Institutional Review of Provider of Higher Education and Training

Institutional Review of Athlone Institute of Technology

21-23 March 2011

Report of Expert Panel

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HETAC Institutional Review

Introduction

This is the Report of the Expert Panel, appointed by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), which carried out the Institutional Review of Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) in March 2011.

HETAC is the qualifications awarding body for third-level educational and training institutions outside the university sector in Ireland. All providers offering HETAC awards are subject to external quality assurance review of their institutions. HETAC carries out such reviews as part of its Institutional Review process.

HETAC appointed an expert panel to carry out the Institutional Review on its behalf. Under the chairmanship of Dr Terrence MacTaggart, membership of the expert panel reflected a wide range of expertise and experience, in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the review. HETAC wishes to record its thanks to the members of the panel for accepting this task and for their generous and professional commitment to the review.

Athlone Institute of Technology will submit a follow-up report to HETAC not more than 12 months after the publication of this report. Its follow-up report will outline how it has implemented the recommendations, as set out in its response to the Institutional Review, and evaluate the initial impact of such implementation. The follow-up report, including a commentary by the HETAC Executive, will be considered by the Academic Committee of HETAC. The Academic Committee may adopt the Institute's follow-up report and may consider further conditions. Following adoption by the Academic Committee of HETAC, the follow-up report will be published on the Council's website.
Note

HETAC’s Institutional Review process is designed to address only those objectives described in the Terms of Reference included in Appendix A.

The expert panel points out that it cannot make any findings regarding:
1. The financial standing and commercial viability of the institution reviewed
2. The institution’s compliance with its general statutory obligations
or
3. The general fitness of the institution’s systems and arrangements for the governance and management of financial matters.

The Report of the Expert Panel contains no assurances, warranties or representations, express or implied, regarding the aforesaid issues, or any other issues outside the Terms of Reference.

While HETAC has endeavoured to ensure the information contained in the Report is correct, complete and up-to-date, any reliance placed on such information is strictly at the reader’s own risk, and in no event will HETAC be liable for any loss or damage (including without limitation, indirect or consequential loss or damage) arising from or in connection with the use of the information contained in the Report of the Expert Panel.
Executive Summary — Report of the Expert Panel

This is the Report of the Expert Panel appointed by HETAC to undertake the Institutional Review of Athlone Institute of Technology on 21-23 March 2011. The review process was carried out in accordance with the HETAC Policy on Institutional Review of Providers of Higher Education and Training, 2007.

Findings

Overall recommendation to Awards Body, including details of any conditions attached

The following is an Executive Summary of the panel’s key findings:

- The effectiveness of the Quality Assurance arrangements operated by Athlone Institute of Technology has been assessed and the arrangements have been found to be generally effective in accordance with the seven elements of Part One of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance 2009, Helsinki, 3rd edition, and the HETAC Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures in Higher Education, 2002.

- Athlone Institute of Technology has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression, as determined by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland.

- Athlone Institute of Technology substantially meets:
  - The criteria for the delegation of authority to make awards that relate to Operations and Management; Education and Training Programmes;

The panel recommends that delegated authority granted to Athlone Institute of Technology be continued subject to the following condition:

A condition for Delegation of Authority is that Athlone Institute of Technology must agree its quality assurance procedures for collaborative provision with HETAC. The Institute should not recruit new students to collaborative programmes prior to consultation with HETAC regarding the completion of this condition.

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1 Policy for collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and joint awards, 2008, HETAC
Commendations and Recommendations

The panel made a total of 12 commendations, 15 recommendations and 1 condition identified in the body of the report, in relation to the Objectives for Institutional Review to which each corresponds.

The panel is grateful to Athlone Institute of Technology for the cooperation and assistance provided to the panel and wishes it well in its future work.
Background to Athlone Institute of Technology

Staff and learner numbers

Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) is located in the Midlands region of Ireland and since establishment in 1970 has developed strong links with the local community and regional and national agencies and industries. AIT considers itself to be a key provider of higher education and training in the Midlands region. At the time of the review the total student population was around 4,000 full-time and 2,000 part-time undergraduate students with just over 330 postgraduate students. Around 440 students were from overseas, split almost evenly between EU and non-EU countries. A notable feature has been the growth in mature undergraduates from 11.7% of total undergraduates in 2006-07 to 31.9% of undergraduate entrants in 2010-11 which exceeds the targets set in the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013 – 17% by 2010 and 20% by 2013. About 75% of students registered at AIT in September 2010 came from the Westmeath and adjacent counties. At the time of the review the Institute had a total staff complement of 670, of whom 320 were academic staff.

Strategy

At present the Institute is following the strategic plan formulated for the period 2009-2013 and this has four priorities:

1. Achieve reputation and visibility as a college of choice;
2. Develop excellence in learning and teaching;
3. Strengthen research capability and capacity;
4. Play a catalytic role in the economic, social, cultural and environmental development of the Region.

(Strategic Plan Athlone Institute of Technology 2009-2013, page 25)

The Institute is reconsidering aspects of the strategic plan in the light of the economic recession and the recently published National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (Hunt report).

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2 EU: The European Union is a unique economic and political partnership between 27 European countries.
Physical resources

The Institute is centred on a campus of about 57 acres two miles east of Athlone town centre. In the last decade there has been an investment of around €100 million in the campus which has included provision of new buildings and facilities for hospitality, tourism and leisure; nursing and health care; engineering and informatics. The Institute has also developed the Midlands Innovation and Research Centre (MIRC) and a postgraduate hub. More recently the sporting infrastructure has benefited from the addition of international-standard athletics and all-weather facilities with a new indoor athletic arena due for completion in 2012.

Programmes offered

Currently the Institute has four Schools offering programmes in the broad fields of business, engineering, humanities and science. There is also a Department of Adult and Continuing Education. The range of programmes is shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School/Dept</th>
<th>Outline of major programme areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Business, management, accounting, business computing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Civil engineering, mechanical engineering, construction, computer engineering, software engineering, electronics, mechatronics, renewable energy, polymer technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>Social studies and care, sports, hospitality, leisure, tourism, communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Biotechnology, toxicology, nursing (including dental and veterinary), pharmaceutical science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult and Continuing Education</td>
<td>Business and management, accountancy, engineering, science, social care, addiction studies, psychology, hospitality, tourism, leisure, computing, teaching and learning, languages, art and design, recreational and hobby programmes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All four Schools are offering programmes from Level 6 to Level 9 with about 40% of registered students at Level 6, 24% at Level 7, 31% at Level 8 and 5% at Level 9. The Department of Adult and Continuing Education has about half of its 1400 registered students attending recognised NFQ undergraduate programmes.
Research and innovation

Since 2000 the Institute has secured about €23 million in research funding largely from national funding agencies. Income reached a peak in the years 2007-08 and 2008-09 when AIT received close to €11 million in research funds during this period. In the last two years, research funding has fallen back considerably. Within the overarching framework of the MIRC there are a number of Research Centres including the Centre for Biopolymer and Biomolecular Research (CBBR), Centre for Nanotechnology and Materials Research (CNMR) and the Software Research Centre. The research centres collaborate with regional industries and multinational companies and these links have been exploited further by the MIRC. This incubator enterprise located on campus has to date supported 58 start-up companies.

AIT also has a commitment to support research and scholarship within its portfolio. Currently, around 25 students are undertaking post-graduate research studies at doctoral level; these students are assigned to supervisors within one of the main research institutes. AIT intends to increase its number of research centres to reflect academic strengths in other key areas.

Delegated authority

Athlone Institute of Technology received Delegated Authority to make awards at Levels 6 to 9 of the NFQ in 2005. In 2007 Delegated Authority was granted for research degrees at Level 9 in the fields of life and physical sciences, mechanical and polymer engineering, and social care. At the time of the review the Institute was being evaluated for further Delegation of Authority at Levels 9 and 10 in life and physical sciences and mechanical and polymer engineering and at Level 9 for software engineering.

Collaborative links and partnerships

The Institute has developed a wide range of links with the local and regional communities through the work of its research centres, the MIRC and the Department of Adult and Continuing Education. It also has close relationships with local secondary schools and formal co-operation with further
education colleges in the region. Research collaboration has been established with Líonra®, a multi-regional higher education network, and a number of national universities.

Over the years AIT has engaged with a large number of national and international partners in programme provision arrangements and student entry to AIT but has only recently moved towards establishing formal partnership agreements. Currently major international partners include: the South East University of Nanjing and the Dongbei University of Finance and Economics in China, both in respect of student intake. Student entry to AIT programmes is also in place for students from the Technical Vocational Training Corporation in Saudi Arabia. Collaborations in place for the provision of AIT programmes abroad include the Zambian Centre for Accountancy Studies in Lusaka; the Dongbei University of Finance and Economics (DUFE), Dalian in China. National collaborations for the provision of AIT programmes also exist with Castlerea Prison; Cavan Institute; Gurteen College; NUIG; Allianz Worldwide/People Dimensions International; ATI and other institutes of technology in Ireland. The Institute has also participated in the EU-funded Erasmus programme since 1995. It also has exchange links with various institutions in the USA and Canada which enable students to study abroad using EU mobility funding. In addition there are agreements for at least five student and staff exchange programmes with UK institutions.

Additional background on the profile of the Institute is set out in the Terms of Reference, Appendix A.

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3 The Líonra network is a higher education consortium comprising AIT, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology, Sligo, Letterkenny Institute of Technology, National University of Ireland Galway, St Angela's College, Sligo, with the BMW Regional Assembly.
Institutional Review Methodology

The Institutional Review process was carried out in accordance with HETAC’s Policy on Institutional Review of Providers of Higher Education and Training, 2007. The process consisted of the following six phases, with the Report of the Expert Panel coming at the end of phase three.

1. HETAC sets the Terms of Reference following consultation with the Institution.
2. Self-evaluation carried out by the Institution, followed by the production of a written Self-Evaluation Report (SER).
3. Visit of the panel appointed by HETAC, followed by the written report of the panel.
4. Institutional response to the panel’s report, including its implementation plan.
5. Publication of the report of the panel and the Institution’s subsequent response.
6. Follow-up report submitted by the Institution.

The Terms of Reference for Athlone Institute of Technology were discussed with HETAC during planning meetings over the period from February 2010 to November 2010. The objectives of the Institutional Review of Athlone Institute of Technology were set by HETAC in January 2011 as follows:

1. To enhance public confidence in the quality of education and training provided by the Institution and the standards of the awards made.

2. To contribute to coherent strategic planning and governance in the Institution. The following special considerations for Athlone Institute of Technology were included at the request of AIT:

   **Strategy**

   Athlone Institute of Technology is reflecting upon the adopted strategic plan and is currently engaged in consultation on a major internal management restructuring project. This will likely involve significant management realignment. The purpose of the proposed change is to position the Institute better to support the scholarship and research endeavours of the Institute community and in so doing to realise the vision set out in the strategic plan. In addition, the Institute is mindful of the recommendations within the recent Higher Education Strategy Review and is open to increased external collaboration.
Management structure

In part as an indirect consequence of the recession, the Institute, in common with many other public sector enterprises, has experienced a number of significant early retirements at senior management level. This has occasioned a change in leadership in a number of areas of the Institute’s operations. This is a factor in the current restructuring discussion and is a significant element to be advised to the institutional review committee.

3. To assess the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance arrangements operated by the Institution with the following special consideration for Athlone Institute of Technology: The Institutional Review should consider the Quality Assurance arrangements for collaborative provision, including any out-centre provision. With the following special considerations for Athlone Institute of Technology:

**AIT Quality Structures - Special consideration requested by AIT**

The Institute believes its commitment to building a quality informed culture was evident in the late 1990s when it became one of the first Institutes in the sector to appoint a dedicated Quality Officer. This office continues to this day and has been a significant resource and support for the office of the Registrar in moving toward and embedding a learner-centred and quality enhancing culture. Due to the elective departure of the Quality Officer and the strictures of the current employment moratorium, the post is currently vacant and this poses challenges for the Institute.

In this context the panel is requested to consider to what extent the quality agenda has been embraced by the wider AIT community and may wish to provide recommendations on how this might be further embedded and enhanced.

**Collaborative Provision - Special consideration requested by AIT**

The Institutional Review should consider the Quality Assurance procedures in place for those collaborative partnerships and arrangements entered into by the Institute with third parties for the purpose of providing, organising, or procuring a programme under Delegated Authority.

4. To confirm the extent to which the Institution has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and its procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression.
5. To evaluate the operation and management of Delegated Authority where is has been granted.

6. To provide recommendations for the enhancement of the education and training provided by the Institution. With the following special consideration for Athlone Institute of Technology:

The Institute wishes to advise that it has made significant investment in the enhancement of learning and teaching both at college level and in collaboration with partners within and beyond the sector. The self-evaluation report will include a case study on this area founded in three key unifying themes of learning and teaching:

- Academic Professional Development
- Technology Enhanced Learning
- Enhancement of the Learning Experience

The Institute invites from the panel its comment on this initiative and its advice on how this can be sustained and enhanced.

For the complete Terms of Reference for Athlone Institute of Technology, see Appendix A.

HETAC appointed a panel of experts to carry out the Institutional Review on its behalf. Under the chairmanship of Dr Terrence MacTaggart, membership of the panel reflected a wide range of expertise and experience, in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the review. Panel members were asked to declare any potential conflicts of interest prior to their appointment. No such conflicts were declared. Panel members received induction training on the conduct of Institutional Reviews in advance of the site visit. The panel membership is outlined in full in Appendix B.

Self-study Process
Prior to the panel's visit, Athlone Institute of Technology engaged in a self-study exercise. In anticipation of the Institutional Review in 2009-10 the Institute carried out programmatic reviews of the provision within its four schools in 2010. The outcomes of programmatic review, along with surveys in 2010 of staff, students and academic provision, provided the self-reflective base for composing the Self Evaluation Report (SER). Six working groups addressed the six objectives of Institutional Review and a Steering Committee, which included the President and Registrar and about
28 other members, met six times between September 2010 and January 2011 and provided overall supervision and editorial control. The working groups gathered input for the SER from the wider community at Athlone. Further reflection was provided by the Institute’s committees and the Students’ Union. Presentations on the progress of preparation for Institutional Review were presented to the Governing Body, Academic Council, and Departments by the Registrar. A draft of the SER was reviewed by an external panel and documentation for the review was made accessible to staff through a SharePoint site.

In advance of the site visit, Athlone Institute of Technology submitted a Self-Evaluation Report and additional supporting documentation. A desk-based review of the SER was undertaken by HETAC prior to forwarding the report to the review panel. Panel members assessed the SER in advance of the site visit, and forwarded their initial thoughts to the Review Chairperson and Secretary.

The SER summarised developments at AIT since the award of Delegated Authority in 2005, in particular:

- Documenting changes in the learner profile;
- Research and innovation developments;
- Expansion of the campus;
- The role played by AIT in the region and with the Midlands Gateway initiative.

The SER also considered AIT’s position with regard to the six objectives of Institutional Review which included for each objective an insightful and critical self-reflective summary. Appendices to the SER provided *inter alia* full reports on the surveys of staff and students carried out in 2010, a listing of programmes and awards, a case study of the Learning and Teaching Unit and profiles of lecturing staff, researchers, graduates and students. The full list of documents submitted with the SER is attached in Appendix C. A number of other documents were submitted in support of the SER either in hardcopy or through the SharePoint site established by AIT. These included institutional strategies, minutes of institutional, school and departmental committees, programmatic review reports, external examiner reports, quality assurance regulations and guides, staff and learner handbooks, undergraduate and postgraduate prospectuses, and school documentation on specific programmes.
An advance meeting was held between the Review Chairperson, Secretary, HETAC Head of Institutional Review and senior representatives of the Institute on 1 March 2011. Discussion at the meeting included the following:

1. Confirmation of the panel composition and noting that there were no declarations of any potential for conflict of interest;
2. A brief overview and update on the Institute was provided by the AIT President;
3. A review of the Terms of Reference and Special Considerations for Institutional Review;
4. The Institute’s arrangements for collaborative provision (both National and Transnational);
5. Consideration and agreement on the agenda and arrangements for the site visit;
6. Outlining of key themes highlighted by panel members in their initial analysis of the Institute’s Self Evaluation Report;
7. Consideration of distinctive aspects of the Institute;
8. Identification of additional documentation to be made available during the site visit or through the SharePoint site (detailed in Appendix D);
9. Confirmation of the schedule for producing the panel’s report and the Institute’s response.

The site visit took place from 21 to 23 March 2011 at Athlone Institute of Technology. An index of the AIT documentation provided to the panel at the site visit is provided in Appendix E. The full panel met with members of the Institute, learners and other stakeholders according to an agenda drawn up by the panel in consultation with the Institute. The agenda for the site visit, agreed in advance with representatives of Athlone Institute of Technology, is set out in Appendix F. With minor changes, that agenda was followed during the visit. Lists of persons with whom the panel met is provided in Appendix G.

