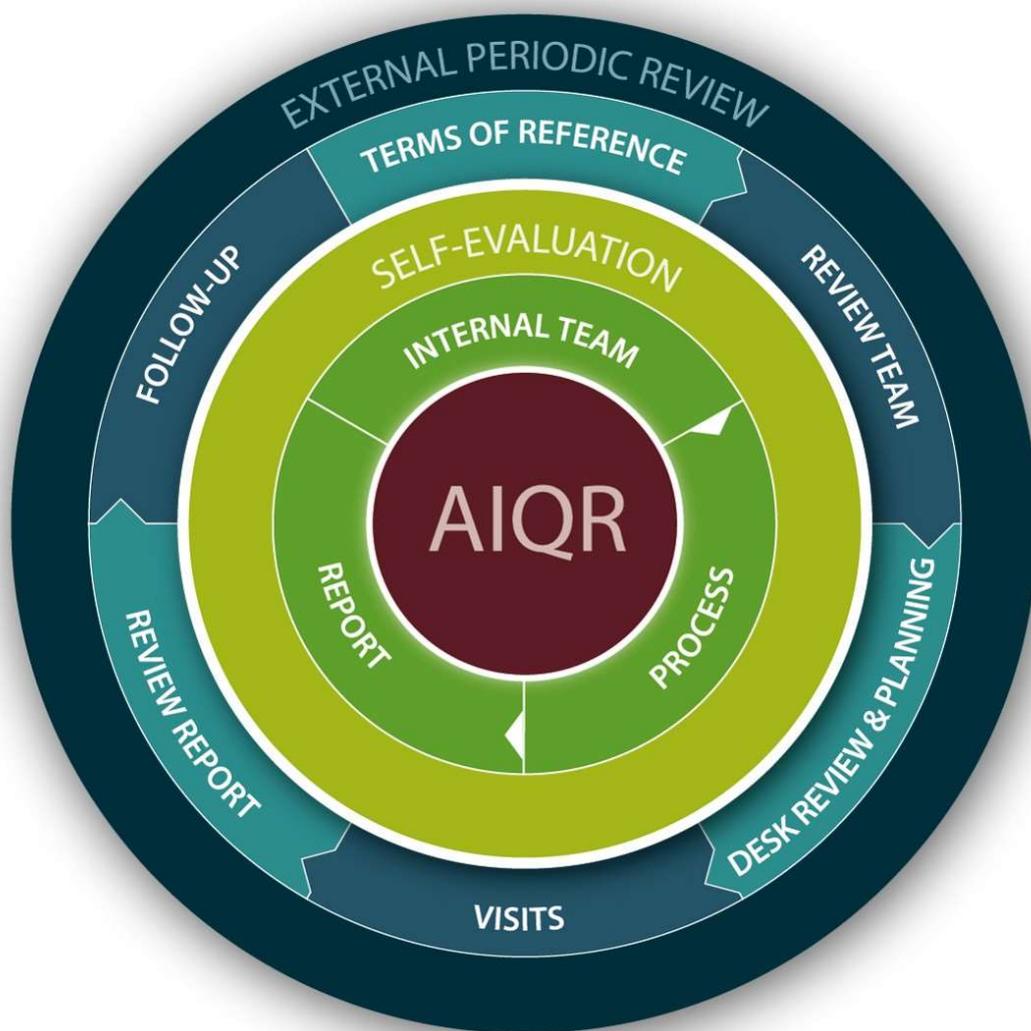


# Waterford Institute of Technology

## Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report 2020

Based on the reporting period 1 September 2018 – 31 August 2019



The Cyclical Review Process

## Part 1

# Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures

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

### 1. Overarching Institution Quality Policy

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

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

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

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

Technology following the signing into law of the Qualifications and quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019.

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

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

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

## 2. Quality assurance decision-making fora

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

An organisational chart for the Structure of Responsibility for Quality is available in the WQAF ([link](#)). A description of the structure of quality assurance and improvement activities in the Institute is also provided in the WQAF along with a detailed assignment of responsibilities at key stages in the cycle. In terms of academic quality and standards, the Academic Council is the key decision-making body. The Academic Council is appointed by the WIT Governing Body, to assist it in the planning (including the strategic planning), co-ordination, development and overseeing of the educational and research work of the Institute, and to protect, maintain and develop the academic standards of the programmes and activities of the Institute. The Qualifications and quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019 states that awards “may only be conferred, granted or given on the recommendation of the academic council”, which confers on the WIT Academic Council the determination of the awards granted by the Institute and changes the relationship of WIT Academic Council to other Institute functions from advisory to decisive.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar has overall responsibility for co-ordinating the above processes and reporting to Academic Council and Institute authorities on progress and implementation. To ensure a link between Academic Council and Governing Body, a member of the Academic Council presents a report on the work of Academic Council to the Governing Body at least annually, but preferably once a semester.

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

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

## Confirmation of QA Policy and Procedures

### 1. Programme Design and Approval (ESG 1.2)

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

#### 1. Programme design and approval

The WIT policy and procedures for the design and approval of taught programmes are contained in Section B of the WIT [Quality Manual: Programme Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy and Procedures 2018-19](#) (RPA). In general, programmes are proposed and designed by an Academic School or Schools, subject to internal and external review, and approved via the Academic Council and its committees.

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

The CE1 process is required to make the initial ‘business’ case proposal for a new programme to consider rationale need, demand, resources, capacity to deliver the programme, and the proposed outline of the programme. It is proposed by an Academic School and reviewed by the WIT Executive Board. The relevant regulations may be found in Section B of the RPA, Sections 2.3-2.4, CE1 stage application

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

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

The CE3 process is required for a significant amendment to an existing approved programme, which necessitates a change in programme learning outcomes. It is proposed by an Academic School and reviewed by a Panel (comprising external academic and industry representatives, and Registry and Academic Council representatives) with the panel report and School response being considered by the Academic Quality Committee and then by the Academic Council. The relevant regulations may be found

in Section B of the RPA, Section 2.8.

The Minor Change Request process is required where the proposal is for minor change(s) to an existing approved programme, which does not necessitate a change in programme learning outcomes. It is proposed by an Academic School and reviewed by the Academic Quality Committee and then by the Academic Council. The relevant regulations may be found in Section B of the RPA, Section 2.9.

