

Annual Quality Report Institute of Technology Sligo
Reporting Period 2019 – 2020

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PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Reporting Period 2019 – 2020

CONTENTS

Introduction and Overview of Institution	5
1.0 Internal QA Framework	6
1.1 Governance and Management of Quality	6
1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision	9
2.0 Programme Development and Delivery	10
2.1 Programme Development and Approval	10
2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification	11
2.3 Procedures for Making Awards	12
2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment	13
3.0 Learner Resources and Support	15
4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes	18
5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support	19
6.0 Information and Data Management	21
7.0 Public Information and Communication	22
8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review	25
9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties	27
9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	27
9.2 Collaborative Provision	32
9.3 Articulation Agreements.	34
PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM	36
1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments	36
1.1 Strategic QA Updates	36
1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR	39
1.3 Governance and Management	42
1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review	44
2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts	47
Case Study 1 New mode of full-time programme delivery to a population of learners who would find college attendance challenging.	50
Case study 2 Online students support needs.	53
Case study 3 Academic writing supports.	59
Case Study 4 Development and Delivery of Online Post Graduate Certificate in Teaching, Learning & Assessment	60
Case Study 5: Using electronic notebooks to enhance laboratory practical sessions, enquiry-based learning and project supervision in the Faculty of Science.	61
Case Study 6: Introduction of CRM system to manage student applications.	63

Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity	64
3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period	66
3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives	66
3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods	69
3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period	69
3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period	69
4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies	70
IQA Response to Emergency Situations/Covid-19 Pandemic	70
Case study 7 Embedding UDL in Programme development, delivery and assessment.	75
Case Study 8 – Research Student Career Development, Training and Networking Plan	77

Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for Institute of Technology Sligo for the reporting period **1 September 2019 – 31 August 2020**.

The AQR has been compiled collaboratively and is submitted by Dr Michele Glacken, VP Academic Affairs and Registrar in conjunction with academic and non academic departments across the institute.

In 2020 the Institute of Technology, Sligo (ITSligo) reached a landmark anniversary of 50 years contribution to the education and development landscape in the North West of Ireland. The Institute offers a wide range of flexible contemporary programmes from apprenticeship, through higher certificate and degree level courses to taught postgraduate and research awards.

The mission statement of ITSligo as set out in the Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022 is: -

“Advancing economic, social and environmental sustainability through education, innovation and engagement, producing graduates who are innovative, confident and a capable of leading the development of the region and beyond”.

The current strategic plan can be found on the website [here](#). The plan, contains six strategic objectives in the following areas:

1. Students
2. Learning and Teaching
3. Research, Development and Innovation
4. Partnerships and External Engagement
5. Shaping and Influencing Economic, Social and Cultural development
6. Organisation and Governance

The Strategic Pillars are underpinned by the organisation, its governance, quality assurance, staff, financial management, infrastructure and communication.

1.0 Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

The overall responsibility ensuring that the Institute meets its Quality Assurance and Regulatory Commitments rests with the Governing body. Governing Body members are appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills in accordance with the Institute of Technology Acts 1992 - 2006. A new Governing Body was established in March 2020, the current members of the governing body are listed on the website [here](#) IT Sligo has adopted a corporate governance regime in accordance with best practice through adoption on 13th June 2018, of the THEA Code of Governance January 2018 which aligns directly to the Code of Practice for State Bodies issued in August 2016. An updated Code of Governance was adopted by Governing Body at their meeting on 9th October 2019. These Standing Orders are made in accordance with the Second Schedule, paragraph 13 of the IOT Acts, 1992-2006 which provides: "Subject to the provisions of this Act a Governing Body shall regulate, by standing orders or otherwise, its procedure and business." These Standing Orders are made subject, to the relevant Legislation. These standing orders were approved by the Governing Body on 13th May. Where any conflict exists between these Standing Orders and any section of the Acts, the provisions of the Acts will take precedence.

The Institute confirms that all appropriate procedures for internal audit are being carried out with an Audit & Risk Committee, an Executive Risk committee and an Internal Controls Framework reviewed by Management. The Institute operates under a national procurement agreement for Internal Audit services for the sector. The function reports directly to the Audit & Risk Committee. The annual audit plan is informed by discussion with management and the Committee together with an analysis of risk to which the Institute is exposed. The plan is approved by the Audit & Risk Committee and all findings of audits carried out are presented to the Committee.

