session.

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>

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.

Student Lifecycle Management

The Registry Department, under the direction of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar and the management of the Academic Administration and Student Affairs Manager is the hub for Student lifecycle management from pre admission to graduation and beyond and in managing the entire student life cycle the department supports the institute in achieving its stated vision and mission.

Policies and procedures for student access, transfer and admission are incorporated into the Admissions Policy Document and is administered by the Admissions office <https://www.ait.ie/life-at-ait/registry/admissions> . Standards, Assessment and Awards is the guiding policy document in relation to examination, assessment, publication of results and award of classification, administered by the Examinations Office <https://www.ait.ie/life-at-ait/registry/examinations> . The Collection of Fees policy document details the guiding principles with student registration, fee collection and fee payment and comes within the remit of the Registration <https://www.ait.ie/life-at-ait/registry/registration> and Fees and Grants offices <https://www.ait.ie/life-at-ait/registry/fees-and-grants> .

The Registry Department, in conjunction with the Banner Office and the Faculty Offices, maintains and controls the institute's student record system, including personal information, grant records, student registrations, student results, the issuing of all graduate parchments and the publication of all timetable and examination schedules. Student progression information is considered at faculty level and implemented by the Registry Department.

The input of the Registry department to the student lifecycle management is crucial to the institute and in managing this function the department supports the quality initiatives of the institute.

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

The First Year Experience

Following acceptance of a place on a first year programme in AIT, we begin engaging with incoming students. An information pack is sent out with details of how to register on-line and their invitation

to attend their faculty tailored New Student Induction programme. This programme has been developed and honed over a number of years with consideration given to students' immediate commencement needs while trying to balance the potential for information overload. The emphasis is on creating a warm and welcoming environment and giving students enough and timely information to get their first year off to a flying start. The process is centrally managed through the Student Resource Centre with involvement from the faculties, progressing students and the Students' Union who all play a role in creating an atmosphere of welcome and celebration.

A focus on the first year experience and assisting students with a successful transition to third level led to the collaborative development of an extended seven-week induction programme to be piloted in 2017-2018 called 'AIT Connect'. <https://www.ait.ie/life-at-ait/current-students/your-first-year/>

This programme is geared towards student needs and addresses themes such as settling in and making connections with new friends, faculty staff and support services, welfare and health, learning support, mental health, time management and finding professional inspiration. AIT Connect compliments existing successful activities such as:

1. **The Peer Assisted Student Support Scheme (PASS)**, <https://www.ait.ie/life-at-ait/student-supports/pass> which fosters cross year support between students and encourages students to learn co-operatively under the guidance of trained 2nd year students who can be awarded academic credit for their voluntary role.
2. **The Learning & Development in Higher Education** (Health & Science; Hospitality & Business) and **Communications** (Engineering & Informatics) modules where the common themes in **AIT Connect** are reinforced, referenced and further developed.

In addition, since the establishment of an Academic Writing Centre in 2015 we have seen significant engagement by students and academics utilising the services provided. The AWC amalgamated existing writing supports delivered through the International Office, the Learning & Teaching Centre, and Student Resources. With a remit to accommodate students across all disciplines, the centre aims to promote excellence in academic writing through a writer and process-centred approach. We believe that everyone can write and are committed to equipping our students with the skills they need to become accomplished writers. Academic lecturers offer individual or small group sessions in various aspects of academic writing, including structure of a written assignment, paraphrasing and in-

text citations, and grammar, spelling and punctuation. The AWC also created a dedicated Writing Skills page on Moodle. In February 2017, an Academic Writing Tutor was appointed whose primary function is to support the mission of the AWC in building excellence in academic writing by acting as a first point of contact and support for students seeking assistance and to triage and facilitate the referral of students to AWC supports. Her role also involves coordinating and planning the activities of the AWC and managing the WC online system to ensure appointment scheduling and data collection are running smoothly.

Link to Writing Skills page on Moodle: <https://elearning.ait.ie/course/view.php?id=33722>

The Academic Writing Centre advances previous supports provided through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). To access the evaluation report produced the Learning and Teaching Unit which was instrumental in mainstreaming the AWC under the Student Resource Centre, please see the following link: <https://www.ait.ie/life-at-ait/student-supports/academic-writing-centre>

Progression

A review and analyses of progression rates is carried out an annual basis. Progression of Year 1 Full time students to Year 2 has been reported and trends identified. The analysis looks at a further analysis which has taken place in this academic year for year 2 to year 3 and year 3 to year 4 on ab initio programmes. Where non progression rates are outside the institute and national norms a more detailed review at module level will inform further for department analysis.

<i>Ab Initio Programmes- Progression Data Analysis – Average data by level since 2010</i>			
<i>NFQ</i>	<i>Year 1 to Year 2</i>	<i>Year 2 to Year 3</i>	<i>Year 3 to Year 4</i>
Level 6	70%		
Level 7	70%	82%	
Level 8	80%	86%	84%

Placement - A comprehensive review of placement practices within the institute was conducted and a report entitled “An Overview of Placement Practices in Athlone Institute of Technology” was submitted by the Learning and Teaching Unit to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar. The review involved key stakeholders throughout the institute and the report includes case studies of placement practice. The review also documents data collated relating to placements in each faculty,

such as timing, duration, credits associated, assessment, pre- and postplacement requirements, supervision and international placements. The link to this report can be accessed at

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

Library

Vital to the student lifecycle is the ability to access the institute library resources. The library not only provides quality information resources but is committed to ensuring students possess the core skills to locate and access the correct information when and where they need it, and the supplementary skills to know how to evaluate and use the information effectively and ethically. The library supports these goals through participating in the annual induction programmes and their own Information Literacy Skills Training Programmes which are organised by the subject librarians in co-operation with academic departments.

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.

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 recognises 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 are 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>

The Executive Management Team fully supported the introduction onto the academic calendar of a two-day induction programme for new staff in key aspects of learning, teaching and assessment including the use of technology to enhance learning. Initially piloted in 2016-2017, the programme will be implemented annually by the Learning and Teaching Unit. In addition, an online programme is under development for part-time staff.

AIT staff engagement in postgraduate modules in learning teaching and assessment is outlined here:

Special Purpose Award/Module	ECTS	No of Participants
Certificate in Learning & Teaching	(15 ECT)	15
Certificate in Technology Enhanced Learning	(15 ECT)	10
Certificate in Formative Assessment Feedback	(15 ECT)	13
Designing a UDL Curriculum	(10 ECT)	9
Implementing a UDL Curriculum	(5 ECT)	10
Capstone Module: Reflection, Action & Evidence Review (5 ECT)	(5 ECT)	4
Total Number		61

In addition, the Certificate in Developing Practice in Online Learning, Teaching and Assessment (15 ECTS) was developed and validated for the initial pilot in 2017-2018. For further information about the programme/modules, click on the following link which accesses the AIT Learning & Teaching website.

<https://www.ait.ie/life-at-ait/learning-and-teaching-unit>

Other key staff development initiatives in learning, teaching and assessment including National Forum funded projects and seminars, dissemination and publications are outlined in the LTU key activities document link

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/learning-teaching-unit-key-activities->

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 data obtained and analysed from the ISSE is used annually as a guide to develop enhancements in programme design and delivery at institute and faculty level. The ISSE data which are both quantitative and qualitative, provides valuable feedback from students.

Faculty level approaches to institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring the quality of teaching and learning:

- Programme boards - feedback from students and staff leading to continuous improvements supported by ASQ
- External examiner induction and feedback via external examiners' reports
- Exam board meetings and annual statistical analysis of examination results for consideration by Academic Council
- Focus on timely feedback to students
- Consideration for timing of teaching and calendar of assessments
- Academic Writing Centre to provide supports to students when faced with challenges in academic writing, referencing etc.
- External accreditation bodies (for example, the Veterinary Council of Ireland, Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland, Engineers Ireland, the Irish Dental Council)

Learning environment: Multi-purpose and specialised teaching laboratories, art studios, design laboratories, simulated nursing and veterinary clinical laboratories, classrooms, lecture theatres and IT laboratories with data projection facilities. Library with comprehensive book-stocks, journals and databases.