The Individual Module(s) Approval process is required where the proposal is to validate stand-alone modules. It is proposed by an Academic School and reviewed by an External subject expert(s), by the Academic Quality Committee and then by the Academic Council. The relevant regulations may be found in Section B of the RPA, Section 2.12.

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

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

## 2. Programme Delivery and Assessment (ESG 1.3)

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

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

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

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

Examination Regulations: The regulations governing written examinations and also the anti-plagiarism policy are published on the WIT website ([link](#)).

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

Policies in respect of the programme delivery include:

1. WIT *Quality Manual* 2018-19, particularly Section A *Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Programmes* (RTP) which is available publicly on the WIT [webpages](#), the WIT [Intranet](#), as well as in the [Academic Council Information Area/Quality Manual](#) on Moodle;
2. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy ([link](#));
3. External Examiner Policy ([link](#));
4. Anti-plagiarism Policy ([link](#));
5. Policy on the Conferring of Aegrotat Awards ([link](#));
6. Approval of Minor, Special Purpose, Supplemental Awards ([link](#));
7. Completing, Granting and Presentation of Awards Policy ([link](#));
8. The Code of Practice of the Disability Office Student Life and Learning ([link](#));
9. Recording Policy: on the Recording of Oral and/or Visual Presentations for Students Registered with the Disability Office ([link](#));
10. The Student Complaints Policy ([link](#)).

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

**Procedures**

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

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

Students are involved in programmes and assessment through

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

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

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

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

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

1. The research strategy (being drafted)
2. Research Postgraduate Student Induction Handbook ([link](#))
3. Research Ethics policy ([link](#))
4. Data protection policy ([link](#))
5. Authorship and Data Retention Policy ([link](#))
6. The Intellectual Property policy ([link](#))
7. The student complaints policy ([link](#))
8. Conflict of Interest Policy ([link](#))
9. Definition and Organisation of Research at WIT ([link](#))
10. WIT Code of Conduct for the Responsible Practice of Research ([link](#))
11. WIT Open Research Policy ([link](#))

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

1. The Research Postgraduate Enrolment Group (PGEG): considers postgraduate student ([Future Postgraduate](#) page) registration applications for enrolment (including a QQI Application, if relevant), Structured PhD applications PG\_A1 and PG\_A2, applications for transfer from the Masters to Doctoral registers (PG2 and QQI Application, if relevant), for confirmation of candidature for Structured PhD students (PG\_C) and applications for confirmation of candidature for probationary traditional Doctoral students (PG4). A postgraduate may also apply to PGEG for a variation in candidature (PG3). A step-by-step guide has also been published for research postgraduates and for supervisors ([link](#)). New school-based research programme boards were established during 2017-18 to support the Research Postgraduate Enrolment Group and the ongoing training and progression of research students. A Sharepoint [site](#) or [link](#), accessible by everyone within the institute who has a WIT login, has been set up as the central repository for the various forms relating to management of research postgraduate students, the process specifications associated with the research postgraduate regulations and a schedule of relevant meetings.

2. The Institute's [Research Ethics Committee](#), scrutinises all research which involves humans and animals to ensure it is compliant with statutory requirements and is conducted to the highest ethical principles.

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

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

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

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

Other Research Quality highlights included:

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

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

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

#### 4. Student Lifecycle (ESG 1.4)

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

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

##### Admissions Policies ([link](#))

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

##### Admission Processes

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

### **Student Transfer**

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

### **Student Progression**

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

### **Recognition (qualifications, periods of study, prior learning)**

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

### **Certification (qualification information, documentation)**

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

### 5. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

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

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

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

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

26. Recording Policy ([link](#));
27. Sick Leave policy ([link](#));
28. Staff Handbook ([link](#));
29. Staff training and development strategy ([link](#));
30. WIT Adverse Weather Policy ([link](#));

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

WIT offers opportunities for, and promotes, the professional development of teaching staff. The Training and Development Committee report to the WIT Executive Board and developed the Staff Training and Development Strategy Plan 2012-2017 ([link](#)), with a successor Staff Learning & Development Strategy 2020 & 2021 currently in preparation. WIT is committed to encouraging and facilitating staff to pursue professional and personal training and development both in the interests of performing their duties at the highest level possible for the accomplishment of the strategic objectives of the Institute and also for self-fulfilment. Key priorities include: an expansion of teaching and research at levels 9-10, with a corresponding improvement of developing knowledge competency of staff in both upper level occupational training and applied research; the further strengthening of networking with industry and community organizations in training and research; and an expanded international orientation and portfolio of international activity. The Training and Development Committee plan also included a number of areas such as teaching and learning (such as modules in Practical Pedagogy, Blended Learning, etc.), management training, academic management, leadership and supervision (including a popular Research Supervision module) and other relevant areas, which emerged after the all-staff consultation process, including health and safety, dignity and respect, course leader training, team building at administrative and support level.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Programme development or alteration, the WIT Module Catalogue, engaging with the Quality Framework, External Examining, Learning Outcomes, Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, QQI Documents and Policies, Award Standards, Irish Higher

Education Quality Network (IHEQN), European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), The Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

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

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

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

## 7. Resources and Support (ESG 1.5)

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

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

Academic support activities include:

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

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

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

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

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

Procedures and/or operating protocols include:

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

Student Finance is managed by the Office of the Vice President of Corporate Affairs and Finance. Policies in respect of student finance and FAQs are available at [link](#).

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

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

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

Extra resources and support have also been put in place to support staff in terms of professional development and enhancing their research. For example, WIT Research Connexions is a support scheme comprised of ten funding pathways to enable and support research activity and develop research capacity and capability across the Schools of the Institute. The scheme and the project are designed to provide the entire WIT academic and research community the opportunity to apply for internal funding to enhance research activity, promote research networking and connections, increase competitively won research funding and increase the number of quality peer-reviewed publications, all ambitions linked to the Institute's wider strategy and all aligned with national strategic objectives with regard to research. The breadth of pathways recognises the variety of levels of research infrastructure and research "maturity" within Schools, Departments, and research groupings.

Finally, in 2018 the Waterford Institute of Technology marked 25 years of doctoral graduates. WIT was one of the first of Ireland's regional technical colleges to award PhDs, starting in 1993.