The members of the panel were satisfied that they received full cooperation from Athlone Institute of Technology and that they had the necessary documentation and discussions to reach their conclusions and produce their report.
Findings in relation to objectives of the Institutional Review

Objective 1 — Public Confidence

To enhance public confidence in the quality of education and training provided by the Institute and the standards of the awards made

This overarching objective covers all areas of the Institute’s activity. The quality of the institutional review process itself is a critical part of this, as is the publication of the SER, the report of the panel, and the Institute’s own response and action plan. The information provided by the Institute to the public is part of this objective.

Summary and key findings of Objective 1 — Public Confidence

The self evaluation process and report

1.1 Preparation for the institutional review was managed by the Registrar’s office and supervised by a Steering Group of about 30 members that included the President, Registrar and President of the Students’ Union. As previously mentioned, six working groups were set up to cover the six objectives designated by HETAC in the institutional review process. The groups, which had memberships of academic and support staff and learner representatives, were charged with gathering information from the wider community at Athlone and drafting relevant sections of the SER. The framework for the self evaluation was based around the precepts of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance 2009 and the HETAC Guidelines for Institutional Review.

1.2 The AIT Steering Group was particularly concerned with benchmarking the experience of staff and learners at the Institute nationally and internationally and gave the following advice to working groups: ’Benchmarking is a critical element of the entire study; each group’s deliberations should focus on critical reflections based on evidence-based conclusions together with examples of good practice’ (AIT internal meeting on Institutional Review, October 2010). Surveys which allowed benchmarking of the learner experience against national and international practice included a learner survey in 2009-10 in conjunction with the National University of Ireland, Galway and
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology with benchmarking across the participants. This survey was partly in response to the perceived limitations of the sectorally agreed learner feedback process. An internal learner survey (13% response rate) using the Australian Course Experience Questionnaire which allowed benchmarking against recent Australian surveys was also carried out in 2010. In addition in 2010 AIT conducted a staff survey (47% response rate) and an academic survey to investigate learning and teaching and strategic goals. Details of the 2010 surveys were provided in an appendix to the SER. Programmatic reviews of all four schools carried out in 2010 also provided important findings for the self evaluation process. These included the views of a range of internal and external stakeholders and independent external assessors.

1.3 The outcome of the preparation was a Self Evaluation Report which the panel regarded as well-written, evidence-based, open and self-reflective in identifying issues and challenges, and balanced through the highlighting of areas of good practice. Findings from programmatic review and the surveys were reflected accurately in the report. The report did not provide much detail on how the Institute was addressing issues and there were some information gaps with regard to quality assurance. In response senior staff at AIT indicated that the aim was to provide a concise report with further detail, particularly on quality assurance, to be available through the SharePoint site established by AIT. Although population of the SharePoint site with documentation was initially slow, by the time of the site visit the panel felt sufficiently informed to be able to conduct a thorough review. However, for future reviews it would be to the Institute’s advantage to provide information to the panel earlier in the process.

The site visit

1.4 During the site visit the panel met members of the Governing Body, senior managers, teaching and research staff, technical and administrative staff, current learners, recent graduates and a range of external stakeholders as set out in Appendix G. All discussions were conducted in an open and discursive manner which mirrored the strong degree of self reflection found in the SER. In particular the external stakeholders, representatives of local and national companies and senior staff from local secondary schools and regional further education colleges, provided an open and honest appraisal of AIT. All the stakeholders recognised the valuable contribution that AIT was making to the Midlands region but also
spoke of how the Institute would need to act promptly and decisively to the changed national economic circumstances and the findings of the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (Hunt report).

1.5 Although the staff survey showed very high levels of agreement with the effective monitoring and reviewing of AIT awards and comparability of awards with other institutes of technology - the panel pursued two of the more unexpected findings of the staff survey during the site visit:

- only 24% of staff agreed that internal communication was effective
- just 51% of staff felt AIT degrees were comparable to those from Irish universities.

Both these results had been noted in the Institute’s SER (pages 26-27). In discussing these findings with staff at a number of meetings the panel heard a variety of opinions and it was difficult for the panel to establish if the findings in the survey accurately reflected the situation presented by staff met by the panel at AIT. Nevertheless the panel did feel that there was a necessity for senior management to carry out further investigation of the findings. The panel concluded that there was scope for improving communication and for encouraging staff to take a more positive stance on the achievements of AIT as it is axiomatic that strong levels of self-belief within an institution are a prerequisite for stimulating public confidence.

1.6 Learners who met the panel were proud of their programmes at AIT and believed that the programmes were considered to have a high reputation. Learners gave examples of how they were more likely to secure jobs following graduation as a result of undertaking their AIT programme and most learners felt the practical nature of their programme offered an important opportunity to gain employment even in the current difficult economic climate.

**Public confidence in the quality and standards of provision**

1.7 The Institute through the SER and in meetings with the panel identified a number of ways in which it assured the public of the quality and standards of its provision. Firstly, AIT indicated that all its awards conform to the requirements of the National Framework of Qualifications and new programmes were subject to a rigorous approval process with formal external validation. Secondly, existing programmes were monitored by external examiners
appointed by the Institute. Lastly, AIT indicated that about 70% of the Institute’s provision is accredited by National Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).

Interaction with the local community

1.8 The SER identified a number of ways in which AIT gained the public confidence of the local and regional community. Through the Midlands Innovation and Research Centre (MIRC), an incubator centre for new business, AIT supported some 70 new enterprises and played a major entrepreneurial role in the region. In 2007, the MIRC was ranked second in the Best Science Incubator awards. This award was organised by Science Alliance in cooperation with Centre for Strategy and Evaluation Services (CSES) and Gate 2 Growth. Collaboration with local industry was also achieved through the work of the AIT Work-Based Learning Office with delivery of programmes in the workplace. The professional and vocational nature of programmes also allowed AIT to develop a substantial volume of placements with larger companies in the region. In a meeting with stakeholders, including employers, the panel noted their high regard for AIT. The panel also noted that there was potential for further collaboration with small and medium enterprises where placements were more problematic.

1.9 Other learning for the local community was provided by the Department of Adult and Continuing Education. A number of learners met by the panel explained how they had entered AIT programmes through this route and staff took pride in the large number of mature learners (about 32% of the undergraduate population) studying at AIT.

1.10 One area that AIT should seek to strengthen is the relationship with local secondary schools and further education colleges. These were the main feeders into AIT programmes and it was reported to the panel that while many learners had a range of options they saw AIT as a destination of choice because potential learners were aware of the caring and committed academic community. The panel found that principals and other senior staff from these ‘feeder’ institutions to be very supportive of AIT, however, many felt that communication could be improved as presently there was no obvious forum for them to either pass opinion and advice to senior staff at AIT on strategic developments in education for the region or to receive feedback on the achievements and progress of their former learners. The panel noted the deep understanding and experience of these colleagues and would endorse the need for a forum at the senior level to ensure views, ideas and partnerships are utilised and optimised.
1.11 Overall the panel concluded that AIT was strongly valued by the local community through, for example, provision of appropriate programmes in adult and continuing education, support for new knowledge-based businesses and having a caring and committed academic community.

Information provided by the Institute to the public

1.12 Information for the public is provided in hardcopy and through the Institute’s website. Documentation seen by the panel included:

- The strategic plan 2009-2013;
- Undergraduate and postgraduate prospectuses;
- Adult and Continuing Education prospectus;
- AIT Life magazine.

1.13 Publicity and provision of information is managed by the Communications and Marketing Office. Learners confirmed to the panel that the prospectuses and website contained accurate and relevant information. The SER stated that the Institute was seeking to provide quantitative statistical information, for example, pass rates, drop-out rates and graduate employment statistics, for prospective learners. The panel would support AIT’s intent to improve its information systems so that such information is available.

Commendations - Public Confidence

1.14 The panel commends AIT on the following.
1. The very strong level of support and leadership it provides to local and regional business and to the local community in general. It is evident that the Institute is highly regarded by business, civic agencies and second level and further education providers and is the destination of choice for learners from the region.
Recommendations - Public Confidence

1.15 The panel recommends the following.

1. Consideration of expanding the links with local business to engage more actively with smaller employers.

2. Further investigation of the apparent lack of staff confidence in AIT degrees and in the effectiveness of internal communications.

3. More systematic engagement with secondary schools and further education colleges to gain a broader outlook on educational developments and to provide feedback on learner achievements.
Objective 2 — Strategic Planning and Governance

*To contribute to coherent strategic planning and governance in the Institute*

The review may address the coherence of institutional mission, vision and values and overall institutional strategic planning.

### Summary and key findings of Objective 2 — Strategic Planning and Governance

#### Strategic Planning

2.1 At the time of the institutional review Athlone Institute of Technology was working to its Strategic Plan 2009-2013. The panel was informed of four key themes:

- Becoming the college of choice for learners;
- Developing excellence in learning and teaching;
- Strengthening research capability and capacity;
- Performing in a catalytic role for the Midlands Gateway initiative.

These themes will be explored in more detail throughout this report. The following paragraphs summarise some of the key examples of progress and developments given by senior staff.

2.2 A key target of the strategic plan is to significantly expand learner numbers; performance indicators given in the appendix to the SER refer to a 40% growth in learner numbers in general (SER, page 69). At the time of the site visit, student numbers were approximately 4000 full-time and 2000 part-time. The three main approaches by AIT to achieving this were given as increasing international learners; increasing home learner numbers through encouraging greater participation in higher education in the Midlands region; and addressing retention. In order to realise the growth the Institute has been developing the campus, in particular improving sporting and cultural facilities, and working in collaboration with partners in the Vocational Education Committee (VEC) to provide better and more integrated pathways into higher education programmes.
2.3 Since its establishment in 2007, the Learning and Teaching Unit has played a key role in promoting excellence in learning and teaching. A case study accompanying the SER gave some examples of how the unit was: strengthening academic professional development through collaboration with other IoTs in providing a Postgraduate Certificate in Third Level Learning and Teaching; providing training in the use of the VLE\(^4\) platform Moodle; and supporting the peer assisted student learning through the PASS\(^5\) scheme.

2.4 In supporting research, innovation and links with industry the Institute has set up three research institutes with a strong focus on applied research: Materials Research Institute (MRI); Bioscience Research Institute (BRI); and the Software Research Institute (SRI). Further links with regional enterprise has been provided by the Midlands Innovation and Research Centre (MIRC).

2.5 As illustrated above, the panel was impressed with numerous aspects of progress on the plan; nevertheless, it had concerns about the continued progress. The key performance indicators (KPIs) given in the SER appendix set some very ambitious targets, for example:

- 40% increase in learner numbers;
- 15% of learner population to be international;
- retention rate at 85% for Levels 6 and 7;
- 90% retention for Level 9;
- growth to 1,000 postgraduate students by 2013;
- €5 million research income per year by 2013 (SER, pages 69-71).

In meetings with senior managers and members of the Governing Body it was clear that re-evaluation of the strategic plan was a key issue in light of the economic recession and the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030. However little evidence was presented to the panel of progress of this re-evaluation. Overall there did not appear to be a systematic approach to evaluating the effectiveness of strategic planning by, for instance, recording and monitoring progress on implementation of priorities.

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\(^4\) A virtual learning environment (VLE) is a system designed to support teaching and learning in an educational setting.

\(^5\) PASS: Peer Assisted Student Support is a scheme that offers cross-year support between students on the same programme.
2.6 In the meetings the panel was not able to gain a clear understanding of how AIT would respond to changed circumstances with a vision for new strategic directions and there appeared to be a continuing period of inaction. During a meeting with principals and senior staff from local secondary schools and further education colleges the view had been that AIT would need to quickly develop strategic regional partnerships. The panel was informed that senior staff at AIT had considered a number of alliances with other institutes of technology but as yet no firm plan had emerged. Likewise internationalisation was seen to be a key element in the diversification of funding to increase numbers, but the panel did not find a clear strategy for achieving this other than gradually linking with more international partners.

2.7 The panel would encourage the Institute to instigate more decisive action in strategic planning taking into account the changed economic, political, educational and environmental circumstances. It also identified an opportunity for senior management to engage with the broader community in the Institute in evaluating and re-developing its strategic plan.

Governance

2.8 The Governing Body manages and controls the affairs of the Institute and has responsibility for the governance and strategic direction of the Institute. There are 19 members of the Governing Body including the President, representatives of AIT staff, students and trade unions, and 11 members external to the Institute. Members of the Governing Body take a clear and strong overview on financial and resource matters and are assisted in reaching decisions by the work of the Audit Committee. Day-to-day management of the Institute is provided by the Executive Management Team (EMT) in which the President is supported by academic and administrative heads. Academic Council, which reports to the Governing Body, is the senior decision-making committee and has a number of sub-committees:

- Research, Innovation and Enterprise Committee;
- Academic Strategy and Quality Committee;
- Learning Enhancement Committee.

At School level, departmental committees and programme boards provide support for decision-making by School and Departmental Heads.
2.9 Through the study of Governing Body minutes and a meeting with representatives of the Governing Body the panel recognised the very strong commitment Governing Body members had to AIT and the mutual respect between them and the executive management team. The team noted that members of the Governing Body were well informed on major strategic developments and issues through the presentation of regular reports on finance, learner numbers, media communications as well as the President’s formal reports. Important academic developments were brought to the attention of the Governing Body through presentations from Heads of School, the Learning and Teaching Unit and AIT research institutes.

2.10 The panel found less evidence that the Governing Body was exposed to information and discussion that helped them stay abreast of academic issues in order to gauge academic quality and standards and to monitor the overall educational performance of AIT. While the trust placed by the Governing Body on the EMT and Academic Council to ensure high academic standards was understandable, the panel believed that the Governing Body could strengthen further AIT’s commitment to high standards through giving closer attention to academic matters. In particular they could have provided opinion on strategies for national and transnational collaborations and other areas with higher academic risk to ensure robust oversight was maintained.

Collaborative Provision

2.11 At present, there appears to be no clear strategic direction on the development of national and transnational collaborative partnerships even though this was considered to be an important area of growth. The Institute did have a written account of its plan for the growth of collaborative provision. Guidelines on the establishment and implementation of collaborative provision (March, 2011) were produced just prior to the visit of the panel. These guidelines did not address the high reputational and financial risk inherent in all collaborative partnerships (national and transnational) amongst other things. Accordingly the panel was concerned that without careful and considered strategic and operational planning AIT could be exposed to unnecessary risk. Further commentary on collaborative provision is provided under Objective 5 – Delegation of Authority.
Committees

2.12 In conversations with staff and learners met by the panel and through a close consideration of minutes the panel concluded that committees were conducted in a competent manner. However, the minutes commonly did not convey how decisions were reached on important issues. Of particular note was the high importance placed by staff on the work of the Academic Strategy and Quality Committee (ASQC). The panel was impressed with the work of the committee and agreed that it played a vital role, especially in the continued vacancy of the Quality Officer post. However, this positive reflection was tempered by a concern that the many meetings of ASQC, up to 12 a year, and the high volume of business and paperwork placed a heavy burden on members of the committee. The panel came to the view that this volume and complexity has the potential to significantly undermine the function of the committee and the academic oversight of programmes.

Commendations - Strategic Planning and Governance

2.13 The panel commends AIT on the following.
1. The Governing Body demonstrated a very strong commitment to the progress and reputation of AIT and there was a high level of mutual respect between members of the Governing Body and senior executives.
2. The Learning and Teaching Unit has provided strategic leadership and operational support in the delivery of the major strategic theme on excellence in learning and teaching.
3. The Midlands Innovation and Research Centre (MIRC) and the research institutes have strongly assisted the Institute in addressing the strategic themes of increasing research capability and capacity and acting as a catalyst for enterprise in the Midlands region.

Recommendations - Strategic Planning and Governance

2.14 The panel recommends the following.
1. The Institute should take rapid and decisive action to evaluate, re-develop and fully implement its Strategic Plan 2009-2013 and key performance indicators, taking account of the changed economic, political, educational and environmental situation. Regular progress reports to the Governing Body should form an integral part of the process.
Widespread consultation with staff of the Institute and partners in the region will provide greater ownership and a broad spectrum of opinion.

2. While the trust placed by members of the Governing Body on the EMT and Academic Council to ensure high academic standards was understandable the panel believe that the Governing Body could further strengthen AIT’s commitment to high standards through giving closer attention to academic matters in general. In particular, they could provide opinion on strategies for collaborations as well as other areas with higher academic risk to ensure robust oversight is maintained.

3. The Governing Body should play a more prominent role in providing strategic oversight of all collaborative provision for national collaborations and transnational arrangements – different risks are inherent in both arrangements. This will ensure that AIT continues to maintain its high reputational standing in the region and nationally.
Objective 3 — Quality Assurance

To assess the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance arrangements operated by the Institute

This is based on Part One of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (QA)\(^6\). By including this in the Institutional Review process, the statutory requirement for the review of QA is met. How the Institute reviews the effectiveness of its QA for the seven elements of the European Standards and Guidelines should be explicitly addressed by the review process.