- (i) Total number of internal audit reviews undertaken in the period – 4 Internal Audit reports were approved by the Audit and Risk Committee on 21.11.2019.
- (ii) Report titles of completed reviews – 21.11.2019 Exam Process Review, Code of Governance Readiness Assessment Report, Compliance with Financial Aspects of Internal Control Framework (ICF) 2018/19, Internal Financial Controls review 2019/20,

The Academic Council, as a statutory body responsible for academic matters within the Institute, has the major task of formulating and implementing the Institute's academic policies. Academic council is appointed by the Governing Body to assist it in the planning, co-ordination, development and overseeing of the educational work of the college and to protect, maintain and develop the academic standards of the courses and the activities of the college. The Academic Council is responsible for the quality of all academic activities within the Institute. The President is the Chairperson of the Council and entitled to be a member of every

Committee of the Council as per the Third Schedule to the 1992 Act. 4. The operation of Academic Council is governed by Standing orders which were reviewed in the academic year 2019/20. The Academic council have a pivotal role in ensuring that the quality assurance systems are in place, are robust and adapt in line with innovations and best practice in the sector. To do this the Academic Council has established a number of committees that carry out specific duties and tasks which are then approved or ratified by Academic Council. The participation of a wide spectrum of academic, non-academic and management on these working committees ensure that robust discussions take place and that a consensus approach to changes is achieved. The current committees are listed below but are subject to continuous review as the need arises

- Planning and Coordination committee
- Academic Processes committee
- Research and Innovation committee
- Learning, Teaching and Assessment committee
- Technical University (TU) Transition Committee – New in 2019-2020
- Collaborative Provision – New in 2019 – 2020
- Designated Awarding Body committee – New in 2019-2020

While changes are discussed and proposed by any committees, the Academic Processes Committee has a special role in overseeing policies and procedures of the institute to ensure they meet external regulatory requirements, are consistent and that fairness and consistency is enshrined throughout the student life cycle starting with admissions and finishing with graduation.

The Governance and Management of Quality is outlined in the following documents.

[Chapter 1 – Governance and Academic Management](#)

The institution has a quality manual, policies, procedures, guidelines and other documents in place to ensure its programmes are developed, validated, delivered and maintained in accordance with the requirements of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), the Quality and Qualifications Act 2012 and the determinations of QQI. While the quality assurance requirements are translated into Policy, Procedural and other Documents under the direction of the Academic Council and its committees, the implementation of these quality assurance requirements is overseen by the administrative functions of the Executive, the Senior Management team, Faculty Management and all the academic and all PMDS staff of the institute. There is a responsibility on every member of staff to ensure the highest possible standards of academic provision are maintained for its students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Ensuring that this quality assurance culture permeates and informs all the activities of the Institute is a delicate balance. On one hand there is the need for the Institute to meet the explicit QA requirements set out nationally and internationally to maintain and protect the institutional award standards and on the other

hand to continue to maintain the reputation and the ability of the Institute to be responsive to rapidly changing learner and stakeholder requirements.

On January 1st 2020, the Institute became a Designated Awarding Body as a consequence of the legislative changes contained in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019. A special committee of Academic Council was established to consider the impact of the legislative changes on the governance of Institute functions, quality assurance processes, role of Academic Council, Governing body and academic officers.

The Connacht Ulster Alliance (CUA) is a strategic partnership between GMIT, LYIT and IT Sligo aimed at achieving Technological University (TU) status. The alliance will align developments in governance, mission, academic strategy, planning, research and corporate services in preparation for TU Designation. The Technological University (TU) for the West and North-West of Ireland will be one of the largest multi-campus universities on the island, spanning a unique geographical region in transition on the periphery of Europe which has a predominantly dispersed rural population. The work of the CUA is undertaken by a Steering Group, four Working Groups and nineteen sub-groups directly involving over 150 staff and students from across the CUA. The CUA plans to submit its application to achieve TU designation in 2021.

<https://cualliance.ie/>

A 'Shadow' Governing Body was established as part of the Connaught Ulster Alliance (CUA)/TU process. This group comprises seven representatives from each of the Governing Bodies of IT Sligo, GMIT and LYIT and each member report back to their home Governing Body who are the ultimate decision makers.