## 8. Information Management (ESG 1.7)

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

The primary policy and procedure documents governing information management include:

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

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

As well as data policies, regulations exist to guide the collecting, analysing and using of relevant information. The quality assurance procedures for programme boards, who collect and use data in reports to the Academic Council are defined in Sections A (RTP) and B (RPA) of the WIT Quality Manual 2018-19, which is available publicly on the WIT [webpages](#), on the WIT Intranet on Q:\Public\Registrar\Quality, as well as in the [Academic Council Information Area/Quality Manual](#) and also the [Quality Promotion Information Area](#) on Moodle. Programme board responsibilities include collecting, analysing and using relevant information that range from reflecting on the outputs of teaching and learning strategies, examination performance, award distribution, and taking or recommending appropriate remedial action when required.

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

### 9. Self-evaluation and Monitoring (ESG 1.9)

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

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

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

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

The WIT External Examiner Policy is presented in the Academic Council [Policies](#) on Moodle and also in Chapter 8 (Examination Boards and External Examining) in Section A (RTP) of the WIT Quality Manual: *Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes 2018-19*, which is available publicly on the WIT [webpages](#), on the WIT Intranet on Q:\Public\Registrar\Quality, as well as in the [Academic Council Information Area/Quality Manual](#) and also in the [Quality Promotion Information Area](#) on Moodle.

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

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

### 10. Stakeholder Engagement (ESG 1.1)

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

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

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

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

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

**11. Engagement with Other Bodies (ESG 1.1)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The procedures for maintaining Delegated Authority in line with QQI awards standards are incorporated in the Quality Manual Sections B (RPA, Undergraduate), D (RRD, Postgraduate) and C (RCP, collaborative provision). WIT does not yet have approved procedures for full delegation at Level 9.

### 15. Collaborative Provision (ESG 1.1)

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

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

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

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

**16. Additional Notes**

Any additional notes can be entered here.

Empty box for entering additional notes.

**17. Internal Review Schedule**

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

Year	2019/20
Areas/Units	Institutional Review
Number	
Link(s) to Publications	QQI website ( <a href="#">link</a> )

## 18. Engagement with Third Parties

### Collaborative Provision

Type of Arrangement	Total Number
Joint Research Degrees	0
Joint/double/multiple awards	3
Collaborative Programmes	5
Franchise Programmes	
Linked providers (DABs only)	

First Collaborative Provision	Double Degree
Name of Body (bodies):	Munich University of Applied Sciences
Programme Tiles and Links to Publications	BA (H) in International Business and the BA (H) in International Management <a href="https://www.wit.ie/images/uploads/About_PDF/Munich_UAS_-_Business_-_Double_Degree_Agreement_of_CoOperation.pdf">https://www.wit.ie/images/uploads/About_PDF/Munich_UAS_-_Business_-_Double_Degree_Agreement_of_CoOperation.pdf</a>
Date of Last Review	2015
Next Review Year	2022

Second Collaborative Provision:	Joint Degree
Name of Body (bodies):	École Supérieure de Commerce, Bretagne, Brest
Programme Tiles and Links to Publications	Master of Science in International Business/Master of Business in Internationalisation Collaborative Programme <a href="https://www.wit.ie/images/uploads/About_PDF/ESC_Bretagne_-_Grad_Business_-_Double_Degree.pdf">https://www.wit.ie/images/uploads/About_PDF/ESC_Bretagne_-_Grad_Business_-_Double_Degree.pdf</a>
Date of Last Review	2015
Next Review Year	2022

Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report

Third Collaborative Provision:	Double degree
Name of Body (bodies):	Nanjing University of Information Science & Technology (NUIST), China
Programme Tiles and Links to Publications	BSc in Software Systems Development <a href="https://www.wit.ie/about_wit/industry_links/collaboration-agreements">https://www.wit.ie/about_wit/industry_links/collaboration-agreements</a>
Date of Last Review	2016
Next Review Year	2023

Fourth Collaborative Provision:	Collaborative Programme
Name of Body (bodies):	Nemeton TV
Programme Tiles and Links to Publications	<a href="https://www.wit.ie/images/uploads/About_PDF/MOU_Nemeton.pdf">Higher Diploma in Arts in Television Production</a> <a href="https://www.wit.ie/images/uploads/About_PDF/MOU_Nemeton.pdf">https://www.wit.ie/images/uploads/About_PDF/MOU_Nemeton.pdf</a>
Date of Last Review	2019
Next Review Year	2026

Fifth Collaborative Provision:	Collaborative Programme
Name of Body (bodies):	Social Justice Ireland
Programme Tiles and Links to Publications	MA in Social Justice and Public Policy <a href="https://www.wit.ie/images/uploads/About_PDF/SJI_Agreement.pdf">https://www.wit.ie/images/uploads/About_PDF/SJI_Agreement.pdf</a>
Date of Last Review	2019
Next Review Year	2026

Sixth Collaborative Provision:	Collaborative Programme
Name of Body (bodies):	Irish Prison Service
Programme Tiles and Links to Publications	<a href="#">Higher Certificate in Arts in Custodial Care</a>
Date of Last Review	2019
Next Review Year	2026

Seventh Collaborative Provision:	Collaborative Programme
Name of Body (bodies):	WLR FM and Beat 102-103
Programme Tiles and Links to Publications	<a href="#">Certificate in Radio Broadcasting and Presenting</a> (Level 6 Special Purpose Award) <a href="#">Link</a>
Date of Last Review	2016
Next Review Year	2023

Eighth Collaborative Provision:	Collaborative Programme
Name of Body (bodies):	Teagasc
Programme Tiles and Links to Publications	Teagasc collaboration agreement to establish and deliver educational programmes, including the BSc in Agriculture, BSc in Horticulture etc. plus minor awards in Horticulture <a href="#">Link</a>
Date of Last Review	2016
Next Review Year	2023

## Parts 2-6

### Institution-led QA – Annual Information

Parts 2-6 are completed annually with information pertaining to the reporting period (i.e. the preceding academic year only).

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### Part 2: Institution-led QA – Annual

Part 2 provides information relating to institution-led quality assurance for the reporting period.

#### Section 1: Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Developments

**1.1** The evolution of quality assurance and enhancement systems in support of strategic objectives in the reporting period.

