

Institutional Review Report 2018

Letterkenny Institute of Technology



QOI REVIEW

CINNTE 

Foreword

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training in Ireland. One of QQI's most important statutory functions is to ensure that the quality assurance procedures that institutions have in place have been implemented and are effective. To this end, QQI carries out external reviews of Institutes of Technology on a cyclical basis. This current QQI cycle of reviews is called the CINNTE cycle. CINNTE reviews are an element of the broader quality framework for Institutes of Technology composed of: Quality Assurance Guidelines; Quality Assurance Approval; Annual Institutional Quality Reports; Dialogue Meetings; The National Framework of Qualifications; Delegation of Authority; and, most crucially, the Quality Assurance (QA) systems that each institution establishes. The CINNTE review cycle runs from 2017-2023. During this period, QQI will organise and oversee independent reviews of each of the Universities, the Institutes of Technology and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI).

Each CINNTE review evaluates the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of each institution. Cyclical review measures each institution's compliance with European standards for quality assurance (Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015), in regard to the expectations set out in the QQI quality assurance guidelines or their

equivalent, and adherence to other relevant QQI policies and procedures. CINNTE reviews also explore how institutions have enhanced their teaching, learning and research and their quality assurance systems, and how well institutions have aligned their approach to their own mission, quality indicators and benchmarks.

The CINNTE review process is in keeping with Parts 2 and 3 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) and based on the internationally accepted and recognised approach to reviews, including:

- the publication of Terms of Reference;
- a process of self-evaluation and Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER);
- an external assessment and Site Visit by a team of reviewers;
- the publication of a Review Report including findings and recommendations; and
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken.

This institutional review of Letterkenny Institute of Technology was conducted by an independent Review Team in line with the Terms of Reference in Appendix A. This is the report of the findings of the Review Team.

The Review Team

Each CINNTE review is carried out by an international team of independent experts and peers. The 2018 institutional review of Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT) was conducted by a team of six reviewers selected by QQI. The Review Team was trained by QQI on 26 February 2018 and the planning visit to LYIT took place on 27 February 2018. The Main Review Visit was conducted by the full team between 23 April 2018 and 27 April 2018. Due to personal circumstances, two of the Review Team members, including the coordinating reviewer, withdrew from the process prior to the Main Review Visit. They were replaced by Dr Trish O'Brien and Jan Cairns. QQI arranged an additional training event for the new members which was also attended by the Chair.

CHAIR

Professor Crichton Lang MRCVS is Deputy Principal and also Head of the School of Health, Social Care and Life Sciences at the University of the Highlands and Islands. He originally trained and practised as a veterinary surgeon in Tayside, Scotland before completing a PhD in neuropharmacology and pursuing a university career. Crichton worked first in the University of Bristol and subsequently for 12 years at the University of St Andrews where in addition to undertaking research, lecturing and developing curriculum in his own areas of interest (applied physiology, human and comparative biology), he held the posts of Director of Teaching for the School of Biology and Pro-Dean for the Faculty of Science. Building on his broad experience within the sector, Crichton co-ordinated much of the strategic development of the University of the Highlands and Islands through its journey to degree awarding powers and full university title. In addition to a broad portfolio of responsibilities within the university as Deputy Principal, Crichton maintains specific oversight of the key activities relating to the quality assurance and enhancement of academic courses, student achievement and satisfaction and the strategic development of the university's portfolio of awards and other areas of academic growth. Crichton has a particular interest in institutional audit and review of universities and has experience as an institutional reviewer both in Scotland and abroad.

COORDINATING REVIEWER

Dr Trish O'Brien has been Director of O'BRIEN / Governance Design since 2016. Trish worked in the private sector for 10 years prior to joining the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) in 2005 as Head of Framework Implementation and Qualifications Recognition. Following the formation of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) she held roles as Head of Provider Relations and subsequently Head of Strategic Planning and Communications. As Director of O'BRIEN / Governance Design she provides governance consultancy services to the private, public and not-for-profit sectors, including to further and higher education and training agencies and institutions. Trish originally studied English language and literature and holds a Doctorate in Governance from Queen's University Belfast.

INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVE

Ann McGregor MBE was appointed as Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry in June 2008. She was formerly Chief Executive of Enterprise NI and a Director with Business in the Community. Ann commenced her career in the private sector working in production/materials management with Roche Manufacturing, Schering Plough and Bird's General Foods before moving into local economic development. Ann is a BA Honours Graduate of Queen's University and holds a MA Marketing from Ulster University. Ann is currently a Trustee of the Grand Opera House and a member of the Senate at Queen's University. Her commitment to developing the Northern Ireland economy was acknowledged in 2012 when she was awarded an MBE.

LEARNER REPRESENTATIVE

Erica Cunningham is in third year of the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Media and Public Relations at IT Carlow. She has participated in the PAKs scheme at IT Carlow, assisting first year students in their transition to college. Erica is particularly interested in student engagement and is part of an internal working group as a faculty representative, involving participation in meetings with Heads of the College to discuss issues relating to quality and projects. She has also acted as class representative and aims to run for election to the Student's Union. Erica is participating in the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP), a collaborative initiative under development by the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and QQI. NStEP seeks to develop student capabilities and institutional capacity to enhance engagement at all levels across the higher education system.

QUALITY ASSURANCE REPRESENTATIVE

Jan Cairns has been Quality Assurance Officer in the Dublin Institute of Technology since 1999. Prior to returning to Ireland, Jan worked in similar roles in the UK. She has experience of institutional review in the UK both from the institutional point of view and from acting as secretary to a Higher Education Quality Council (predecessor to the Quality Assurance Agency) audit panel. Jan was also a member of the Steering Group for DIT's most recent institutional review in 2011. She has been involved in the design, monitoring and implementation of DIT's quality assurance policies and procedures and has a particular responsibility for drafting DIT's Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR) to QQI.

INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Professor Jürg Christener has been Director of the School of Engineering at the University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW), Windisch since 2006. He worked as an engineer before moving to the University of Applied Sciences in Northwest Switzerland in 1995, where he worked as a lecturer, Vice President and finally Director in the area of Engineering. He is President of the association, NaTech-Education, and President of the Foundation Board of the Summermatter Foundation.

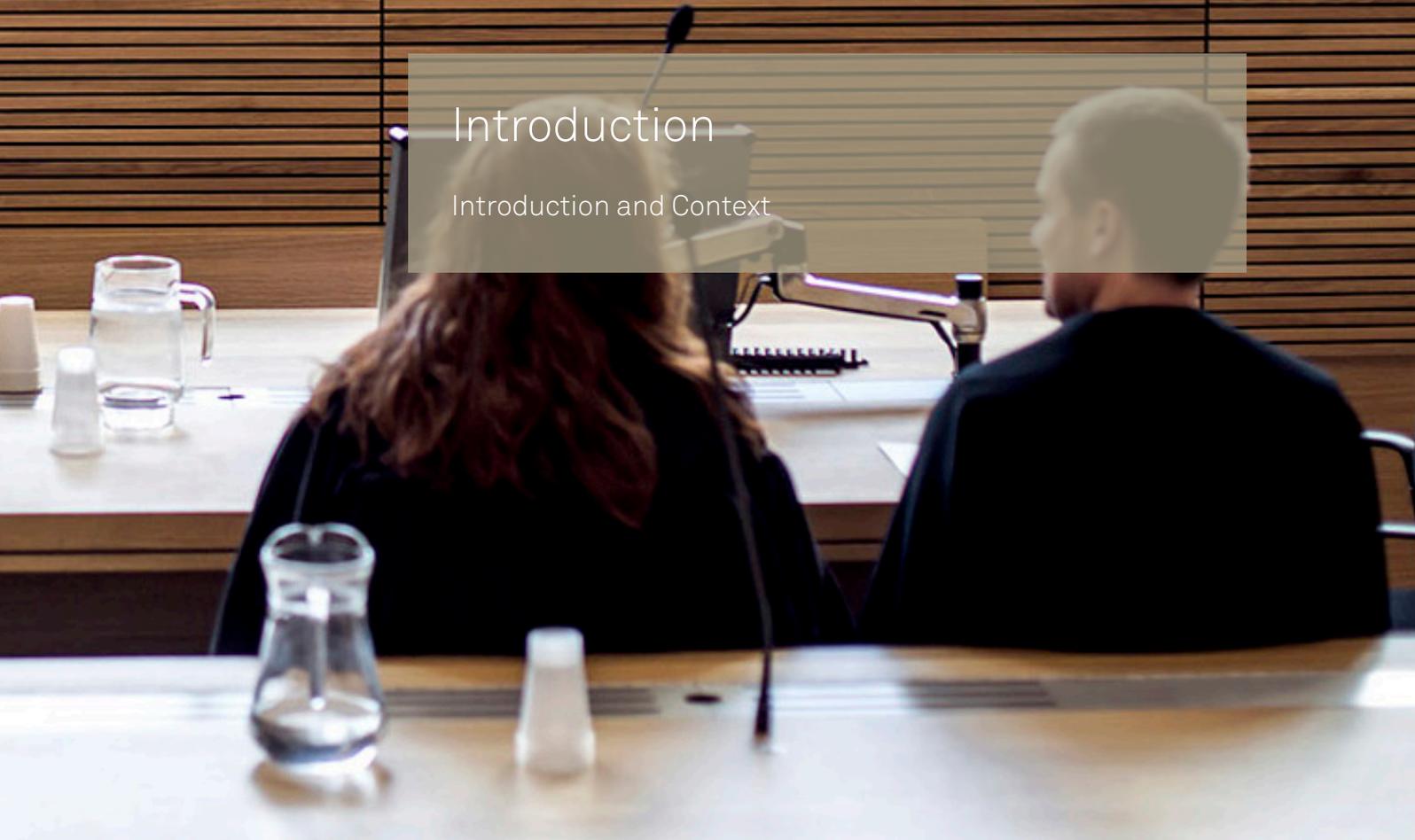


Section A



Introduction

Introduction and Context



Introduction

1. Introduction and Context

Brief profile of Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT)

- 1.1 Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT) is one of 14 Institutes of Technology regionally dispersed across the Republic of Ireland. Its statutory basis is set out by the Institutes of Technology Acts 1992 to 2006. The Institute is located in the north-west of Ireland in a two-campus setting: Letterkenny and Killybegs.
- 1.2 LYIT is funded through the Higher Education Authority (HEA); the Irish funding and strategy body for higher education. A funding breakdown for 2017 published by the HEA indicates that the Institute's overall funding for 2017 was in excess of €17.5 million. Much of this figure (75%) consisted of core funding from the HEA. The remainder included undergraduate and nursing fees and other State funding received to support the provision of labour-market focused programmes free of cost to eligible individuals, and to support the successful participation in higher education of students with disabilities.
- 1.3 The Institute has four academic schools: Business, Engineering, Science and Tourism. The Tourism school is based in Killybegs and became part of LYIT in 2007. In 2017, it was confirmed to the Institute that €3 million would be provided by the State, over a four-year period, to support the ongoing costs of the Killybegs campus.
- 1.4 The Review Team was provided with staff data published by the HEA in 2017. Based on a total number of full-time core-funded academic staff of 168, 90.5% were permanent and 9.5% on temporary contracts.
- 1.5 LYIT has delegated authority from QQI to make undergraduate and postgraduate awards up to Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) i.e., master's level. In its presentation to the Review Team, LYIT confirmed that it has 51 entry level programmes and 11 masters programmes. LYIT largely delivers its taught programmes face-to-face and on its campuses. The Institute's programmes are labour market focused and 60% of its graduates are reported as working within Donegal.
- 1.6 The Institute has recorded an increase in full-time students from 2,684 in 2011/2012 to 3,152 in 2017/2018; the most recent figures were derived from its October census returns as March HEA returns had not been made at the time of submission of the ISER. Part-time student figures for the same period rose from 336 to 883. Part-time students now make up 22% of the student population of LYIT. Overall growth in numbers is 34% since 2011/2012, which compares with 24% average growth across the higher education system. 42% of school leavers in Donegal that pursue higher education are reported as attending LYIT. In 2017/18 LYIT had 70 Erasmus students and 72 non-EU students. The number of countries from which its non-EU students are derived has increased from 1 in 2013/14, to 15 in 2017/18.
- 1.7 LYIT currently has a joint awarding agreement with Ulster University and six other collaborative agreements, in which the Institute is the awarding body, with Retail Ireland, Skillnet, Northwest Regional College Derry, Dorset College, and the National Alcohol Forum.
- 1.8 In terms of research, LYIT received delegated authority from QQI in 2017 to award research degrees at Level 9. In addition, it has a number of Strategic Research Centres that specialise in areas such as marine biotechnology, wireless sensors, and electronics, production and innovation technology. In terms of knowledge transfer, HEA data references four invention disclosures by LYIT in 2013 and one in 2014 and 2015. A license agreement was referenced in 2014.
- 1.9 At a higher education policy level, LYIT is operating within a Performance Framework for

2018-2020. It reports against six objectives and associated high-level targets on an annual basis to the HEA. The Performance Framework in turn is influenced by a range of national policies and strategies that have been revised or introduced; including areas such as skills, innovation, access, international engagement, entrepreneurship and language. The Technological Universities Act was introduced in 2018 and now Institutes of Technology can apply for Technological University status if they have met the associated criteria. At least two Institutes of Technology must partner to apply for this status. Letterkenny is a member of the Connaught-Ulster Alliance (CUA), which includes Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, and Institute of Technology Sligo. Consideration of TU status is a current priority for LYIT.