Moodle is the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) used across the institute to support formal and non-formal learning activities. It is also used as a tool for the provision of feedback to students.

The [Learning and Teaching Unit](#) at AIT continues to offer staff members a number of accredited modules, either as standalone Special Purpose Awards or as part of the Post Graduate Diploma in Learning, Teaching & Assessment.

Details can be found at: <http://learningandteaching.ait.ie/programmes/>

Peer observation of teaching occurs in these accredited learning and teaching modules. This has acted as a catalyst for further sharing of best practice in learning, teaching and assessment.

Research: AIT is a partner in a multi-institute research project funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning's Enhancement Fund called '[Technology Enhanced Assessment Methods \(TEAM\) in Science and Health Practical Settings](#)'. The main aim of the TEAM project has been to develop a framework for applying the principles of good assessment and feedback to practical assessment and to facilitate dialogue among stakeholders about what we want students to learn in practical classes and how our assessment can facilitate this learning.

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.

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 programmes, additional years on existing programmes and all other programmes, 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. Resources are allocated in a flexible way where possible e.g. lecturer hours assigned to the Academic Writing Centre for discipline specific writing assistance.

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 programmes 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. We also endeavour to respond to the evolving nature of student needs. As many of our students commute and have conflicting schedule pressures and busy class timetables, in 2016/17 we also began providing phone and email learning support through our Science, Maths and Business Tutors and also through the Academic Writing Centre. Optimum use is made of available technology with a significant number of online resources for students such as our Moodle Writing Skills page.

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>

AIT Library – Resources and Supports

The AIT Library supports teaching, learning and research with a range of supports to learners. Many of these supports are available online to ensure learners can avail of these 24/7. AIT Library also supports learning, teaching and research by providing regularly updated guides on referencing, citation and plagiarism. A [new APA referencing guide](#) was launched in 2016 to complement the existing [Library Harvard guide](#).

More supports are provided by participating in the annual general induction programmes. The library provides their own Information Literacy Skills Training Programmes which are organised by the Subject Librarians in co-operation with academic faculties.

Extensive databases and e-resources are made available to learners to further support out of hours learning and revision in preparation for examinations. A new guide was created in the 2016/2017 Academic year and this is available at: <http://ait.libguides.com/Librarybasics>

The library began extending its opening hours in the two weeks before each examination session in recent years. Consequently, it functions as a central academic support outside the normal college hours.

One major accomplishment of 2016-2017 was the successful migration of Millennium (old Library Management Software system) to Koha (New LMS system) during the Summer of 2017. The project itself began in January 2017. Click [here](#) to view our new library website and single search option.

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.

Student Data is collated and submitted to the HEA twice annually for statistics purposes. November is the provisional student numbers report and March is the final student numbers report. These extracts are used within AIT to analyse trends and numbers by institute, faculty, department and programme

and many different reports are derived from this source data. It is used in various strategic discussions which contributes to programme planning and review of numbers across the institute and is used to inform internal discussions.

AIT is cognisant of the New Data Protection Laws which will come into effect from May 2018 and in preparation for same the institute will be appointing an Information and Compliance Officer who will play a key role in preparing the institute for the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and in the overall management of information compliance, coordination of operations (including records retention) and risk management in respect of institutional data and related matters.

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.

Programmatic Review:

This is a quinquennial quality review process which gives the faculties within AIT an opportunity to conduct a critical evaluation and review of their programmes. This review is a core statutory obligation for the institute under Section 28(2) of the Qualifications, Education and Training Act. It is a positive, supportive and open process and results in the production of a five-year plan for the faculties which should align with the institute's Strategic Plan. The self-evaluation process, with inputs from experts and stakeholders (internal and external), involves the production of a self-evaluation report (SER). The self-evaluation comprises a critical evaluation of all aspects of each programme being reviewed – its strategy, learning outcomes, modules, assessment, resources etc. Review of the SER by external peers results in a Programmatic Review Report which will include a set of conditions and recommendations. The faculties will then provide a response to this report and both the report and responses are published on the AIT website.

See the following link: <https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmatic-review-2015-reports>

Institutional Review:

The institute also undergoes cyclical Institutional Reviews which are carried out by QQI. The last Institutional Review for AIT took place in 2011. The next review is scheduled to take place in 2022.

Programme Boards:

Each faculty appoints Programme Boards to consider all matters affecting the operation and innovation of each programme within the faculty. They:

- monitor the implementation of academic policy including learning, teaching and research issues, maintenance of standards and administration of the course, including selection, teaching, academic counselling and industrial/professional placement of students, and publication of course publicity material
- appoint such subcommittees as are deemed necessary for assisting in the administration of the course
- make an assessment of the progress of students and, where necessary, propose exclusion on academic grounds in accordance with the appropriate institute regulations
- review the reports of external examiners and propose appropriate action
- review student feedback and recommend appropriate action
- review annually the operation of the programme, consider proposals for its improvement and complete annual reports for tabling at ASQ
- consider from time to time the need to revise, develop or otherwise substantially alter the course in the light of prevailing circumstances, and prepare appropriate proposals
- approve minor programme changes and table them for final sanction at ASQ
- prepare relevant materials for school and institutional review
- discuss and make recommendations upon, as appropriate, the resource and staff development requirements of the course
- carry out such duties as agreed in conjunction with other schools, in relation to joint programmes

External Examiners:

External Examiners act as independent and impartial advisors providing the institute with informed comment on the standards set and student achievement in relation to those standards. External examining is therefore an integral and very important part of institutional quality assurance. The main purposes of external examining are:

- To verify that Learning Outcomes as assigned to a programme / module to which the external examiner has been appointed have been met
- To assist AIT in the comparison of academic standards across higher education awards and award elements
- To ensure that AIT's assessment processes are fair and are fairly operated and are in line with AIT regulations. It shall be the External Examiners' task to scrutinise the examination process on a continuing basis and report to senior management on whether particular students' performances have been judged properly against the institute's awards standards and further, whether the assessment process has measured Learning Outcomes appropriately and whether the examination process has been conducted fairly. It shall be the institute's task to respond to any observations made by the External Examiners in an appropriate manner

See the following link: <https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/external-examiners>

The Irish Survey of Student Engagement:

The Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) is a survey which is designed to ask students directly about their full experience of higher education. Student feedback is providing AIT with valuable information to identify effective practice and provision and to prompt awareness of, and action on, any particular issues or challenges that affect students in the institute.

The ISSE project is funded by the HEA and co-sponsored by the Higher Education Authority, Institutes of Technology Ireland (IOTI), the Irish Universities Association (IUA) and the Union of Students in Ireland (USI). The survey was developed in response to a key recommendation of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 that every higher education institution should put in place a comprehensive anonymous student feedback system to inform institutional and programme/course development, as well as national policy.

ISSE is based on best practice internationally as developed by the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) since 2007 and the US National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) since 2000.

The information obtained from ISSE is a key output to the quality assurance mechanisms of AIT.

It has done so by:

- increasing transparency in relation to the student experience
- enabling direct student input on levels of engagement and satisfaction in AIT
- identifying good practice that enhances the student experience in AIT
- assisting AIT to identify issues and challenges affecting the student experience in the institute
- serving as a guide for continual enhancement of institutions' teaching and learning and student engagement
- documenting the experiences of the student population, thus enabling year on year comparisons of key performance indicators
- providing insight into student opinion on important issues of higher education policy and practice
- facilitating comparison with other higher education systems internationally

See the following link:

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

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.

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>

At the core Institute Stakeholder Engagement policy is the commitment to engage intensively with the society that the institute serves. This engagement is managed through the identification of the distinct stakeholder groups who have a legitimate interest in the operations of the institution.

Stakeholders are defined as those individuals and groups who impact and/or could be affected by this organization's activities, learning and teaching, research, and engagement. The relevance of the institute's offerings and activities requires regular interaction with identified stakeholder groups.