The evolution of quality assurance and enhancement systems in support of strategic objectives in the reporting period is strongly driven by the Waterford Institute of Technology Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021, which was launched in the reporting period. The Plan identifies WIT’s educational, research and regional ambitions and has defined Actions to achieve all goals. Each Action has been drawn up following extensive consultation with stakeholders and in light of the national drive for Higher Education Institution mergers and in the face of severe financial challenges over several years. All of this influences and shapes decision-making and the manner in which modernising and enhancement occur. The Plan’s QA and QE goals draw from WIT’s previously published strategic focus in its quality development activities, which are based on 5 strategic themes (ST):

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

The Strategic Plan sets out targets, which can be mapped to these 5 strategic themes (ST), whereby in meeting these targets WIT will be known:

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

In engaging with our wider community, WIT is committed to an approach of openness, transparency and ease of engagement. This not alone means that all policies and procedures are published and readily available, but the design of policies and implementation of procedures should result in public, easily understood and easily accessed processes that enable users to readily engage. In order to further instil confidence quality review reports and regulations are also all published publicly. All quality reviews involve panels comprise a wide representation that include peers from outside the Institute to provide objectivity and to allow comparisons against external quality standards.

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

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

The 2018-19 year saw many specific changes to QA within WIT, as result of strategic implementations and the changing demands on the Institute.

WIT has decided that Academic Risk Management is an important area, which the Academic Council Quality Committee explored and developed in this academic year. A draft proposal was produced, designed to support risk management, the quality assurance framework and the activities, more generally, of the Institute. Its purpose is to define the Institute's approach to academic risk and its management and to inform decision making. It is intended to develop this further in the 2019-20 year, through the creation of an Academic Risk sub-committee of the Council's Quality Committee and to publish the policy as a research paper in an international conference.

To reflect the dynamic and sometimes transient nature of learning and the Institute's flexibility in meeting learner demands while maintaining high standards of quality, Academic Council approved a policy on the Currency of Learning. This enables learners who return to a programme after a long period of absence, in order to accumulate enough credits for award purposes, to benchmark previous successful learning or to formally recognise where it has become outdated and/or programme and/or module learning outcomes may have changed.

The Office of Quality Promotion recognised the difficulties that arise for programme teams in relation to QA processes leading to problems in programme development and modification and so created of online multimedia support material on the Quality Assurance processes for new programme creation, programme modification and module catalogue entries.

The granting of a WIT award constitutes the certification of student attainment of Programme Learning Outcomes. However, due to administrative error, or as a result of academic unfair practice, an award may be conferred on an individual in circumstances where the basis for the award is invalid. In order to maintain the integrity of WIT's academic standards, WIT retains the right to revoke a previously conferred award and has therefore produced a Policy on the Revocation of an Award. The authority to revoke a WIT award rests with the Governing Body.

Student engagement is at the heart of WIT's academic approach and to further delve into student's own opinions, the QA3 survey on students' programme experience, was extended to all programmes, following the success of a pilot survey on a limited number of programmes in the previous academic year. However, this year also saw a low engagement in the ISSE student survey of under 10%, so the Office of Quality Promotion has drawn up plans for a new approach to this survey in the coming year, setting a minimum response target of 20%, which should grow to 40% in successive years.

In order to improve the visibility of research produced by WIT and to align the Institute with National and European policy and infrastructural objectives, an Open Research Policy has been drawn up and approved by Council.

Institutional research has changed since the existing policy on the Definition and Organisation of Research was drawn up in 2012, including the desire of successful Research Centres to seek to redefine themselves as Research Institutes and also the definition of what carrying out research means given the ever-changing nature of research.

National and international expectations on the conduct of research have increased and reflecting this the Institute's Governing Body approved the Code of Conduct for the Responsible Practice of Research. Research Integrity training is now offered to all Institute researchers via an agreement between OUP/Epigeum and the IUA.

In response to the Department of Education's Gender Action Plan, titled Accelerating Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions 2018-2020, the Institute began to take the steps necessary to successfully meet these targets. For example, in the Gender Action Plan and through the production of gender-neutral documentation, including the WIT Quality Manual, the introduction of gender-neutral toilets in parts of the campus, and the creation of gender-neutral student cards. Unconscious Bias training has also been provided and is mandatory for members of interview panels.

A summary of the significant specific changes to QA within the Institute is as follows:

- Development of an Academic Risk Policy (ST-TU, ST-E, ST-A);
- Policy on the Revocation of an Award (ST-L, ST-E, ST-A);
- Policy on the Currency of Learning (ST-L, ST-E, ST-A);
- Online multimedia support material on Quality Assurance processes (ST-E, ST-A);
- Equality Action development, including training for interview panel members unconscious bias (ST-E, ST-TU);
- Enhance student engagement through expanded QA3 surveying (ST-L, ST-IS);
- Development of a draft policy on Recruitment and Selection Appointment Decisions (ST-A, ST-E);
- Policy on Open Access Research (ST-TU, ST-L);
- Policy on the Definition and Organisation of Research (ST-TU, ST-L);
- Code of Conduct for the Responsible Practice of Research was presented to and signed-off by governing body in December 2018 (ST-E, ST-TU, ST-L);
- Ongoing training on Research Integrity offered via the agreement between OUP/Epigeum and the IUA. This agreement came into effect as of January 2018 (ST-E, ST-TU, ST-L);
- Enhanced support through workshops and seminars, for supervisors involved with research masters and doctoral supervision launched at the end of 2018 ([link](#)) (ST-E, ST-TU, ST-L);

**1.3 The schedule of QA governance meetings.*****Eighth Academic Council Meetings for Academic Year 2018/19 ([link](#) and [minutes](#))***

<i>Agenda Setting</i>	<i>Academic Council</i>
	03/10/17 (JM)
25/09/2018	02/10/2018
06/11/2018	13/11/2018
27/11/2018	04/12/2018
15/01/2019	22/01/2019
05/02/2019	12/02/2019
12/03/2019	19/03/2019
02/04/2019	09/04/2019
14/05/2019	21/05/2019
04/06/2019	11/06/2019

Due to industrial action four Academic Council meetings in the 2018/19 schedule were not held, as they were not quorate: 04/12/2018, 22/01/2019, 12/02/2019 and 19/03/2019

During the Summer the Academic Council duties were taken over by a Standing Committee, which met as follows:

<i>Standing Committee of Academic Council</i>
28/06/2019
30/09/2019

The Academic Council sub-committee meeting schedule for the year was as follows:

<i>Academic Quality</i>	<i>Research Innovation &amp; Entrepreneurship</i>	<i>Academic Planning</i>	<i>Teaching &amp; Learning</i>
11/09/2018	25/09/2018	18/09/2018	18/09/2018
16/10/2018	06/11/2018	23/10/2018	23/10/2018
20/11/2018	20/11/2018	27/11/2018	27/11/2018
08/01/2019	08/01/2019	04/12/2019	15/01/2019
29/01/2019	05/02/2019	12/02/2019	05/02/19
05/03/2019	05/03/2019	19/03/2019	12/03/2019
26/03/2019	26/03/2019	02/04/2019	02/04/2019
07/05/2019	07/05/2019	14/05/2019	14/05/2019
28/05/2019	28/05/2019	04/06/2019	04/06/2019

Due to industrial action two Academic Council Learning and Teaching Committee meetings in 2018/19 were not held, as they were not quorate: 15/01/19 and 05/02/19.