The Institute is committed to listening to the students and other external stakeholders' voices. The Students Union President is a member of Academic Council and Governing Body. Student representatives are selected by each cohort of students and are a member of academic programme committees. Students' complete anonymous evaluations of modules, stage, and programmes at the end of each semester/ stage. These evaluations are considered by programme teams and Heads of Departments. Students are represented on School review and programmatic review panels. The Registrar holds monthly meetings with the Student Union President and elected officers where issues pertinent to students are discussed.

All programme validation panels, school review panels and programmatic revalidation panel are comprised of external persons from both academia and community/ employers. External persons with particular expertise or perspective are invited to serve on working groups in the Institute to ensure that informed decisions can be made that represent all perspectives on the issues under review.

The Institute has a number of programmes which are accredited by external regulatory Professional Bodies (e.g., C.O.R.U., Engineers Ireland, RIBA etc.). These bodies conduct regular reviews of programmes to ensure

they are current and meet the regulatory/ professional body standards. Programme teams constantly engage with these bodies in relation to modifications to programme, programme outcomes etc.

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

The Institute defines collaborative provision as any programme directly leading to a Higher Education (HE) award (QQI or professional body) which is delivered in part or in whole through an arrangement with a partner organisation. A partner organisation may be another education provider, professional body, business or community organisation. There is a range of different forms of collaborative provision. There may be collaboration in the development and validation of the programme, in the academic monitoring of the programme, in the teaching, in the assessment, and in the awarding etc, or a combination of any of these. Anyone one of the partners may or may not be a lead partner.

In order to ensure the academic quality of these emerging multiple-provider, customer led, programmes it is essential robust procedures are in place to adequately protect the learner and to ensure that each programme, as delivered, is of a recognised national standard. Where two or more providers are collaborating in the development, validation and/or international delivery of a programme, and maybe in joint awarding, then procedures must be in place to not only protect the learner but also the providers. In the case of the later the rules and regulations of both higher education institutes need to be aligned for those particular programmes and documented in Joint Marks and Standards.

The procedures in relation to Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision are outlined in the following documents.

[Quality Manual Chapter 14](#) Policy and Procedures for Collaborative and Trans-National Provision

[UU and IT Sligo Composite Marks and Standards 2016a](#)

[Composite NUIG and IT Sligo Marks and Standards 2015a](#)

2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

2.1 Programme Development and Approval

Approval of a programme refers to the process by which the Governing Body of the Institute, with a recommendation from the Executive Committee and Academic Council formally agrees to provide the resources to deliver the validated programme of learning. Chapter 2 of the [Quality Manual](#) and its associated procedures set out the procedures to be followed to develop and validate any new programme or indeed modifications to existing programmes.

All proposed new programmes are designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the Institute Strategic Plans, which focus on the needs of industry and of the region as well as ensuring that programmes are student centred. In designing new programmes, the institute engages with external stakeholders, external expertise, students and alumni. The programmes are designed to allow students routes to progress from Level 6 up to level 8 with further opportunities to progress to study at level 9 and 10.

The Registrars area oversee programme development. Each programme must be validated, a process by which the Academic Council of the Institute, following a recommendation from an External or Internal Peer Review Panel formally recognises a module or a programme as constituting a body of learning leading to a specified award in a designated discipline area. New programmes are generally validated for a period of five years. Validation panels conditions/ recommendations are audited after a designated period of time to ensure that all issues have been addressed and to close the quality look as recommended by CINNTE - recommendation 18. The institute provides training for staff in devising programme and module learning outcomes for the purposes of programme design and development. The system of documents is supported by Module Manager, a database system to maintain the modules and programmes throughout their life cycle.

Chapter 2 Quality Manual New Programmes and Modification to Programmes of Learning

Forms EAP1 to EAP4 supporting the various stages of programme development

CDEV002 Preparation of programme for Online Delivery Guidelines

CDEV003 Continuous Improvement of an Online Course Guidelines

QA003 Module Writing procedure

CDEV005 Flexible and new models of Prog Design and Delivery.

Recent Programme Validation Reports are available of the website [here](#)

Recent Audit of Programmes are available [here](#)

To augment the communication process around pertinent QA issues in relation to programme development, validation, academic council committee dates etc. An annual quality calendar is constituted to all staff to support them in their planning (CINNTE recommendation 8)

2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

[Ref: QQI Core QAG Section 2.3.2 – *Learner admission, progression and recognition*; ESG 1.4; QQI Policy Restatement on Access, Transfer and Progression (2015)].