### Summary and Findings of Objective 3 — Quality Assurance

#### Introduction

3.1 The seven areas covered by the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (QA) are:

i. Policy and procedures for quality assurance
ii. Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards
iii. Assessment of learners
iv. Quality assurance of teaching staff
v. Learning resources and support
vi. Information systems
vii. Public information

#### Overview

3.2 The panel considered the Institute’s procedures in relation to the seven elements of the European Standards and Guidelines for Internal Quality Assurance and concluded that the criteria have been met. In relation to each of the seven elements of the European Standards and Guidelines, the panel’s findings are summarised below.

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Element 1 — Policy and procedures for quality assurance

3.3 Guidance for staff on the Institute’s quality assurance framework is provided by a number of key documents presented by AIT:

- Quality Assurance Manual (revised 2010);
- Standards, Assessment & Awards in Athlone Institute of Technology (revised 2011);
- Staff Handbook (2009);
- Procedures and guidelines for the operation of the external examiner system for taught courses validated by HETAC (2004);
- Procedures and guidelines for postgraduate research in the Institute (2007);
- Guidelines for collaborative programmes, transnational programmes, and joint awards (March 2011).

3.4 As the list shows, in recent years there has been both revision of existing guidance and development of new guidance. The SER focused on the revised Quality Assurance Manual as the parent document designed to assist the AIT learning community to ‘ensure the quality of the learner experience and to assure the quality of standards of the programmes, of the awards, and qualifications’ (SER, page 22). The panel found the Quality Assurance Manual to be a very helpful document with clear and concise descriptions of major procedures with reference on to more detailed documentation where appropriate. Following discussions with teaching staff the panel came to the view that, for the present, the document was not fully assisting these staff as they indicated reliance on senior managers, such as Heads of Departments, or the ASQC to provide guidance and leadership on quality assurance matters and procedures. Nevertheless the panel accepted the view of senior management at AIT that staff were cognisant of quality assurance as they engaged regularly in programme approval, monitoring and review.

3.5 According to the Institute, a key person in the past in developing and supporting a quality culture within the Institute was the Quality Officer. The incumbent had resigned some time prior to the institutional review and had not been replaced. As a special consideration in the Terms of Reference the Institute requested the panel ‘to consider to what extent the quality agenda has been embraced by the wider AIT community and may wish to provide recommendations on how this might be further embedded and enhanced’ (TOR, page 13). To address this request the panel studied relevant documentation, in particular minutes of institutional and departmental committees, and discussed the operation of quality assurance with a wide range of staff and
learner representatives. It was apparent that in the absence of a Quality Officer that quality assurance functions were devolving into Schools and Departments with some limited central support being provided by the Registrar’s office. In addition the Academic Strategy and Quality committee, which had a very heavy workload, could no longer draw on the support of a Quality Officer. The outcome appeared to be an increased reliance on informal approaches to addressing quality assurance matters and issues especially in regard to the learner experience. Whilst acknowledging that informal solutions can be very effective, the main challenge identified by the panel was that central management could not have full oversight of academic quality matters. This meant that systematic institutional assurance that quality controls were operating effectively was significantly hindered.

3.6 In considering policy and procedures for quality assurance the panel noted some specific difficulties around all collaborative provision both nationally and transnationally; these are highlighted under Objective 5 – Delegated Authority.

Element 2 — Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards

Programme Approval

3.7 The SER sets out in detail the Institute’s approval procedure for new programmes. The process begins with the preparation of a business case for a new programme which considers market demand, resources and match to the Institute’s strategic plan. This is considered by the executive management team. If agreement to proceed is granted then the Programme Development Team (PDT), in consultation with the ASQC, draws up a submission document. In a meeting with the PDT a Programme Evaluation Panel (PEP), composed entirely of external experts, discusses the submission documentation. The submission is revised to the agreement of the PEP and the Registrar’s office then confirms approval to Academic Council and the Governing Body. Staff informed the panel that depending on the urgency of offering the new programme the process can take between 3 and 18 months.

3.8 The panel judged that programme approval at AIT followed procedures well established in the sector. From the limited amount of documentation on programme approval available for
scrutiny it appeared that procedures were being implemented with care and consistency and that PEPs had an appropriate level of expertise.

Programmatic Review

3.9 In preparing for institutional review AIT had conducted programmatic reviews in all four Schools. Programmatic review is comprehensive and in addition to re-approval of programmes it covers major topics such as:

- strategic overview of economic challenges;
- interaction with local and regional businesses and agencies;
- adult and continuing education provision for local communities;
- research strategies;
- departmental review of learning and teaching policies;
- statistical analysis of learner progress and performance;
- the employability of graduates;
- use of student placements;
- learner mobility and internationalisation;
- staffing and resourcing.

Senior management reported that in the last cycle carried out in 2009-10 the reviews had considered the progress of important strategic academic priorities such as semesterisation, modularisation, integration of programmes and module sharing. These priorities were designed to provide more flexible pathways for learning, better coherence with EU curricula to allow greater mobility of learners, and to introduce greater efficiencies in module and programme delivery.

3.10 A considerable amount of documentation on programmatic review was made available to the panel. It was clear to the panel that the recent round of reviews was carried out in a thorough and conscientious manner. Very strong panels of external assessors had conducted a thorough examination of the Schools’ on-site provision and the resulting comprehensive reports were judged by the panel to be of great value to the Schools and Institute. In meetings with the panel, staff spoke convincingly of the value of programmatic review and
were able to give examples of greater module sharing, more integration of programmes, and assessment strategies suited to modularisation. The panel concluded that programmatic review at AIT was commendably robust, inclusive and effective for internal programmes. For external collaborative provision the panel found more limited reference and evidence and there is perhaps an opportunity for Schools to demonstrate the strength of quality assurance for collaborative programmes.

Programme monitoring

3.11 The Quality Assurance Manual sets out guidelines for departmental committees and programme/course boards and acknowledges that departmental committees have evolved in ways to suit the requirements of their parent School. From the viewpoint of quality assurance the programme or course boards are of particular importance as they report both to departmental committees and the ASQC. The boards meet twice a year and produce an annual monitoring report. The report is prepared following an institutional pro forma which requires the course board to report on: actions arising from the previous year’s recommendations; entrance statistics; a programme development plan for the coming year; an analysis of learner awards; comment on progression and retention; and discussion of external examiners’ reports. External examiner reports will be considered more fully under Element 3 – Assessment of learners. Annual monitoring reports from Course Boards are reviewed by the ASQC and the Registrar.

3.12 The panel reviewed a limited amount of documentation on annual monitoring and minutes of recent meetings of programme/course boards across the Institute. The implementation of annual monitoring appeared to be adequate though the abbreviated nature of minutes made judgement rather arbitrary. The panel would agree with the view expressed by senior managers in a meeting with the panel that the Institute needs to strengthen its approach to annual monitoring so that the procedure becomes more effective and delivers similar value to the Institute as programmatic review. As examples, annual monitoring could support the Institute in identifying and addressing issues arising from collaborative provision or with specific groups of learners (e.g. mature, Recognition of Prior Learning [RPL]/APL entrants).
Institutional management of quality assurance

3.13 The SER stated that the Academic Registrar had overall responsibility for quality assurance. In discharging this responsibility the Registrar is supported by the ASQC and the Academic Council. Until recently further support was provided by the Quality Officer. In general terms the Academic Council has a strategic role in maintaining and enhancing academic standards and the ASQC deals with more operational matters such as the review of annual monitoring reports. The Registrar has a key role in reviewing the reports of external examiners on provision in all four Schools. The ASQC handles a considerable volume of quality assurance material and currently is meeting up to 12 times in the academic year. ASQC members met by the panel were enthusiastic and committed but were concerned at the heavy burden of work. Pressure of business meant that there was limited time for detailed discussion and the panel found that this was reflected in the short and cursory nature of some of the committee’s minutes.

The learner voice

3.14 The panel, through meetings with learners and staff and through the study of the minutes of meetings and committees and other documentation, established that there was an effective system of learner representation. It was also clear that, in addition to the more formal channels of communication, learners seemed to be more comfortable in taking informal steps to address issues and problems. This was generally achieved through direct approaches to staff and in particular the Heads of Departments. Although the panel appreciated the value of informal contact between learners and staff in a small, friendly institutional environment, the panel advise the Institute to keep this under review. As AIT is a rapidly expanding institution informal contact will not be so effective in resolving issues.

Conclusion

3.15 The panel found that quality assurance was well established and generally effective for programmes delivered on campus. The ASQC played a vital role in providing leadership for institutional quality assurance procedures. Quality assurance in schools was generally effective though there was notable variation in the application of some procedures such as annual monitoring. In the absence of a Quality Officer the panel concluded that it would be
difficult to achieve consistency of application of quality assurance procedures in schools. The panel would recommend endeavours to maintain the centrality of quality assurance in its operations at every level.

**Element 3 — Assessment of learners**

3.16 In the SER the Institute states that it supports the principles set out in HETAC’s publication *Assessment and Standards, December 2009*. In assuring the quality and standards of its assessment procedures senior staff indicated that there is a heavy reliance on the external examiner system. Procedures for assessment, examination and external examining are outlined in the *Quality Assurance Manual* and further detail is supplied in a number of supporting documents:

- *Standards, Assessment & Awards in Athlone Institute of Technology, (revised 2011)*;
- *AIT- Procedures and guidelines for the operation of the external examiner system for taught courses validated by HETAC (2004)*;

3.17 Learner performance and achievement is discussed and certified through boards of assessment in each School. Schools and the Registrar’s office analyse information on assessment performance and retention as part of the annual monitoring procedure. Institutional expectation is that external examiners will be present at examination board meetings. External examiner reports are considered by the Schools and the Registrar’s office. Serious concerns are usually identified by the Registrar’s office and a comment made on the front of the report for the attention of the School. However, it was not clear to the panel as to whether all schools and collaborative partners providing AIT programmes routinely get a copy of external examiner reports. A response from AIT to a concern of institutional importance is made through the Registrar who may copy this to the School and, if appropriate, provide a copy to the collaborative partner. The Registrar considers all external examiner reports and provides an annual overview report for the ASQC. At present, the external examiner focus is at the module level as opposed to a programme focus. However, senior staff indicated to the panel that there was a desire to have external examiners review the standards of programmes and have a more prominent role as a ‘critical friend’.
3.18 Whilst the expectation of the Institute’s quality assurance regulation is that external examiners will normally attend examination board meetings, the panel found through consideration of external examiner reports and through meetings with AIT staff that this does not happen. Most external examiners do not attend boards and often there is only a single external examiner present. During engagement with the panel, staff assured the panel that external examiners’ views were discussed when they visited the Institute to review examination scripts and coursework prior to the examination board meeting. Of particular concern to the panel was that external examiners and teaching staff teaching on collaborative programmes were not expected to attend examination board meetings. The panel found that minutes of examination board meetings were little more than a hand-written recording of decisions on learner performance. The panel was advised by AIT that this was common practice across the IoT sector. The records of the examination board meetings showed further variation from school to school with some schools recording those present at the meeting and others giving no indication of who was present at the meeting.

3.19 External examiners reports were found to be quite variable with some detailed and fulsome while others simply ticked sections of the report with little or no comment. The AIT sign-off forms to confirm responses were also variable with some responses quite dismissive of the criticism from the external examiner. Some feedback from collaborative partners and external examiners suggested that issues are raised repeatedly but are not responded to in a systematic manner. It was not clear to the panel whether all staff had access to the external examiners’ reports and the opportunity to provide feedback to any points of concern.

3.20 The panel did not have a concern for the integrity of awards made by AIT; however, it did find that the reporting of assessment boards and use of external examiners could be significantly improved. The Institute could establish minimum requirements for the reports of examination board meetings. At the very least these could ensure that an accurate listing of those attending the boards is recorded. With regard to external examiners the Institute needs to review its requirements about external examiners attending boards and establish a clear policy on the level of external input to examination board meetings. AIT may also find it useful to review the procedures in place regarding follow-up responses to external examiners report comments to ensure they are operating as efficiently as the Institute expects.
3.21 General issues on assessment are discussed by programme boards, and the ASQC and Academic Council. The development and delivery of strategic approaches to assessment is provided by the Learning and Teaching Unit. Learners met by the panel were aware of the Institute’s appeals and complaints procedures and that they could get informal feedback on examination performance from lecturers. The Institute kept a record of appeals and complaints and an annual report was reviewed by the Academic Council. The panel was informed in a meeting that there had been quite limited use of the formal procedures in recent years.

Element 4 — Quality assurance of teaching staff findings

3.22 The SER reported that since its establishment in 2007 the Learning and Teaching Unit had played a vital role in improving the quality of teaching and advancing the professional development of staff. The Unit had funding to support the academic development of staff and part of its remit was to encourage staff to upgrade their qualifications. As an example of the latter, senior managers referred to the Unit working with other IoT partners in the Learning Innovation Network (LIN) to provide an off-campus version of the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) Postgraduate Certificate in Third Level Learning and Teaching. The Learning and Teaching Unit is charged with validating a Postgraduate Diploma in Learning and Teaching that will be a sectoral award. Since 2007, 23 AIT staff had completed the DIT Postgraduate Certificate in Third Level Learning and Teaching. Other Level 9 programmes provided through the LIN were focused on learning and teaching, assessment and evaluation, and technology enhanced learning and nearly 70 AIT staff had participated in those programmes. Senior staff informed the panel that the postgraduate diploma was obligatory for new staff with little or no third level teaching experience. It was hoped that the acquisition of a professional teaching qualification by new staff would encourage experienced staff to seek the qualification; the Institute gave a time allowance for the training and also paid programme fees. The Institute also allowed time for staff to study for Masters and PhD qualifications. The Learning and Teaching Unit also delivered thematic workshops, the most recent in January 2011 focussed on assessment strategies and was led by an international expert. One of the notable examples of staff development quoted by a number of staff during meetings with the panel was the rapid roll-out of Moodle across the Institute. The Learning and Teaching Unit had provided support
for staff to engage with Moodle and it was also acknowledged that pressure from learners and peers was a key factor in the rapid uptake of Moodle.

3.23 At present there is no formal evaluation of the performance of teaching staff. Although the nationally agreed Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) was mentioned, it was not considered by staff to be functioning effectively. However, senior managers met by the panel reported informal action on lecturer performance in response to learner feedback gained through, for example, programmatic review and annual monitoring. Heads of Schools and Heads of Departments met regularly with learners before committee meetings such as programme boards. This gave learners an opportunity to raise concerns about lecturer performance. The Heads of Schools/Departments also informed the panel of informal peer support arrangements in their group which allowed for an exchange of experience and was particularly of help to newly-appointed Heads.

3.24 In meetings with learners the panel found that there was general satisfaction with the performance of teaching staff and learners confirmed that informal channels for commenting on performance, principally through Heads of Schools, were effective. Staff confirmed to the panel that there were good opportunities for them to upgrade their qualifications. The panel also noted through documentation and meetings that the Learning and Teaching Unit provided strong and effective leadership and management of academic staff development. Overall the panel concluded that the development and quality assurance of teaching staff was effective, moreover, it would support the senior management’s aspiration to move towards more formal assessment of lecturer performance.

Element 5 — Learning resources and support findings

3.25 In the last decade there has been investment of around €100 million in the campus with the most recent development being the opening of a new engineering and informatics building in 2010. Another key advance has been the roll-out of the VLE platform Moodle, along with other appropriate software, to allow off-campus and asynchronous learning and social networking. Currently AIT is moving towards a minimum specification for lecture rooms and laboratories. Since the Goldsmith library was opened in 1993 there has been considerable development of online resources and in a survey of learners, in preparation for the institutional review, 78% expressed satisfaction with the library. Nevertheless, the SER
asserted that the library was ‘tired and outdated’ and ‘ill-suited for purpose’. In meetings with learners the panel heard that noise and poor security were their chief complaints about the library. There was also concern at the very limited availability of Wi-Fi in campus buildings. The panel also heard that the review of support services, principally the library, information technology (IT) and learner services, is incorporated into programmatic review in schools. Study of the review reports generally showed that staff and learners felt adequate resourcing was available for the programmes. The library had last conducted a formal user survey in 2007. Support staff informed the panel that continuous evaluation of services and discussion about improving provision was achieved through regular informal meetings of managers and staff.

3.26 In addition to the major support areas of library and IT the SER described various other means of providing academic support. These included the introduction in September 2010 of a 5 credit Learning to Learn, first year module, and specific tutor support for academic writing support, maths and information technology. These were introduced as a consequence of programmatic review. These along with the PASS scheme mentioned elsewhere (paragraph 4.7 – Objective 4) demonstrated to the panel a very firm commitment from AIT to tackle progression and retention issues. The SER also referred to support for work-based learning (WBL) and student work placements with the aim of developing an institute-wide service for learners seeking placements. Staff acknowledged some difficulty in increasing the pool of employers willing to collaborate in providing work-based learning; this was chiefly a reflection of the high percentage of small companies, with very limited capacity, in the Midlands region. The panel heard that learners greatly valued their work placement learning and would welcome an increase in opportunities to gain work experience. On the broader front of preparation for work, learners expressed satisfaction with tutorials provided by the career’s service; however, staff were not clear on how graduate destination data was used by the Institute and its schools.