Two subcommittees of the Research Innovation & Entrepreneurship committee, the Research Ethics Committee and the Postgraduate Enrolment Group also met frequently:

<i>Postgraduate Enrolment Group</i>	<i>Research Ethics Committee</i>
21/09/2018	20/09/2018
19/10/2018	05/11/2018
16/11/2018	11/12/2018
17/01/2019	17/01/2019
07/02/2019	15/02/2019
14/03/2019	21/03/2019
04/04/2019	22/05/2019
16/05/2019	
06/06/2019	
19/07/2019	
23/08//2019	

**Section 2: Reviews in the reporting period**

**2.1 Internal reviews that were completed in the reporting period.**

A full School Review panel visit occurred in January 2019 for the School of Humanities. The Peer Review Group commended the School on the significant achievements in the period under review and made 34 recommendations, including the rationalisation of language teaching offerings. The School engaged immediately with the task of working through the recommendations.

The Academic Council facilitated the completion of the School of Engineering School Review in May 2019 through the appointment of an external moderator to guide the School through recommended changes to the curriculum and delivery.

A review on the Application for joint Participation in the WIT Structured PhD Framework by the Schools of Humanities and Lifelong Learning & Education was also carried out. The outcome of the review was that one School, the School of Lifelong Learning & Education could proceed, but the School of Humanities were requested to resubmit. There were 3 panellists for the main part of the review, 1 from a university in Scotland, 1 (the Chair) from an Irish university (DCU), and the Institute’s Registrar. The chair is a Vice-President of Academic Affairs (Registrar).

Also, in this reporting period, two WIT Schools submitted a joint proposal how the Schools propose to operate the new WIT structured doctorate, for external panel review. One School successfully defended its role in the proposal before an external panel, with the second School being requested to reconsider some parts of the proposal and to resubmit.

New Postgraduate Regulations to include the Structured Doctorate were also drawn up and approved by Academic Council for implementation starting September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018.

Other reports include:

- 19 new programme validations/major programme changes were conducted through external peer review in daylong panels and 11 were recommended for approval by the Academic Council end of the academic year.
- 23 minor changes (modules and programmes) recommended for approval by the Academic Quality Committee to the Academic Council;

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

Number of new Programme Validations/Programme Approvals completed in the reporting year	19
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Number of Research Reviews completed in the reporting year	1
Number of School/Department/Faculty Reviews completed in the reporting year	2
Number of Service Unit Reviews completed in the reporting year	0
Number of Reviews of Arrangements with partner organisations completed in the reporting year	0

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

<b>Composition of Panels</b>	<b>%</b>
Internal	23
National	68
UK	3
EU	1
Student	5
Other	

<b>Chair Profile</b>	<b>%</b>
Internal	47
Similar Institution	47
Different Institution	6
International	0

### Section 3: Other Implementation Factors

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

At the centre of good evaluation is the availability of good data and of the appropriate reporting of that data for decision-making and review. The Institute has invested in the development of data analysis capability, by appointing a Strategic Information Manager and Analyst, and in the implementation of a strategic planning office led at vice-president level, since 2017/8. This further developed the institutional capacity for data analysis and data informed decision-makings. The Institute will continue to emphasise data reporting and data-led review at all levels of the Institute. The evaluation of practice in education relies on excellent information and data is therefore extensively used in quality assurance and the management of the student learning experience, in key processes, including annual and periodic monitoring, School reviews, programme reviews and programme annual reporting. The data being considered relates to student recruitment (CAO points, programme preferences, demographics and geographical origin) and student performance (progression, retention and award), student feedback and external examiner reports.

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

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

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

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

Regular management reports linked to QA also include:

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

Student engagement is strongly reinforced through consideration of data and information acquired through formal and informal student feedback in relation to both programme and Institute-wide experience. Student feedback comes through a variety of valued routes, from informal discussions with staff to more formal feedback through participation on programme boards, the Class Representative

Council and surveys such as ISSE and the standard QA3 programme survey. All programme boards have student representatives from each year of the programme. Also, the Institute works closely with the Students' Union through NStEP, in the development and training of student representatives (which should lead to greater engagement in future years' Class Representative Councils).

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

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

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

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

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

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

A key issue for the year was that industrial action by a staff union resulted in Academic Council meetings not meeting quorum targets for four meetings of 2018/19. Committees of the Council however continued to meet and the approval for academic activity was granted directly by the Governing Body in the absence of Council.

The Institute prepared for its Institutional Review coordinated by QQI under the CINNTE Review cycle of Irish Higher Education Institutes, with an Institutional Self Evaluation Report (ISER) due in Q2 2019. However, the decision to apply for Technological University status with IT Carlow, cast some doubt over the timing of the Institutional Review, and following discussions with QQI the Institute did not submit the ISER for the original Review submission date. The submission of the TU application may require further time, in which case the ISER may be submitted in the following academic year.

The ongoing lack of government investment in Higher Education has not changed for the better since the previous reporting period. Such challenging financial constraint has heavily influenced the Institute in terms of both strategy and operation. Room usage rises to 97% at times during the year, leaving the students with very little scope for independent learning, group sessions and project work in free classrooms. The decay in older buildings impacted directly on services with the Awards Office, Exams Office, Registrations and Student Life and Learning all being forced to leave their area of work and find new workspaces throughout the campus.

**3.3 A description of other implementation issues.**

None

## Part 3: Effectiveness and Impact

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

### 1. Effectiveness

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

The most important measure of effectiveness is in the graduation of about 2642 learners in the reporting period. 2,153 students successfully graduated with Major Awards, and a further 456 students graduated with Minor and Special Purpose Awards. Moreover, 33 students graduated with Level 9/10 awards (7 Research Masters, 18 PhD, 8 DBA), awards, while there were 64 new postgraduate student registrations (1926 undergraduate and 394 postgraduate) across a wide range of levels and types of awards.