The institution maintains a current list of stakeholders. The intention is not to develop an exhaustive list but rather to build and maintain a catalogue of stakeholders who can influence the work of the institute and/or who are themselves dependent or impacted by the institute.

Stakeholder observations and concerns are fed into strategic monitoring and planning by the strategic plan oversight group. This group works closely with the EMT.

Athlone Institute of Technology provides a minimum of annual feedback to its stakeholders. This is managed via both electronically and/or through direct meetings. The mode of interaction is determined through the preference of individual stakeholders.

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).

Please see link below which provides details in relation to the Professional Body Accreditation in AIT.
<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers>

The institutes three faculties have extensive links with professional bodies which include the following organisations; The Veterinary Council of Ireland, Athletic & Rehabilitation Therapy Ireland (ARTI), Tusla, Nursing & Midwifery Board of Ireland, The Dental Council of Ireland, The Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland, Engineers Ireland, Chartered Accountants Ireland (CAI), Association of Chartered and Certified Accountants Ireland (ACCA), Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA), Certified Public Accountants in Ireland (CPA), Accounting Technician Ireland (ATI).

The faculties liaise on a regular basis with the relevant bodies and undertake periodic reviews to ensure the programme content aligns to the professional bodies to ensure accreditation is maintained. In some cases, such as with Chartered Accountants Ireland (CAI) our Masters of Arts in Accounting programme is subject to an annual quality assurance review via a joint board. To ensure the QA process with regard to a programme which has exemptions up to and including the penultimate level of their professional accountancy examinations.

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.

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>

The role of the AIT marketing and communications department is to enhance our institutes national and global reputation, help build effective stakeholder relationships, and attract and develop students with the potential to excel. We are responsible for building and maintaining the Institutes brand and competitive position regionally, nationally and internationally. We are committed to delivering world-class communications; engaging with future students, students, staff and stakeholders to help build an outstanding educational and student experience, develop high quality services and to raise awareness about the institute and all its activities. We engage with stakeholders in Ireland and all around the world and have expertise in branding, strategic marketing, event management, digital and traditional media and internal communications.

AIT ensures that all information about our activities including programmes is clear, accurate, up to date and readily accessible for general consumption either for prospective, current students, graduates, other stakeholders and the public. All publications issued by the institute for either public consumption or internal communications perspective are made visible on the website and through the internal intranet. This ensures that there is visibility and transparency with regards to the institute. Examples of such publications include AIT's Strategic Plan, Presidents reports, graduate survey, UG and PG prospectus etc.

In AIT's Strategic Plan - Global Focus Regional Impact, sets out in Pillar 5.3 - Staff, Organisational Structure and Institute's Environment that the institute is to be as inclusive an environment as possible with regards to communications of which includes an internal communication strategy, staff communications and induction programmes for staff.

Since its foundation, AIT has been rooted in the fabric of the midlands. This has seen the institute play a catalytic role in the life of the region, recognising the levels of engagement and connectivity that exist between the institute and the wider community. Pillar 5.7.1 - Socio-Economic Engagement

and External Stakeholder Partnerships, sets out a key strategic goal to construct and embed a sustainable and measurable approach to civil engagement (social, economic, cultural) that permeates AIT's curriculum and advances regional development. The pillar ensures that AIT is not only a functional institute but an engaged institute for the region and beyond through its open campus mantra.

Moodle: A range of documentation is made available to students through the VLE. These include: Programme and Module Assessment Strategies, Module descriptors, Calendar of Assessments, Student Handbook, Department Handbook, Programme Manual.

Module Management System

This Module Manager system is used in the design of programmes and modules, and also acts as a repository for programme and module documents. The system is currently under development and it is envisaged that during the academic year 2018-2019 the publication of all programme information will be available on-line, through the Academic Module Manager 3.0.

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.

The institute has an existing range of provision that falls under the terms of the QQI's collaborative policy. In addition, links will be considered only where clear benefits from establishing any collaborative programme and from the involvement of each of the partner providers can be shown. It is recognised that contemporary higher education involves a greater range of collaborative partners and arrangements.

AIT subscribes to the guiding principles set out in the Irish Higher Education Quality Network's (IHEQN) draft Guidelines for Collaborative and Transnational provision, namely:

- 1) **Principle one:** providers of higher education have primary responsibility for the management and provision of programmes of higher education and training for learners
- 2) **Principle two:** providers of higher education have the primary responsibility for the quality assurance of their provision, wherever or however it is delivered
- 3) **Principle three:** providers of higher education must ensure that learners enrolled on collaborative or transnational programmes (whether at home or overseas) which lead to awards of an Irish awarding body, receive an equivalent learning experience to that of learners studying at their campus in Ireland
- 4) **Principle four:** providers of higher education are cognisant of the strategic context for collaborative or transnational provision
- 5) **Principle five:** providers of higher education give due consideration to the academic support and pastoral care of students, and to their representation on appropriate institutional bodies/groups
- 6) **Principle six:** providers of higher education, recognising that their decisions to collaborate and/or provide transnational higher education programmes may involve ethical considerations, are committed to respecting the human rights of their staff, learners, and partners in all their joint ventures
- 7) **Principle seven:** providers of higher education develop institutional approval and quality assurance processes for collaborative/transnational provision which include the conduct of appropriate due diligence checks

The procedures with regard to the procedures for approval, monitoring, review, withdrawal of approval and appeal for linked providers are set out in our policy on Supplementary Quality Assurance Procedure for collaborative provision, to include national and transnational programmes.

The full policy document can be accessed at the below URL.

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

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

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

http://www.iadt.ie/content/files/00_iadtpolicy_IoT_Sectoral_Protocol,_Validation_Research_Progs_Level_9.pdf

<http://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/IoT%20Sectoral%20Protocol%20on%20Programmes%20Leading%20to%20Joint%20Awards.pdf>

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.

AIT has a policy in place called Supplementary Quality Assurance Procedures for Collaborative Provision. This policy was implemented following a condition set out by the external evaluation panel at Institutional Review 2011.

The panel recommended that Delegated Authority granted to Athlone Institute of Technology be continued as provided for 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 on this.

Please see links below on the AIT website to this policy document and also a link to AITs register of collaborative provision.

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

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

16. Additional Notes

Any additional notes can be entered here.

17. Internal Review Schedule

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

Year	2016/17
Areas/Units	Faculty of Engineering & Informatics Faculty of Science and Health Faculty of Business and Hospitality Department of Lifelong Learning
Number	<p>5 New programme proposals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. BSc in Polymer Processing Technology Level 7 (Apprenticeship) 2. Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Graphic and Digital Design Level 8 3. BA (Hons) in Hospitality Management (with international placement) Level 8 4. Minor Award in Online Learning, Teaching and Assessment 5. Certificate in Volunteering Special Purpose Award <p>50 (approx) Programme/Module Changes which were discussed at Faculty Programme Boards and submitted to the Academic Strategy and Quality Committee at the end of semester 1 and end of semester 2 to be implemented for the following academic year. These changes relate to, for example, assessment breakdown, changes to learning outcomes. There is a quality process in place when any changes are proposed. This can be seen at the following link:</p> <p>https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/module-manager-process</p>
Link(s) to Publications	<p>https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/summary-of-new-programme-proposal</p> <p>https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/external-validation-panel-reports</p> <p>https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/module-manager-process</p>

Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report

Year	2017/18
Areas/Units	
Number	
Link(s) to Publications	

Year	2018/19
Areas/Units	
Number	
Link(s) to Publications	

Year	2019/20
Areas/Units	
Number	
Link(s) to Publications	
Year	2020/21
Areas/Units	
Number	
Link(s) to Publications	

Year	2021/22
Areas/Units	
Number	
Link(s) to Publications	

Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report

Year	2022/23
Areas/Units	
Number	
Link(s) to Publications	

Year	
Areas/Units	
Number	
Link(s) to Publications	

AIQR - PART 1

Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures	AIQR-Part1updated 21.02.2018.docx
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	07-12-2017
Next review year	2022
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Second Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Nursing and 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>Please note that the requirements and standards for nursing have changed and as a result the nursing curriculum in Athlone Institute of Technology is currently under review in order to match the requirements and standards. This process is underway in the Institute and a review from the National Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) will take place in the coming year.</p> <p>https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers</p> <p>http://www.nmbi/Home</p>
Date of last review or accreditation	01-09-2014
Next review year	2018
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>HC in Engineering in Civil Engineering; HC in Engineering in Electronic and Computer Engineering; HC in Engineering in Mechanical Engineering; BEng in Civil Engineering; BEng in Computer Engineering; BEng in Electronics & Wireless Communications; BEng in Mechanical Engineering; BEng in Mechanical Engineering & Renewable Energy; BEng in Mechatronics; BSc in Network Management.</p> <p>The majority of programmes listed above are accredited until 2021 - for complete listing see the following links:</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	01-09-2017
Next review year	2021

Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Fourth Set of Records

Type of Arrangement

PRSB

Name of the Body

Association of Chartered Accountants of Ireland (CAI); Association of Chartered and Certified Accountants of Ireland (ACCA); Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA).