- 1.10 At a wider national level, the *National Planning Framework* is also a significant reference point for LYIT and its strategic development. The *National Planning Framework* is aiming to correct the over-concentration of population, homes and jobs in the Dublin area by creating a more even spread of development across the country by 2040. It also acknowledges Ireland's close relationship with Northern Ireland, and in this context, the "key links between Letterkenny and Derry" as part of the North-West Growth Partnership.
- 1.11 LYIT is in the process of developing a strategic plan for the period 2018-2022. It has cited the outcomes of this present CINNTE Institutional review as one of the inputs to that process. The President of LYIT was reappointed for a further 5-year term in January 2018 and will oversee the implementation of the new strategy. LYIT communicated to the Review Team that its mission remains constant and will influence its new strategy. In summary, its mission is to be nationally significant, regionally engaged, and student-centred.

Quality assurance, review and enhancement

- 1.12 The most recent institutional review of LYIT was carried out by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) in 2009. HETAC was subsequently amalgamated with a number of

other education and training agencies to form QQI. As part of its statutory remit, QQI has issued core, sector-specific and topic-specific quality assurance guidelines that higher education institutions, including LYIT, must have regard to in documenting their quality assurance policies and procedures.

- 1.13 LYIT has a quality assurance policy and a detailed QA handbook that sets out how it implements that policy through its procedures. Staff of the Institution articulated their use of these procedures in the planning and management of academic programmes. The Institute has a management and governance system that is tasked with assuring its Academic Council and its Governing Body that these procedures are being implemented as intended. Student representatives form part of quality oversight through their membership of organs of governance at institute and school levels. LYIT has responded to the introduction of QQI's statutory quality assurance guidelines. The Institute is currently refreshing its quality assurance procedures and finalising a review and redrafting of its Quality Assurance Handbook.
- 1.14 In its review of the Institute's Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report (AIQR) submitted by LYIT to QQI in 2016 and 2017, the Review Team could see examples of how the Institute is seeking to initiate quality enhancement activities. During its visit, the Review Team was assured by its discussions with staff and students that the Institute is responsive to the needs of, and any issues encountered by both cohorts. The Institute has also undertaken a significant number of Periodic Programme Evaluations (PPEs) and Central Services Reviews (CSR). However, the Review Team did not receive documented evidence of quality enhancement by the Institute, arising from the outcomes of these review processes. As discussed later in this report (paragraphs 3.49 and 5.1), the introduction of a Quality Implementation Plan (QIP), would increase the efficiency of the quality enhancement initiatives that the Institute wishes to instigate.



Section B

Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)

Methodology used to prepare the ISER

Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)

2. Methodology used to prepare the ISER

- 2.1 The Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) was developed by an ISER Group. Its membership consisted of the Registrar, the Head of Development, the Head of Teaching & Learning, the Senior Lecturer (Strategic Planning), the Senior Lecturer (Quality Assurance), and the President of the Students' Union.
- 2.2 As illustrated diagrammatically in the ISER itself, the creation of the ISER drew on the outputs from a 24-month cycle of review activities including school and programme-level reviews (PPEs) from January 2016 to September 2017, and central service reviews (CSRs) from January 2016 to March 2018; the latter were thus partially completed prior to the submission of the ISER. Through their participation in these reviews, most staff had some input into the evaluation processes that subsequently informed the content of the ISER. The PPE and CSR reviews, the preparation of the ISER and the cyclical review process are also viewed by LYIT as being closely linked to the ongoing development of its new Strategic Plan 2018-2022. The ISER states that "Oversight of both the development of the new strategy and the self-evaluation for the Cyclical Review involved the Academic Council, Executive Board, Executive Council and the student body with every effort made to ensure that the ongoing work for the new strategic plan could contribute to the Cyclical Review and vice versa".
- 2.3 In terms of other measures reported to inform the ISER, a Consultation and Engagement Document was prepared specifically to inform debate at the Academic Council, Executive Council and with the student body. Fifteen LYIT students and LYIT sabbatical officers also participated in a focus group led by Student Partners in Quality Scotland (sparqs). The session examined key statements from the draft LYIT Institutional Self Evaluation Report. A summary of student responses to these statements was then passed back to LYIT. Given the close link between the ISER preparation and LYIT's development of its new Strategic Plan the Review Team also notes positively that, within the context of its chairing of NStEP's national project 4 (see paragraph 5.8), LYIT and its Students' Union held creative focus groups with students – in the form of facilitated graffiti walls – to assist students in articulating their preferred destination for the Institute by the end of the forthcoming strategic period.
- 2.4 The final draft of the ISER was developed by a sub-group and agreed by the ISER Group, before being approved by both the Executive Board and the Academic Council. The final submission document and the LYIT Profile Document for Cyclical Review were made available electronically to all staff and students.
- 2.5 Whilst the Review Team is satisfied that consultation on the content of the ISER took place, and that it was informed by the outcomes of extensive review processes completed and being undertaken by LYIT, it is of the opinion that, on balance, the ISER is more descriptive than evaluative. It bases this conclusion on several factors:
- LYIT is in the process of developing a strategic plan for 2018-2022. As a result, it was difficult for the Review Team to understand the preferred strategy of the organisation and, in turn, how this has influenced its quality assurance procedures and enhancement initiatives.

- Much of the ISER is written in the future tense: as noted above it refers to a future strategy, but it also refers to developments underway to refresh its quality assurance procedures and proposed quality enhancement activities. As the Review Team is tasked with considering what is currently in place, this concentration on the future was interesting and contextually important, but not evaluatively helpful.
 - Acknowledging LYIT's own observation that it needs to improve the capture and use of academic management information (see paragraphs 3.34-3.35), the Review Team is of the view that future ISERs would benefit from more comprehensive utilisation of data both in terms of evidence **and** evaluation. For instance, while the ISER includes some useful data regarding trends in student numbers and a significantly increased profile of part-time students, it does not present any evaluation of what is behind these trends and the impact on the Institution of this changing profile.
 - To provide a more positive example of where evaluation was in evidence, it is worth noting a thread in the ISER relating to the theme of 'Building Digital Capacity', including potential future investment to accommodate a learning resource centre, IT and innovation laboratories, online learning delivery rooms and classrooms, inclusion of digital literacy in staff and student support and training, and an awareness of the need to improve data systems to inform QA and QE. Although not data-informed, this thread is one very appropriate example within the ISER of a more evaluative approach linking to future planning and strategy, that might extend to a much wider range of areas in future ISERs.
 - The AIQRs for 2016 and 2017 were also made available to the Review Team. These were viewed as satisfactory documents in describing the Quality Assurance processes within LYIT and the improvements being made to these processes. Although the AIQRs are intended to be qualitative and not metric driven, the Review Team felt that even here there was opportunity for more reflective/ evaluative narrative, especially of the reasons for specific QA developments being prioritised. A further unpacking of the reasoning for specific approaches taken and reflection on the impact and effectiveness of the changes would be very useful for the reader. The section of the AIQR relating to enhancement activities is particularly relevant in this respect.
- 2.6 Because of the number of questions that remained unanswered for the Review Team following its review of the ISER and AIQR documents, LYIT was requested to provide quite a significant volume of supplementary information to aid the Review Team in carrying out its review. This was time-consuming for LYIT and perhaps commenced the review process with an impression for LYIT of a quality audit rather than of an improvement and enhancement exercise.
- 2.7 By contrast, the Review Team wishes to positively note the high-level of reflection and evaluation in evidence in its formal meetings with LYIT staff and students. Due to this capacity in the individuals the Review Team engaged with, and also the supplementary information provided by LYIT, the Review Team was confident in its ability to triangulate views on certain key areas of strategic importance to the Institute, and to make recommendations that the Review Team believes will be seen as constructive and useful to LYIT in its next period of very important development.
- 2.8 The Review Team recommends that LYIT embraces the opportunity to be more evaluative when developing its next ISER. In doing so, the Review Team suggests that LYIT reviews its next ISER from an enquiring external perspective i.e., one that seeks to understand why things have happened, what their impact on the Institution has been, and how this will inform future activities and strategies.**



Section C

Quality Assurance/Accountability

Objective 1 – Current Quality Assurance Procedures

Objective 2 – Procedures for Awarding

Objective 3 – Quality Enhancement

Objective 4 – Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression

Objective 5 – Provision of Programmes to International Learners

Quality Assurance/ Accountability

3. Objective 1 – Current Quality Assurance Procedures

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

- 3.1 In conducting its review of LYIT, the Review Team examined the ISER provided by the Institute, its AIQRs for 2016 and 2017, its QA Handbook and a significant amount of supplementary information that illustrated how the Institute is implementing its current quality assurance policies and procedures. Based on this analysis, the Review Team is satisfied that LYIT has in place, and is implementing, an effective set of quality assurance procedures. These procedures are compliant with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and have regard to the *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* (2016) of QQI and to its *Sector-Specific Guidelines developed for the Institutes of Technology* (2016).
- 3.2 There are two significant areas of the relevant QA Guidelines that are addressed by the Review Team in other sections of this report: the first is Governance and Management of Quality (addressed under Objective 2), and the second is Access, Transfer and Progression (addressed under Objective 4).
- 3.3 In the following section, the Review Team makes commendations regarding the implementation of the QA procedures of LYIT and recommends some quality improvement opportunities based on its review, and against the relevant sections of the QA guidelines.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

- 3.4 As noted above, the *governance and management* arrangements of LYIT are discussed under Objective 2. The QA Guidelines identify the link between governance and decision-making and the strategy of the organisation. The strategy of LYIT is addressed here.

- 3.5 LYIT is currently in the process of developing its Strategic Plan for the period 2018-2022. This would appear to the Review Team to be a particularly important period in the Institute's development as it determines its direction regarding the status of Technological University and plans accordingly towards meeting the requisite criteria. The Institute is also actively pursuing growth and increased capacity through its buildings, programmes, student recruitment, and collaborations.
- 3.6 **The Review Team commends the success of LYIT in growing its student numbers and its programme offerings, and for the possibilities of diversifying its income streams this growth has presented during a time of financial challenge.** The Institute has been a key player in regional economic developments and opportunities and has been extremely responsive to the requirements of enterprise (discussed under Objective 3). It has responded to changes in student patterns; notably, the increase in demand for part-time places. It has also been strategic in its collaborations (discussed in paragraphs 3.40-3.46). The Review Team considers that a renewed organisational strategy provides an opportunity for LYIT to build on these positive developments, through the clear identification of priority areas for growth.
- 3.7 The Review Team was informed that some consultation with staff on the strategy of LYIT has taken place. The Review Team considers it extremely important that a collaborative approach to the development of strategy is taken by the Institute as it enters this significant time in its institutional development. The Institute informed the Review Team that draft documentation has been made available to staff on elements of the proposed new strategy; it

was not provided with evidence, however, that staff have had the opportunity to engage in the formulation of the strategy that they will collectively be responsible for implementing. **The Review Team therefore recommends to the Institute that it provides opportunities for all staff to engage in informing the strategy it is currently developing for 2018-2022, as well as for reviewing draft versions of the document.**

- 3.8 Due to the importance of the alignment of mission, strategy and quality assurance and enhancement initiatives, the Review Team considers that a procedure for the systematic involvement of staff in the development of future strategic plans should also be assured. **The Review Team recommends that the Institute includes in its QA Handbook a documented procedure for the development of Strategic Plans, which articulates how staff and other stakeholders are included in one or more stages of internal and external consultation on strategic priorities.**
- 3.9 In several meetings with staff, the wish for a closer strategic link between the Institute's education and training, research, and central support activities was highlighted for the Review Team. Essentially, staff expressed a wish to see a strategic map that would connect the purpose and outcomes of their activities to the overall direction of the organisation. The Review Team notes that the Institute sought to pursue the establishment of Functional Area Plans to support its Strategic Plan 2014-2017. However, it was conveyed to the Review Team that this model was found to be overly complex in its implementation and will be reviewed for the next Strategic Plan.
- 3.10 The fulfilment of an organisational strategy requires the development of linked cross-organisational sub-strategies and detailed operational plans. Sub-strategies connect the areas of the organisation that need to align, in order to deliver on the organisational strategy. Operational plans translate those sub-strategies further for individuals and functional areas and detail indicators of effective performance. In the context of quality review, it is particularly important that functional areas have operational plans and performance

measures against which they can chart their progress and identify changes in the internal and external environment that may have impacted upon or changed those original objectives. The absence of these operational plans was evident to the Review Team in its discussions with staff regarding Central Services Review (CSR), as was the potential benefit of their introduction. **The Review Team therefore recommends, that LYIT develop a series of sub-strategies and operational plans, each involving input and collaboration across education and training, research, and central support areas as necessary, in order to develop Institute-wide systems to support and manage the implementation of its strategy for 2018-2022.**

PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- 3.11 In terms of quality assurance arrangements for programmes of education and training, the Review Team considered the policies and procedures of LYIT for programme development and approval and for programme monitoring and review. The lifecycle of a programme from its proposal to its introduction and review was provided to the Review Team which was a helpful means of corresponding the intention of quality assurance procedures with their implementation. The Review Team saw examples of Outline Programme Proposals that require the proposer to illustrate demand for the proposed programme from industry and learners, and to identify similar programmes in other institutions. Outline programme aims, learning outcomes, and a programme schedule are required for consideration by the Programmes Committee, which in turn reports to the Academic Council. The PPE documentation that the Review Team reviewed illustrated a thorough process that availed of internal and external information and expertise to inform its findings. The reporting arrangements detailed in programme-related quality assurance procedures were evidenced through the minutes of the Programmes Committee and the Academic Council. In these regards, the Review Team considers LYIT's programme-related quality assurance procedures to be robust.