The Institute relies on external examiners as the principal means of confirming the standard and appropriateness of curriculum and outcomes, in light of relevant award standards and the National Framework of Qualifications. Examiners are also asked to reflect on the quality of the learning environment and processes provided to support it. As preparation for the Institutional Review, an analysis will be carried out of previous years external examiner reports, for all six WIT Schools. Furthermore, the Institute recognises that with modularisation there is a need to provide for the deepening academic specialism at subject level, while maintaining consistent standards across programme level. The Academic Council has sought to strengthen the external examining system through the replacement of programme examiners with subject level and school level examiners, where the subject level examiners are responsible for the detailed work of monitoring assessment and assessment outcomes and ensuring that standards are maintained in particular subject areas and the school level examiners will ensure that the micro level focus of the subject externs is balanced by a macro level focus on the programmes.

Matters relating to academic risk are noted and discussed by the Governing Body Audit and Risk Committee. For example, the Academic Risk Policy below was considered in detail by the Audit and Risk Committee. A by-product of developing the overall quality assurance framework was to highlight the extent to which each oversight function (i.e. Governing Body, Academic Council, and Executive Board) is aware of and responding to their obligations and more significantly how errors or instances of non-compliance are managed and reported. The Institute, through the Academic Quality Committee has also addressed the very specific issue of academic risk and academic risk reporting. The committee developed an Academic Risk Policy that creates a clear pathway for understanding and codifying academic risk occurrences and the reporting responsibilities arising for risk events. Annual School Board reports provide a School level oversight of the programme board activity and a forum for coordinating school wide issues across teaching, learning and assessment within the school. Effective implementation of School Board structures has taken up much of the Academic Council's time, and progress in getting consistent implementation was slower than expected. However, a unified approach has been evident since 2018/9.

Key points that have arisen in the 2018-19 School Board reports are:

- External Examiners
  - external examiners are positive about the standard of learning;

- anonymous marking of scripts and continuous assessment;
- implement a clear assessment rubric aligned to the marking criteria for each module;
- programme assessment matrix to allow viewing of total programme assessments;
- internal moderation of assessments set and marking;
- continuous assessment should be sent for review before distribution to students;
- provision of statistical data on assessment performance;
- provide an Internal Examiners' commentary on the student cohort;
- Programme Boards
  - concerns raised included student attendance and strategies to address same;
  - students would like examination timetables published earlier;
  - dissatisfaction with the level of Wi-Fi and IT resources both in the classroom and the lack of the availability of IT rooms outside class hours in order for students to complete project work;
  - part-time students found off-site access to library resources quite slow;
  - improve supports for Part-Time students: assistance with study skills, further support for Moodle, facilities for peer working groups and access to central services such as Counselling.

The activities completed by the committees of Council during the reporting year (2018-19) were as follows:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>No. of approvals</b>	<b>No. Referred, not approved or withdrawn</b>
New programmes granted permission	9	6
New programmes/variations	8	6
Minor changes proposed	27	21
External Examiners Subject Areas	75	13
External Examiners Research	53	5
Ethical Approvals	61	61
Postgraduate Registrations	68	0
Collaborative programme validations	0	0

## 2. Impact

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

WIT is strongly focussed on Quality Enhancement evidenced in the ambition shown in the WIT Strategic Plan produced in this reporting period. These Quality Enhancements are both internally and externally driven, and their impact is measured and reported annually to Academic Council and through the AIQR.

The drive in recent years to build capacity for new modes of delivery, including collaborative, long-distance, blended and fully online programmes led to the significant positive impact of the graduation of the first cohort of Irish Prison Officers from the Higher Certificate in Custodial Care. The first students will be registered next September on the New Apprenticeship for Laboratory Technicians (Higher Certificate).

The WIT Quality Framework has evolved to support new modes of learning, including online and distance learning. Moreover, the Centre for Technology-Enhanced Learning has supported best practice through a series of lunchtime seminars and an Institute Community of Practice, as well as upgrading two new rooms for lecture recording purposes.

The Bring Your Own Device policy has been successfully implemented by the programme team on the ICT Conversion Course, the Higher Diploma in Science in Computer Science, where a dedicated room has been set aside for the students to use their own devices.

Researchers in WIT can compete for national and international funding having completed the Research Integrity training provided by the Research Support Unit.

The preparation and insight given by the training and videos produced by the Office of Quality Promotion has led to a higher standard of documentation from programme teams and less support requests for Module Catalogue users.

The School Boards continue in gaining traction and reported to Academic Council for the first time.

Student engagement, especially in relation to student feedback, has been targeted for improvement in this period, following relatively low response rates in 2018-19. In the ISSE survey, through the WIT Quality Promotion Office next year should see a response rate of 20% building to the Strategic Plan target response rate of 40%, from the current level of almost 10%. This has the potential of more meaningful impact for WIT students.

Finally, the reporting period saw the graduation of the first peer-to-peer mentoring students now via a dedicated 10-credit Special Purpose Award, for students who complete a P2P cycle and wish to achieve formal recognition of their learning.

### 3. Themes

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

Academic Council recognised that the implementation of QA policies and procedures has become less easy following years of additions and changes to the WIT Quality Manual, which resulted in a manual of both policy and procedure. In the coming year the Manual will be reviewed, with the aim being to produce a set of policies and a distinct, separate set of procedures to support those policies.

A synthesis of external examiner reports for 2018/19 has yielded consistently high ratings relating to the Institute's external examining system and in overall student outcomes. However, the Institute nonetheless recognises the need to modify the external examiner system, as common themes in the current programme-based examining are absence of deep academic specialism at subject level and the challenge of maintaining consistent standards in modules across programmes. Consequently, the Academic Council has begun the process of phasing out programme examiners and confirming subject level and school level examiners, where the subject level examiners are responsible for the detailed work of monitoring assessment and assessment outcomes and ensuring that standards are maintained in particular subject areas and the school level examiners will provide a broader oversight of the programmes.

Themes that arose during the reporting period relate to the post School Review process and an analysis of themes raised by external examiners. Ongoing key themes include the annual review and update of the academic regulations for WIT; continuous improvement to the flexibility of the experience offered to WIT students; modernising the curriculum and the academic structures, and the expansion of Technology Enhanced Learning.