Programme Titles and Links to Publications

Bachelor of Arts Honours in Accounting, Level 8
Master of Arts in Accounting, Level 9
Bachelor of Business (ladder system), Level 8
Bachelor of Business (ab initio) Honours Level 8
Bachelor of Business and Law Honours Level 8

Bachelor of Arts Honours in Accounting, Level 8;
Bachelor of Business (ab initio) Honours, Level 8;
Bachelor of Business Honours, (ladder system) Level 8;
Master of Arts in Accounting, Level 9;

Bachelor of Arts Honours in Accounting, Level 8;
Bachelor of Business (ladder system), Level 8;
Bachelor of Business ab initio (Honours), Level 8
Bachelor of Business and Law (Honours), Level 8

*There will be different review dates for the various programmes as outlined in the Programmes and Register link on the AIT Quality website. See the following link:

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

Chartered Institute of Accountants Ireland:

<https://www.charteredaccountants.ie/Prospective-Students/Apply-and-Join/Exemptions>

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ACCA Global:

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<http://www.accaglobal.com/pk/en/help/exemptions-calculator.html>

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CIMA Global:

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<https://www.cimaglobal.com/Starting-CIMA/Starting-CIMA/Exemptions/Exemption-Search/>

Date of last review or accreditation

31-05-2015

Next review year

2021

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

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>http://www.ait.ie/Programmesandregisters/</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. A delegation from DUFE visited AIT during 2016-2017.</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:

<http://www.ait.ie/Programmesandregisters/>

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 the Bachelor of Engineering in Software Engineering at AIT. Athlone Institute of Technology recognises 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 recognises the curriculum in Mechanical Engineering at ECUT allowing the students to transfer to the final year of the Bachelor of Engineering in Mechanical Engineering (Honours) degree at AIT. The first group of 16 students transferred 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 an 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: 15th 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	<p>Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Graphic and Digital Design (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>Jiangnan University, Wuhan, China</p> <p>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 Graphic and Digital Design (Level 8) programme at AIT. The first cohort of 10-15 students is expected to transfer to AIT in September 2018.</p> <p>Awarding Body: Students receive AIT award when they transfer to AIT.</p> <p>Title of Award: Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Graphic & Digital Design (Level 8)</p> <p>Date of last review: January 2015</p> <p>Annual review meeting to take place at AIT and Jiangnan University</p>
Date of last review of arrangement/agreement	31-01-2015
Review year for agreements	2023
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	21-02-2018

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.

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 and 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. These graduate attributes were first introduced during the reporting period of this AIQR and will be included in the upgrade to the Module Manager System, which is to be implemented in 2018.

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

The reporting period saw a change in personnel whereby there was a new Vice President Academic Affairs (Registrar) appointed in February 2017 and the position of Academic Administration and Student Affairs Manager was appointed on a permanent basis.

In terms of policies, the drafting of a Student Fitness to Practice Policy was initiated through a working group which was set up by the VIPAR. This policy document will provide an overarching set of guidelines for the Institute with respect to Fitness to Practice but with addendums which will be specific to the various departments across the institute.

Revisions were made to the Institute Plagiarism Policy and plans were put in place to establish a Plagiarism Committee with institute-wide representation which will be chaired by the Dean of Faculty of Science and Health. The functions of this committee will be to:

- assist with the implementation for the revised policy
- investigate cases of alleged plagiarism
- establish whether the allegation of plagiarism is founded and, if so, to determine whether it is a case of incidental or substantive plagiarism
- impose an academic sanction, where appropriate
- keep up to date with best practice guidelines and national/international developments in the area of academic integrity
- develop or identify staff and student training and development

This Plagiarism Committee will be a sub-committee of Academic Council and when established will commence their role at the start of the academic year 2017-2018. This will be a very welcome initiative within the institute.

A number of working groups were established to consider and make recommendations on such matters as the academic calendar, the admissions policy, the examinations policy and the Institute Standards, Assessment and Awards document.

The existing RPL policy is under review and various avenues are being explored to support this process. An information session was provided by experts involved in the Connaught-Ulster Alliance, 'My Experience' initiative as an option for the institute going forward.

In May 2017, the VIPAR gave a presentation to ASQ members on Curriculum Development. It was noted that the institute must empower its expertise and become a more effective institution. The committee members were informed that this process is already underway.

A review in relation to the development of Special Purpose Awards offered in the institute was initiated.

A review of placement practices across the institute was conducted by the Learning and Teaching Unit leading to the drafting of a baseline report. Please see the following link to access this report:

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

1.3 The schedule of QA governance meetings.

Governing Body Meeting Dates Academic Year: 2016-2017

Wednesday 14th September 2016

Wednesday 26th October 2016

Wednesday 7th December 2016

Wednesday 8th February 2017

Wednesday 22nd March 2017

Wednesday 10th May 2017

Wednesday 21st June 2017

Academic Council Meeting Dates Academic Year 2016-2017

Friday 16 September 2016
Friday 14 October 2016
Friday 02 December 2016
Friday 27 January 2017
Friday 10 March 2017
Friday 05 May 2017
Thursday 15 June 2017

Academic Strategy and Quality Meeting Dates 2016-2017

Friday 23 September 2016
Thursday 20 October 2016
Wednesday 16 November 2016
Thursday 15 December 2016
Monday 23 January 2017
Wednesday 22 February 2017
Thursday 23 March 2017
Friday 28 April 2017
Wednesday 24 May 2017
Thursday 08 June 2017

Section 2: Reviews in the reporting period

2.1 Internal reviews that were completed in the reporting period.

During the academic year 2016-2017 there were a number of new programme proposals brought forward from the three faculties and the Department of Lifelong Learning. All of these proposals went through the quality assurance processes at AIT. They were first brought to Executive Management for initial approval and financial analysis and then to the Academic Standards and Quality Committee for review and then to external panel for evaluation. When all of these steps were complete to a high standard the programmes were brought to Academic Council for final approval.

The following is a summary of these proposals:

Faculty of Engineering and Informatics presented a new Level 7 programme called **Bachelor of Science in Polymer Processing Technology Level 7**. The programme was designed as part of a state initiative to offer higher educational awards through the apprenticeship model. The qualification is underpinned by an Occupational Profile that was created by a consortium comprising key

stakeholders (Plastics Ireland¹, SOLAS², ETBI³, IMDA⁴) with primary input from the relevant industrial contributors to outline the description and requirements of the role of the Polymer Technologist. This profile received approval from the Apprenticeship Council in 2014, thereby securing the go-ahead to create and design a new apprenticeship programme. The approved Occupational Profile and the QQI level 7 Science Award Standards guided the initial task of outlining the programme learning outcomes. The programme will be offered over seven phases; a model that aligns with the traditional apprenticeship model. Four of these phases will be completed *on-the-job*, where the student will be employed within a relevant approved company. The students will be tutored and assessed by an industrial mentor during his/her time *on-the-job*. The additional three phases will be completed in the academic setting of the coordinating educational institute, Athlone Institute of Technology. During these phases the student will undertake modules of learning to develop the key competences, skills and knowledge base. Online learning modules will also be undertaken by the student during their time *on-the-job*. These modules will predominantly be offered by the collaborating Institute of Technology, IT Sligo, who have established a national and international reputation for on-line teaching and learning.