3.27 In view of the positive comments provided by learners about support and the Institute’s carefully considered self-reflection on support in the SER and programmatic review, the panel concluded that learning resources and support at AIT were satisfactory and effectively managed. The panel would strongly support the Institute in its desire to: improve library facilities; provide a minimum specification for classroom resources; improve online access to
resources around the campus, for example, WiFi access; and to increase the opportunities for learners to gain work experience.

Element 6 — Information systems

3.28 AIT has continued to work towards developing a comprehensive and cohesive management information system (MIS) in partnership with other institutes of technology on the An Chéim (Collaborative Higher Education Information Management) project. In particular academic management reports can now be produced which incorporate data from the student records system (Banner), Core (human resources database) and Syllabus Plus (timetabling software). Middle and senior managers do not currently have direct access to reporting tools that will allow them to analyse key data and trends for applications, retention and graduation. The next development, which is sector wide and driven, will involve the implementation of the revised CAPP (Curriculum Advising Programme Planning) software which will give learners improved online management of their programmes. During meetings with the panel, staff also commented on the usefulness of the Academic Module Manager software in providing a repository for up-to-date module information. The SER noted that this information was used in the production of the European Diploma Supplements and transcripts.

3.29 The panel was satisfied that AIT was keeping pace with the broader IoT sector in developing more effective management information systems. The panel agreed with AIT’s declaration in the SER that it and the sector has some way to go to meet the ambition of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 in providing ‘reliable and consistent data on the outcomes of higher education’ (SER, page 34).

Element 7 — Public information

3.30 Advice and direction on the provision of public information is given in the Quality Assurance Manual. For public documents (e.g. prospectuses, CAO7 handbook) the accuracy of information is verified by senior managers from the appropriate Departments and

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7 Central Applications Office (CAO): The higher education institutions in the Republic of Ireland have delegated to the CAO the task of processing centrally applications to their first year undergraduate courses.
information is updated annually. Learners informed the panel that, generally, prospectuses and the Institute’s website provided up-to-date and accurate information. However, principals from local secondary schools thought that the quality of programme information provided on the website could be improved. Overall, the panel came to the conclusion that AIT was satisfactorily fulfilling its obligation to provide accurate information to the public.

Commendations - Quality Assurance

3.31 The panel commends AIT on the following.

1. Programmatic review has been of considerable value to the Institute with strong external panels allowing well-considered benchmarking of AIT programmes and services to national and international norms.

2. The Learning and Teaching Unit has provided high quality leadership and management in a number of important aspects of quality assurance and enhancement: staff development, assessment strategies, and the use of new technologies to enhance learning.

3. Learners have a high regard for AIT and particularly value the care and commitment of the staff and the open and informal channels for raising concerns.

4. Staff within support areas, the library, information technology and student services, are providing strong support which is recognised and appreciated by learners.

Recommendations - Quality Assurance

3.32 The panel recommends the following.

1. The panel would recommend that the Institute takes a more robust, systematic and analytical approach to quality assurance, especially in Schools and Departments. The panel heard of much good work through informal ‘open door’ approaches referenced throughout this report and would consider that more systematic approaches to quality assurance would provide more consistency in monitoring and enhancing the student learning experience.

2. The Institute should consider ways of making quality assurance more prominent in discussions at all levels within the institution. At present there is little evidence of a centralised approach to achieving the Institute’s aspiration to disseminate good practice
and develop a quality culture. The Institute should consider whether this aspiration can
be achieved solely through activity within Schools.

3. The Institute should seek to strengthen its oversight of assessment and develop a policy
that ensures consistency in the use of external examiners; for example their
consideration of the programme perspective, their attendance at examination board
meetings and responses to their reports across the institution and engagement with
AIT's collaborative partners.

4. A considerable amount of learner feedback is gained informally and the Institute should
seek ways to strengthen the formal processes; for example through committees and
other methods of obtaining feedback.
Objective 4 — Qualifications Framework, Access, Transfer and Progression

To confirm the extent to which the Institute has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and its procedures for access, transfer and progression

Summary and Findings — Objective 4 — Qualifications Framework, Access, Transfer and Progression

Qualifications Framework and transfer

4.1 Athlone Institute of Technology has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications and is committed to the principles of Access, Transfer and Progression. A review of access, transfer and progression was a key factor in the programmatic reviews carried out by all four Schools in 2009-10. These reviews also provided an opportunity to judge the impact and progress of semesterisation and modularisation. The Institute informed the panel that semesterisation has allowed greater integration across packages of programmes and modularisation, guided by protocols, is seen as the key to increasing learner mobility and transfer both within Ireland and other EU countries. The Institute has accepted a flexible approach to modularisation with some areas not modularised in year 1 (Engineering) and others opting for continuous assessment in year 1 (Science) in order to tackle retention. For postgraduate study the Institute has set minimum entry requirements which normally for Degree of Master (Research) is a cognate Level 8 qualification and for PhD study successful completion of a probationary period for a Level 9 Master’s award. However in AIT, Candidates may enter the Research Master’s programme with an Ordinary Bachelor Degree. This requirement indicates that an ‘Ordinary Bachelor Degree with a performance equivalent to at least second class honours (which is a major award type at level 7 in NFQ) provided they have completed a suitable preparatory programme of education and research training at Level 8 in the NFQ in a cognate area before applying for entry to a masters research degree programme. Such a programme will normally be expected to be one academic year in duration.’ (AIT Procedures and Guidelines for Postgraduate Research at the Institute, September 2007).

4.2 The Institute has articulation arrangements with the Cavan Institute and Gurteen College that allow learners to transfer into study at AIT in their second year. There is also an articulation arrangement with the Dongbei University of Finance and Economics (DUFE),
Dalian in China which allows learners who have successfully completed a foundation year in China to transfer to year 1 at AIT.

4.3 Most undergraduate learners enter AIT through the standard CAO route though there are significant levels of entry through lifelong learning. A feature of AIT is the high level of programmes available at Levels 6 and 7 with a ‘ladder’ system giving progression to Level 8. For direct CAO entry the Heads of Departments at AIT have developed strong links with liaison officers in secondary schools. AIT also runs a Saturday maths club to support pupils studying for leaving certificate mathematics and it offers on-campus computer games programmes and music technology programmes three times a year. Learners met by the panel reported they chose AIT for geographical location, its friendly and caring reputation, flexibility of entry and range of study modes available.

4.4 In addition to the ladder system, the Institute has many initiatives to encourage and support those who would not otherwise have an opportunity to avail themselves of a third level qualification. The Department of Adult and Continuing Education provides a very wide range of programmes from third level degree programmes and professionally accredited programmes to recreational and DIY courses. Its provision is available in Athlone and also through outreach centres run in collaboration with NUI Galway and NUI Maynooth. The aim is to create part-time pathways into degree programmes particularly for mature learners; the high number of mature learners registered at AIT testifies to the success of this approach. The Access Office at AIT and School of Engineering provide an access (foundation) programme covering a range of subjects for prospective learners. The SER stated that the access (foundation) programme is not currently accredited and that this is a national issue relevant to all colleges offering access programmes (SER, page 46). About 2% of learners enter AIT through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) route, though even when eligible for RPL many learners opt for standard entry. Staff trained in work-based learning delivery and RPL practices conduct a short interview with applicants to assess their potential for the recognition of prior learning.

4.5 AIT is addressing low participation in the Midlands region through collaboration with other institutes and colleges to match up programme structures and create more ease of transfer or
articulation. The aim is to enrol 60% of ‘available’ learners in the region. Whilst seeing the value of the ladder system and indicating its ongoing commitment to provide provision at Levels 6 & 7, AIT also recognises that a common external perception of higher education is that it is about Level 8 Honours Bachelor Degree learning. In order to enhance further AIT’s visibility in the degree ‘market’ the institution is planning better promotion of its offer at Level 8, especially as there has been recent growth in *ab initio* programmes at this level within the institution.

4.6 Another area that AIT may seek to strengthen is its relationship with local secondary schools and further education colleges. The panel heard that these were the main feeders into AIT programmes and it was reported that while many learners had a range of options, AIT was a destination of choice as learners recognised it had a caring and committed academic community. As mentioned earlier in the report, the panel found principals and other senior staff from these institutions to be very supportive of AIT; however, all felt that communication could be improved as presently there was no obvious forum for them either to pass opinion and advice to senior staff at AIT on strategic developments in education for the region or to receive feedback on the achievements and progress of their former students.

**Progression and retention**

4.7 The Institute has developed a number of ways to address issues arising from a policy of broad access. A system of peer help to assist staff to adjust to changing learner profile (e.g. more international and mature learners) has been set up by the Learning and Teaching Unit. In addition, within Schools there are writing skills workshops and a Learning to Learn module to help mature learners. The Learning and Teaching Unit also gave support to the PASS scheme in which experienced learners provide help and advice for year one entrants and gain five ECTS\(^8\) credits. A PASS tutor forms a focal point for a network of student PASS leaders to exchange experience and ideas on good practice. Learners met by the panel spoke highly of the PASS scheme emphasising that the PASS leaders themselves gained benefit from assisting new learners.

4.8 As shown above the Institute has a number of worthy initiatives to address retention but as yet it does not appear to have a systematic approach to analysing the problem. The panel

\(^8\) ECTS: European Credit Transfer System
heard mainly anecdotal evidence on the reasons for relatively high withdrawal rates. Senior management and staff stated that there was analysis of retention data but the panel could not see any significant detailed analysis of why learners withdraw or tracking of ‘at risk’ learner groups. The panel heard that it was the intention of the Institute to introduce a tracking system as the current management information system had that capability. It was noted that such a system was in place in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education. The panel sees an opportunity for the Institute to build on its success at introducing initiatives to tackle retention by carrying out more detailed analysis on withdrawal and by providing better tracking of learners in their first year. An improved tracking system would also allow the Institute to follow the progress and performance of learners articulating into awards from different learning cultures arising from transfer/entry for example via its transnational collaborative partners in Zambia or China. In the absence of any obvious tracking the panel believes that as collaborative provision expands a reliance on individual staff noting performance differences will be inadequate to oversee academic performance.

Equality and access

4.9 A notable area of strength for the Institute is its support for disabled learners. AIT has had a disability officer for over a decade and claims to be the first IoT to appoint such a person. The disability officer provides services to assess impact of disability on study and this is supported by the provision of assistive technology, trained staff and a code of practice for learners with disabilities. The result has been a substantial increase in learners with disabilities entering AIT, increasing from 26 in 2000 to 235 in 2010-11 (SER, page 42). The panel received confirmation of the supportive service for learners with special needs that made a significant difference in their ability to study at AIT.

Conclusion

4.10 From the information available, the panel concluded that AIT was implementing the National Qualifications Framework appropriately.
Commendations - Qualifications Framework, Access, Transfer and Progression

4.11 The panel commends AIT on the following.

1. The range of initiatives used by AIT to provide wide access to its programmes, these include: close linking with local secondary schools; the ladder system which stimulates entry at Levels 6 and 7; articulation agreements with regional second level colleges; provision for mature, part-time learners through outreach centres; use of the recognition of prior learning (RPL); and strong collaboration with other regional institutions and bodies to increase higher education participation in the Midlands region.

2. The range of initiatives used to aid the academic progression of learners, these include: the PASS system; the flexible use of modularisation and semesterisation in devising assessment strategies; the arrangements made for disabled learners.

Recommendations - Qualifications Framework, Access, Transfer and Progression

4.12 The panel recommends the following.

1. AIT should provide more formal opportunities for senior management from local secondary schools and regional further education colleges to provide opinion and advice to senior staff at AIT on strategic developments in education for the region and to receive appropriate feedback on the achievements and progress of their former students.

2. AIT should undertake a more strategic and systematic analysis of retention in order to quantify the reasons for withdrawal and, in conjunction, introduce a system that will allow better tracking of learners ‘at risk’ during the earlier part of their academic studies.
Objective 5 – Operation and Management of Delegated Authority

This objective is to evaluate the operation and management of Delegated Authority (where applicable) for both taught and research programmes

Summary and findings — Objective 5 — Operation and Management of Delegated Authority

Delegated authority

5.1 Athlone Institute of Technology first achieved Delegated Authority in 2005, principally for undergraduate levels and since that time Delegated Authority has been extended gradually to include postgraduate levels of award. Currently Delegated Authority extends to:

- Levels 6, 7, 8 and 9 of NQF for all taught programmes;
- Fields of approved research Master degree provision at Level 9 – nursing and health studies, social studies, business and marketing and Doctoral degree Level 10 – mechanical engineering and social studies;
- Fields of accredited research at Master degree Level 9 – life and physical sciences, mechanical and polymer engineering, social care, software engineering and Doctoral degree Level 10 – life and physical sciences (specified areas), polymer engineering;
- Authority to maintain a research register for specified research degrees at Master degree Level 9 – life and physical sciences, mechanical and polymer engineering, social care.

At the time of the site visit the Institute had an application pending for full Delegated Authority in research at Level 9 and Level 10 for life and physical science, mechanical and polymer engineering and social care.

5.2 Since gaining Delegated Authority in 2005, the SER stated that AIT had become a more confident institution and this was confirmed by senior managers and staff in meetings with the panel. Senior managers gave as an example of this growing confidence in the quality and

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9 Research approval and research accreditation are both processes for the validation of research degree programmes. The same criteria are used for approval and accreditation because research approval is to facilitate preparation for research accreditation. The main difference is that research accreditation affords more independence to the provider and requires evidence of a greater level of intrinsic research capacity in the discipline-area concerned.
standards of AIT provision the use of external and international experts in the scrutiny of its key quality assurance processes including programmatic review and new programme approval. It was also reported by senior managers that Delegated Authority at Levels 9 and 10 had enhanced the reputation of AIT and given it a more confident voice in dialogue with other academic institutions and industrial partners. The SER also referred to the developing network of academic and industrial collaborators in research and consultancy.

5.3 As a means of ensuring the continuing maintenance of academic standards of the programmes delivered through Delegated Authority, the SER and senior management in meetings referred to the use of external experts in all major review and approval processes. This meant that its programmes were being measured against national and international standards. In addition the SER noted that the Institute’s robust external examining system, which adopted the precepts of HETAC’s Effective Practice Guideline for External Examining, March 2010, provided independent confirmation of the status of academic standards.

5.4 Following discussions with senior managers, staff and learners in meetings, and the scrutiny of key documentation such as programmatic review reports, external examiners’ reports, and minutes of ASQC and Academic Council the panel concluded that Delegated Authority was appropriately applied for programmes delivered solely by AIT.

Collaborative Provision, National and Transnational

5.5 Collaborative Provision of all types is important in the strategic development of AIT in supporting the intention to grow learner numbers and diversify the provision at the Institute. The Institute has a number of local, national and international collaborative partnerships, some of which are long-standing. A table of collaborative and strategic partnerships was provided to the panel just prior to the site visit. This table is provided in Appendix H. The panel learned that there are currently 13 partnerships that AIT consider to fall under the remit of their own collaborative programme guidelines: Athlone Institute of Technology Guidelines for collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and joint awards (adopted March 2011). The programmes included academic provision in Ireland, Zambia, China and Italy. The Institute also believed that a significant proportion of their collaborative provision fell outside of the HETAC definition of collaborative provision and thus did not include any review or
reflection in the SER. The guidelines mentioned above were specifically produced for the institutional review panel though the intention is that these will be formally adopted by the Institute.

5.6 The guidelines propose three definitions of collaborative provision: validation, recognition and franchise, and they indicate that each partnership will be underwritten by ‘a legally binding formal agreement that is consistent with sectoral policy’. Collaborative partnerships are subject to a formal review with a panel that evaluates the proposal and advises Academic Council. AIT has established as a statement of guidance a number of requirements of which the following are of particular importance, as set out in the Institute policy adopted in March 2011:

- A signed off Memorandum of Understanding (MOU);
- Teaching methods, syllabi and assessment methods approved by AIT;
- The main language of tuition to be English;
- The Provider establishing a course board in accord with AIT procedures;
- Assessment procedures aligned with the normal processes at AIT and external examiners to be agreed by partners;
- An award from AIT or the partner institution will be authorised on successful completion of all requirements.

5.7 The panel confirmed that the 13 collaborative programmes did fall within the remit of the review. Although AIT’s own guidelines require an MOU, the panel learned that these were not in place for many programmes that are longstanding and predate the recent HETAC policy developed and published in 2008 Policy for collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and joint award. Some programmes continued to operate under what senior management described in a meeting as ‘gentlemen’s agreements’. Overall the panel could not confirm that the AIT procedures outlined in its guidelines (March, 2011) had, at the time of the visit, been applied to all collaborative partners as this document was due for submission to HETAC as part of an early stage of engagement on collaborative provision. However the documentary evidence provided to the panel on the individual agreements with the collaborative partners was very limited and largely embedded within the mainstream documentation provided for all provision.