The outcomes of the completed School reviews focused Academic Schools on the development of School-level teaching and learning strategies appropriate to their discipline area. Schools were encouraged to formalise expectations and standardise module design requirements within their areas, and to provide clear insight to learners on curriculum and learning expectations. The better use of programme handbooks to achieve this outcome was a common theme across all reviewed Schools. The School of Engineering and the School of Humanities both required post-School Review external facilitation to specifically deal with curriculum and delivery, the former requiring more clarity and uniformity and the latter requiring facilitation in the rationalisation of their language teaching.

Themes identified by the current external examiners have included:

- the communication of Continuous Assessment material to examiners;
- anonymising all assessment;
- summary data to enable a year-on-year analysis;
- more consistent practice;
- producing programme assessment matrices and developing generic marking criteria.

The research postgraduate regulations had been modified for this academic year. However, delays in processing of research candidates has been a consistent theme at Academic Council. Therefore, the new system will be reconsidered, so that research candidate graduate admissions and registration processes are more effective and immediate.

## Part 4: Quality Enhancement

**Part 4 provides information which goes beyond the description of standard quality assurance procedures. Quality enhancement includes the introduction of new procedures but also extends the concept of quality assurance to other initiatives, activities and events aimed at improving quality across the institution.**

### 4.1 Improvements and Enhancements for the Reporting Period

Improvements or enhancements, impacting on quality or quality assurance, that took place in the reporting period.

Improvements and enhancements are always guided by the WIT Strategic themes:

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

Annual School Board reports provide a School level oversight of the programme board activity and a forum for coordinating school wide issues across teaching, learning and assessment within the school. Effective implementation of School Board structures has taken up much of the Academic Council's time, since the 2010 review and progress in getting consistent implementation was slower than expected. However, a unified approach has been evident since 2018/9.

To further support the operation of School Boards across WIT, School Board reported back to Academic Council for the first time using a new, standardised template on the Quality Assurance, Quality Enhancement and Strategic Development cycle of their School Review.

External examining contributes significantly to the QA of the Institute's pedagogy, by evaluating the assessment standard and the standard of the student work, the standards of student performance in comparison with standards of similar programmes or modules in other institutions and their evaluation of the fairness and consistency of assessment processes and how fit for purpose they would regard them. External examiner themes identified for improvement by the programme boards have included the communication of Continuous Assessment material; anonymising all assessment; summary data to enable a year-on-year analysis; more consistent practice; producing programme assessment matrices and developing generic marking criteria.

The main achievements in these areas include (among others):

- Academic Council approved the streamlining of the regulations for Minor and Special Purpose Awards, and for Single Module certification;
- Course evaluation processes were redesigned and Service Level Agreements have since been established between central offices and academic areas;
- To improve retention figures and the broader educational experience the Institute generates detailed retention reports and has introduced peer-to-peer mentoring initiatives;
- A dedicated 10-credit Special Purpose Award is now in operation for students who complete a peer-to-peer cycle and wish to achieve formal recognition of their learning;
- Developments in the Institute's financial systems has enhanced the financial data available at school-level and better-informed decision-making locally;
- The Institute (through the academic planning committee) developed a Students' Charter in conjunction with the students' union and this has been adopted by the Governing Body, published widely and incorporated in academic regulations. This now sets the established benchmark for behaviour and expectations;
- There is an increased emphasis on Student feedback at Institute-level with, for example, a target in the WIT Strategic Plan to grow the ISSE response rate to 40% of the students, from a peak to date of 12%;
- WIT issued its first Embedded Awards in this period;
- The Institute has started a new apprenticeship programme in 2018-19 in conjunction with IT Tallaght, as lead and therefore WIT students follow IT Tallaght regulations.

#### **4.2 Quality Enhancement Highlights**

Analysis of quality enhancement activities that were initiated during the reporting period and which would be of interest to other institutions and would benefit from wider dissemination.

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

1. completing the ongoing work regarding School Reviews, with the Review of the final Institute School (School of Humanities) in January 2019 (ST-E);
2. continuing to improve the Module Catalogue by making its administration more effective (ST-L, ST-E);
3. preparing for the Institutional Review by implementing enhanced data processing (ST-A, ST-L, ST-E, ST-TU);
4. continuing to be open in publicly publishing evaluations of performance at module, programme, School and Institution levels (SL-E);
5. through Academic Council's flexibility in both the quality framework and processes, to deal with an increase in new programme types, including online learning, distance learning and new apprenticeships (ST-E, ST-A, ST-L).

## Part 5: Objectives for the coming year

Part 5 provides information about plans for quality assurance in the institution for the academic year following the reporting period (in this instance 1 September 2018 – 31 August 2019).

### 5.1 Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Plans

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

WIT will continue to develop the Technological University application with IT Carlow. The TU project so far has begun with the process for a merge change programme. However, in parallel WIT will also continue to focus on some Strategic themes for 2019-20:

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

A key challenge in the coming year relates to the implementation of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019. This will include the definition of Award Standards to be adopted by WIT.

The strategic planning process establishes the overarching strategic framework for the Institute and its enhancements activities. Coupled with the strategic plan, unit level plans also exist, and the Office of the Registrar has published a strategy for its operations to support the QE direction of activities. The strategic plan forms the basis of reporting at WIT and is tightly connected to the performance compact agreed with the HEA. The plan is therefore evaluated on a consistent basis and reviews of the plan conducted. A mid-term review was completed in the reporting period (2018-9). Broadly, the review shows strong progress against targets. Strategic progress and enhancements have been made in (among others):

1. Creating a community of practice for on-line learning;
2. Approving a framework for the creating of Research Institutes;
3. The publishing of a student charter;
4. The funding of a new student transition project to support student persistence and retention;
5. The continued development of Further Education (FE) relationships with Institute and the seamless transition of FE learners into WIT;
6. Increasing the numbers of flexible learners in the Institute;
7. To improve retention figures and the broader educational experience the Institute generates detailed retention reports and has introduced peer-to-peer mentoring initiatives;

8. Increasing 1<sup>st</sup> year intakes and particularly the continued roll-out of the Right-Student Right-Programme initiative;
9. The Institute continues to be challenged by the financial circumstances of HE funding generally and specifically its current resource and cost base.

### **5.2 Review Plans**

A list of reviews within each category (module, programme, department/school, service delivery unit or faculty), as per the internal review cycle, planned for the next reporting period.

The Institutional Review was planned for May 2020, having been deferred from Q4 2019. Due to the nature and scale of an Institutional Review, no other reviews were planned for 2019-20.