Faculty of Science & Health presented a new Level 7 programme called **Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Graphic and Digital Design Level 8**. The one-year proposed programme has been designed in response to industry and technological developments, in light of Government expert group reports on future skills needed in the creative skills and innovation sectors, and to meet future demands in the areas of the identified skills needs. The programme would provide a coherent progression pathway for the current Level 7 Design Graduates and it would contribute to AIT's role in developing competencies required in the region.

Faculty of Business and Hospitality presented a new Level 8 programme called **Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Hospitality Management (with international placement) ab initio**.

The inclusion of this ab-initio honours degree to the institute's portfolio supported the strategic objectives of the institute in terms of regional development, creating sustainable links with industry and supporting the needs of industry.

A Minor Award in Developing Practice in Online Learning, Teaching and Assessment (15 credits) was also presented by the Learning and Teaching Unit for approval during this academic year. This proposal formed part of the Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching, Learning and Assessment Level 9.

The Department of Lifelong Learning presented a proposal - Certificate in Volunteering.

This programme was developed as a Special Purpose Award (SPA) with a broad interdisciplinary focus of learning in the Department of Lifelong Learning and is closely aligned to AIT's overall strategic goals for social engagement and internationalisation (5.6.1.8 Key Strategic Goal: To be internationally focused in teaching, research and knowledge exchange). This programme would allow students from a broad range of disciplines to achieve recognition of their learning through immersion and active participation in voluntary organisations and NGOs with which AIT has established links or working relationships (5.7 Key Strategic Goal: Socio-Economic Engagement and External Stakeholder Partnerships). It would afford students an opportunity to gain recognition for social engagement and participation as well as expanding their knowledge about the organisation of and geo-political factors influencing the day-to-day running of voluntary organisations and NGOs. In addition to students achieving accredited learning (10 ECTS at level 6) and the previously outlined alignment with AIT's strategic objectives.

Details with regard to the timings of the above programme approvals can be accessed on the Quality Section of the AIT website at: <https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/summary-of-new-programme-proposal>

The External Evaluation Reports can be accessed at: <https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/external-validation-panel-reports>

Ongoing review/amendments to Programmes/Modules post Approval Process

If a faculty deems it necessary to amend a programme/module following validation during delivery to the students, there is a process in place for this. All changes requested are discussed initially at programme board level within the faculty and if agreed they are then brought to the Academic Quality and Strategy Committee who review the proposals. If they are agreed, then all necessary updates are made to the internal systems such as Module Manager and Banner. For further information on this process and the regulations with regard to same please see the following link

which is located on the Quality Section of the AIT website:

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/module-manager-process>

Review of External Examiner Reports

External Examiner Reports are reviewed on an annual basis initially by the President and VIPAR and then by the relevant faculties. A summary of these reports is drafted by the Quality Office and the faculties are requested to provide updates on how they addressed the recommendations of the external examiners.

Programme Boards

At faculty level Programme Boards are held once per semester to consider all matters affecting the operation and innovation of each programme. Such issues as programme changes, external examiner reports and assessment of the progress of students are addressed at Programme Board. There is always a student representative on the Board. The Programme Board plays an integral role in the smooth operations of each faculty in the institute.

New Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland Standards and Requirements 2016

In light of the new Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland Standards and Requirements 2016 a route and branch update of the four-year Bachelor of Science (Honours) in General Nursing and the four-year Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Psychiatric Nursing within the Department of Nursing and Healthcare in collaboration with AIT's Clinical partners in the HSE was undertaken. The following work breakdown structure outlines the processes involved:

1. **Curriculum Design & Development;**
 - Course Philosophy
 - Educational Philosophy
 - Programme aims/ Outcomes
 - Core Indicative Content (Nursing Informatics and Social Policy)
 - Taxonomy of Learning (Steineker and Bell)
 - Teaching and Learning opportunities (Get list of teaching sessions received in clinical areas e.g. End of Life, Renal, and Dementia Care; include Journal clubs)
 - Continuous professional development (Portfolio of learning year 1-4. Reflective element on Moodle)

2. **Student entry, admission, transfer, discontinuation & completion; Exit awards; student attendance records update**

3. Programme Governance and Management

- Local Joint Working Group
- Membership (to include students & consumer) General and Psychiatric students to be invited, Bernie to follow up
- New Memorandum of Understanding (Need to be signed with new hospital groups)
- Student Welfare Policy (for review)
- Disciplinary Policy (for review)
- Dignity and Respect policy (for review)
- Course Leader Coordinator
- Link lecturer arrangements
- Continuous quality improvement

4. Student support, supervision and Learning Resources

- Grievance & Complaints policy for students in place
- Ratio of CPCs

5. Assessment Strategies

- Student assessments
- External examiners
- Student evaluation (QAI already in the curriculum document)

6. Self-Assessment Document

7. Practice Placement Allocations

- Clinical Placements Allocations Group to;
- Identification of sites to include:
- Care of the Older Person increasing to 6 weeks
- Primary Health Care Nursing increasing to 4 weeks (This can be with the Public Health Nurse, Visiting the Primary Healthcare Team, Community Nurse or Care of the Person with an Intellectual Disability).
- Specialist mental health nursing (8 weeks e.g. CNS/ ANP nurse led services, drug/alcohol dependence, forensic/prison medical services, child and young person services, suicide/self-harm prevention, homeless team, perinatal services, voluntary agencies, dual/complex needs, other. Practise placements outside of Ireland (maximum of 13 weeks)

8. Practice Placement Learning Environment and Competence Assessment

- Clinical Competency Assessment Documentation Group to;
- Review of Clinical Workbooks
- Domains of competence
- Action plans/ learning contracts
- Repeat opportunities

9. Clinical Learning Environment Group

- Members (programme leaders, link lecturers, allocations staff, NMPDU, CPCs)
- Educational Audit Tool Group to: (Develop a new audit process and tool with NPDC, CPCs and AIT staff)
- Student Handbook (to include Disability Guidelines)
- Student skills books
- Preceptorship; Initial preparation & updates; Preceptorship course; blended learning SPA

10. Learning Outcomes Clinical Area

- Update all clinical learning outcomes to reflect 6 Domains of competence (NPDC, CPCs & Link Lecturers)
- Develop final practice placements learning outcomes for year 1-3 (NPDC, CPCs & Link Lecturers)
- Protected time policy
- Arrangements are in place for preceptor supervision and examining of Undergraduate students
- Preceptorship evaluation Safety of the practice learning environment
- Framework in place for students to raise concerns Undergraduate health problems

11. Quality Assurance and Enhancement Mechanisms

- Reports of internal and external subject quality reviews
- Reports of module, year and programme evaluation
- Students', former students' and employers' evaluations of the programme
- Sufficient registered practitioners to facilitate the supervision of nursing students
- Evidence based practice guidelines to support care delivery (PPPGs)
- Reports of research awareness and the application of research findings among clinical practitioners
- Reports on the delivery of person-centred, holistic care of the person using health services
- Unit Profiles and in the Educational Audits
- Policies/protocols in respect of medication management
- Policies/protocols in respect of good practice in recording the delivery of nursing care
- Mechanisms and evidence of audit of nursing documentation
- Evidence of maintenance of competence and of continuing professional development of all academic and practice staff involved in programme delivery
- Evidence of clinical risk management programmes Kevin O'Malley HSE
- Mechanisms for and evidence of student support, supervision and assessment whilst in practice settings. (Employee Assistance, Counselling Policy)
- Mechanisms for and evidence of educational and clinical audit
- Mechanisms are explicit as to the role and function of members of the public and person's in receipt of healthcare in the process of programme review and evaluation

12. Professional Advisory Group

- Continuous Professional development, Education

13. Education Management and Evaluation

- Document to be put on shared folder for each programme
- Template of Audit document
- All updated Modules to be presented to CPCs and NPDU at next programme board
- Attendance in practical's commencing 2018 to be wrote into document

Monitoring and Evaluation of Erasmus+ Programmes

The HEA and the EU Commission monitor the correct implementation of the Erasmus Charter at AIT. All mobility's are recorded on an online system called the Mobility Tool. This system is checked regularly by the HEA to ensure it is up to date. Interim and Annual Reports record all activities for the academic year. At the end of each mobility programme a financial and written report on all aspects of the Erasmus + programme is prepared and submitted to EU Commission. Sample documentation is sent to the HEA for examination and proof of payment of Erasmus monies must be presented to the HEA. The HEA may 'desk check' documentation at any time. The Erasmus Office at AIT is also subject to random external audits at any time.