3.12 LYIT introduced 14 new programmes in 2015/2016 (11 Major Awards and 3 Special Purpose Awards) and 19 new programmes in 2016/2017 (15 Major Awards and 4 Special Purpose Awards). New programmes being offered by LYIT have been influenced, in part, by labour market demand and employment opportunities. In its ISER the Institute notes that its forthcoming strategy will also commit to developing new programmes that are interdisciplinary in nature and will require greater interaction between departments and schools and also strengthened processes to support this type of collaboration. The potential benefits of a more inter-disciplinary approach at undergraduate level were articulated by some students; how this could provide strategic building blocks and progression pathways for a similarly cross-disciplinary approach at postgraduate level was also highlighted by staff. For these reasons, and to increase cross-organisational collaboration towards meeting the strategy of LYIT, the Review Team very much encourages the Institute to pursue this intended inter-disciplinary approach.

3.13 The Programmes Committee, which focuses on the oversight of the quality of programme development and review on behalf of the Academic Council, was reported as having met 45 times in the last year. This is an important indicator of the amount of programme activity that is taking place in LYIT. In discussing the Programmes Committee with its members and reviewing associated documentation, the Review Team considers that the oversight being provided by this committee is robust. However, the efficiency of this model is worthy of further consideration and its sustainability in its current format is being evaluated by LYIT. The Review Team understands that the further devolution of some of the responsibilities of the Programmes Committee to a school level is being considered and supports the Institute in its evaluation of this possibility (see paragraph 4.1). At the same time, the Review Team emphasises the importance of the Institute maintaining governance oversight in a more devolved model of governance.

3.14 An increase in the number and types of programmes offered by any institution has a corresponding impact on its human resources. The absence of a role in LYIT most consistently defined as ‘course coordinator’ was raised on several occasions in meetings with staff. The Review Team notes that the potential advantages of introducing this role were identified in the 2009 institutional review of LYIT. LYIT reported to the Review Team that due to the financial challenges experienced by the Institute, this role has not been created. It would appear from discussions with staff that the absence of a course coordination role below Head of Department level is significantly stretching department-level management, who in effect appear to be the first port of call for all students within the Department and for all academic and related queries. Apart from the increase in programmes, the Review Team also notes the increase in the number and diversity of LYIT students, and the demands that this can place at Head of Department level. **The Review Team recommends that given the growth and diversification in LYIT’s portfolio since 2009, and its continued plans for expansion, LYIT introduces course coordinators.**

STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT

3.15 The Review Team was provided with staff data published by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in 2017¹. Based on a total number of full-time core-funded academic staff of 168, 90.5% were permanent and 9.5% on temporary contracts. The gender data categories show that the Executive Board (essentially the senior management team) is made up of seven males and one female; the Executive Council (the full management team) is made up of 15 males and nine females; there is an even balance of females and males amongst academic core staff; there are approximately 17% fewer males in non-academic core staff; and approximately 39% fewer females in what is categorised as research/specialist non-academic roles. The Review Team notes LYIT’s *Equal Opportunities*

1 Higher Education Institutional Staff Profiled by Gender (HEA, 2017)

Policy, and its response to the HEA's *National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions* (2016) and considers that the Institute should continue to seek and avail of opportunities to improve gender balance in those areas outside of academic core staff.

- 3.16 LYIT provided the Review Team with the policies and procedures that inform its staff recruitment, management, and development and their implementation was discussed during the Review Team's meetings with the Institute. The Review Team noted the assessment of qualifications and delivery skills that is undertaken when the Institute is recruiting academic staff. The Institute also assesses attitudinal commitment in terms of institutional values when recruiting new staff. The Review Team was informed of the formal recruitment parameters nationally within which LYIT is obliged to operate. It was clear to the Review Team from the depth of discussion with the Institute's HR staff, that they are very aware of the constraints that nationally agreed employment contracts place on them strategically. However, it was also evident that LYIT is taking measured approaches to internal staff development and recruitment, as it seeks to grow capacity to meet the HR demands of its education and training, research and other activities. The Review Team believes the Institute's processes and procedures around staff recruitment are robust and that they incorporate the consideration of an appropriate range of selection factors.
- 3.17 The Review Team was informed that LYIT will source external expertise and specialisms when required, but that it focusses where possible on the development of existing staff. Apart from culturally wishing to support staff development, the Institute is also pragmatic in the limitations its distance from more highly populated regions can present. The Review Team was of the view that LYIT was maintaining an appropriately balanced staff recruitment and development strategy.
- 3.18 Supporting lecturing staff in their continuous professional development (CPD) was prioritised as part of its Strategic Plan 2014–2017 and LYIT has provided substantial funding for staff

to pursue masters and doctoral programmes. The Institute runs a Master of Arts in Learning and Teaching (MALT) which it describes as being central to supporting staff in advancing their skills in, and knowledge of, learning and teaching. The first cohort to complete the programme in 2017 included eight LYIT staff members and an additional 8 are anticipated to successfully conclude the programme in 2018. Staff are also enrolled on Level 9 and 10 programmes in the university sector with some completing professional doctorates in education. By October 2017, 28.1% of staff had achieved a Level 10 qualification. The acquisition of these qualifications by staff will contribute to the Institute's ability to meet the criteria for Technological University status. The opportunity to avail themselves of these qualifications was also reported by staff as enhancing their personal and professional development and informing their professional practice. **The Review Team commends both the professional development support provided by LYIT and the impact that it is having on individual staff in terms of their professional practice and aspirations.**

- 3.19 The Review Team also heard from staff about their willingness, and indeed wish, to share their research, and the enhanced skills and knowledge gained, with their department and school, and with the Institution as a whole. The Review Team noted a research day that was taking place during its visit and which provided an opportunity for staff to brief others on their research activity. This is of course positive. However, **the Review Team recommends that the Institute develops a strategy to systematically maximise the benefits to LYIT, and to its learners, of staff undertaking postgraduate study, including those on the MALT programme.**
- 3.20 In speaking with the staff of LYIT, the Review Team noted their professionalism; their commitment to their students; and their focus on the assurance and enhancement of quality. This view was supported in the meetings of the Review Team with a substantial cohort of the students of LYIT and with external stakeholders who are interacting with the Institute. While it was clear to the Review Team that the Institute

has access to a significant breadth of skills and experience through its staff, it was not always evident how individuals in linked areas of work, e.g. within central service departments, were enabled by the Institute to formally share that skill and experience. It was also not clear to the Review Team how cross-institutional dialogue is formally facilitated, e.g. between central services departments and academic schools and departments, and between the staff of the Institution and the Executive Board. The Executive Council was identified during meetings with the Review Team as one means through which this communication had been taking place, but meetings were reported to have become less frequent. **The Review Team commends the clear commitment of staff to LYIT and to its learners and the strong learning community that this commitment creates.** In keeping with its previous recommendation, to develop cross-institutional sub-strategies to support the overall strategy of the Institution (paragraph 3.10), **the Review Team recommends that the Institute identifies how it can enhance opportunities for institution-wide and cross-functional dialogue on issues of common interest or shared responsibility.** This could incorporate a review of the function and meeting frequency of the Executive Council and/or other enhancements/alternatives.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

3.21 LYIT has in place procedures for the monitoring of the delivery of its programmes. In speaking to students, the Review Team was satisfied that these procedures are being implemented systematically and provide learners with the opportunity to express their views, both formally and informally. The class representative system is maintained and supported by the Students' Union and it provides a key formal contribution to the monitoring of programmes. It was reported to the Review Team that participation by students in the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) is encouraged by LYIT, but it has led to a reduction in rates of student responses to internal questionnaires on programmes. The Institute has formed a Student Survey Working Group that has been proactive in addressing this and

internal student questionnaire response rates have improved since moving from a paper-based system to an online system. In the next year the online programme questionnaire (titled QA3) will be combined with the ISSE. In terms of informal feedback provided on programmes, students consistently reported to the Review Team that staff were responsive to issues they raised. This was stated as being particularly important to part-time students who identified themselves as being less engaged with the class representative system.

3.22 LYIT has introduced the content management system Blackboard to support teaching and learning. It appears to be primarily used to post lecture notes, but some lecturers also make use of its learning tools, including quizzes. The Institute reports that the PPEs carried out in 2016/2017 led to the identification of a need to examine LYIT's approach to online and blended learning and to the recognition that capacity building in this area is required. Increasing online and blended learning opportunities was referenced to the Review Team on several occasions as being an area of interest to the Institute. If LYIT is to pursue this mode of teaching and learning, it will impact on its quality assurance policies and procedures. The Institute is currently in the process of reviewing the *QA Guidelines for Blended Learning Programmes* (QQI, 2018) to identify any gaps arising in this regard. The advancement of online and blended provision, is a further area of institutional development that would benefit from a cross-institutional approach and, if a strategic priority, could be captured in one of the sub-strategies recommended in paragraph 3.10. As noted in paragraph 3.19, and as part of the recommendation therein, the Review Team would also encourage LYIT to support this development by capitalising further on the teaching and learning research that many of its staff are undertaking, to assist it in ensuring that its pedagogic style incorporates national and international effective practice (Core QA Guidelines, p.13) across all modes of its delivery.

3.23 In terms of other teaching and learning settings, the Institute intends drafting institute guidelines to address work placement. In addition to the

professional placements that are currently part of some of its programmes, these guidelines will also be relevant to the development of New Apprenticeships, if the Institute pursues its intention to explore opportunities in this regard with Donegal ETB. In this context, the Institute will also need to review its quality assurance procedures against the *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes* (2016).

- 3.24 The Teaching and Learning section of the Core QA Guidelines also addresses complaints and appeals. The QA Handbook of LYIT includes a Student Charter and comprehensive information on student entitlements. The Review Team was provided with the procedures for complaints and appeals and it was reported to the Review Team by staff and students that these are made available to students in the handbook they receive at the point of induction. The Students' Union described the role it plays in encouraging students to seek informal resolution of issues arising if possible, but also in supporting students in pursuing formal complaints and appeals if necessary. Mature and part-time students were not aware of how they could complain or seek an appeal, but they were confident that they would be able to acquire this information without any difficulty if needed. This, however, was another example of the Head of Department being frequently cited as the first point of contact for these students, when these circumstances arise. The Review Team considers that this reinforces the recommendation it has made to the Institute in paragraph 3.14 to introduce the role of course coordinator.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

- 3.25 The 2009 review of LYIT recommended that the Institute review examination patterns to ensure appropriate levels of assessment, and that it optimise the timing of examination periods. The Institute reports having made advances on this recommendation by reviewing and revising its modularisation and semesterisation framework,

and by reviewing and formally reporting on examination performance by semester and year. Current assessment procedures and processes being implemented by the Institute appear to be robust. The increasing diversity of programmes and students has led to the Institute keeping its assessment processes under continuous review; it reports that the percentage success in examinations each year is trending towards 75% of students passing all examinations.