5.8 The use of external examiners for collaborative provision was confirmed as the panel had access to external examiners’ reports from collaborative partnerships. These included a
report highly critical of the standard and quality of provision in one partner that had been noted as a matter of serious concern by a senior manager at AIT. The panel learned that reports of such seriousness are addressed and lodged in the Registrar’s office. However, the panel could not ascertain if follow-up action was taken as senior managers in AIT confirmed that there is often no formal and systematic annual monitoring process in place with collaborative partners or a designated liaison function. Collaboration appeared to be managed locally through good relationships with partners at the school level in AIT and supervision by course boards at AIT.

5.9 The fact that AIT has found itself in difficulties in relation to one national partnership reinforces the need for the guidelines provided to the panel to be developed into internal policies and procedures and be used to establish more systematic processes to support existing and new collaborative arrangements. The new processes should be strengthened by the development of a clear strategy for collaborative provision that identifies its aims, approaches and aspirations.

5.10 The panel did learn that some regional partnerships were functioning very well. During the site visit the panel met two senior managers from Irish partner institutions and they confirmed that AIT was very supportive. There was contact between teaching staff which was collegial, helpful and led to mutual respect and trust. There was, however, no formal method for reporting or updating on quality assurance processes at AIT as the partner institutions used their own processes which were considered to be acceptable to AIT. However, AIT staff attended the examination and board meetings at the partner institution.

5.11 Some of the collaborations listed in Appendix H (national and transnational) are legacy arrangements, predating the 2008 HETAC Policy for collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and joint awards, and indeed the 2005 delegation of awarding powers to AIT. The authority delegated to AIT currently does not extend to collaborative provision. The panel came to the view that with some overseas partners AIT was operating within a concept of a franchise and delegating responsibility for teaching and programme delivery for parts of its awards to its partners potentially in ways that are incompatible with the 2008 HETAC policy. The panel regarded this as a serious breach by AIT of its Delegated Authority. The panel felt that this matter required urgent engagement between AIT and HETAC.
5.12 More significantly, the panel came to the conclusion that it is difficult to have confidence in AIT’s management of the quality of the learning experience of learners in collaborative provision in the absence of systematic quality processes that are clearly identified and systematically implemented. This does not suggest that partner organisations are offering anything less than excellent programmes for their learners but from the evidence available to the panel, senior managers at AIT cannot be assured that their processes are operating as intended.

5.13 The panel also came to the view that there was an urgent need to underpin partnerships, however longstanding, through formal legal agreements which outline respective responsibilities. In the light of these findings the panel concluded that AIT’s continued Delegated Authority must be conditional on agreeing its quality assurance for collaborative provision with HETAC and implementing those provisions. AIT should publish a list of its collaborative providers on its website and report to HETAC within 12 months on the outcomes of the quality assurance procedures in respect of those collaborations. AIT must put in place robust processes that are monitored and developed in partnership with collaborating institutions in a way that strengthens academic oversight for both partners. The panel recognised that there were some excellent collaborative partners. By following the recommendations set out in this report the panel is confident that AIT can demonstrate the strength and academic integrity of its collaborative partnerships.

Conclusion

5.14 Overall, the panel finds that Athlone Institute of Technology is only substantially compliant with its obligations in the operation and management of Delegated Authority and therefore recommends a conditional continuation of Delegated Authority as it currently stands.

Commendation - Operation and Management of Delegated Authority

5.15 The panel commends AIT on the following.

1. The manner in which the Institute has used Delegated Authority to enhance its reputation regionally and nationally and its use of external experts to assure the standards of the programmes it delivers under Delegated Authority.
Recommendation - Operation and Management of Delegated Authority

5.16 The panel recommends the following.

1. The Institute should rapidly and rigorously implement the requirements for collaborative provision set out in the HETAC *Policy for collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and joint awards, 2008*, ensuring that the requirements apply to all its collaborative partners. AIT should publish a list of its collaborative providers on its website and report to HETAC within 12 months on the outcomes of the quality assurance procedures in respect of those collaborations.

2. The panel recommends that Delegated Authority granted to Athlone Institute of Technology be continued as provided for in the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 subject to the following **condition**:

   Athlone Institute of Technology must agree its quality assurance procedures for collaborative provision with HETAC\(^\text{10}\). The Institute should not recruit new students to collaborative programmes prior to consultation with HETAC regarding the completion of this condition.

\(^{10}\) *Policy for collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and joint awards, 2008*, HETAC
Objective 6 — Recommendations for Enhancement

To provide recommendations for the enhancement of the education and training provided by the Institute

Summary and key findings - Objective 6 - Recommendations for Enhancement

6.1 The panel found the SER to be open and commendably self-reflective. In the summary evaluations at the end of each section in the SER the Institute identified areas for improvement. The panel considered that the evaluations gave an accurate reflection of areas for enhancement and in particular would support the Institute in its desire to:

- Put in place internal policy and procedure for the different collaborative provision arrangements that are consistent with HETAC policy;
- Improve its management information systems to provide fuller qualitative and quantitative data for the public;
- Fully integrate key performance indicators into the Institute’s information management systems;
- Achieve greater consistency in the application of quality assurance procedures across the institution;
- Match staff development to the Institute’s strategic direction;
- Improve the library infrastructure and facilities in general;
- Conduct regular surveys of staff and learners to monitor the quality and accessibility of services to learners;
- Develop a comprehensive and consistent approach to addressing retention;
- Extend e-learning and blended learning and wider use of Moodle by staff;
- Instigate a full study of changing learner profiles;
- Invest in internationalisation with an emphasis on targeted support for different groups;
- Increase the opportunities for learners to gain work experience.
6.2 Following the study of documentation provided for the institutional review and discussions with staff and learners during the site visit, the panel would make the following recommendations for enhancement. AIT should:

- Improve the academic oversight of institutional level deliberative systems to provide a better platform for the dissemination of good practice and consistent enhancement of the learning experience for all learners;
- Continue to give support for the Learning and Teaching Unit to address key developmental issues for learning and teaching and to upgrade the qualifications and professionalism of staff;
- Provide greater time and opportunity for the ASQC to review and evaluate the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures;
- Continue to provide a caring environment for learners based around ‘open door’ informality but seek ways to evaluate the effectiveness of this approach.

6.3 The panel concluded that by giving greater prominence to assurance of quality across the Institute the image of AIT both regionally and nationally will improve and that the risk of poor academic management and oversight will be reduced.

Commendation - Recommendations for Enhancement

6.4 The panel commends AIT on the following.
1. The frank, open and strongly self-reflective approach, as exemplified in the SER and meetings with staff on the site visit, which the Institute has adopted for the institutional review and the preceding programmatic reviews.

Recommendations - Recommendations for Enhancement

6.5 The panel recommends the following.
1. The Institute should progress those areas for enhancement that it has identified in the summary evaluations in the SER and also consider taking action on the items identified by the panel and listed above.
Appendix A  Terms of Reference

Higher Education and Training Awards Council
TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW OF
Athlone Institute of Technology in March 2011
STATUS: SET

Section 1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to specify the Terms of Reference for the Institutional Review of Athlone Institute of Technology in March 2011. The HETAC Institutional Review policy applies to all institutions providing HETAC accredited programmes, or programmes accredited under Delegated Authority. These Terms of Reference are set within the overarching policy for Institutional Review as approved in December 2007 and should be read in conjunction with same. These Terms of Reference do not replace or supersede the agreed policy for Institutional Review. The Terms of Reference once set may not be amended and any significant revision required to the Terms of Reference will result in a new Terms of Reference to be set by HETAC following consultation with the institution. These Terms of Reference should be read in conjunction with the supplementary guidelines for Institutional Review.

The objectives of the Institutional Review process are

1. To enhance public confidence in the quality of education and training provided by the institution and the standards of the awards made;
2. To contribute to coherent strategic planning and governance in the institution;
3. To assess the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance arrangements operated by the institution;
4. To confirm the extent that the institution has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications and procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression;
5. To evaluate the operation and management of Delegated Authority where it has been granted;
6. To provide recommendations for the enhancement of the education and training provided by the institution.

It is possible that, within the objectives outlined above, institutions may have specific sub-objectives to which they will attach particular importance and wish to emphasise in their TOR. To maximise the benefits of the review process, institutions may also consider including additional objectives relevant to its context.

The approach taken by HETAC to Institutional Review will:

- Acknowledge that institutions have ownership of and responsibility for their activity;
- Be conducted in a spirit of partnership with institutions, with a view to improvement and enhancement, whilst acknowledging statutory requirements for accountability;
- Be conducted in a manner which adds value to the institution, minimises overhead and assists in building institutional capacity;
- Be flexible, adaptable and scalable in order to meet the needs of diverse institutions;
- Be conducted in an open, consistent and transparent manner;
- Be evidence-based in accordance with established criteria;
- Promote learning and development for all involved;
- Reward innovation and experimentation when it seeks to enhance our understanding of good practice;
- Promote collaboration and sharing of good practice between institutions;
- Take cognisance of international best practice and contribute to European and international developments in this area.
Section 2. Institution Profile

Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) is a recognised higher education provider situated in the midlands region of Ireland with close ties to agencies, industries, and the wider community. The Institute is located on a 57.5 acre campus in total, approximately three kilometres east from Athlone town centre off the Dublin Road. The Institute’s land bank has been added to on three different occasions: in October 2001 when eight acres of land with 400 km of road frontage to the Dublin Road was acquired. This constitutes the east campus and comprises the nursing and health science department, the trades and apprentice complex, and the innovation centre. It also houses a dedicated research space, the research hub (see below). The most recent land acquisition has given the Institute a direct physical interface with the Industrial Development Agency’s Technology and Business Park. The total teaching and research area available to the Institute is 43,126 square metres.

The Institute claims to be a leader within the Institute of Technology sector in developing national and international educational linkages and says this is reflected in a small number of collaborative and transnational arrangements and in the presence of a significant cohort of international students drawn from around the globe on campus.

AIT is a multi-campus college with some 6,000 (full-time and part-time) students consisting of a diverse mix of home, European, and other overseas students. The Institute has a total staff complement of 670 comprising some 320 academic staff along with administrative, technical, and support staff. The international cohort of students comprises some 10% of the Institute’s students overall. Included in this are a number of non-EU learners on foundation programmes that offer preparation for higher level study.

Table 1. Breakdown of Student Registration Numbers per School 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundation Programmes: non-EU students registered in 2009 – 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China 28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Registration Numbers as reported to the Higher Education Authority for the academic year 2010 - 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Business School</th>
<th>School of Engineering</th>
<th>School of Science</th>
<th>School of Humanities</th>
<th>Adult &amp; Continuing Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># Undergraduate Students</td>
<td>1196</td>
<td>778</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>1248</td>
<td>722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Postgraduate Students</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice Provision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>529</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considerable investment in the infrastructure over the past decade has resulted in an attractive, well-equipped, and modern range of facilities that provide an excellent environment for higher education.

11The numbers within Table 1 are founded on the following: the foundation programmes refer to the academic year 2009-10. The main table of undergraduate and postgraduate enrolments are as returned to the HEA in November 2010. The apprentice numbers are habitually collated for one year as a factor of the block system; thus the reported figures refer to the academic year 2009-10.
As a higher education provider, Athlone Institute of Technology concentrates predominantly on delivering programmes from Level 6 to Level 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications and principally in the disciplines of Business, Engineering, Humanities, and Science. As above, the Institute also offers tailored programmes at foundation level and has engaged in a number of initiatives in support of labour activation and separately toward equipping learners with mathematical competence for higher education. The Institute also offers some non-standard offerings such as apprenticeship studies, veterinary nursing, dental nursing, and both general and psychiatric nursing.

The Institute offers a range of Lifelong Learning opportunities through its Adult Education and Continuing Education Centre. AIT delivers approximately 60 programmes to some 1,000 students using a range of accredited and non-accredited programmes across the following disciplines: Recreational/Positive Living; Art and Design; Business and Management; Professional Accountancy; Teaching and Learning; Computing; Engineering; Hospitality; Tourism and Leisure; Social Care; Addiction Studies/Counselling and Psychotherapy; Psychology; Languages and Science. The Adult and Continuing Education Centre is managed by a head of department and has recently been made independent of the School of Humanities in order to better reflect its close relationship with all faculties of the Institute. The current reporting lines are to the President and to the Academic Registrar on quality matters. The Department of Adult and Continuing Education works in partnership with the Institute’s Schools, ensuring that the programmes offered by the Institute, reflect the needs of the Adult Community, predominantly mature students, within the midlands region and that they are delivered in a flexible, part-time mode, at an appropriate time. In doing so the Department and consequently the Institute is attempting to ensure that it meets the economic, social, and cultural needs of the adult learner from the midlands region and beyond.

According to the Institute modularisation is well embedded in the Institute structure and has warm learner support. It is facilitating increased access and this is partly attested through the growing number of mature students to be seen within the Institute. While the adopted academic calendar is structured in two even blocks, the Institute does not contend that it engages in true semesterisation of its programmes.

The Institute has joined with other Institutes of Technology (IoT) in the sector to engage Deloitte to manage the internal audit process. This facility is employed to afford objective external evaluation on a range of the operations and functions of the Institute.

**Strategy**

The current strategic plan sets out a vision for the Institute’s development, supported by a set of strategies, priorities, objectives, and actions delivered over a five-year period concluding in 2013. The mission of the Institute states that:

“Athlone Institute of Technology will build on its strengths to become a college of choice for learners and staff regionally, nationally, and internationally. This outcome will be achieved through an emphasis on the development of innovative excellence in teaching, academic exchange, and enhancement of the learning centred environment, the establishment of a strong reputation in research, innovation and knowledge transfer, and a leadership role in the economic, social, cultural, and environmental development of Midlands Gateway/region.”

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12 The Midlands Gateway Chamber was established in 2007 and serves as the representative lobby group that supports issues and projects that are critical to enhancing business growth in the Irish midlands region. Its stated ambition is to build Ireland’s premier centre for living and learning.
AIT says the strategic plan was formulated within the context of the wider social and economic
development of the Midlands Gateway/region and the requirements of the broader Irish economy.
A vision for the Gateway was enunciated in the Strategic Development Framework for the Midlands
Gateway, which was launched by the then Tánaiste and Minister for Finance, Brian Cowen, in
December 2006, and entails ‘the development of a world-class, knowledge-based and competitive Gateway,
underpinned by a quality urban structure and environment, excellent infrastructure and a visionary leadership, which
maximises quality of life for its citizens’.

The Main Strategic Priorities 2009-2013

1. Achieve reputation and visibility as a college of choice
2. Develop excellence in learning and teaching
3. Strengthen research capability and capacity
4. Play a catalytic role in the economic, social, cultural and environmental development of the
   Midlands Gateway/region

Engagement with stakeholders

Athlone Institute of Technology says it takes an active role with HETAC, through its officers, in
contributing to the formulation of policy, criteria, and procedures that govern the quality of
education in the IoT sector. The Institute claims to have followed these procedures diligently and in
December 2003 its quality assurance procedures for the purpose of further improving and
maintaining the quality of education and training were agreed with HETAC. This assurance of
quality underpins the delegation of authority at undergraduate level and in respect of programmes at
postgraduate level to Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications including research in
certain defined fields of learning. In addition, the Institute has accreditation in respect of defined
research areas at Level 10 and is in the process of finalising the application for delegation of authority
in respect of those areas.

The Institute has established formal cooperation with the Cavan Institute, a further education
college, and separately with the County Offaly Vocational Education Committee. The success of the
latter link has led to similar discussions in early 2011 with Westmeath Vocational Education
Committee with a view to similar avenues of access for learners within that county. These are
examples of regional engagement that assist in supporting continuity of education and in offering
greater avenues of access to higher education.
The Athlone Regional Technical College opened in 1970 with an enrolment of 100 students. Initial programmes included diplomas in science technician, professional studies, mechanical & civil engineering technicians. By the early 1990s, the college was providing some 40 full-time courses to 2,000 students in areas such as accounting, hotel & catering, toxicology & mineral engineering. In 1999, the college was renamed the Athlone Institute of Technology. AIT was granted delegated authority in 2004.

### AIT At A Glance

**School**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students (Nov '10)</th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Engineering</th>
<th>Humanities</th>
<th>Science</th>
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<td>98</td>
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**Programmes**

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<th>Science</th>
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<tr>
<td>Non-accredited</td>
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**Undergraduate Students (Nov '10, incl Adult Ed)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult Education</th>
<th># of Courses</th>
<th># of Students (09/10)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**AIT Facilities**

AIT has 17 large lecture rooms (71% enabled for computer projection) and 110 lab spaces; Engineering 38, IT 32, Research 20, Science 39 and an Assistive Technology space. It has 7 Workshops, 6 Graphics Studios, 6 Drawing Offices and 5 Training Kitchens. Sports facilities include 3 playing pitches and an athletics track. A multipurpose hall contains a basketball, badminton & volleyball courts, indoor soccer and a fitness suite.

Approximately €100 million has been invested in campus infrastructure since 2000.

**Research at AIT:**

AIT has 3 strategic research institutes: Biosciences, Materials Engineering & Software Engineering that support indigenous industry and collaborate with leading multinational companies & universities across Europe, Asia and the USA. To date 392 Research Masters and 84 PhDs have been awarded while 408 publications and 611 conference proceedings have been published.