The International Office carries out an annual review of agreements with partner universities in the EU and Non-EU markets to determine which agreements are active and date of expiry of agreement. If the relationship with the partner university is active, AIT renews the agreement. An updated list of EU and Non-EU partner universities is sent to the Quality Office by the International Office once per year, usually in November. Please see link below which provides a table of all EU and Non-EU partners.

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

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

Number of new Programme Validations/Programme Approvals completed in the reporting year	5
Number of Programme Reviews completed in the reporting year	0
Number of Research Reviews completed in the reporting year	0
Number of School/Department/Faculty Reviews completed in the reporting year	0
Number of Service Unit Reviews completed in the reporting year	0
Number of Reviews of Arrangements with partner organisations completed in the reporting year	5*

* This number represents Articulation Agreements that were reviewed during the reporting period
None of the Collaboration Agreements were due for renewal during the reporting period

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

Composition of Panels	%
Internal	14%
National	81%
UK	
EU	5%
Student	
Other	

Chair Profile	%
Internal	
Similar Institution	80%
Different Institution	20%
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.

During the academic year 2016-2017 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 cohort of students who participated in the survey were from first year, final year, and postgraduate taught masters programmes. There were a number of additional questions included in the survey in 2016.

A total of 61% of students from AIT participated in the survey 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.

- 87% of AIT students rated their entire educational experience as good or excellent.
- 83% of students stated 'Probably' or 'Definitely Yes' when asked would they start over again at the same HEI.

The most significant issue identified by the students during the previous reporting period 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 which has hugely improved the student

experience. The number of students who never received feedback had fallen from 19% in 2014 to 11% in 2017.

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 2016-2017 period which was presented to the institute's academic council and shared also with other committees and student bodies.

Please refer to the following link for further information:

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

AIT is committed to supporting student engagement and leveraging data to enhance student success.

This commitment is evidenced in the current strategic plan which states that the institute “will continue to attract, support and assist our diverse cohort of learners throughout their entire educational pathway” (2014, p.19). In addition, the institute is “committed to put in place the structures that can collect, analyse and publish data that will afford the opportunity to benchmark the organisation both nationally and internationally (2014, p.17).

Throughout the institute there are pockets of excellent practice, where data is gathered, analysed and acted upon. Examples include:

- The use of the VLE (Moodle) at a basic level to record attendance and logins with follow up by faculty
- A more advanced use of the VLE through the monitoring of activities for student engagement
- Specific educational research projects initially supported through the Learning and Teaching Unit and subsequently embedded in teaching practice. These utilise educational technologies such as classroom response systems, online portfolios and collaborative multi-media tools, to support learning and feedback

In addition, systems used by the library and the academic writing centre provide valuable data on student engagement to inform the provision of services to students.

AIT has invested in a package of key initiatives to support the transition to higher education for a diverse student population. These include:

- AIT Connect - a seven week extended induction/transition programme coordinated by the Student Resources Centre in collaboration with faculties and other key stakeholders

- Transition Module - to assist in the development of key skills for success
- Peer Assisted Student Support - a student-led programme to help first year students cope better with all aspects of life at third level
- Student Tutors – maths, business and science
- Academic Writing Centre (AWC), which focuses on promoting excellence in writing

There is a growing recognition amongst Senior Management and other key stakeholders of the value of existing data when used to identify students at risk, particularly in first year and support, as necessary, their wellbeing, integration into college life and ultimately their success in AIT. In support of this, in June 2017 we had a presentation from an Irish based software company of their cloud based solution in the field of student attendance monitoring and learning analytics that has been implemented in a number of UK based HEIs and a small number of Irish HEIs.

Data Protection Regulations and how they support Quality Assurance

Athlone Institute of Technology in order to carry out its statutory functions, collects and processes personal data of students. The institutes take the confidentiality of all personal data seriously and takes all reasonable steps to comply with the principles of Data Protection legislation. The institute endeavours to collect personal data only in order to meet specific legitimate purposes and to retain that data only for so long as those purposes remain valid. Ordinarily the institute will not pass personal data to any third party except where required by legislation, statutory obligations or for other legitimate purposes as balanced against the rights and interests of the Data subject.

Personal data may be defined as data relating to a living individual who is, or can be identified from, either the data itself or from the data in conjunction with other information that is in, or is likely to come into, the possession of a Data Controller. Athlone Institute of Technology is a data controller as defined under the legislation and will comply with its obligations under the Data Protection Acts of 1988 and 2003. With regard to the dissemination of personal information to any third party the institute may provide information to relevant authorities, such as HETAC (Higher Education & Training Awards Council), FETAC (Further Education & Training Awards Council), HEA (Higher Education Authority), CAO (Central Applications Office), Grant Awarding Bodies, other Colleges and Research Institutes and Research Collaborators, the Department of Education & Science, and other relevant authorities such as: the Department of Social Welfare, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Health and Children.

Electronic student records containing information about individual students (which typically could include name and address on entry and completion, contacting next of kin, programmes taken, examination results and awards obtained) are collected and processed by the institute. Most of this data is gathered during 1st year Registration in AIT. The information given on the registration form is stored on the institute database and then used for multiple purposes related to the student's study (examples of the use of this data are: class lists, computer accounts, library access, AIT Card, examinations, graduation, alumni, sport, health etc.). In accordance with AIT's Records Retention Policy, student records are kept permanently.

The new GDPR is due to be enacted across Europe in May 2018 and it will bring significant changes to the current system. One of the biggest changes will be the introduction of significant monetary penalties for breaches of the law. Other changes include additional legal requirements on Data Processors, broadened definition of personal data and significant changes to the issue of consent, particularly fully informed consent.

AIT will be appointing an Information and Compliance Officer in the coming months who will ensure that the institute will be compliant with the new Data Protection Regulations.

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

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 realised. In 2015 the MEND regional cluster received funding from the HEA 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 work of these projects has been completed. For the mapping of SMEs regionally and developing systematic engagement, the working group extended to incorporate the Regional Skills Forum Managers from the MEND region. The project piloted a sector and developed an engagement framework in what was deemed Phase 1 of the project. The working group identified a number potential development areas for Phase II leading to more comprehensive and streamlined source of information available to both HEIs and Regional Skills Managers within the cluster, along with greater enterprise engagement and inter-institutional collaboration within the region to meet the needs of the region.

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 skills 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.

3.3 A description of other implementation issues.

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.

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 our ambition to become a Technological University, AIT has worked toward satisfying the criteria as set out in the governing legislation.

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.

During the reporting period evidence of the effectiveness of QA Policies and Procedures was reflected and the following are a number of examples of how this occurred.

- The Implementation of QA policies across functional areas.
- Review process facilitated through programme and examination boards.
- New programme development across all faculties.
- Programme and module revisions.
- Policy development and review of existing policies.
- Review of External Examiner Reports .

Below is a synopsis of how the External Examiner process is carried out within the institute:

External Examiners who are approved by Academic Council and appointed for a three-year period, which may be extended thereafter. External examiners act as independent and impartial advisors providing AIT with informed comment on the assessment process itself and on student achievement against approved learning outcomes.