- 3.26 From a regulatory perspective, reports on any breaches of assessment regulations are submitted annually to the Academic Council. Samples of external examiner reports, and how they are responded to, were also provided to the Review Team. In addition, academic staff told the Review Team that the Institute supports their acting as External Examiners elsewhere, and that they consider this to be a very useful opportunity to see other quality assurance systems in operation.

SUPPORTS FOR LEARNERS

- 3.27 As a general statement, the Review Team is satisfied from its meetings with all students that LYIT provides a supportive environment. The responsiveness of staff to students was reported as being high and was also emphasised by part-time and international students. 90% of LYIT students that responded to the 2016 ISSE² rated their overall experience of LYIT as good or excellent. In the 2017 ISSE, LYIT scored half a percentage point below the national average for 'Supportive Environment' and over two points higher than the national average for 'Quality of Interactions'.
- 3.28 The Institute has placed an increased emphasis on the induction of new students to LYIT and intends gathering institutional approaches to the first-year experience in an institute guideline. This is part of its strategy to identify the aspects of the student experience that need to be addressed and to establish how best to monitor the achievement of the intended results.
- 3.29 Another aim of the Institute is to encourage students to be innovative and entrepreneurial by

2 32.5% of LYIT students participated in the 2016 ISSE survey: this percentage figure represents the proportion of target student cohorts that responded to at least some survey questions (ISSE Results of 2016, p.95).

offering them opportunities to achieve advanced levels of digital literacy and by supporting them in their transition to employment. As part of the decision to introduce new programmes, and in its review of existing programmes, an identification of required resources is requested. Students reported satisfaction with the library resources available to them and noted that requests for reading material or for support in locating relevant research documentation were readily accommodated by staff in the LYIT and Killybegs campuses. The Review Team equally heard no issues being raised regarding IT facilities or other programme-specific resources. The Review Team was informed by LYIT that it has secured a share of capital funding from the HEA with which it intends to realise a learning resource centre, IT and innovation laboratories, online learning delivery rooms, and classrooms.

3.30 LYIT's Learning Support Unit (The Curve) is evidently well-known and utilised by students. It currently includes a Mathematics Learning Centre, a Communications Learning Centre and a Revision Support Initiative. The Curve also delivers, in partnership with the Department of Law and Humanities, two access programmes: a Certificate in Preparatory Studies for Higher Education, and a Certificate in Access Studies. Several of the students met by the Review Team spoke of having availed of the services of The Curve. Examples included a mature student returning to education, an international student, and a student requiring assistance in one of the disciplines supported. **The Review Team commends the availability through the Curve of support for students in core academic skills throughout their studies in the Institute.** During the review visit, the Review Team also met with staff delivering pastoral and health care student support functions. Support staff clearly articulated not only how their own specific areas of support were delivered, but also how more holistic support plans could be agreed for individual students through meetings involving a number of staff. Based on these discussions, supported by the accounts of students, the Review Team is of the view that LYIT has robust and effective student supports in place in these areas.

3.31 The Students' Union (SU) described for the Review Team the support it provides for students on a range of fronts, including in its engagement with the student representative system and with governance forums. It reported to the Review Team that it has been assisted in this work through the active participation of LYIT in the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP); an initiative that is revisited under Objective 3 – Quality Enhancement. The SU and staff also appear to be collaborating well on certain initiatives. The Estates Manager has engaged with the SU regarding facilities and was invited to meet with class representatives. Students and staff also reported working jointly on a three-year plan of alcohol-free initiatives for which it hopes to achieve national accreditation, and on an anti-bullying policy.

3.32 The area of student supports is one in which a contrast between the two campuses of LYIT is inevitably apparent; this is largely due to the distance between the two campuses and the practical difficulty of students in Killybegs accessing resources physically situated in Letterkenny. The Review Team is aware that the staff and Students' Union of LYIT have sought to bridge this gap for students, as far as that is possible, and intend to continue to expand these efforts. Although the Review Team was at no point made aware of, nor was there any suggestion of, any fundamental failure in any aspect of student support at the Killybegs campus, or that students were less satisfied with the quality of their academic experience there, some students in Killybegs did express to the Review Team a sense of missing out in a general way on a more comprehensive student experience. **The Review Team recommends that the provision of student supports, including opportunities for social, sport or curricular interactions within the wider student body and across sites, forms an integrated sub-strategy of the Institute (as per its recommendation in paragraph 3.10) to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in these areas to meet continued growth and diversification of the student population.**

3.33 Finally, the international office of LYIT is becoming increasingly important to the Institute's prioritisation of growth. As noted in paragraph 1.6, LYIT has 72 non-EU students from 15 different countries and an additional 70 Erasmus students. The Review Team noted that a sensible and discerning view was being taken by the International Office on how best sustainable growth in this area can be achieved. It also noted the care, attention and responsibility that is taken for settling international students into LYIT. This includes the introduction of an ambassador system where established students support new students in orientating them to their new environment. As the international activity in LYIT grows, there would appear to be emerging areas of best practice in this area.

INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

3.34 In terms of the utilisation of data by LYIT to support its quality assurance, review and enhancement, the primary information system of LYIT was reported by the Institute as not having all the reporting capability it required. For instance, difficulties were experienced in consistently extracting data to inform quality assurance self-evaluation reports. Having easy access to data and being able to cross-refer that data to assist in evaluation and planning are recognised by LYIT as being important areas of system development for the Institute, and these will feature in its next strategic plan.

3.35 Aside from difficulties experienced in the presentation of data from an information system perspective, the Institute is in possession of significant amounts of data, as is evidenced through the data tables presented in its ISER. It is also in receipt of data derived from national sources, including from the HEA, and from the outcomes of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE). The Institute informed the Review Team that it intends to maximise its capacity to interpret this data by introducing an Institutional Research Office; essentially a central data unit. As the Institute enters its next stage of development, with its ambitions for further growth and diversity, **the Review Team recommends that the Institute introduces the Institutional Research Office (central data**

unit) as a matter of priority and aligns it with its strategy, planning, monitoring and quality review activities.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

3.36 LYIT has a comprehensive website for public reference. It clearly indicates for prospective learners the qualification to which a programme leads, the associated amount of credit, and the level of the qualification on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

3.37 The Institute's quality assurance policy and procedures are clearly set out on its website in an easily accessible format. The current Student Handbook is also available in digital format.

3.38 LYIT has a policy of publishing the outcomes of reviews on its website. It considers that the information derived from its PPE process is useful to staff, current and prospective students, and other stakeholders. The PPE reports are thus published, as are Programme Validation Reports.

3.39 In terms of its corporate governance, the Institute has also published Annual Reports and Financial Reports.

OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

3.40 The location of LYIT has a significant influence on the extent to which the Institute collaborates. Its location also determines the student population that is available to LYIT and has encouraged the Institute to create models of partnership within and outside the region. The Institute has included *Procedures and Guidelines Governing Collaborative Programmes* in its QA Handbook in the last two years. It anticipates that collaboration in programme development and research will be a focus of its Strategic Plan 2018-2022. LYIT is not currently engaged in transnational education or awarding.

3.41 LYIT has established documented agreements with Donegal Education and Training Board (DET) and with the North-West Regional College (NWRC) in neighbouring Derry, to develop progression pathways for learners wishing to pursue higher education; LYIT's engagement of a

Schools Engagement and RPL Officer will assist in this process. It also makes joint awards with Ulster University at Level 9. The responsibilities of both parties in this regard, for both academic and student support matters, are clearly documented in an associated Memorandum of Understanding that was made available to the Review Team. As a natural extension of these bilateral engagements, a formal strategic alliance has been established by DETB, NWRC, LYIT and Ulster University to support “long-term growth outcomes for the North-West City Region aligned with the work of the North West Strategic Growth Partnership” (Memorandum of Understanding, p.1).

- 3.42 National higher education policy encourages collaboration amongst higher education institutions and LYIT has an Inter-institutional Articulation Agreement with National University of Ireland, Galway and Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (the West North West Higher Education Cluster). In the context of pursuing Technological University status, Letterkenny is a member of the Connaught-Ulster Alliance, which includes Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, and Institute of Technology Sligo. This group of Institutes of Technology made an expression of interest in 2015 for re-designation as a Technological University. The group is currently exploring further steps towards this goal. **The Review recommends that LYIT, in the context of its next strategic plan, begins to formulate and articulate how it can best capitalise on the opportunities that a future designation of Technological University might represent for the Institute, its staff, students and community.**
- 3.43 The partnerships that LYIT has established for co-delivery of programmes leading to its awards require, as in any institution, detailed outlining of respective quality assurance responsibilities. The Institute partners with the National Alcohol Forum in Letterkenny in the co-delivery of a Postgraduate Diploma / MSc in Therapeutic Interventions for Alcohol and Other Drugs, and with Dorset College in Dublin in the co-delivery of a Level 7 BSc in Early Childhood Care, Health and Education. In these cases, the Institute follows a very detailed agreement that sets out how, as the awarding body, it assures the quality of staff,

delivery, resources and the learner experience. This agreement also looks at risk management, appeals arrangements and dispute resolution.

- 3.44 The Review Team spoke with several staff involved in the delivery of these different types of collaborations on behalf of LYIT and was informed of the advantages arising for the Institute and its learners from these partnerships. All collaborative agreement proposals are subject to review by a Due Diligence Committee, which in turn makes recommendations to the Executive Board and Academic Council. The Review Team was able to triangulate the documentation supporting collaboration, staff delivering on collaborative programmes, and discussions with the Institute’s collaborative partners. **The Review Team commends, the manner in which the Institute has developed collaborations and partnerships in order to develop its academic profile and capacity.**
- 3.45 Whilst the Review Team is satisfied with the arrangements that LYIT has put in place to support existing collaborations and partnerships, it did not see or hear evidence of a clear strategy that guides the initial decision of LYIT to collaborate or to form a partnership with another organisation. As LYIT enters into a new strategic phase, **the Review Team recommends to the Institute that it also articulates, from a strategic standpoint, the criteria that it will apply when choosing to engage in further collaborative partnerships.**
- 3.46 The Other Parties Involved in Education and Training section of the Core QA Guidelines also addresses the use of external panellists and examiners by a provider. LYIT has established a Panel of Assessors for New Programme Evaluations and an External Expert Group for Periodic Programme Evaluations (PPE). The reports arising from the Central Services Reviews, and provided to the Review Team, also include input from experienced and knowledgeable external participants. As noted under Programmes of Education and Training (paragraphs 3.11-3.14), the procedures of the Institute for developing new, and reviewing existing programmes, require the input of external expertise, including local enterprise

specialists. The high quality of the Institute's engagement with enterprise is discussed under Objective 3.

SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

3.47 There are a range of monitoring and review mechanisms used by LYIT. The four schools each include Student Progress Committees, Programme Boards, and the School Student Committee, which form part of its ongoing internal monitoring. On an annual basis, schools produce individual reports which are combined to create an Academic Plan that is overseen by the Executive Board and the Academic Council. In terms of periodic evaluation, LYIT conducts Periodic Programme Evaluations (PPE) and Central Services Reviews (CSR). The introduction of the CSR is a new initiative for the Institute and it describes it as the first formal effort at extending peer review to the central service areas. Samples of PPE and CSR self-evaluation reports and review reports were provided to the Review Team. The introduction of the CSR represents a change for service departments and an addition to other reporting commitments, audits etc., to which some of those departments are currently subject. The outcomes of ongoing monitoring, only some examples of which are referenced here, and periodic evaluation are subject to the Institute's governance system, which is discussed under Objective 2.

3.48 LYIT has conducted a very substantial number of PPEs and CSRs in the last 24 months. The rate at which these reviews have been completed was ambitious, in the view of the Review Team, although influenced by the wish of the Institute to use the outputs of these processes to inform its ISER. The ISER does include some review findings, but overall, the evaluative contribution to the review from the completion of these reviews was not proportionate to the immense effort required in undertaking them. Connecting periodic evaluation processes with performance measures linked to the strategy of LYIT was communicated to the Review Team as being difficult for those carrying out both PPE and CSR reviews. Correspondingly, the Institute identified

the difficulties that can arise in distilling salient points across monitoring and evaluation processes. The Review Team has recommended to the Institute that it creates a series of sub-strategies that connect its education and training, research, and central support services to collectively addressing its agreed strategy (paragraph 3.10). It has also recommended the inclusion of metrics in these sub-strategies through which those carrying out monitoring and self-evaluation exercises can measure their own performance and progress. The Review Team considers that the implementation of these connected recommendations around strategy, planning, and determining anticipated performance within and across the Institute, can assist the Institute in its ambition to fully capitalise upon the monitoring and review activities that it is currently undertaking.