**Innovation at AIT:**

The Midlands Innovation & Research Centre (MIRC) is an 800m2 on-campus incubation building with enterprise programmes for entrepreneurs and start-ups. To date the MIRC has supported 58 start-ups including 7 HPSUs, collaborating on €1.46m worth of research and coordinated 99 Innovation Voucher research projects with SMEs.
Research

The Institute says it has taken a radical and proactive approach towards building a sustainable research structure and supports. The research support comprises a directorate with external liaison and full administrative support and three research centres collocated in a dedicated centre to offer the necessary scale, dialogue, and opportunity for interdisciplinary endeavour. The three strategic research Institutes within AIT are in the areas of Biosciences, Materials Engineering and Software Engineering. According to AIT the research Institutes have developed international collaborations with leading multinational companies and universities in Europe, Asia, and the US along with supporting indigenous industry. Further research clusters exist within the four Schools of Business, Engineering, Humanities, and Science. Research income to AIT to date totals €28.96 million.

AIT’s Postgraduate Research Hub which was opened in 2010, includes purpose-built interdisciplinary research workspace, seminar and social space. The hub, comprising some 1,400 square metres, considerably enhances the learning, research, and social infrastructure of the Athlone campus. The research space comprises three major platform laboratories in the areas of biosciences, chemistry, and characterisation. It houses 60 research masters and doctoral candidate stations, materials processing, research candidate seminar and social space, journal reading rooms and ancillary supporting facilities.

In addition to the hub and discrete research spaces within the schools, 300 square metres in a new state of the art engineering and informatics building is dedicated to the Software Research Institute. The Engineering and Informatics building at AIT represents an investment of €36 million. The 11,000 square metre facility comprises six blocks of internal and external courtyards, and consists of classrooms, lecture theatres and office space. The building, which was designed by McCullough Mulvin Architects, claimed the prize for best educational building in the 2010 RIAI Irish Architecture Awards. The Institute is investing €3.7 million on new equipment, spread across the domains of mechanical, renewable and sustainable engineering, gaming and network administration technologies, as well as civil engineering. The new building opened for use in September 2010.

To date 392 Research Masters and 84 PhDs have been awarded while 408 publications and 611 conference proceedings have been published.

The opportunities offered through the Higher Education Authority’s multi-annual Strategic Innovation Fund initiatives have been warmly grasped by the Institute and have necessarily involved considerable cooperation and exchange of information with other HE providers and with external agencies. It is intended that details and consequences of the engagements will form part of the review.

Quality Assurance (programmatic review – Delegated Authority)

The Institute agreed its quality assurance procedures with HETAC in December 2003. This is the prerequisite for the delegation of authority to make awards.

AIT received Delegated Authority to make awards at Levels 6 to 9 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) in 2005. In 2007 delegated authority was extended to research at Level 9 in the specific fields of life and physical sciences, mechanical and polymer engineering, and social care. In January 2011 the Institute was evaluated for full delegation of authority in the defined areas of Mechanical and Polymer Engineering, and in specified fields within the domain of Life and Physical Science at Levels 9 and 10, and in Software Engineering at Level 9.
The following table indicates the fields of research activity approved by HETAC:

**Table 2. Fields of approved research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Date of HETAC Decision</th>
<th>Research at Level 9</th>
<th>Research at Level 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlone Institute of Technology</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Nursing and Health Studies</td>
<td>Mechanical Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Approved)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Business and Marketing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3**

The following indicated fields of research activity in AIT accredited by HETAC:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Date of HETAC Decision</th>
<th>Research at Level 9</th>
<th>Research at Level 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlone Institute of Technology</td>
<td>November 2005</td>
<td>Life and Physical Sciences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Accredited)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mechanical and Polymer Engineering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Social Care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November 2008</td>
<td>Software Engineering</td>
<td>Life and Physical Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>in specific areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Polymer Engineering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4**

Delegated Authority to maintain a register for specified research degree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Date of HETAC Decision</th>
<th>Research at Level 9</th>
<th>Research at Level 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlone Institute of Technology</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Life and Physical Sciences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mechanical and Polymer Engineering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Social Care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As given above, the Institute is currently engaged in the separate process of finalising an application for delegation of authority at Level 10 in respect of two defined fields of research.

The four faculties of the Institute have recently completed programmatic review. These were consciously completed as a precursor to the institutional review. The findings of the programmatic review and follow-up enhancement plans will be available for the consideration of the institutional review panel. The Institute has incorporated the ‘seven elements’ of Part One of the European Standards and Guidelines as themes for the focus groups established to prepare for both the programmatic and institutional reviews.

The Institute and its officers have been consistent in their engagement with policy and procedure formulation in conjunction with HETAC over the past decade. The Institute’s quality manual and associated procedures are available to the whole learning and research community of the Institute on the intranet and direct from the office of the Academic Registrar or quality office. The evaluation panel will be afforded access to a defined area of the Institute intranet through SharePoint and will be able to view a range of documentation pertaining to, and supporting, this review process.15

Engagement with further education and training and second Level - disadvantaged

Athlone Institute of Technology says it works closely with the Further Education area and with regional PLCs to enhance opportunity for non-standard learners. It is also working with regional agencies to the same end. More recent developments in this regard include the relationship with Co Offaly Vocational Education Committee, as referenced above. AIT claims to be one of the first colleges in the sector to appoint a disability officer, a post established in January 2000. It is an active member of the Inter-Institutional Management Committee for the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) and Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) initiative that again seeks to broaden access to higher education by offering places at reduced Central Application Office points to school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and those with a registered disability respectively.

The Institute says it has worked consistently and proactively with other providers to offer a range of supports and access avenues for under-represented groupings in higher education. The Institute claims to have been proactive in supporting the HEA’s Labour Activation initiative and is satisfied that it has achieved considerable success of this particular scheme in both phases to date.

The Institute says it has made considerable advances in the learning and teaching approaches adopted; these involve an increasing use of technology all of which is designed to better serve the learners.

15 The AIT Institutional Review 2011 portal is enabled by Microsoft SharePoint 2010 software. It can be utilised to facilitate collaboration, provide content management features, implement business processes and supply access to essential information. Detail on access for panel members will be provided separately.
Section 3. Institution's Team

The inclusive nature of institutional review necessarily means that every member of the institution will be involved in this welcome process. However, the lead team will be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Contact Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President: Professor Ciarán O Catháin</td>
<td>e-mail: <a href="mailto:cocathain@ait.ie">cocathain@ait.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phone: 090 6468101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Registrar and Project Manager: Dr Joseph Ryan</td>
<td>e-mail: <a href="mailto:josephryan@ait.ie">josephryan@ait.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phone: 090 6468105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IR Project Assistant: Mary Duffy</td>
<td>e-mail: <a href="mailto:mduffy@ait.ie">mduffy@ait.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phone: 090 6468117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Secretary: Elaine Kelly</td>
<td>e-mail: <a href="mailto:quality@ait.ie">quality@ait.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phone: 090 6424611</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Internal management and focus groups will also contribute to this process and will in turn interface with the various external agencies and individuals who will necessarily contribute also.

Section 4. HETAC objectives for Institutional Review

There are six prescribed objectives for Institutional Review as outlined below. Institutions may wish to highlight any areas of specific importance to the institution within each of the objectives.

Objective 1: To enhance public confidence in the quality of education and training provided by the institution and the standards of the awards made

This objective is to enhance public confidence in the quality of education and training provided by the institution and the standards of the awards made. This is an overarching objective which covers all areas of the institution’s activity. The quality of the Institutional Review process itself is a critical part of this as is the internal self study, the publication of the Self Evaluation Report and Panel Report. The information provided by the institution to the public falls within this objective.

Special considerations for Athlone Institute of Technology
None

Objective 2: To contribute to coherent strategic planning and governance in the institution

This objective is to contribute to coherent strategic planning and governance in the institution. The review may address the coherence of institutional mission, vision and values and overall institutional strategic planning. For recognised institutions with Delegated Authority this objective also includes the Operation and Management criterion of the review of Delegated Authority (governance, management, administration, planning, and evaluation) and the Objects of the Qualifications Act criterion relating to national contributions etc.
Special considerations for Athlone Institute of Technology

Strategy

Athlone Institute of Technology is reflecting upon the adopted strategic plan and is currently engaged in consultation on a major internal management restructuring project. This will likely involve significant management realignment. The purpose of the proposed change is to position the Institute better to support the scholarship and research endeavours of the Institute community and in so doing to realise the vision set out in the strategic plan. In addition, the Institute is mindful of the recommendations within the recent Higher Education Strategy Review and is open to increased external collaboration.

Management structure

In part as an indirect consequence of the recession, the Institute, in common with many other public sector enterprises, has experienced a number of significant early retirements at senior management level. This has occasioned a change in leadership in a number of areas of the Institute’s operations. This is a factor in the current restructuring discussion and is a significant element to be advised to the institutional review committee.

Objective 3: To assess the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance arrangements operated by the institution

This objective is to assess the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance arrangements operated by the institution. This will be based on Part One of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. By including this in the Institutional Review process the statutory requirement for review of QA is met. How the institution manages its QA for the “seven elements” of Part One of the European Standards and Guidelines should be explicitly addressed by the review process including: Policy and Procedures for Quality Assurance; Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes and Awards; Assessment of Students; Quality Assurance of Teaching Staff; Learning Resources and Support; Information Systems; Public Information.

Special considerations for Athlone Institute of Technology

AIT Quality Structures

The Institute believes its commitment to building a quality informed culture was evident in the late 1990s when it became one of the first Institutes in the sector to appoint a dedicated Quality Officer. This office continues to this day and has been a significant resource and support for the office of the Registrar in moving toward and embedding a learner-centred and quality enhancing culture. Due to the elective departure of the Quality Officer and the strictures of the current employment moratorium, the post is currently vacant and this poses challenges for the Institute.

In this context the panel is requested to consider to what extent the quality agenda has been embraced by the wider AIT community and may wish to provide recommendations on how this might be further embedded and enhanced.
Collaborative Provision

The Institutional Review should consider the Quality Assurance procedures in place for those collaborative partnerships and arrangements entered into by the Institute with third parties for the purpose of providing, organizing, or procuring a programme under delegated authority\(^\text{16}\).

(The policy and criteria in the HETAC document – *Policy for collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and joint awards, December 2008* are relevant in this regard).

Objective 4: To confirm the extent that the institution has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications and procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression

This objective is to confirm the extent that the institution has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications and procedures for Access, Transfer, and Progression. The National Qualifications Authority has produced guidelines in relation to this. For example, this includes issues such as credit, transfer, and progression routes between levels and award types, entry arrangements, and information provision. As part of this objective, HEA-funded institutions should be mindful of the goals of the HEA’s National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (2008-2013) and pay particular attention to the objectives relevant to Higher Education institutions.

Special considerations for Athlone Institute of Technology

None

Objective 5: To evaluate the operation and management of Delegated Authority where it has been granted

This objective is to evaluate the operation and management of Delegated Authority (where applicable) for both taught and research programmes. The Institutional Review process will satisfy the statutory requirement for the review of Delegated Authority for recognised institutions, once Objective 5 of the Institutional Review process is included in the Terms of Reference. The majority of the Delegated Authority criteria are covered under the objectives of Institutional Review. Additional criteria which relate specifically to the operation of Delegated Authority are included in the Supplementary Guidelines and should be addressed in the institution's submission. Institutional Review will cover all areas for which the Institute has Delegated Authority (both taught and research).

*Athlone Institute of Technology has Delegated Authority for taught programmes at Levels 6 to 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications. In 2007 delegated authority was extended to research at Level 9 in the specific fields of life and physical sciences, mechanical and polymer engineering, and social care.*

Objective 6: To provide recommendations for the enhancement of the education and training provided by the institution

This objective is to provide recommendations for the enhancement of the education and training provided by the institution. This will include both the recommendations arising from the external peer review process and recommendations arising from the internal self study process. These will be advised on more fully following the completion of the internal self study process.

\(^{16}\) Section 28 Qualifications (Education & Training) Act 1998
Special considerations for Athlone Institute of Technology

The Institute wishes to advise that it has made significant investment in the enhancement of learning and teaching both at college level and in collaboration with partners within and beyond the sector. The self-evaluation report will include a case study on this area founded in three key unifying themes of learning and teaching:

- Academic Professional Development
- Technology Enhanced Learning
- Enhancement of the Learning Experience

The Institute invites from the panel its comment on this initiative and its advice on how this can be sustained and enhanced.

Section 5. Institution-specific objectives

In addition to the prescribed HETAC objectives and the special considerations noted in relation to them, there is an option to include additional objectives to maximise the benefits of the review process.

Additional Institutional Objectives for Athlone Institute of Technology

None
Section 6. Schedule for Athlone Institute of Technology

As outlined in the Institutional Review policy, the process consists of six phases
1. HETAC sets terms of reference following consultation with institution;
2. Self-study by the institution;
3. Visit by expert panel appointed by HETAC and written panel report;
4. Institutional response including implementation plan;
5. Panel report and response published;
6. Follow-up report submitted by the institution.

The major milestones in the timeframe for the institutional review of Athlone IT are outlined below. This should be read in conjunction with the supplementary guidelines for institutional review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relative timeframe</th>
<th>Actual Date</th>
<th>Milestone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At least 6 months before panel visit</td>
<td></td>
<td>Institution indicates timeframe for institutional review as per overall HETAC schedule of reviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 6 months before panel visit</td>
<td>January 2011</td>
<td>Terms of Reference set following consultation with Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 6 months before panel visit</td>
<td></td>
<td>Institution undertakes self study process and produces self evaluation report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due 8 weeks before site visit</td>
<td>Received: 10 February 2011</td>
<td>Submission of Self Evaluation Report and other documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 week following receipt of SER</td>
<td>11 February 2011</td>
<td>HETAC desk based review of SER and feedback to Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approx. 3 weeks before site visit</td>
<td>1 March 2011</td>
<td>Advance Meeting between Chair, Secretary and Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel Visit</td>
<td>21-23 March 2011</td>
<td>Site visit by external peer review panel (3 days approximately as determined by TOR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 weeks after site visit</td>
<td>Estimated: 27 June 2011</td>
<td>Draft report on findings of panel sent by HETAC to Institution for factual accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actual: 15 July 2011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually 4 days – 1 week following this</td>
<td>5 August 2011</td>
<td>Institute reply to HETAC with details of any factual accuracies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually 4 days – 1 week following this</td>
<td>24 August 2011</td>
<td>Following discussions with panel in relation to factual accuracy check the final report is sent by HETAC to Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 weeks following receipt of final report</td>
<td>17 October 2011</td>
<td>Response by Institution to HETAC including plan with timeframe for implementation of any changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next available HETAC Academic Committee meeting</td>
<td>7 November 2011</td>
<td>Consideration of report and institutional response by HETAC Academic Committee Publication of report and response on website once adopted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 months after adoption</td>
<td>November 2012</td>
<td>Follow up report by Institution to HETAC on implementation of recommendations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B  Panel membership

Chairperson
Dr. Terrence MacTaggart
Higher Education Consultant and former Chancellor at the Minnesota State University System and University of Maine System

Secretary
Prof. Howard Colley
Senior Associate with the Higher Education Academy in the UK

Ms. Kay Hallahan
Former senior policy analyst in Forfas with Expert Group on Future Skills Needs

Mr. Christian Hemmestad Bjerke
Student at the Department of Administration and Organisation Theory at the University of Bergen

Prof. Sue Frost
Associate Senior Lecturer at the University of Kent and Professor Emeritus at Huddersfield University

Mr. Edmond Riordan
Deputy Registrar and Head of Academic Quality at Cork Institute of Technology
Appendix C  Supporting documentation received before the site visit

Documentation received as part of the submission with the SER
- AIT Self Evaluation Report
- Appendix to Self Evaluation Report
- Learning and Teaching Case Study
- AIT People Profiles

Further documentation received from AIT prior to the advance meeting
- AIT Quality Manual
- Dept of Adult and Continuing Education- Lecturer Guidelines
- Procedures and Guidelines for Collection of Feedback on Course Quality
- Procedures and Guidelines for Design, Development, Evaluation and Withdrawal of taught programmes at/by the Institute
- Course Manual Template
- Standards, Assessment, and Awards
- Procedures and Guidelines for the Operation of the External Examiner System for Taught Courses Validated by HETAC
- Code of Practice for External Examiners
- Staff Handbook
- Guidelines for Part-Time Academic Staff
- Staff Development committee - Guideline Notes for use in consideration of staff training/development applications for funding
- Procedures and Guidelines for the Operation of Activities within the International Office
- Management and Organisation Structure
- Procedures and Guidelines for Postgraduate Research
- Recognition of Prior Learning within AIT
- Procedures and Guidelines for the Student Services Department

Documentation received following the advance meeting

1. Athlone Institute of Technology Strategic Plan 2009 – 2013
2. Investing in Global relationships: Ireland’s international education strategy 2010-2015
3. Strategic Development Framework for the Midlands Gateway, volume 1, key findings, recommendations, and implementation (December 2006)
4. Capital Securities Corporation, issue 4, March 2009, Midlands Gateway index
5. Institute guideline on collaborative provision including a list of current programmes that fall under this heading
6. Postgraduate Prospectus 2010-211
7. Undergraduate Prospectus 2010-2011
8. Undergraduate Prospectus 2011-2012
9. Adult and Continuing Education evening & part-time courses 2010 -2011
10. Learning & Teaching Unit plan 2010-2011
Appendix D  Documentation requested by the panel

Following the advance meeting on 1 March 2011 the panel requested the following from AIT:

**Documentation to be provided before the site visit**

1. Strategic Plan- any documentation which provides
   i. indication of any adjustments made to the strategic plan
   ii. an update on the status, evaluation or implementation of the current strategic plan, e.g. biannual update provided to Governing Body.
   iii. Any supplemental strategies developed by the Institute for example: Teaching and Learning strategy; Internationalisation strategy.