### **5.3 Other Plans**

None

## Part 6: Periodic Review

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

### 6.1 The Institution and External Review

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

Waterford Institute of Technology began preparations for an Institutional Review, the first since 2010, in the reporting period 2018-19. The preparation centred on WIT's growth and maturation in the intervening period, across teaching and learning, research and engagement and as, they in turn have become more complex, in line with the increased complexity and changing nature of higher education provision and the evolving nature of Irish higher education providers (HEIs). The regulatory and legislative framework under which the Institute operates has been and continues to be dynamic with the potential for radical and transformative change, including the potential creation of a new technological university.

Much of the change experienced over the period has supported the Institute's strategic ambition to develop further as a progressive higher education institute. However, equally some change has also been due to the challenges posed by external factors, such as resource limitations arising from: reduced funding to the Institute together with pay reductions and more demanding work conditions in the Employment Control Framework.

The changing and challenging landscape provide the backdrop to the ambitious WIT Strategic Plan published in 2018 and which establishes the values of the Institute and how they are to be applied to strategic effect in the region. This strategic plan informs all the activities of the Institute and particularly those associated with quality assurance.

To this effect, the Institute published a Quality Assurance Framework, which sets out the overarching philosophy and framework that guides academic quality assurance and quality improvement activities at WIT and establishes the following values in the development and implementation of our policies and procedures.

1. Subsidiarity: Quality is the responsibility of all staff in the Institute and the Institute will locate responsibility to the closest point to actual delivery of the service.
2. Learner Driven: The involvement of the learner is central to the design, implementation and review of our activities and the Institute actively engages with the learner to enhance their opportunity to shape their learning process.
3. Data Informed: Decisions of the Institute will be based on robust data analysis and debate.
4. Communication: The importance of understanding how quality assurance processes connect to the daily activities of the Institute is critical to achieving ownership of quality.

The Institute strives to engage all staff through communication channels, training process and involvement in the design of effective procedures to build a sustainable commitment to delivering on the quality assurance framework.

2. Openness, transparency and ease of engagement: the design and implementation of procedures should result in public, easily understood and easily accessed processes that enable user to readily engage. Procedures should be based on clearly defined policies and be supported by appropriate training and support structures. All policies and procedures should be published and readily available.
3. Strategic: The operation of the quality assurance and improvement systems should be informed by and support the strategic plans of the Institute and be aligned to the strategic risks and risk appetite of the Institute (Quality Assurance Framework pp 1-2).

The Institute engages in a continuous cycle of self-improvement to improve the student experience by enhancing teaching, learning and research, and improving the quality assurance systems designed for this purpose. The Institutional Review will be welcome, once it occurs, in evaluating our approach and our plans for future oversight during a unique period of growth and ambitious strategic planning, albeit at a time of restricted public funding.

## **6.2 Self-Reflection on Quality Assurance**

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

Effective self-evaluation is key to improvement. The preparation for CINNTE Institutional Review of WIT presented an opportunity for the Institute to consider in detail on the quality of its education provision, its governance and strategic planning structures and to engage in critical self-reflection and independent review.

The Quality Assurance of assessment depends greatly on external examiners, as has been documented in detail earlier in this report. While the external examiner reports have been very positive, the Institute recognises that the system of external examining requires change to confirm the consistency of modular delivery across programmes through subject level examiners, while Schools would also greatly benefit from school level examiners offering a broader perspective on their programmes.

Research students in meeting external review panels are generally positive about the environment and research culture in the Institute. However, some students highlighted the variability of experience across funded and non-funded research students and also in different campus locations. WIT Schools were therefore asked to consider mechanisms to facilitate all research students in integrating more successfully into the wider postgraduate community, and to review the resources and financial support available to all students to ensure a consistent research-student experiences.

The School of Engineering were slow to complete their School Review which happened in early 2017. Consequently, Academic Council proposed a facilitator come in, in May 2018, to guide the staff in completing the outstanding work.

The Self-Reflection required for the planned Institutional Review is important and welcome in evaluating our approach and our plans for future oversight during a unique period of growth and ambitious strategic planning, albeit at a time of restricted public funding. The Institute considers the Review an integral part of the improvement process and have established the following objectives as valued outputs from the process:

1. reflect on the institutional actions since the 2010 Institutional Review in the context of the review, the development of the Institute's strategic plan and our achievements;
2. benchmark the Institute's QA framework against both the European Standards and Guidelines, and also against national Guidelines;
3. articulate and validate our Quality Enhancement proposals for the future; and
4. assess the extent to which WIT engages its students and other stakeholders and supports its staff and researchers with a view to constant improvement.

### 6.3 Themes

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

The Institute has also been at the forefront of reflecting on governance responsibilities more generally and are playing a lead role in a sectoral wide project on academic governance (AG). The AG project arises from a previous project co-chaired by WIT's Registrar on developing a Technological Higher Education Sector Quality Framework, which was published in April 2017. The AG project aims to position QA in the context of governance and focus on the balance of governance responsibilities between the traditional corporate arenas and academic activity.

The Academic Quality Committee has identified academic risk and academic risk reporting as a key theme of importance for the future. The committee developed a policy document that creates a clear pathway for understanding and codifying academic risk occurrences and the reporting responsibilities arising for risk events. It is intended that this will not alone be implemented in the Institute, but also be published at an international higher education conference for consideration by peers outside of our community.

A developmental theme of considerable importance to the Institute will be the changing legislative framework in the coming year. The enactment of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act will offer the Institute more autonomy and with it more responsibility. This increased autonomy fits well with ongoing work in Academic Governance and Risk Management. External evaluation of the Institute's pedagogy is vital to its success. In the recently completed periodic cycle of School Reviews the Peer Review Group (PRG) panel reports commended the Schools on the rich and varied pedagogical practices in evidence. The panels cited some excellent exemplars of teaching, learning and assessment and a number of noteworthy aspirations for future development. The Schools were asked, however, to encourage staff to develop a shared vision of pedagogy delivery and assessment across each School and to articulate this in a School Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and responding to this will continue to be a theme into the near future.

The difficulties posed by the financial constraints under which the Institute (and all other HEIs) has operated is an important theme which has arisen in all reviews. These financial constraints have led to problems in the operation and capital development needs of the Institute.

Other important themes relate to new challenges arising from the decision to merge and apply for Technological University status. For instance, this will require the development of academic governance and the integration of two diverse QA systems.