3.49 The Review Team notes that a *Summary of Proposed Quality Enhancement Activities* was included by the Institute in its ISER. This includes enhancement measures that are drawn from the outcomes of review processes, the AIQR and Annual Dialogue Meetings of QQI, and the HEA strategic dialogue process. As an extension of this approach, **the Review Team recommends that a more detailed and comprehensive Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), including the outcomes from its monitoring and review activities and related to academic delivery, student experience and student outcomes, is developed and utilised, and that it is monitored by the Institute with a focus on impact and effectiveness.**

RESEARCH

3.50 LYIT is seeking to engage strategically in research and knowledge exchange activities and this is likely to be an increasingly recognisable pillar of its ongoing development as it considers Technological University status. The Institute agreed its research strategy in 2016. It describes the core of its strategy as being "to contribute to the Institute's mission by creating a research and development environment that brings researchers and students together with start-ups, regional industries, and local communities" (ISER). The Review Team was provided with

the policies and procedures that have been developed by the Institute to support its research activities, including regarding intellectual property, regulations, and ethics, as part of a quality framework. LYIT intends conducting an examination and revision of these procedures as they relate to all aspects of research activity. As with other Institutes of Technology, the Institute does not receive core funding for its research activities and has limited flexibility to enable staff to participate in research through its nationally agreed employment contracts.

3.51 The Institute has successfully sourced funding as a participant under the INTERREG VA Programme and under Horizon 2020. It has partnered on a cross-border basis in projects on Renewable Energy, Advanced Manufacturing, and for the cross-border Centre for Personalised Medicine. A second Renewable Energy project, TAOIDE, was funded under Horizon 2020. The WiSAR Lab is an Enterprise Ireland funded Technology Gateway and LYIT research centre, that uses wireless sensor technologies to support companies locally and nationally. The Institute's research strategy is stated as including the improvement of the coordination of research funding, and the undertaking of research in all schools that informs teaching. **LYIT has recently advertised the position of Head of Research and Innovation and it acknowledged the importance of this development during meetings with the Review Team. Staff pointed to the potential of this role to provide common support for inter alia the preparation of research funding applications. It would seem important that this role can provide cross-institutional support. The need for this role having, in turn, appropriate support from an office, was acknowledged by the Institute and this development is commended by the Review**

Team. Whilst the establishment of this role is not the single solution for research expansion in the Institute and cannot be the sole accountable party for the success of research in the Institute, it is a very important part of the infrastructure required to advance an institution-wide research and knowledge exchange strategy.

3.52 The Review Team was informed that all research students are provided with two supervisors; thereby enabling a learning pathway for new supervisors. The quality assurance procedures set out an annual review process, whereby the research student and supervisor can independently assess the progress being made and the effectiveness of the student/supervisor relationship. The Postgraduate Research Advisory Board then independently reviews these accounts and any required actions are taken. Similarly, to the communication of the research that is being carried out by staff, **the Review Team recommends that the Institute find further opportunities for promoting student research internally and identifying its connection with undergraduate programmes.** As referred to in paragraph 3.12, the Institute may also be able to identify opportunities for increased inter-disciplinary contact as part of building a research community for its relatively small research cohort.

3.53 Whilst LYIT has introduced and is currently implementing a research strategy, it is important that it ensures that this sub-strategy remains aligned with its overall Strategic Plan for 2018-2022 and is updated if required, in order to maximise the benefits of the research, in which it is currently investing resources. **It is therefore recommended that the Institute assures itself that its current research strategy is supportive of its new Strategic Plan for the period 2018-2022 and vice versa.**

4. Objective 2 – Procedures for Awarding

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF PROCEDURES FOR AWARDING

- 4.1 The Review Team is aware that LYIT is an independent awarding body with delegated authority from QQI to make awards. Consequently, it has responsibility for establishing and maintaining a quality assured environment for *inter alia* programme design, delivery and assessment. It is also responsible for assuring the quality of any other provider with which it is co-delivering a programme, that is leading to one of its awards.
- 4.2 As discussed under Objective 1, the Review Team is satisfied that LYIT has robust quality assurance procedures in place to determine whether a higher education programme should be developed and to manage the development, delivery and assessment of that programme.
- 4.3 As noted previously, LYIT is engaged in a joint awarding agreement with Ulster University (a master's programme) and has established collaborative agreements with four other organisations for the co-delivery of six other programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The Review Team was provided with the details of the signed agreements that the Institute entered into forming these joint and collaborative arrangements; this was referred to in paragraph 3.41.
- 4.4 Having reviewed substantial documentation regarding LYIT's quality assurance policies and procedures and their implementation, the Review Team is satisfied that LYIT has in place, and is implementing, effective procedures in the context of its awarding of qualifications up to and including research degrees at Level 9. These procedures are compliant with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and have regard to the *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* (2016) of QQI and to its *Sector-Specific Guidelines developed for the Institutes of Technology* (2016).
- providers are required to have regard. For the Institutes of Technology, these are supplemented with sector-specific guidelines that refer to the governance of taught and research programmes that lead to awards independently made by these institutions under delegated authority.
- 4.6 The role and membership of LYIT's Governing Body is set out in the legislation that established the Institutes of Technology. Its members are drawn from education and training, local government, staff and students of the Institute, and labour market actors. The Review Team met with the Chair and several members of the Governing Body. The Governing Body communicated that it is working from a formal risk register that leads to issues of concern, academic or otherwise, being discussed at its Audit Committee and elevated to the Governing Body as necessary. In this regard, the Governing Body considered itself to be well-informed regarding the Institute as a whole. This was supported for the Review Team in its discussion with the Governing Body members who were knowledgeable about the Institute, as well as being enthusiastic about, and strategically ambitious for, LYIT.
- 4.7 As per its underpinning legislation, LYIT has an Academic Council appointed by the Governing Body and to which it has delegated its responsibility for overseeing academic matters. The Academic Council staff membership has been devised with reference to gender equality; two students are amongst its members. LYIT also has an Executive Board, essentially a senior management team, that plays a significant role in the governance of LYIT, particularly regarding matters of resources and strategy.
- 4.8 The Academic Council has established a series of sub-committees to support it in fulfilling its responsibilities. The sub-committees established by LYIT are the Learning & Teaching and Student Engagement Committee; the Academic Standards Committee; the Planning Committee; the Research Committee; and the Programmes Committee. The Institute prefers to appoint Chairs of these sub-committees that

THE GOVERNANCE SYSTEM OF LYIT

- 4.5 The Core QA Guidelines describe academic governance characteristics for which all

are not Heads of School or Department, with a view to extending the contribution of other staff members to decision-making and operational management processes. The Review Team considers this to be a positive approach for the Institute to take, rather than replicating its senior management hierarchy in its academic governance structures. It was also provided with examples during its discussions with staff where this construction has led to positively challenging interaction on key academic and research matters, such as the agreement of a research strategy for the organisation. The Review Team was provided with minutes from the Academic Council and reports from the sub-committees to the Academic Council on issues referred for consideration.

- 4.9 There is a further layer of governance that has evolved at school level to oversee programmes, namely the Student Progress Committees, Programme Boards, and the School Student Committee. Class representatives sit on both Programme Boards and School Student Committees; as discussed under Objective 3, supports to increase the quality of student engagement in governance have been sourced by LYIT through the National Student Engagement Programme (NSTEP). The Institute has also developed governance to support its research activities, including the Postgraduate Research Advisory Board and the Research Ethics Committee.
- 4.10 The large number of governance units in place in LYIT leads to a consequent need for clarity regarding how these governance units interact. The Review Team was provided with general descriptions of the roles of the units that make up the governance system of LYIT, but not with terms of reference that specify decision-making responsibilities. The Review Team also considered that there were mixed levels of understanding amongst the staff it met regarding the relationship of one unit with another. The Core QA Guidelines require that a governance system has documented roles and responsibilities (2016:5). The Review Team also considers that the documentation of these roles is a significant component in assuring the quality and consistency of an academic

governance system. **The Review Team therefore recommends that LYIT clarifies, documents, and internally communicates the specific remits of all its governance entities, the parameters of their decision-making ability, and their reporting lines.**

- 4.11 A potential governance development communicated by LYIT was the restructuring and decentralisation of some of its governance decision-making relating to the academic management of programmes to the Institute's schools. This was articulated to the Review Team as potentially having two key advantages: the first being to focus the Academic Council and the Executive Board on more strategic matters, and the second being to increase the pace of decision-making on programme issues in a way which will not compromise quality outcomes. The Review Team considers that, if LYIT is going to re-examine its governance structures in this way, it should also take the opportunity to consider more comprehensively how its current governance arrangements are structured and whether they can be simplified. **The Review Team therefore recommends that LYIT reviews its governance system and establishes if it can be streamlined with consideration to its effectiveness and impact, in the context of its plans for further decentralisation of decision-making, and in line with supporting the goals and targets in its renewed strategy.**
- 4.12 On an executive level, and as noted above, the Institute has an Executive Board. It also has an Executive Council that includes senior management, Heads of Department and Central Service managers. The Review Team was provided with minutes from a meeting of this group that took place in November 2017. The Executive Council was mentioned by several staff as having been a positive, if challenging, forum when it met consistently. The now apparent irregularity of meetings of the Executive Council directly relates to the earlier recommendation made by the Review Team to the Institute, to identify how it can enhance opportunities for institution-wide and cross-functional dialogue, on issues of common interest or shared responsibility (paragraph 3.20).

5. Objective 3 – Quality Enhancement

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

5.1 As noted under Objectives 1 and 2, the Review Team is satisfied that LYIT has a quality assurance system in place that is leading to quality outcomes and is subject to oversight through its governance system. The Review Team is also satisfied that LYIT is actively seeking to improve the quality of the Institution and to responsively address any concerns raised by its students. Consistent with its previous recommendation, however, the Review Team considers that LYIT should capture, manage and monitor its quality enhancement activities more efficiently and comprehensively through the introduction of a defined Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) (paragraph 3.49).

THE ALIGNMENT OF THE INSTITUTION'S MISSION AND TARGETS FOR QUALITY

5.2 The Review Team notes that the mission of LYIT is to be nationally significant, regionally engaged, and student-centred. This mission will, in turn, inform the strategy LYIT is developing for the period 2018-2022. In its examination of documentation and discussion with staff members, the Review Team noted a lack of specified performance measures to support staff in reviewing and reporting on progress towards meeting objectives in a given period. The Review Team has also identified the benefits of introducing more opportunities for cross-organisational or cross-departmental planning. As a result, the Review Team has recommended that LYIT develops a series of linked sub-strategies and detailed operational plans, including performance measures, that are informed by more strategic use and evaluation of data (paragraph 3.10).

5.3 The Review Team has noted the significant number of quality reviews of programmes and services that LYIT has undertaken over the last 24 months. However, as referenced in paragraph 1.14, in its consideration of the Institute's 2016 and 2017 AIQRs, the Review Team was without

strong evidence of quality enhancement being managed and linked by LYIT to quality review outcomes. It considers that the outcomes of these processes, and key themes identified, could be harnessed more effectively to inform organisational enhancement initiatives by the introduction of a comprehensive Quality Improvement Plan (paragraph 3.49). **The Review Team recommends that LYIT should monitor its quality enhancement activities based on a systematic analysis of the outcomes of its reviews against the objectives of the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).**

5.4 The Review Team considers that the implementation of these linked recommendations regarding mission, strategy, and planning will enable the Institute to more effectively align its mission with specified targets for quality and its enhancement.

INNOVATIVE AND EFFECTIVE PRACTICES FOR QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

5.5 There are two areas of innovation and quality enhancement that the Review Team wishes to highlight under this objective; the first relates to the quality of LYIT's engagement with enterprise and the second is its active participation in national enhancement initiatives.

5.6 The regional location of LYIT has been referenced previously in this report as a significant influence on how the Institute operates and its role within the community. In meeting with external stakeholders as part of this review, the Review Team was left in no doubt regarding the high esteem in which the Institute is held by its regional partners. The Institute plays a very active role in meeting the evolving skills needs of existing employers and of attracting new enterprise to the region. In addition to its direct engagement with enterprise, **the Review Team commends the commitment by LYIT of the time and expertise of its staff to contributing to relevant regional and sectoral fora.**

5.7 The Review Team noted in its discussions with staff and students that the Institute's

engagement with enterprise has a correspondingly positive impact on its teaching and learning and research activities. **The Review Team commends LYIT for the strong and effective links it is making with industry and employers which are, in turn, enhancing the student experience.** The presence of Colab on the LYIT campus is a further dimension to the Institute that is increasing the interaction of undergraduate and postgraduate students with enterprise and entrepreneurs.