External examining is therefore an integral and very important part of AIT's quality assurance. It shall be the External Examiners' task to scrutinise the examination process within AIT on a continuing basis and submit their reports to senior management on whether particular students' performances have been judged properly against the institute's awards standards and further, whether the assessment process has measured learning outcomes appropriately and whether the examination process has been conducted fairly.

Senior management circulates the external examiner reports to the faculties for consideration at discussion and action at programme board level. Feedback is then provided by the faculties to both the external examiners and quality office in order to complete the process.

Training is delivered to External Examiners on an annual basis by the institute to ensure all quality procedures are being adhered to and all parties are familiar with their roles and responsibilities. Many programmes within AIT are accredited by **professional bodies** which protect both the public interest and the interests of professionals. The professional bodies may act to protect the public by maintaining and enforcing standards of training and ethics in their profession.

2. Impact

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

- AIT's Academic Council, supported by its associated committees, for example, the Academic Strategy and Quality Committee, recommends new and revised policies for approval to its Governing Body.
- External Examiners expressed satisfaction with the high standard of programmes delivered within the institute and commented positively on the good balance between theory and practice in programmes.
- The increased use of technology enhanced learning and teaching and assessment methods is evident across the institute.
- The level of external engagement is notable throughout the institute.
- The level of training and support provided by the Learning and Teaching Unit has had a significant impact to the quality across the institute.

3. Themes

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

Retention

Student retention and progression was a major concern which is being addressed by the institute. There are a number of initiatives being undertaken by the Faculty of Business and Hospitality which will focus on improving student retention and enhancing the learner experience among the first year student cohort. Some of these initiatives will include:

- The introduction of a first year assignment at Induction Day.
- Speaking with all first year students within the first 2 weeks of the commencement of programme.
- Regular student meetings with the Head of Department.
- Ensuring that students are aware of the calendar of assessments.
- Informative parent's evenings.
- Improved engagement of students in the classroom.
- Briefing for students with failed modules following semester 1.
- Emphasis on specific areas such as performance, esteem, personal life, mental health, resilience, determination, personal organisation, respect, humanity, work-life balance.
- Identifying at-risk students through attendance monitoring, assessment submission and Moodle usage.
- The Introduction of a bespoke Retention Officer for the faculty

The Retention Officer for the Faculty of Business and Hospitality

As a result of the initiative outlined above a part-time Retention Officer will be appointed within the faculty and is due to commence the role in September 2017. The role of the Retention Officer will be to ensure a planned and coordinated approach is taken to retain students on first year programmes each year and to maximise the number of students who progress to the next stage.

The Officer will also:

- Track the performance of first year students with particular attention to those on Low Leaving Cert points
- Apply specific focus to programmes with a low retention record
- Link potential at-risk students with the appropriate support person or service where necessary

Data relating to these Retention Initiatives can be found at the following link:

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

Professional Body Recognition

Many professional bodies associated with AIT perform professional certification to indicate a person possesses qualifications in the subject area, membership in a professional body is a requirement by the graduates in order to be legally able to practice the profession.

Below you will find a directory of the main professional bodies affiliated to AIT which are reviewed on an ongoing basis. <https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/quality/programmes-and-registers>

AIT Graduate Attributes

AIT Graduate Attributes inform the development of Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategies at both institute and faculty Level. The rationale is to offer an alternative perspective to staff when designing and revising modules and programmes and to differentiate the institute and its graduates.

Industry Engagement

The report of the Enterprise Strategy Group pointed out that:

After education and research, educational institutions have a third role: the promotion of enterprise

This “third role” of engagement with enterprise and the community and knowledge exchange is a key strategic priority – and differentiator - of AIT and we continued to grow this activity during 2016. We continued to support enterprise in the region in developing its innovation capacity and assisting companies to develop new products, processes and designs. We continued to make support of entrepreneurship in the region part of our core mission. A key strategic priority for AIT – working in partnership with Enterprise Ireland - is to significantly increase the number of high-growth knowledge-intensive export-focused businesses in the Midlands.

AIT was awarded funding by Enterprise Ireland in 2016 for expansion (more than doubling) of the Midlands Innovation and Research Centre, our campus business incubator. An expanded MIRC will increase the research, innovation and entrepreneurship infrastructure and capacity of the Midlands - and will be cross-dimensional in its impact on Ireland’s targets under the EU’s Europe 2020 growth strategy. An expanded MIRC will support smart (knowledge and innovation driven) growth, will improve competitiveness, foster significant job creation, support graduate retention and increase Gross Value Added in the Midlands - in line with the overriding goal of AIT’s Strategic Plan 2014-2018 - the building of regional competitiveness and innovative capacity in the Midlands.

(See Appendix 5 for details)

Benchmark

	AIT	CIT	DKIT	GMIT	IT Blanch	Carlow	Sligo	Tallaght	Tralee	Letterkenny	Limerick	WIT
Technology Gateways	2	2	0	1	0	1	1	1	2	1	1	3

Source: Higher Education System Performance Institutional and Sectoral profiles 2013/2014 (most up to date published data)

A clear indicator of our strength in applied research is the awarding of two Technology Gateways to the Institute by Enterprise Ireland. They are as follows:

- Applied Polymer Technology
- COMMAND – Connected Media

The Department of Lifelong Learning – Engagement with Industry

The DoLL delivers all its programmes to industry. To support industry in the region the DoLL through its understanding and implementation of flexible delivery channels continues to develop and work with industry and the community through the design of tailored and customised flexible accredited learning solutions, meeting the needs of industry in the midlands region. A recent example is the design, development and accreditation of a flexible on-line programme in leadership delivered to Alkemers and this is further demonstrated through the number of Springboard and programmes offered in the college.

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.

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. This has been reflected in a significantly higher satisfaction rate with respect to feedback during the most recent ISSE return. During the reporting period there was a Retention and Support initiative put in place in the Faculty of Business and Hospitality.

A bespoke Retention Officer was appointed to ensure a planned and coordinated approach be taken to retain students on first year programmes within the faculty.

The Institute Library

During this period, the library replaced their old Library Management System (Millennium) with a new LMS system called KOHA. This is part of a suite of software changes sweeping across the IOT sector. The new suite of software is radically affecting the library workflows and leading to improvements for all library customers.

In addition:

- A [new learning support guide for APA Referencing](#) was introduced in 2016/2017 to support the [existing Harvard Referencing guide](#)

- Extended early opening hours around examination times were introduced after consultation with the Students' Union.
- The electronic resources offerings are constantly reviewed year on year. The library introduced a new database in January 2017, [Taylor & Francis](#). This has proved to be immensely popular with both staff and students. Over 11,254 searches were undertaken on T&F in 2017.
- A collaborative workshop between the Academic Writing Centre and the Library took place in October 2017. This proved to be very popular with the students. The library looks forward to more such collaborations in the future.
- Collaborative initiatives took place in connection with the PASS initiative (see under Student Lifecycle) and the library referencing expert worked with PASS leaders to act as a mentor for Academic referencing skills.

National Student Engagement Programme

AIT Students' Union in conjunction with the Learning and Teaching coordinator took part in a collaborative piece with GMIT Students' Union and their learning and teaching development department. This collaboration was aimed at getting class representatives to become more engaged with the various departments within the college particularly senior management. In August 2016 the then Deputy President of the Students' Union undertook a three-day Institutional Associate Trainer Programme. This was held by SPARQS (Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland).

The training focused on a student engagement framework that can be implemented in the areas of supporting students, supporting institutions, supporting the sector and developing a culture.

The underlying and prominent theme was student engagement and the features associated with it. This training was then given to the class representatives.

The National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) was also formed in 2016 with pilot institutions chosen to run training with their class representatives. In 2017 NStEP became a national project with all HEI's engaging with the programme. The training aims to develop student capabilities and institutional capacity to enhance engagement at all levels across the higher education system. The Union of Students in Ireland (USI), the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) are collaborating on this initiative.