2. Collaborative Provision –
   i. A list of all programmes involving third parties - the name of the collaborative partner - brief description of the nature of the collaboration and arrangements in place (national international) the number of students involved in each arrangement; the duration of the agreement/contract; a copy of the agreement underpinning the partnership/collaboration, for example, contracts/memorandum of understanding or equivalent agreements. The duration/period of the agreement and the number of learners involved in each programme and the additional quality assurance arrangements. Sample documentation from other institutional review terms of reference provided.
   ii. A copy of the AIT policies, procedures and guidelines governing collaborative arrangements/partnerships/engagement of third parties in programme provision.

3. A short economic profile of the catchment area.

**Documentation to be available on-site for panel members**

4. Copies of committee minutes working back over two years from the most recent version available for the Academic Council and sub committees; Governing Body minutes.
5. AIT full-time and part-time prospectus.
6. Examples of how AIT use student survey data to impact on the student learning.
7. Committee minutes of meetings- 2 years to demonstrate continuity.
8. The names of the five organisations represented on the Governing Body, (not identified on SER, pp 63-64) breakdown of members and affiliation.
9. Any documentation demonstrating how QA processes are embedded within the institution. How effectiveness can be demonstrated for the key quality control areas such as learner assessment and the external examining system.
Statistics
10. Details of staff participation levels in the Learning and Teaching Unit - past and present participation, variations between schools/categories of staff. Details of any strategies/initiatives to encourage fuller participation.
11. Adult education - breakdown of student numbers across disciplines, programmes and NFQ levels.
13. Apprentices – How many of these are there currently in AIT? Are these exclusively involved in construction-related trades? How many of the apprentices participated in the progression paths/RPL referred to on p.44 of the SER? Are there other plans for redirecting them for employability purposes?
14. Breakdown of the number of Masters/PhDs degrees across disciplines/schools.
15. Breakdown of the €23m research funding - in terms of sources of funding and allocation across fields of study.

Programme documentation
16. Hard-copy programme documentation to be available on site, for the following programmes:
   - Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Psychiatric Nursing (Level 8)
   - MSc in Environmental Health and Safety (Level 9)
   - Bachelor of Science in Sustainable Construction (1 year add-on) (Level 7)
   - Bachelor of Science in Sustainable Construction (3 year ab initio) (Level 7)
   - Higher Certificate in Science in Construction Studies (Level 6)
   - Higher Certificate in Business (Level 6)
   - Bachelor of Business (Honours) (Level 8)
   - Bachelor of Arts in Accounts (Level 7)
   - Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social Care Practice (Level 8)
   - Higher Certificate in Childcare Supervisory Management (Level 6)
   - Master of Arts in Applied Social Care Practice (Level 9)
   - 1 Minor Award
   - 1 Special Purpose Award

The documentation should include, for example – for each programme:
Programme validation documentation, including programme/course handbook
Minutes of programme committees - 2008/2009/2010
Following issues relating to student input, retention etc. - 2008/2009/2010
External Examiner reports 2008/2009/2010 and documentation relating to follow-up by AIT on the reports - progression to other programmes
Programme review documentation
Programme evaluation forms/ reports of evaluation results
Staff qualifications – summary
Other appropriate QA documentation indicating follow-through of issues raised
Sample exam Board minutes
### Appendix E  Index of AIT documentation provided to the panel at the site visit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folder No</th>
<th>Documentation Requested</th>
<th>Documentation provided or to be provided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Copies of committee minutes working back over two years from the most recent version available for the Academic Council and sub committees; Governing Body minutes.</td>
<td>Governing Body&lt;br&gt;Academic Council&lt;br&gt;Research, Innovation and Enterprise Committee&lt;br&gt;Learning Enhancement Committee&lt;br&gt;Academic Standards and Quality Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>AIT full-time and part-time prospectus.</td>
<td>Full Time Prospectus&lt;br&gt;Part Time Prospectus&lt;br&gt;Post graduate Prospectus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Examples of how AIT uses student survey data to impact on the student learning</td>
<td>Surveys from 2009 and 2010 will be referenced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Committee minutes of meetings- 2 years to demonstrate continuity.</td>
<td>As per folder 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The names of the five organisations represented on the Governing Body, (not identified on SER, pp 63-64) breakdown of members and affiliation.</td>
<td>Five names and organisations supplied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Any documentation demonstrating how QA processes are embedded within the institution. How effectiveness can be demonstrated for the key quality control areas such as learner assessment and the external examining system.</td>
<td>Quality Manual&lt;br&gt;External Examiners Policies&lt;br&gt;Standards, Assessments and Awards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Details of staff participation levels in the Learning and Teaching Unit - past and present participation, variations between schools/categories of staff. Details of any strategies/initiatives to encourage fuller participation.</td>
<td>Details of staff participation levels in the Learning and Teaching Unit - past and present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Adult education- breakdown of student numbers across disciplines, programmes, and NFQ levels.</td>
<td>Analysis of enrolment and completion on adult education provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Any breakdown of statistics on progression/retention - Case studies - annual reporting statistics.</td>
<td>Detail provided from the central Banner system. This includes progression and retention statistics for each of the four faculties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder No</td>
<td>Documentation Requested</td>
<td>Documentation provided or to be provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Apprentices – How many of these are there currently in AIT? Are these exclusively involved in construction-related trades? How many of the apprentices participated in the progression paths/RPL referred to on p.44 of the SER? Are there other plans for redirecting them for employability purposes?</td>
<td>Record from the school of engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Breakdown of the number of Masters/PhDs degrees across disciplines/schools</td>
<td>Taught Level 9 registered graduated 2005 – 2010 Level 9 and 10 research 2005 - 2010 registered and graduated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Breakdown of the €23m research funding-in terms of sources of funding and allocation across fields of study.</td>
<td>Breakdown of research funding will be made available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 16        | Registry documentation available to the panel for review  
2009-10  
Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Psychiatric nursing  
Master of Science in Environmental Health and Safety  
Bachelor of Science in Sustainable Construction – 1 year add-on Level 7  
Bachelor of Science in Sustainable Construction – 3 year ab initio Level 7  
Higher Certificate in Science in Construction Studies  
Higher Certificate in Business  
Bachelor of Business (Hons)  
Bachelor of Arts in Accounts  
Bachelor of Arts in Social Care Practice  
Higher Certificate in Childcare Supervisory Management  
2010-11 Master of Arts on Applied Social Care Practice  
Sample of student withdrawal forms from the above courses for academic years 2009-10 and 2010-11                                                                 | |
Appendix F  Agenda for site visit

Agenda for Institutional Review of Athlone Institute of Technology
21-23 March 2011

Dr. Terrence MacTaggart, Review Chairperson, to chair all plenary sessions, unless otherwise indicated. The format of each session is a discussion in question and answer format unless otherwise indicated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evening before first day</th>
<th>Sunday 20 March 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.00pm- 8.00pm</td>
<td>Panel Induction and planning (Evening before) in Sheraton Hotel, Athlone (private meeting for panel)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>21 March</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.30am- 12.00pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.00pm - 1.00pm Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting with Senior Management /Governing body representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 1 – Objective 2 - Strategic planning and governance; Brief presentation by President (10 mins)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.30pm- 2.45pm coffee break and panel discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.45pm - 3.45pm Session 2 - Objective 1 - Public confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.45pm – 4.15pm coffee break and panel discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.15pm- 5.45pm Session 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.45pm – 6.00pm Private meeting of panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.00am – 10.30am Session 4 - Objective 3: Quality Assurance continued (Seven Elements Review): Overview of QA System - Committee staff and Learner Support/ Service Staff / Administrative Staff The “seven elements” covered by the European Standards and Guidelines. Evidence of performance of QA system in each area; evaluation of effectiveness of QA system in each area; improvements identified; integration between processes, governance, management and planning etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30am – 11.30am Coffee break and review of documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.30am - 12.30pm Session 5- Objective 3: Quality Assurance continued (Seven Elements Review): Overview of Enhancement/ QA System – Non Committee staff The “seven elements” covered by the European Standards and Guidelines. Evidence of performance of QA system in each area; evaluation of effectiveness of QA system in each area; improvements identified; integration between processes, governance, management and planning etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.30pm – 1.30pm private lunch for panel - Panel discussion and review of documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.30pm – 2.15pm Session 6 (2 parallel sessions) Meeting with learners (student union representatives) and Graduates representing a variety of students across the schools and programme levels including postgraduate and non-standard students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.15pm- 2.45pm- Coffee break and panel discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.45pm - 3.45pm Session 7 - Objective 4: Access, Transfer and Progression: Review of Implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications and procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression; learning outcomes; learner assessment; recognition of prior learning (RPL), retention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.45pm - 4.00pm Coffee break and private panel discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.00pm - 5.00pm Session 8- (2 parallel sessions) Meeting with Stakeholders including Second level representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.00pm - 6.30pm Private meeting of panel – feedback and preparation and review of documentation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>23 March</th>
<th>All meetings take place at the Institute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.00am - 10.00am Session 9- Objective 5: Operation of Delegated Authority - operation and management of DA.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00am - 10.30am – Panel meeting and coffee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30am - 11.30am - Clarification meeting (if required) with Institute staff on any outstanding issues/ documentation required.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.30am - 12.30pm – Review of documentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.30pm – 1.30pm</td>
<td>Private lunch for panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.30pm - 3.15pm</td>
<td>Private meeting of panel to consider findings and recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.15pm – 3.30pm</td>
<td>Coffee break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.30pm – 3.45pm</td>
<td>Meeting with President, Registrar (and institution’s team) to provide preliminary feedback on findings and recommendations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G  List of people met by the panel

Monday 21 March 2011

1.00pm – 2.30pm Session 1 – Objective 2 - Strategic planning and governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Full-time/Part-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Paul Breen</td>
<td>Outgoing chair of Governing body</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor Ciarán Ó Cáthain</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Joseph Ryan</td>
<td>Academic Registrar</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Eoin Langan</td>
<td>Head of School of Business</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. John McKenna</td>
<td>Secretary/Financial Controller</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Joe LaCumbre</td>
<td>Governing Body</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Yvonne Kennedy</td>
<td>Governing Body</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Liam Rattigan</td>
<td>Governing Body</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Fergal Lynam</td>
<td>Governing Body</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Garry Cassin</td>
<td>Governing Body and President ATSU</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Joe Whelan</td>
<td>Governing Body</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.45pm - 3.45pm Session 2 - Objective 1 - Public confidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Full-time/Part-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Joseph Ryan</td>
<td>Academic Registrar</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Brian Lynch</td>
<td>Communications and Marketing Manager</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Anne Handy</td>
<td>Acting Careers Officer</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Nuala Harding</td>
<td>Learning and Teaching Coordinator</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Geraldine McDermott</td>
<td>Lecturer, Department of Humanities</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Name | Department | Full-time/Part-time
--- | --- | ---
Mr. Seamus Ryan | Lecturer, Department of Business & Management Studies | Full-time
Dr. Cepta Brougham | Lecturer, Department of Life and Physical Sciences | Full-time
Dr. Michael Tobin | Head of Department of Adult and Continuing Education | Full-time
Mr. Fergal Sweeney | Head of Department of Civil, Construction and Mineral Engineering | Full-time
Mr. Owen Ross | Head of Department of Humanities | Full-time
Mr. Michael Lonergan | Manager of the Midlands Innovation and Research Centre | Full-time
Ms. Mary Simpson | Director of International Relations | Full-time

#### 4.15pm- 5.45pm Session 3 - Objective 3 - Quality Assurance: Overview of QA System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Full-time/Part-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Joseph Ryan</td>
<td>Academic Registrar</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Marian Fitzgibbon</td>
<td>Head of School of Humanities</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Owen Ross</td>
<td>Head of Department of Humanities</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Michael Tobin</td>
<td>Head of Department of Adult and Continuing Education</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Eoin Langan</td>
<td>Head of Business School</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Peter Melinn</td>
<td>Head of Department of Professional Accountancy, Financial Services and Business Computing</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Austin Hanley</td>
<td>Head of School of Engineering</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Joe Lawless</td>
<td>Head of Department of Mechanical and Polymer Engineering and Trades</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Fergal Sweeney</td>
<td>Head of Department of Civil, Construction and Mineral Engineering</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Don Faller</td>
<td>Head of Department of Life and Physical Science</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Khalil Arshak</td>
<td>Acting Director of Research</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Robert Stewart</td>
<td>Director of Graduate Studies</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Tuesday 22 March 2011**

**9.00am – 10.30am Session 4- Objective 3- Quality Assurance -Committee staff and Learner Support/ Service Staff / Administrative Staff**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Full-time/Part-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Paul Archbold</td>
<td>Lecturer in Engineering / Member of Academic Council</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Breen Cunningham</td>
<td>Learner Support – IT Services</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Stephen Harney</td>
<td>Lecturer in Engineering / Member of Academic Standards and Quality Committee</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Una O’Connor</td>
<td>Learner Support - Acting Librarian</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Geraldine McDermott</td>
<td>Lecturer in Humanities / Member of Academic Council</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Ashling Jackson</td>
<td>Lecturer in Humanities / Former member of Research, Innovation and Enterprise committee</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Marie O’Halloran</td>
<td>Lecturer in Humanities / Member of Academic Council</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Theresa Ryan</td>
<td>Learner Support - Access Officer</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Barry O’Loughlin</td>
<td>Lecturer in Business / Member of Academic Council</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Eileen Lane</td>
<td>Lecturer in Science / Member of Academic Standards and Quality Committee</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Marc Cashin</td>
<td>Lecturer in Business / Member of Academic Council</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Andrew Fogarty</td>
<td>Lecturer in Science / Former Member of many committees to include Academic Council, RI&amp;E, Academic Standards, etc.</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**11.30am - 12.30pm Session 5- Objective 3- Quality Assurance- Non Committee staff**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Full-time/Part-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Sean Arthur</td>
<td>Lecturer in Business</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Sean Connell</td>
<td>Lecturer in Humanities</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Carmel Joyce</td>
<td>Lecturer in Art &amp; Design</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Damien Brady</td>
<td>Lecturer in Science</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Name | Department | Full-time/Part-time
---|---|---
Ms. Marva Fitzpatrick | Lecturer in Nursing | Full-time
Dr Michael Nugent | Lecturer in Engineering | Full-time
Ms. Mary Giblin | Lecturer in Engineering | Full-time
Mr. Keith Vaugh | Lecturer in Engineering | Full-time
Ms. Mary Corrigan | Lecturer in Business | Full-time
Ms. Louise Kane | Deputy President (Education and Communication) | Full-time
Mr. Joe Meegan | Lecturer in Dept of Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure Studies | 

1.30pm – 2.15pm Session 6 - Learners and Graduates (2 parallel sessions)