- 5.8 In terms of national enhancement programmes, the Review Team notes that LYIT was successful in its competitive bid to participate in the NStEP programme, as a means of enhancing student participation in consultation and decision-making fora. The Students' Union, in

conjunction with the staff of LYIT, has sought to take best advantage from this enhancement opportunity and to extend its utility amongst student representatives and others. The Review Team encourages the Institute to ensure that the NStEP programme remains relevant, as class representatives develop in their roles. The staff of LYIT also made several references to the work of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. It was communicated to the Review Team that the Institute wishes to increase the digital capacity of the Institute through its engagement with the National Forum's activities. It is also actively working with the National Forum on its new Data-Enabled Student Success Initiative. **The Review Team commends the active engagement of LYIT in national quality enhancement initiatives.**

6. Objective 4 – Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION (ATP)

- 6.1 The Review Team is satisfied that LYIT is effectively implementing access, transfer and progression processes that are in accordance with the *QQI Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression (2015)*.
- 6.2 The Institute informed the Review Team that it is in the process of developing a composite Access, Transfer and Progression procedure that will encompass its current arrangements and regulations regarding the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), award titles and entry requirements. It intends that this will reflect the student lifecycle from admission to graduation. The Review Team considers that this will be an important and useful addition to the QA Handbook of the Institute.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ATP IN LYIT

ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION

- 6.3 LYIT's student body is becoming increasingly diverse and it now has significant numbers of both mature and part-time students (paragraph 1.6). These combined activities have resulted in the HEA referring to LYIT as 'a national leader in access to higher education' (HEA, LYIT Strategic Dialogue Cycle 4, Reflections on Performance). In addition, and further enhancing the access opportunities it provides, LYIT offers two Level 6 access programmes (as referenced in paragraph 3.30) for adult learners who wish to progress to higher education either after a break from education and/or who have little or no formal education qualifications. It is also increasing access to its programmes for international students, which is contributing to a growing diversity of the learner environment. As referenced previously in this report (paragraph 3.41), LYIT has also been extremely active in seeking to engage in strategically important collaborations both north and south of the border. In the context of facilitating progression, it has entered into agreements with Donegal ETB (DETB) and with the North-West Regional College

(NWRC) in Derry. In doing so, the Institute has worked with these partners to chart appropriate pathways for learners that wish to pursue higher education on completion of their further education and training studies. **The Review Team commends the highly effective and wide range of activities pursued by LYIT to support the access, transfer and progression of students.**

- 6.4 In addition, and from speaking to students from every mode of learning, in education and training and in research, and on both campuses, **the Review Team commends the extent to which all students reported feeling integrated into LYIT and the wider student community.** However, Objective 1, paragraph 3.32 should also be noted where the Review Team recommends that the provision of student supports forms an integrated sub-strategy of the Institute to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in these areas to meet continued growth and diversification.

CREDIT AND RPL

- 6.5 The programmes of LYIT are all articulated in credit that is aligned with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) have been a more recent inclusion in the QA Handbook of LYIT. The Institute has procedures in place for the recognition of certified and experiential learning and has information regarding the availability of both on its website. In its AIQRs for 2016 and 2017, it reported almost 400 RPL applications for the 2015/2016 academic year and over 400 for 2016/2017.

INFORMATION PROVISION

- 6.6 As an additional component of Access, Transfer and Progression, and as noted in paragraph 3.36, the website of LYIT clearly indicates for prospective learners the qualification to which a programme leads, the associated amount of credit, and the level of the qualification on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). This level of information was also in evidence in published programme prospectuses.

7. Objective 5 – Provision of Programmes to International Learners

Statement re Provision of Programmes to International Students

- 7.1 As the statutory international education quality assurance scheme to determine compliance with the *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners* has not yet come into effect, this section is not applicable.

Section D

Conclusions

Overall Findings

- Commendations
- Recommendations
- Top 5 Commendations and Recommendations

Conclusions

8. Overall Findings

8.1 This final section draws together the commendations and recommendations made throughout this report and prioritises the most important five of each. The overarching statements regarding the quality assurance arrangements of LYIT made by the Review Team are also re-stated.

COMMENDATIONS

8.2 The Review Team makes the following commendations to LYIT:

- 8.2.1 The Review Team commends the success of LYIT in growing its student numbers and its programme offerings, and for the possibilities of diversifying its income streams this growth has presented during a time of financial challenge.
- 8.2.2 The Review Team commends both the professional development support provided and the impact that it is having on individual staff in terms of their professional practice and aspirations.
- 8.2.3 The Review Team commends the clear commitment of staff to LYIT and to its learners and the strong learning community that this commitment creates.
- 8.2.4 The Review Team commends the availability through the Curve of support for students in core academic skills throughout their studies in the Institute.
- 8.2.5 The Review Team commends the manner in which the Institute has developed collaborations and partnerships in order to develop its academic profile and capacity.
- 8.2.6 The Review Team commends LYIT's commitment to the introduction of a Head of Research and Innovation and a Research Office.
- 8.2.7 The Review Team commends the commitment by LYIT of the time and expertise of its staff to contributing to relevant regional and sectoral enterprise fora.
- 8.2.8 The Review Team commends LYIT for the strong and effective links it is making with industry and employers which are, in turn, enhancing the student experience.
- 8.2.9 The Review Team commends the active engagement of LYIT in national quality enhancement initiatives.
- 8.2.10 The Review Team commends the highly effective and wide range of activities pursued by LYIT to support the access, transfer and progression of students.
- 8.2.11 The Review Team commends the extent to which all students reported feeling integrated into LYIT and the wider student community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8.3 The Review Team makes the following recommendations to LYIT:

- 8.3.1 The Review Team recommends that LYIT embraces the opportunity to be more evaluative when developing its next ISER. In doing so, that it reviews the document from an enquiring external perspective i.e., one that seeks to understand why things have happened, what their impact on the Institution has been, and how this will inform future activities and strategies.
- 8.3.2 The Review Team recommends to the Institute that it provides opportunities for all staff to engage in informing the strategy it is currently developing for 2018-2022, as well as for reviewing draft versions of the document.
- 8.3.3 The Review Team recommends that the Institute includes in its QA Handbook, a documented procedure for the development of Strategic Plans, which articulates how staff and other stakeholders are systematically included in one or more stages of internal and external consultation on strategic priorities.

- 8.3.4 The Review Team recommends that LYIT develop a series of sub-strategies and operational plans, each involving input and collaboration across education and training, research, and central support areas, where necessary, in order to develop institute-wide systems to support and manage the implementation of its strategy for 2018-2022.
- 8.3.5 In dialogues with students, the Heads of Department were very frequently cited as the default port of call within the Department for all academic and related queries. The Review Team recommends that given the growth and diversification in LYIT's portfolio since 2009, and its continued plans for expansion, LYIT introduces course coordinators.
- 8.3.6 The Review Team recommends that the Institute develops a strategy to systematically maximise the benefits to LYIT, and to its learners, of staff undertaking postgraduate study.
- 8.3.7 The Review Team recommends that the Institute identifies how it can enhance opportunities for institution-wide and cross-functional dialogue on issues of common interest or shared responsibility.
- 8.3.8 The Review Team recommends that the provision of student supports, including opportunities for social, sport or curricular interactions within the wider student body and across sites, forms an integrated sub-strategy of the Institute to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in these areas to meet continued growth and diversification of the student population.
- 8.3.9 The Review Team recommends that the Institute introduces the Institutional Research Office (central data unit) as a matter of priority and aligns it with its strategy, planning, monitoring and review activities.
- 8.3.10 The Review recommends that the Institute, in the context of its next strategic plan, begins to formulate and articulate how it can best capitalise on the opportunities that a future designation of Technological University might represent for the Institute, its staff, students and community.
- 8.3.11 The Review Team recommends to the Institute that it articulates, from a strategic standpoint, the criteria that it will apply when choosing to engage in further collaborative partnerships.
- 8.3.12 The Review Team recommends that a more detailed and comprehensive Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), including the outcomes from its monitoring and review activities and related to academic delivery, student experience and student outcomes, is developed and utilised, and that it is monitored by the Institute with a focus on impact and effectiveness.
- 8.3.13 The Review Team recommends that the Institute find further opportunities for promoting student research internally and identifying its connection with undergraduate programmes.
- 8.3.14 The Review Team recommends that the Institute assures itself that its current research strategy is supportive of its new Strategic Plan for the period 2018-2022 and vice-versa.
- 8.3.15 The Review Team recommends that LYIT clarifies, documents, and internally communicates the specific remits of all its governance entities, the parameters of their decision-making ability, and their reporting lines.
- 8.3.16 The Review Team recommends that LYIT reviews its governance system and establishes if it can be streamlined with consideration to its effectiveness and impact, in the context of its plans for further decentralisation of decision-making, and in line with supporting the goals and targets in its renewed strategy.
- 8.3.17 The Review Team recommends that LYIT should monitor its quality enhancement activities based on a systematic analysis of its outcomes against the objectives of the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

Top 5 Commendations and Recommendations

8.4 The Review Team wishes to highlight the following 5 commendations:

- 8.4.1 The Review Team commends the success of LYIT in growing its student numbers and its programme offerings, and for the possibilities of diversifying its income streams this growth has presented during a time of financial challenge.
- 8.4.2 The Review Team commends LYIT's commitment to the introduction of a Head of Research and Innovation and a Research Office.
- 8.4.3 The Review Team commends LYIT for the strong and effective links it is making with industry and employers which are, in turn, enhancing the student experience.
- 8.4.4 The Review Team commends the highly effective and wide range of activities pursued by LYIT to support the access, transfer and progression of students.
- 8.4.5 The Review Team commends the manner in which the Institute has developed collaborations and partnerships in order to develop its academic profile and capacity.

8.5 The Review Team wishes to highlight the following 5 recommendations:

- 8.5.1 The Review Team recommends that LYIT develop a series of sub-strategies and operational plans, each involving input and collaboration across education and training,

research, and central support areas, where necessary, in order to develop institute-wide systems to support and manage the implementation of its strategy for 2018-2022.

- 8.5.2 The Review Team recommends that LYIT reviews its governance system and establishes if it can be streamlined with consideration to its effectiveness and impact, in the context of its plans for further decentralisation of decision-making, and in line with supporting the goals and targets in its renewed strategy.
- 8.5.3 In dialogues with students the Heads of Department were very frequently cited as the default port of call within the Department for all academic and related queries. The Review Team recommends that given the growth and diversification in LYIT's portfolio since 2009, and its continued plans for expansion, LYIT introduces course coordinators.
- 8.5.4 The Review Team recommends that the Institute identifies how it can enhance opportunities for institution-wide and cross-functional dialogue on issues of common interest or shared responsibility.
- 8.5.5 The Review Team recommends that the Institute introduces the Institutional Research Office (central data unit) as a matter of priority and aligns it with its strategy, planning, monitoring and review activities.

Overarching Statements about QA

8.6 The Review Team restates the following overarching statements regarding the quality assurance arrangements of LYIT:

8.6.1 *The effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of the Institution, the extent of their implementation, and the extent to which the quality assurance procedures can be considered compliant with the ESG and having regard to QQI's statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (QAG).*

In conducting its review of LYIT, the Review Team examined the ISER provided by the Institute, its AIQRs for 2016 and 2017, its QA Handbook and a significant amount of supplementary information that illustrated how the Institute is implementing its current quality assurance policies and procedures. Based on this analysis, the Review Team is satisfied that LYIT has in place, and is implementing, an effective set of quality assurance procedures. These procedures are compliant with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and have regard to the *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* (2016) of QQI and to its *Sector-Specific Guidelines developed for the Institutes of Technology* (2016).

8.6.2 *The effectiveness of the procedures established for the overall operation and management of the Institution as an awarding body.*

Having reviewed substantial documentation regarding LYIT's quality assurance policies and procedures and their implementation, the Review Team is satisfied that LYIT has

in place, and is implementing, effective procedures in the context of its awarding of qualifications up to and including research degrees at Level 9. These procedures are compliant with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and have regard to the *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* (2016) of QQI and to its *Sector-Specific Guidelines developed for the Institutes of Technology* (2016).

8.6.3 *The enhancement of quality by the Institution through governance, policy, and procedures.*

The Review Team is satisfied that LYIT has a quality assurance system in place that is leading to quality outcomes and is subject to oversight through its governance system. The Review Team is also satisfied that LYIT is actively seeking to improve the quality of the Institution and to responsively address any concerns raised by its students. Consistent with its recommendation, however, the Review Team considers that LYIT could capture, manage and monitor its quality enhancement activities more efficiently and comprehensively through the introduction of a Quality Improvement Plan.

8.6.4 *The extent to which the procedures are in keeping with QQI policy for Access, Transfer and Progression.*

The Review Team is satisfied that LYIT is effectively implementing access, transfer and progression processes that are in accordance with the *QQI Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression* (2015).