The NStEP programme has two objectives. The first is to develop and support the implementation of a student training programme, specifically to class representatives. The second objective is to build capacity within institutions to provide high quality opportunities for learners to engage.

So far this year NStEP has delivered one training session in AIT which took place in semester 1 to the class representatives. A second training session is due to take place in semester 2.

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.

During the reporting period 2016-2017 there were many improvements made in the institute which impacted on Quality Assurance. Examples of enhancements which took place during this year are as follows:

1. The Regional Skills Forum was the principal organising party for the inaugural Biopharma and MedTech Fair held at Athlone Institute of Technology on Wednesday 28 September 2016. There were a number of other companies involved including Biopharmachem Ireland, Irish Medtech Association Skillnet, First Polymer Skillnet and Pharmachem Skillnet. The careers day provided an excellent opportunity for companies to meet a **pool of highly skilled and motivated graduates and job seekers**. CV and Interview workshops were run throughout the day.
2. In 2016 AIT was granted authority by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) to award PhDs in the areas of software engineering and network communications. This is a significant achievement and further underpins the institute's drive towards achieving the quality targets required to become a Technological University. This new area within which AIT can now award PhD's is in addition to polymer engineering, microbiology and toxicology. The four domains that enjoy this level of accreditation makes AIT one of the very few Institutes of Technology in the country who have been delegated such extensive authority.
3. AIT set up a Student Ambassador Programme in 2016. The AIT student ambassador programme is a group of current AIT undergraduate students who are selected to represent AIT to prospective students, their parents and guidance counsellors. The role of the student ambassador is to positively promote AIT, assist with presentations, help at Open Days, assist with campus tours, attend careers fairs and join the recruitment team on local school visits.
4. During the reporting period 2016-2017 AIT launched a Higher Certificate in Science in Hearing Aid Audiology by Blended Learning. This was a very positive and exciting initiative for the institute and will play a pivotal strategic role in advancing AIT's commitment to the provision of high quality education programmes in audiology from the outset.
5. In December 2016 the Department of Nursing and Healthcare hosted a Health Promotion Workshop which was very successful. Senior health promotion professionals from all over Ireland attended the conference.

6. A paper was presented by the Dean of Faculty of Business and Hospitality at the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) annual conference in Dublin Castle in December 2016. The conference which was titled 'Growing your Vision for Higher Education using Data for Enhancement Purposes' was hosted in Dublin Castle and included a range of presenters both national and international. The paper titled 'The Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) as a Tool for Institutional Knowledge and Enhancement: A tri-institutional case study' outlined the approaches taken to the ISSE in Athlone IT, Dublin City University and Maynooth University. The paper covers the approaches taken to deployment of the survey, engagement of students, analysis of the results and actions taken incorporating further consideration as to the future challenges and opportunities for the ISSE.
7. There were a number of presentations made to the Academic Strategy and Quality Committee during the 2016-2017 academic year, including a very interesting presentation by the Systems Librarian titled *AIT Library Supporting Teaching, Learning & Assessment*. She discussed the library services support, the library-link to the strategic plan and future developments.
8. Athlone Institute of Technology was a founding member of the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA), which was launched by the Minister for Education and Skills, Mr Richard Bruton TD in April 2017.
9. The largest academic conference ever held in AIT took place over a three-day period in April 2017. Two hundred and eighty-five delegates registered for the hugely successful conference. Over 100 oral papers and 60 posters were presented at the conference which was divided into sixteen themes. Delegates from USA, Germany, UK, Northern Ireland and Ireland attended the conference. The overwhelming success of the conference was largely due to the amazing student volunteers and AIT staff. Highlights of the conference included a public engagement debate entitled draining the Shannon- Flood Mitigation which was full to capacity and was addressed by two government ministers. This debate was reported on the RTE 9 pm News and was also featured on News talk radio as well as all the local radio stations.
10. Athlone Institute of Technology was designated as a College of Sanctuary in June 2017 in recognition of a range of initiatives demonstrating a commitment to welcoming asylum seekers and refugees into the college community and fostering a culture of inclusion for all. AIT is the third HEI in Ireland - following DCU and UL - to attain this accolade and is the first recipient of the College of Sanctuary which is awarded by Places of Sanctuary, an organisation that supports efforts in Ireland and the UK to build a culture of hospitality for people seeking sanctuary.
<https://www.ait.ie/news-and-events/news/humanitarian-work-and-spirit-of-inclusion-rewarded-as-ait-is-awarded-the-fi>

There were significant enhancements to research within the Institute and these can be found at the following link also which is situated under the Quality Section of the AIT website.

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

There were a number of excellent initiatives undertaken by the Learning and Teaching Unit within the institute which are outlined in detail on the Quality section of the AIT website:

https://www.ait.ie/uploads/downloads/LT_Unit_Activities_2016-2017_Final.pdf

Part 5: Objectives for the coming year

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

5.1 Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Plans

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

The institute's current strategic plan states:

Quality enhancement has been identified as the guiding principle in this plan. The institute will recalibrate 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.

A schedule of reports to feed timely information to enable strategic decision making is the focus of planned activity. Plans to formulate reports on CAO, retentions, progression and advanced entry are planned.

Cognisant of policies, needs, and ambition AIT have begun the formulation of the next strategic plan 2018-2022. The targeted focus is sharpened by our ambition to become a Technological University.

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.

- Creation of the New Strategic Plan 2018-2022 and implementation of pillars associated with it.
- All Collaboration/Articulation Agreements which are due for renewal will be reviewed with the partners and new Agreements signed.
- All policies and procedures which are due for updating will be reviewed by working groups and brought before the Academic Strategy and Quality Committee for approval.
- Embedding of new and updated QQI policies and procedures, especially the Programme Validation Training for Evaluators procedure.
- Further updating and developing the Institute Quality Manual.
- Upgrading the Academic Module Manager System.

5.3 Other Plans

- **ISSE:** Further analysis of ISSE will take place during the academic year 2017-2018 in order to further enhance particular aspects of the student experience.
- **Athena Swan initiative:** In September 2017 AIT will make application for membership of the Athena Swan Charter. It's the institute's intention to work towards an application submission for the bronze award by the end of the academic year. A steering committee will be formed in September 2017 from which subgroups will be set up which will focus on specific areas to include staff data, leave arrangements, organisations culture and governance, recruitment, progression and promotion. The self-assessment process will inform the institutes application.
- It is hoped that further developments will take place in the use of learning analytics to support student success in the future.
- Implement a pilot of selected document management workflow for handling examination papers during external review process. Focus is to increase efficiency, security and quality of the examination review process.

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.

Having completed an institutional review in 2015, AIT have engaged in continual review and working towards the enhanced activity. The identification of thematic areas for review will support action as we work on to future review.

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.

Quality assurance and quality enhancement remain a high priority for AIT and significant work is on-going to ensure that QA process and procedures are relevant to all stakeholders in the institution. Ownership of QA is at all levels of the institution and there is a willingness to support continuous improvement.

AIT welcome the proposed omnibus delegated authority policy for Level 10 and will work with QQI to support the formulation of the n and m criteria.

6.3 Themes

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

Educational Provision: Academic positioning is central to future agendas. Work has commenced and is on-going with respect to reviewing the level of offerings and the consolidation of the pathways from 6-10. This will enable a review of core pillars of expertise and support the development of interdisciplinary offerings and strengthen cross faculty collaborations. In addition, building on the work of MEND, the development of comprehensive partnerships with FE providers will further support, access to education and training.

Teaching and Learning: AIT has committed to the ISSE survey and has a consistently high participation rate. This gives high levels of reliability and validity to the data secured. Annual analysis informs future direction and enables critical decision making with respect to enhancing the student experience.

Research: With respect to Research Innovation and Enterprise AIT will continue to build on its strong research position and further strengthen its links with industry partners. Research integration and capacity building as outlined in the strategic plan will remain the focus of the institute, specifically by developing the relationship between research centres and taught provision. Further effort will focus on supporting supervision, mentorship, grant writing and dissemination capability.