**Group A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Representing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sean Prunty</td>
<td>BB in Business</td>
<td>Y3</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Grennan</td>
<td>BSc in Business Computing</td>
<td>Y3</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edel Galligan</td>
<td>BA in Accounting</td>
<td>Y3</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Aspell</td>
<td>BA in Accounting</td>
<td>Y3</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May Cunningham</td>
<td>HC in Business</td>
<td>Yr 1</td>
<td>Full time – Non Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Ryan</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmel Rohan</td>
<td>Bachelor of Business via Ladder OM</td>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tao Cui (Bernard)</td>
<td>Graduate ACCA/BAA</td>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maura Burke</td>
<td>Tourism &amp; Hospitality</td>
<td>Y4</td>
<td>Full-time – Non standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padraig McGrath</td>
<td>Social Care Practice</td>
<td>Y4</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronagh Leonard</td>
<td>Childcare Management</td>
<td>Y3</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura O’Dea</td>
<td>Masters in Child &amp; Youth Care</td>
<td>Y1</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David O’Brien</td>
<td>BA in Design &amp; Communications</td>
<td>Y1</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Group B**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Representing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conor Brannigan</td>
<td>BEng Mech &amp; Renewable Eng</td>
<td>Y3</td>
<td>Full-time – Non standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacqueline Stewart</td>
<td>BSc (Hons) Software Eng</td>
<td>Y4</td>
<td>Full-time – Non standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Rattigan</td>
<td>BSc in Construction Sustainable</td>
<td>Y3</td>
<td>Full-time – Non standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Lacey</td>
<td>MSc Software Engineering</td>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Ryan</td>
<td>BSc. In Construction Sustainable</td>
<td>Y1</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teresa Fox</td>
<td>Pharmaceutical Technology</td>
<td>L7</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eddie Kelly</td>
<td>BEng in Sustainable Energy</td>
<td>L8</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmi Purhonen</td>
<td>BSc Toxicology</td>
<td>Y4</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Hayes</td>
<td>PhD Life &amp; Physical</td>
<td></td>
<td>PG Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelsey McEvoy</td>
<td>MSc in Science by Research</td>
<td></td>
<td>PG Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugh Farrell</td>
<td>Post doc – completed PhD 2010</td>
<td></td>
<td>PG Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deirdre Finneran</td>
<td>BSc in Psychiatric Nursing</td>
<td>Y3</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Farrell</td>
<td>BSc in General Nursing</td>
<td>Y3</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2.45pm - 3.45pm Session 7 - Objective 4: Access, Transfer and Progression:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Full-time/Part-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Joseph Ryan</td>
<td>Academic Registrar</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Nuala Harding</td>
<td>Learning &amp; Teaching Coordinator</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Norrie O'Callaghan</td>
<td>Admissions Officer, Registration</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Kieran Doyle</td>
<td>Work Based Learning Coordinator</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Theresa Ryan</td>
<td>Access Officer</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Patricia Kearney</td>
<td>Disabilities Officer</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Margaret O'Keeffe</td>
<td>Lecturer in Humanities</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Michael Tobin</td>
<td>Head of Department of Adult &amp; Continuing Education</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Oliver Hegarty</td>
<td>Lecturer in Humanities</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Kelly Gallagher</td>
<td>Lecturer in Humanities</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Pearl Moore</td>
<td>Lecturer in Humanities</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Chris McDermot</td>
<td>Lecturer in Humanities</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Marc Cashin</td>
<td>Lecturer in Business</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Name | Department | Full-time/Part-time
--- | --- | ---
Mr. Joe Lawless | Head of Department of Mechanical & Polymer Engineering and Trades | Full-time

### 4.00pm -5.00pm Session 8- Stakeholders (2 parallel sessions)

**Group A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Title</th>
<th>Company/Organisation</th>
<th>Collaboration/link to college</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr Mike Pearson</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Gurteen College</td>
<td>Collaborative provider in the area of Equine Studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Adrian Delaney</td>
<td>Deputy Principal</td>
<td>Cavan College</td>
<td>Collaborative provider in the area of Business Studies and Social Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Tom Blaine</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Marist College</td>
<td>Second level provider, CAO Feeder, school visits, local area partner in provision of supplementary facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Eileen Donohoe</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Athlone Community College</td>
<td>Second level provider, CAO Feeder, school visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Elizabeth Doherty</td>
<td>Staff Member</td>
<td>Moate Community College</td>
<td>Second level provider, CAO Feeder, school visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Colin Roddy</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Colaiste Cholim Tullamore</td>
<td>Second level provider, CAO Feeder, school visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Seamus Casey</td>
<td>Guidance Counsellor</td>
<td>St Joseph’s Secondary School, Rochfortbridge</td>
<td>Second level provider, CAO Feeder, school visits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Group B**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Title</th>
<th>Company/Organisation</th>
<th>Collaboration/link to college</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr Liam Nally</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Summerhill School</td>
<td>Second level provider, CAO Feeder, school visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Eileen Alford</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>St. Joseph’s Secondary School, Rochfortbridge</td>
<td>Second level provider, CAO Feeder, school visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Angela McGarvey</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Loretto College Mullingar</td>
<td>Second level provider, CAO Feeder, school visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr John Irwin</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Gallen Community School, Ferbane</td>
<td>Second level provider, CAO Feeder, school visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Seamus O’Doherty</td>
<td>Staff Member</td>
<td>CBS Roscommon</td>
<td>Second level provider, CAO Feeder, school visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position/Title</td>
<td>Company/Organisation</td>
<td>Collaboration/link to college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Patricia Kilgallon</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Ardschool Mhuire, Ballinasloe</td>
<td>Second level provider, CAO Feeder, school visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Gearoid O’Brien</td>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>Athlone Library</td>
<td>Acts on interview panels, course advisory panels, postgraduate interview panels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Barry Geoghegan</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Entitlement, functional drinks</td>
<td>MIRC client. Product Development funded through Midlands and West Enterprise Programme (MWEP) 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Chris Forde</td>
<td>Regional Executive</td>
<td>IDA Ireland</td>
<td>Industry Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Ethel Gavin</td>
<td>Assistant Governor</td>
<td>Castlerea Prison</td>
<td>Collaborated and delivered on course provision and professional development for prisoners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr John Lyons</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>The Office Centre</td>
<td>Sponsor of Student awards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Seamus Sheerin</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Capital Securities &amp; Midland Gateway</td>
<td>Asset Management Equity Firm working in the Midlands. Also a member of the Midland Gateway Chamber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Barry Egan</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Midlands Region of Enterprise Ireland</td>
<td>Developmental Agency working in the areas of enterprise enhancement and provision for the Midland region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr John Smyth</td>
<td>Development Manager</td>
<td>Ericsson</td>
<td>Business &amp; Member of Programmatic Review Panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Anne Marie Durkan</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Shasta, Innovative baby products</td>
<td>Midlands Innovation &amp; Research Centre Client. Product Development funded through Midlands and West Enterprise Programme (MWEP) 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Tony O’Riordan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Simon Community</td>
<td>Agency involved in student placements and internships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Sheila Buckley-Byrne</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
<td>Athlone</td>
<td>Local government representative and also manager of National Learning Network working with the Institute through innovative course provision for unique clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sgt Andrew Haran</td>
<td>Sergeant</td>
<td>Garda Station, Athlone</td>
<td>Community partner, involved in social initiatives, student community protection and awareness initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Doreen Gerety</td>
<td>HR Manager</td>
<td>Elan Corporation</td>
<td>Assists with interview panels and industry partner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Wednesday 23 March 2011**

9.00am-10.00am Session 9- Objective 5: Operation of Delegated Authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Full-time/Part-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor Ciarán Ó Cáthain</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Joseph Ryan</td>
<td>Academic Registrar</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. John McKenna</td>
<td>Secretary/Financial Controller</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Marian Fitzgibbon</td>
<td>Head of School of Humanities</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Eoin Langan</td>
<td>Head of Business School</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Austin Hanley</td>
<td>Head of School of Engineering</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Don Faller</td>
<td>Head of Department of Life and Physical Science</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Liam Brennan</td>
<td>Human Resources Manager</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix H  Table of collaborative programmes at AIT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner (School)</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Staff involved in providing programme</th>
<th>Location of provision of programme</th>
<th>Programme awarded by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cavan Institute (School of Business and Humanities)</td>
<td>The Higher Certificate in Business (Level 6) first year is delivered in Cavan by Cavan Institute academic staff. Students complete all year one modules in Cavan under AIT quality assurance guidelines. Students transfer to AIT for year two and all subsequent study. Academic staff from both institutions liaise on learning and teaching approaches and syllabus content. There is significant engagement at senior level between the two centres. The School of Humanities acts in collaboration with Cavan Institute in relation to the co-provision of the first year of the Higher Certificate in Applied Social Studies in Social Care. Up to 20 students are accepted directly, on an annual basis, to attend first year in Cavan Institute. These students are governed by AIT QA procedures, sit the same exams as their AIT counterparts, and, where successful, join the AIT programme at the beginning of second year. This collaboration is supported by a number of mechanisms such as: the annual “Harmonization Day” for both students and staff from both AIT and Cavan Institute; ongoing and regular communication between AIT’s first year class advisor and Cavan Institute’s course leader; attendance at programme and exam boards by the Cavan Institute course leader; AIT Induction programme for former Cavan Institute students on the commencement of second year; and regular consultation between AIT and Cavan Institute staff with regard to delivery and enhancement.</td>
<td>Eoin Langan &amp; Marian Fitzgibbon (AIT)</td>
<td>Cavan Institute academic staff</td>
<td>First year at Cavan Institute Students transfer to AIT for year two and all subsequent study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia Centre for Accountancy Studies (ZCAS), Lusaka, Zambia (School of Business)</td>
<td>The Bachelor of Arts in Accounting (Level 8) third year is delivered in Zambia by ZCAS academic staff. AIT monitors the QA arrangements. This collaboration was developed in conjunction with Irish Aid. Academic staff from both institutions liaise on learning and teaching approaches and syllabus content. Students have access to the online facilities of the AIT library. Collaboration commenced in 1995 under agreement signed by NCEA, a panel visit by NCEA was undertaken to approve the original programme in 1995. The original agreement was for the National Diploma in Professional Accounting. In 1999, additional NCEA approval was given for the Bachelor of Arts in Accounting and Finance. Both these programmes have been discontinued and replaced by the three year Level 8 Bachelor of Arts in Accounting. The current arrangement is that students are exempt from years one and two on the basis of having completed the managerial level of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA). Students then complete the third and final year of the degree in ZCAS.</td>
<td>Academic staff from both institutes liaise on learning and teaching approaches</td>
<td>Third year provided in Zambia</td>
<td>Programme awarded by AIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner (School)</td>
<td>Description</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Finance and Economics (DUFE), Dalian, China (School of Business)</td>
<td>The Bachelor of Arts in Accounting (Level 8) first year is delivered in China by DUFE academic staff. This collaboration was developed following the signing of an MOU between DUFE and AIT in October 2003. This particular collaboration was employed as the model when the joint recognition treaty was prepared and agreed between China and Ireland; the respective ministers subsequently signed this agreement. Students undertake a foundation year in DUFE, taking two modules from the first year of the programme plus English modules. They then transfer to first year in AIT and complete the normal programme with exemptions from the modules covered in Dalian. Academic staff from both institutions liaise on learning and teaching approaches and syllabus content. AIT academic staff exchange and student exchange arrangements are also in place. There is considerable dialogue between the institutions at senior level in respect of monitoring and learner adaptability. The first intake of students commenced in September 2005 on a 2+1 basis for one year, then moved to a 2+2 basis and in September 2007 moved to a 1+3 basis that exists to the present day. The programme is the same as validated by AIT.</td>
<td>DUFE academic staff (in China) Academic staff from both institutes liaise on learning and teaching approaches and syllabus content</td>
<td>First year is delivered in China</td>
<td>Programme awarded by AIT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Gurteen College, Ballingarry, Roscrea, Co Tipperary (School of Business and Science) | The Higher Certificate in Business in Equine Studies (Level 6) and Bachelor of Business (Level 7) are delivered by a combination of AIT and Gurteen academic staff. The AIT quality assurance procedures govern this provision. Students on Year 1 of the Higher Certificate are based in Gurteen College, then continue their Year 2 studies in AIT. In the Bachelor of Business (Level 7), the students study in both AIT and Gurteen College.  
• For the Higher Certificate, AIT deliver 50 out of 120 credits.  
• For the Bachelor of Business, AIT deliver 30 of the 60 credits.  
First and second year veterinary nursing students from AIT undergo a two week residential placement at Gurteen College annually during February/March. This activity commenced in the academic year 2003–2004 with approximately 30 students for each group per year and increasing. | AIT and Gurteen academic staff | Higher Certificate Year 1 based in Gurteen College Bachelor of Business students study in both AIT and Gurteen College | Programme awarded by AIT |
<p>| NUIG (Masters Toxicology) (School of Science) | The School of Science at AIT and the pharmacology department at NUIG collaborate in running a full-time year-long taught Mater of Science in Toxicology. This commenced in the academic year 2005–2006 with between 5 and 10 students annually. Each institution provides its own element of the programme and recognises the contribution of the partner. | School of Science at AIT and the pharmacology department at NUIG | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner (School)</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal Ireland and Lionra (School of Business)</td>
<td>The Higher Certificate in Business in Enterprise Development is delivered in outreach centres. These are located in Ballinasloe, Galway, Trim, and Emyvale, Co Monaghan. This is a two-year, part-time programme. AIT monitors the QA arrangements. Collaboration commenced in 2008 starting with the Higher Certificate in Enterprise Development in Ballinasloe and Galway. This has led to a follow programme Bachelor of Arts in Business, Enterprise and Community Development (Level 7). Currently being delivered in the four centres listed above. There are 65 students registered for academic year 2010-2011. -Lionra is a network of the seven third level colleges in the Border, Midlands and Western area (BMW) of Ireland. -Equal Ireland is a ‘not for profit’ charitable trust founded in 2001 by IBEC, SIPTU, FÁS, and Lionra.</td>
<td>AIT deliver academic staff deliver 50% of the programme</td>
<td>Outreach centres Ballinasloe, Galway, Trim, and Emyvale, Co Monaghan</td>
<td>Programme awarded by AIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allianz Worldwide / People Dimensions International (PDI) (School of Business)</td>
<td>The Diploma in Leadership (Level 8) is a special purpose award developed to assist the professional development of Allianz staff; to build leadership skills in order to maximise business and individual potential over time. AIT monitors QA arrangements. AIT academic staff to deliver some teaching. It is envisaged by AIT that this model can be rolled out to other companies in the future. The collaboration commenced in January 2011, there were 11 students registered at the time of the site visit. Allianz have plans for an additional 54 students over the next two years. The programme duration is 18 months. People Dimensions International (PDI) deliver the programme on behalf of AIT. An AIT academic staff member has been appointed as programme director to oversee the QA aspects of this programme. -PDI was formed in 2007 and has specialised in coaching, performance management, and leadership services. Working in a training and consultancy capacity over the past number of years, it has worked with a large number of prominent Irish companies.</td>
<td>AIT academic staff to deliver some teaching PDI deliver the programme on behalf of AIT</td>
<td>At the Allianz offices in Parkwest, Dublin</td>
<td>Programme awarded by AIT and 60 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bord Na Móna (School of Business)</td>
<td>The Higher Certificate in Business (Level 6) is offered to employees of this State company which has had a commendable staff training programme. This offering ran from 2007 to 2009. All sixteen students on the programme went through an RPL process. AIT staff delivered all lectures on the AIT campus.</td>
<td>AIT staff delivered all lectures</td>
<td>AIT Campus</td>
<td>Programme awarded by AIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner (School)</td>
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<td>-----------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castlerea Prison / Teamlife and Líonra (School of Business)</td>
<td>This offering follows from a request from the Irish Prison Service to assist in affording education and training to certain candidates in advance of release from custody. The Higher Certificate in Business and Enterprise Development has been employed as a pilot in this respect. The course is delivered in Castlerea Prison, Co Roscommon, to students who are near release date. AIT monitors QA arrangements and AIT academic staff deliver some teaching. The Higher Certificate in Business and Enterprise Development is a 20 credit special purpose award- there is no deficit in credits as only 20 credits are awarded. Teamlife was founded in 2007 by James Martin and provides a range of training programmes from start ups to staff development. It is engaged by the Prison Service to support this offering.</td>
<td>AIT academic staff deliver some teaching, Teamlife deliver the remainder</td>
<td>Castlerea Prison, Co Roscommon</td>
<td>Special Purpose Award for 20 credits, awarded by AIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATI (School of Adult and Continuing Education)</td>
<td>Currently under review. Two Level 7 programs: Bachelor of Arts in Applied Addiction Studies, commenced September 2006, and Bachelor of Arts in Counselling and Psychotherapy, commenced September 2008. Total student number is 197. Under this collaboration, AIT monitors QA, staffing, general operations, and accredits award.</td>
<td>ATI staff provide the programme</td>
<td>In Dublin, Waterford, and Athlone</td>
<td>AIT makes the award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politecnico Di Torino, Torino, Italy (School of Business)</td>
<td>Working with the international office, the business school has established links with the Politecnico di Torino, Italy since the 2005-2006 academic year. The partnership involves students from Turin attending ATI for one full academic year on the Higher Certificate in Business programme. The numbers involved range between 20 &amp; 40 learners annually and the arrangement is facilitated through regular meetings of staff from the partners.</td>
<td>AIT</td>
<td>AIT- students attend from Turin for 1 year</td>
<td>Award made by AIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT Sligo (School of Engineering)</td>
<td>The Bachelor of Engineering in Polymer Processing (Level 7). Teaching is shared between IT Sligo &amp; AIT. Students are registered within their home institute. Two modules are delivered from AIT which also supervises its own research-based projects.</td>
<td>Teaching is shared between IT Sligo &amp; AIT</td>
<td>Delivered between the two parties, each on its own campus</td>
<td>The institute where the student registers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIN (School of Business)</td>
<td>This collaboration arises from a SIF 1 Learning project involving all institutes of technology and the DIT. The initiative led to the development of a Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching that has been developed to a P/G Diploma in Learning and Teaching and validated through AIT on behalf of all partners in March 2011. The initiative is focused on building capacity and expertise amongst professionals in third level.</td>
<td>Provided by AIT and IADT academic staff</td>
<td>On campus in AIT and IADT</td>
<td>AIT only award a special purpose (15 credits) award in Teaching and Learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>