APPENDICES

Appendices

- A: Terms of Reference
- B: Main Review Visit Schedule
- C: Institutional Response

Appendix A

Terms of Reference (Terms of Reference for the Review of Institutes of Technology)

SECTION 1 Background and Context for the Review

1.1 Context and Legislative Underpinning

These are the Terms of Reference for the Review of an Institute of Technology (non-Designated Awarding Bodies) and encompass the following institutions:

- Athlone Institute of Technology
- Cork Institute of Technology
- Dundalk Institute of Technology
- Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology
- Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology
- Institute of Technology Blanchardstown
- Institute of Technology Carlow
- Institute of Technology Sligo
- Institute of Technology Tallaght
- Institute of Technology Tralee
- Letterkenny Institute of Technology
- Limerick Institute of Technology
- Waterford Institute of Technology

In 2016, QQI adopted a policy on cyclical review in higher education which sets out in greater detail the scope, purposes, criteria, model and procedures for review. These are represented in the Terms of Reference and the Handbook for the Review of Institutes of Technology. QQI has introduced an annual reporting process for institutions whereby institutions are required to submit an Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR). The aim of the AIQR is to provide a contemporary account of quality assurance (QA) within an institution. Information is provided through an online template and it is published. Collated annual reports are provided to periodical review teams. Annual reporting allows institutions and QQI to engage on a regular basis. Published annual reports assist with documentation management for institutions in reviews and lessen the burden on institutions in the lead-up to a review.

This review cycle is being conducted in a very changed context for higher education. The landscape for higher education has been significantly reshaped since the last cycle of reviews commenced. Smaller colleges have been merged with universities and many institutes of technology are reorganising and preparing mergers as part of the Technological University process. New alliances and partnerships envisaged by [Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape](#) have commenced. A new approach to public funding has been introduced and operated by the Higher Education Authority (HEA). Initiatives for enhancement such as the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (NFETL) have been formalised at a national level. These developments mean that there are new sources of information and external benchmarks available to institutions that can be used to inform self-evaluation in this review cycle. Key measurements such as entry profiles, student retention, graduate profiles and staff and student satisfaction rates can provide a quantitative source of information for institutions, to assist in internal decision-making and to help demonstrate evidence of the quality of an institution's offer.

The 2012 Act states that QQI shall consult with the HEA in carrying out the review. QQI has agreed with HEA that this will take the form of engagement with QQI on the Terms of Reference and confirmation of the status of the institution within the higher education system, sharing individual institutional profiles and data with the team.

Institutes of Technology completed a statutory review cycle from 2009-2012. Prior to this, IoTs were reviewed for the purpose of granting Delegation of Authority. This review cycle commences in 2017 and will terminate in 2023.

The 2017-2023 Review Cycle Schedule is:

INSTITUTION	COMPLETION DATES			
	ISER	Planning Visit	Main Review Visit	Report
Institute of Technology, Sligo	Q4 2017	Q1 2018	Q2 2018	Q3 2018
Letterkenny Institute of Technology	Q4 2017	Q1 2018	Q2 2018	Q3 2018
Dundalk Institute of Technology	Q2 2018	Q3 2018	Q4 2018	Q1 2019
Institute of Technology, Tralee	Q4 2018	Q1 2019	Q2 2019	Q3 2019
Waterford Institute of Technology	Q2 2019	Q3 2019	Q4 2019	Q1 2020
Institute of Technology, Carlow	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020
Institute of Technology, Tallaght	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020	Q1 2021
Institute of Technology Blanchardstown	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020	Q1 2021
Limerick Institute of Technology	Q4 2020	Q1 2021	Q2 2021	Q3 2021
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology	Q2 2021	Q3 2021	Q4 2021	Q1 2022
Cork Institute of Technology	Q4 2021	Q1 2022	Q2 2022	Q3 2022
Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology	Q2 2022	Q3 2022	Q4 2022	Q1 2023
Athlone Institute of Technology	Q2 2022	Q3 2022	Q4 2022	Q1 2023

1.2 Purposes

The Policy for the Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions highlights four purposes for individual institutional reviews. These are set out in the table below.

PURPOSE	ACHIEVED AND MEASURED THROUGH:
<p>1. To encourage a QA culture and the enhancement of the student learning environment and experience across and within an institution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - emphasising the student and the student learning experience in the review - providing a source of evidence of areas for enhancement and areas for revision of policy and change and basing follow-up upon them - exploring innovative and effective practices and procedures - exploring quality as well as quality assurance within the institution.
<p>2. To provide feedback to institutions about institution-wide quality and the impact of mission, strategy, governance and management on quality and the overall effectiveness of their quality assurance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - emphasising the governance of quality and quality assurance at the level of the institution - pitching the review at a comprehensive institution-wide level - evaluating compliance with legislation, policy and standards - evaluating how the institution has identified and measured itself against its own benchmarks and metrics to support quality assurance governance and procedures - emphasising the enhancement of quality assurance procedures.
<p>3. To contribute to public confidence in the quality of institutions by promoting transparency and public awareness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - adhering to purposes, criteria and outcomes that are clear and transparent - publishing the reports and outcomes of reviews in accessible locations and formats for different audiences - evaluating, as part of the review, institutional reporting on quality and quality assurance, to ensure that it is transparent and accessible.
<p>4. To encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - using the expertise of international, national and student peer reviewers who are independent of the institution - ensuring that findings are based on stated evidence - facilitating institutions to identify measurement, comparison and analytic techniques, based on quantitative data relevant to their own mission and context, to support quality assurance - promoting the identification and dissemination of examples of good practice and innovation.

SECTION 2

Objectives and Criteria

2.1 Review Objectives

OBJECTIVE 1

To review the effectiveness and implementation of the QA procedures of the institution. through consideration of the procedures set out, primarily, in the AIQR. Where necessary, the information provided by the AIQR is supplemented by additional information provided through documentation requests and interviews. The scope of this includes reporting procedures, governance and publication. This also incorporates an analysis of the ways in which the institution uses measurement, comparisons and analytic techniques, based on quantitative data, to support quality assurance governance and procedures. Progress on the development of quality assurance since the last review of the institution will be evaluated. Consideration will also be given to the effectiveness of the AIQR and Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports (ISER) procedures within the institution.

The scope of this objective also extends to the overarching approach of the institution to assuring itself of the quality of its research degree programmes and research activities.

This objective also encompasses the effectiveness of the procedures established by the institution for the assurance of the quality of alliances, partnerships and overseas provision, including the TU clusters, mergers, transnational provision, joint awarding, joint provision and regional fora.

OBJECTIVE 2

To review the procedures established by the institution for the governance and management of its functions that comprise its role as an awarding body. The team will focus on evidence of a governance system to oversee the education and training, research and related activity of the institution and evidence of a culture that supports quality within the institution. Considerations will centre upon the effectiveness of decision-making across the institution.

OBJECTIVE 3

To review the enhancement of quality by the institution through governance, policy, and procedures.

To review the congruency of quality assurance procedures and enhancements with the institution's own mission and goals or targets for quality.

To identify innovative and effective practices for quality enhancement.

OBJECTIVE 4

To review the effectiveness and implementation of procedures for access, transfer and progression.

OBJECTIVE 5

Following the introduction of a statutory international education quality assurance scheme, to determine compliance with the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners.

2.2 Review Criteria

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 1

The Review Report will include a specific qualitative statement on the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of the institution and the extent of their implementation. The report will also include a specific statement on the extent to which the quality assurance procedures can be considered as compliant with the ESG and as having regard to QQI's statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (QAG). These statements will be highlighted in the report of the review.

The statements may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements, recommendations and possibly recommendations for directions in reference to this objective.

The criteria to be used by the team in reaching conclusions for this objective are:

- ESG
- QQI Core Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines
- QQI Sector Specific QA Guidelines for Institutes of Technology
- Section 28 of the 2012 Act
- QQI Policy and Criteria for Making Awards (including FET provision).

Where appropriate and actioned by the institution, additional QQI guidelines will be incorporated:

- For Apprenticeship, QA Guidelines for Apprenticeship Programmes
- Sectoral Protocols for Research
- Sectoral Protocols for Joint Awards
- The institution's own objectives and goals for quality assurance.

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 2

The Review Report will include a specific qualitative statement on the effectiveness of the procedures established for the overall operation and management of the institution as an awarding body.

The statements may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements, recommendations and possibly recommendations for conditions in reference to this objective.

The criteria to be used by the team in reaching conclusions for this objective are ESG (Parts 1.1 and 1.4 in particular), QQI Core QAG, QQI Sector Specific Institute of Technology QAG and QQI Policy and Criteria for Delegation of Authority.

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 3

The Review Report will include a specific qualitative statement on the enhancement of quality by the institution through governance, policy, and procedures.

This statement may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements and recommendations in reference to this objective. If identified, innovative and effective practices for quality enhancement will be highlighted in the report.

The criteria to be used by the team in reaching conclusions for this objective are:

- The institution's own mission and vision
- The goals or targets for quality identified by the institution
- Additional sources of reference identified by the institution.

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 4

The report will include a qualitative statement on the extent to which the procedures are in keeping with QQI policy for Access, Transfer and Progression.

This statement may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements and recommendations and possibly recommendations for conditions in reference to this objective.

The criterion to be used by the team in reaching conclusions for this objective is QQI Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 5

When the statutory international education quality assurance scheme is in place, the report will include a qualitative statement on the extent to which the procedures are compliant with the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners.

This statement may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements and recommendations and possibly recommendations for conditions in reference to this objective.

The criterion to be used by the team in reaching conclusions for this objective is the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners.

Key questions to be addressed by the review for each objective

- How have quality assurance procedures and reviews been implemented within the institution?
- How effective are the internal quality assurance procedures and reviews of the institution?
- Are the quality assurance procedures in keeping with European Standards and Guidelines?
- Are the quality assurance procedures in keeping with QQI policy and guidelines, or their equivalent?
- Who takes responsibility for quality and quality assurance across the institution?
- How transparent, accessible and comprehensive is reporting on quality assurance and quality?
- How is quality promoted and enhanced?
- Are there effective innovations in quality enhancement and assurance?
- Is the student experience in keeping with the institution's own stated mission and strategy?
- Are achievements in quality and quality assurance in keeping with the institution's own stated mission and strategy?
- How do achievements in quality and quality assurance measure up against the institution's own goals or targets for quality?

SECTION 3 The Review Process

3.1 Process

The primary basis for the review process is the handbook.

3.2 Review Team Profile

QQI will appoint the Review Team to conduct the institutional review. Review Teams are composed of peer reviewers who are students and senior institutional leaders and staff from comparable institutions as well as external representatives. The size of the Team and the duration of their visit will depend on the size and complexity of the institution but in general the Review Team for an Institute of Technology will consist of five or six persons. Each Review Team includes a Chairperson and Coordinating Reviewer, and may be supported by a rapporteur, who is not a member of the team, to take and collate notes of meetings. A single team may undertake the review of two different institutions.

Reviewers are not QQI employees, but rather peers of the institution. The institution will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed composition of their Review Team to ensure there are no conflicts of interest, and QQI will ensure an appropriate and entirely independent team of reviewers is selected for the institution. QQI has final approval over the composition of each Review Team.

There will be appropriate gender representation on the Review Team. The team will consist of carefully selected and trained and briefed reviewers who have appropriate skills and are competent to perform their tasks. The team will operate under the leadership of the Review Chairperson.

The Review Team will be appointed in keeping with the following profile:

1. A Review Chairperson

The role of the Chairperson is to act as leader of the Review Team. This is an international reviewer who is a (serving or recently former) senior third-level institution leader – usually a head of institution or deputy head of institution or a senior policy advisor who:

- » possesses a wide range of higher education experience;
- » demonstrates a deep understanding of the complexities of the higher education system;
- » understands often unique QA governance arrangements;
- » has proven experience in the management of innovation and change.

2. A Coordinating Reviewer

The role of the Coordinating Reviewer is to act as secretary to the team, as well as to be a full Review Team member. This is usually a person with expertise in the Higher Education system and prior experience in participating in external reviews. As the coordinating reviewer is responsible for drafting the report, he or she will possess proven excellent writing abilities.

3. A student reviewer

The role of the student reviewer is to represent the student voice in the Review Team. The student reviewer will be typically a student with significant experience of higher education or an undergraduate student who has completed a quality assurance training programme and can represent the viewpoint of students.

4. An industry representative

The role of the industry representative is to bring an industry perspective to the Review Team. This representative should understand that their role in the review is to represent industry as a whole and not any particular industrial sector. QQI may seek guidance on the suitability of a particular profile for an industry representative from the institution.

In addition to the specific roles above, the full team complement will include a range of experts with the following knowledge and experience:

- » Experience of higher education quality assurance processes
- » Experience of postgraduate research programmes
- » Experience and proven ability in the advancement of teaching and learning

3.3 Procedure and timelines

The outline set out in the policy (below) will be elaborated further and timelines will be set out to accompany it, through discussion and consultation.

STEP	ACTION	DATES	OUTCOME
Terms of Reference (ToR)	Completion of an institutional information profile by QQI Confirmation of ToR with institution and HEA	9 months before the Main Review Visit (MRV)	Published Terms of Reference
Preparation	Appointment of an expert Review Team Consultation with the institution on any possible conflicts of interest	6-9 months before the MRV	Review Team appointed
Self-evaluation	Forwarding to QQI of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)	12 weeks before the MRV	Published ISER (optional)
Desk Review	Desk review of the ISER by the Team	Before the initial meeting	ISER initial response provided
Initial Meeting	An initial meeting of the Review Team, including reviewer training and briefing	5 weeks after the ISER, 7 weeks before the MRV	Team training and briefing is complete and Team identify key themes and additional documents required
Planning visit	A visit to the institution by the Chair and Coordinating Reviewer to receive information about the ISER process, discuss the schedule for the Main Review Visit and discuss additional documentation requests	5 weeks after the ISER, 7 weeks before the MRV	An agreed note of the Planning Visit
Main Review Visit	To receive and consider evidence on the ways in which the institution has performed in respect of the objectives and criteria set out in the ToR	12 weeks after the receipt of ISER	A short preliminary oral report to the institution

STEP	ACTION	DATES	OUTCOME
Report	Preparation of a draft report by the team	6-8 weeks after the MRV	
	Draft report sent to the institution for a check of factual accuracy	12 weeks after the MRV	
	Institution responds with any factual accuracy corrections	2 weeks after receipt of draft report	
	Preparation of a final report by QQI	2 weeks after factual accuracy response	QQI Review Report
	Preparation of an institutional response	2 weeks after final report	Institutional response
Outcomes	Consideration of the Review Report and findings by QQI together with the institutional response and the plan for implementation	Next available meeting of QQI committee	Formal decision about the effectiveness of QA procedures <i>In some cases, directions to the institution and a schedule for their implementation</i>
	Preparation of QQI quality profile	2 weeks after decision	Quality profile published
Follow-up	<i>The form of follow-up will be determined by whether 'directions' are issued to the institution. In general, where directions are issued the follow-up period will be sooner and more specific actions may be required as part of the direction</i>		
	Preparation of an institutional implementation plan	1 month after decision	Publication of the institutional implementation plan by the institution
	One-year follow-up report to QQI for noting. This and subsequent follow-up may be integrated into annual reports to QQI	1 year after the MRV	Publication of the follow-up report by QQI and the institution
	Continuous reporting and dialogue on follow-up through the annual institutional reporting and dialogue process	Continuous	Annual Institutional Quality Report Dialogue Meeting notes

Note: The total period from start to finish is approximately 15 months but will depend on QQI committee meeting dates.

Appendix B

Main Review Visit Schedule

Day 1: Monday 23 April 2018

TIME	MEETING WITH	PURPOSE
09.00-09.30	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator.
09.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
10.00-10.30	Meeting with President and Registrar	Private Meeting with President and Registrar. To discuss institutional mission, strategic plan. Roles and responsibilities for QA and Enhancement.
10.30-11.15	Meeting with Heads of School/Central Service Review Committee	Roles and responsibilities for QA and Enhancement and Central Service Review Process.
11.15 - 11.45	Private Review Team Meeting	
11.45-12.15	Meeting with Governing Body Representatives	To discuss the mechanisms employed by the governing body for monitoring QA and Enhancement with LYIT in line with the Acts and how it ensures its effectiveness.
12.15-1.30	Private Review Team Meeting and Lunch	
1.30-2.15	Meeting with Students' Union Officers	To discuss student engagement and student role in the Institute in QA, Strategic Planning and decision-making process.
2.15-2.45	Private Review Team Meeting	
2.45- 3.30	Meeting with Students (1) » Undergraduate full time	Discussions with students from all schools, to include representation from different years and disciplines.
3.30-3.45	Private Review Team Meeting	
3.45-4.30	Meeting with Students (2) » Postgraduate » Part time	Discussions with students from all schools, to include representation from different years and disciplines.
4.30-5.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
5.00-6.00	Meeting with External Stakeholders – Industry and Commerce, Representative Groups and Local Government	Discussion with a small group of external stakeholders.

Day 2: Tuesday 24 April 2018

TIME	MEETING WITH	PURPOSE
09.00-9.30	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator to clarify issues from previous day and review today.
9.30-10.15	Meeting with ISER Group	To discuss how the Institute monitors effectiveness of its Quality Management processes and structures.
10.15-10.45	Private Review Team Meeting	
10.45-11.30	Meeting with representatives from Academic Council	To discuss how the Academic Council monitors the effectiveness of its Quality Management Processes and structures.
11.30-12.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
12.00-1.00	Meeting with Academic Heads of Department	To discuss Quality Management Processes at the Academic Department Level, their implementation and how their effectiveness is ensured.
1.00-2.00	Private Review Team Meeting and Lunch	
2.00-2.45	Meeting Managers of Central Services	To discuss involvement in QA and enhancement and Central Service Reviews.
2.45-3.15	Private Review Team Meeting	
3.15-3.45	International Education	To discuss involvement in QA and enhancement in International Education.
3.45-4.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
4.00-5.00	Meeting with Academic Staff representatives from all schools	
5.00-5.15	Private Review Team Meeting	

Day 3: Wednesday 25 April 2018

TIME	MEETING WITH	PURPOSE
09.00-9.30	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator to clarify issues from previous day and review today.
9.30-10.15	Meeting with Head of Development, Industrial Services Manager, Chair of Research Committee, representatives from research centres.	To discuss the development of Research and Innovation in the Institute.
10.15-10.45	Private Review Team Meeting	
10.45-11.45	Meeting with Academic Staff involved in postgraduate research supervision	To discuss staff experience of research management and supervision, the relationship between teaching, research, and innovation, QA and enhancements impact on the research student experience. #2 per discipline.
11.45-12.15	Private Review Team Meeting	
12.15-1.00	Meeting with Student Support Services	To discuss Student Support Services.
1.00- 1.45	Private Review Team Meeting and Lunch	

TIME	MEETING WITH	PURPOSE
1.45-2.30	Meeting with Management and Staff involved in HR and Staff Development	To discuss HR and Staff Development.
2.30-3.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
3.00-3.45	Meeting with Management and Staff involved in Collaborative Provision including cross-border Ulster University North West Regional College Dorset College	To discuss Collaborative Provision including cross-border.
3.45-4.15	Private Review Team Meeting	
4.15-5.00	Staff undertaking PhDs and MA in Learning and Teaching (#8)	To discuss staff experience of undertaking PhDs and MA in Learning and Teaching.

Day 4: Thursday 26 April 2018

TIME	MEETING WITH	PURPOSE
9.00-11.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
11.00-11.45	Meeting with LYIT Executive Board	Optional Meeting.
11.45-12.30	Private Review Team Meeting	
12.30-2.00	Lunch	
2.00-5.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
6.00-8.00	QQI Cyclical Reviews Unit	To discuss the Review Team's main findings and ensure alignment with the terms of reference for the review.

Day 5: Friday 27 April 2018

TIME	MEETING WITH	PURPOSE
9.00-11.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
10.00-11.00 Parallel meeting	Meeting between QQI and Institutional Coordinator and ITS staff	To gather initial feedback on the institution's experience of the review process.
11.00-11.30	Oral Report to LYIT Executive Board	
11.30-1.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
1.00-2.00	Lunch	

Appendix C

Institutional Response



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Letterkenny Institute
of Technology

LYIT welcomes the QQI CINNTE Institutional Review Report. In addition to the 11 formal commendations, the Review Team made a number of key overarching statements regarding the quality assurance arrangements of LYIT and were satisfied that:

- » LYIT has in place, and is implementing, an effective set of quality assurance procedures. These procedures are compliant with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and have regard to the Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016) of QQI and to its Sector-Specific Guidelines developed for the Institutes of Technology (2016).
- » LYIT has in place, and is implementing, effective procedures in the context of its awarding of qualifications up to and including research degrees at Level 9.
- » LYIT has a quality assurance system in place that is leading to quality outcomes and is subject to oversight through its governance system.
- » LYIT is actively seeking to improve the quality of the Institution and to responsively address any concerns raised by its students.
- » LYIT is effectively implementing access, transfer and progression processes that are in accordance with the QQI Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression (2015).

LYIT welcomes the recommendations made by the Review Team. These recommendations will be the basis for significant input into strategic planning and quality enhancement activities in the Institute in the coming years. The following is an initial response to the Review Team's recommendations.

- 8.3.1 The Review Team commended the success of LYIT in growing its student numbers and its programme offerings; and for the possibilities of diversifying its income streams this growth has presented during a time of financial challenge. It is fair to say that working to achieve this growth has been the focus of the Institute, rather than reflecting on activities with an enquiring external perspective. The ISER template did not readily lend itself to an evaluative approach; a revised template and/or supporting guidelines would be helpful in addressing this.
- 8.3.2 LYIT's strategic planning process includes consultation and engagement with staff, students, employers and other stakeholders. The consultation process for Strategic Plan 2018-2022, which had commenced at the time of the visit of the Review Team, will form an important input to the new strategic plan. The strategic planning process will be formally articulated in a revised Quality Assurance Handbook. [2018/19]
- 8.3.3 The Institute will include in its QA Handbook a documented procedure for the development of Strategic Plans, which articulates how staff, students and other stakeholders are systematically included in one or more stages of internal and external consultation on strategic priorities. [2018/19]
- 8.3.4 In addition to the Institute's School Reviews and Central Services Reviews, LYIT plans to develop a series of sub-strategies and operational plans linked to Strategic Plan 2018-2022. [2018/19 – 2019/20]
- 8.3.5 The Institute has previously considered the introduction of course coordinators/group tutors. This will be reviewed again in the context of planned restructuring and available resources. New resource requests are considered by the LYIT's Resource Review Committee.

- 8.3.6 The HR Manager will work with the academic schools to produce a Staff Continuing Development Plan in the context of Strategic Plan 2018-2022. This Plan will aim to articulate a strategy to develop human capital and to systematically maximise the benefits to LYIT, and to its learners, of staff undertaking postgraduate study. [2018/19]
- 8.3.7 The Institute plans to review the functioning of its Executive Council, with a view to establishing a committee structure and meeting schedule that will enhance opportunities for institution-wide and cross-functional dialogue in order to respond to the increasing complexity of the external environment. [2018/19]
- 8.3.8 The Institute will develop a new Student Services Plan, addressing the provision of student supports, aligned with Strategic Plan 2018-2022. Building on the success of NStEP, it is envisaged that this will be coordinated by a working group comprising the Head of Teaching and Learning, Academic Administration and Student Services Manager and Students' Union President. [2018/19]
- 8.3.9 The Institute articulated in its ISER the intention to introduce an Institutional Research Office (central data unit) as a matter of priority. The new Institutional Research Office will be attached to the President's Office. [2018/19]
- 8.3.10 The Institute will continue to work with its partners in the Connacht Ulster Alliance to achieve the metrics required for designation as a Technological University (TU) and will articulate the opportunities of future designation as a TU in Strategic Plan 2018-2022.
- 8.3.11 The Institute will articulate the strategic criteria/principles driving collaborative partnerships in a revised Quality Assurance Handbook. [2018/19]
- 8.3.12 The Institute developed a draft Quality Improvement Plan as part of the ISER. A more comprehensive Quality Improvement Plan will be developed during 2018/19, which will address the outcomes from its ongoing monitoring and review activities, including the recommendations of the QQI CINTE Institutional Review Report. [2018/19]
- 8.3.13/14 The Research Committee of Academic Council in collaboration with the Development Office plans to run a Research Day and Research Poster Day as annual events. Identifying further opportunities for promoting student research internally will be a priority for the new Head of Research and Innovation. The Institute will develop a new Research Strategy, aligned to Strategic Plan 2018-2022. [2019/20]
- 8.3.15/16 The Institute has adopted the THEA Code of Governance for Institutes of Technology (2018) and will undertake a review of its structures this academic year. Arising from this review, it is anticipated that there will be some further decentralisation of quality assurance decision-making to school/faculty level. The review of Institute structures will also bring more clarity to the specific remits of all the Institute's governance entities, the parameters of their decision-making ability, and their reporting lines. [2018/19]
- 8.3.17 The Institute developed a draft Quality Improvement Plan as part of the ISER. A more comprehensive Quality Improvement Plan will be developed. [2018/19] Quality enhancement activities will be evaluated against the objectives of the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and will be reviewed annually by Academic Council.