Entry to year 1 of full time programmes is by application through the CAO including mature students. The only exception is international students. The institute uses the NFQ as the basis for entry for all programmes. There are a variety of Level 6 to Level 10 programmes available. Information for applicants applying for 1st year or advanced entry is located [here](#). IT Sligo is part of the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) and DARE Scheme. In the reporting period, 60 students were part of the HEAR scheme and 63 the DARE Scheme. It is important to note that many more students in the target group of students with a disability and from a disadvantaged socio economic backgrounds enter IT Sligo without deploying either of the access routes above and are being supported by the access office.

There is a separate system for direct entry and advanced entry to the on-line / part time programmes. In this case applications are reviewed and approved by a designated person within each programme. EXAM012 Recognition of Prior Learning procedure provides the details and guides the student through the application process for recognition of prior learning (RPL), which includes non-formal and formal learning as well as prior certified learning. The '[myexperience.ie](#)' platform which is shared with GMIT facilitates these applications. The toolkit includes an information website and an online RPL application tool for candidates looking for access or advanced entry to a higher education programme.

The Institute as part of the West/North West Cluster of NUI Galway, LyIT and GMIT is a recipient of Path 2 and Path 3 funding which are aimed at widening access/ participation in Higher Education. PATH 2 - The 1916 Bursary Fund is a targeted funding scheme established by the Department of Education and Skills to support the implementation of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019. The Bursaries are targeted at students who are socio-economically disadvantaged and who are from target groups that have low participation rates in higher education; mature students, lone parents, students with disabilities, FE students, students from ethnic minority groups and the travelling community. IT Sligo is currently supporting 17 students under this PATH. PATH 3 - IT Sligo are working with the Cranmore Regeneration Project to support local people from a socio-economic disadvantaged area to progress in their

education. Formal mentoring is provided by an education mentor to people in the community and school settings.

[Website link to all Courses](#)

[Website link to information on Fees and funding](#)

[Website link to Recognition of Prior learning](#)

[EXAM012 Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure](#)

2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

As a result of the legal changes brought about by the passing of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance ([Education and Training\) Amendment Act 2019](#) in July 2019 the Academic Council of the institute formed of new *specific purpose* committee of Academic Council to oversee the transition to Designated Awarding Body status (DAB committee). The DAB committee will be in operation for the limited period of three years. The three main areas that will be impacted are

- Cultural shift from Compliance to Ownership
- **Academic Governance - Section 36(b)** These provisions seem to strengthen the authority (and responsibility) of academic council, though its fundamental relationship to Governing Body is unaltered by the legislation.
- Define Standards and areas of awarding.

The proposed function of DAB committee is to review the legislative impact of becoming a Designated Awarding Body in IT Sligo and more specifically:

1. To inform and propose an action plan to Academic Council - presented in June 2020.
2. To ensure adequate and timely consultation with key stakeholders to inform proposed modifications to QA processes (staff, learners, professional/regulatory bodies etc.) other stakeholders with an interest in our programmes.
3. To present proposed changes to QA processes to AC highlighting the rationale, implications and resources required.
4. To make recommendations to Academic Council on the efficacy of proposed changes to QA systems/ processes.

The DAB committee was established in the reporting period and will be in operation for the limited period of three years. The three main areas that will be impacted are

- Cultural shift from Compliance to Ownership
- **Academic Governance - Section 36(b)** These provisions seem to strengthen the authority (and responsibility) of academic council, though its fundamental relationship to Governing Body is unaltered by the legislation.
- Define Standards and areas of awarding.

The initial changes have included the introduction of a procedure to and the adoption in the interim of the QQI awarding standards in December 2019. An IT Sligo awarding Policy (CDEV006) was approved and issued

in June 2020. The QQI award standards for the discipline areas relevant to the institute were then incorporated into the QA system of the institute through the approval of a series of discipline specific award standards (CDEV007 to CDEV 017) approved in August 2020 as set out below. It is anticipated that work will now continue to for at least two years to embed and implement cultural and other changes.

CDEV006	ITSligo Awarding Policy
CDEV007	Generic Award Standards
CDEV008	Award Standard Business
CDEV009	Award Standard Science
CDEV010	Award Standard Engineering
CDEV011	Award Standard Computing
CDEV012	Award Standard Architecture
CDEV013	Award Standard Architectural Technology
CDEV014	Award Standard Art and Design
CDEV015	Award Standard Counselling and Psychotherapy
CDEV016	Award Standard Social Care
CDEV017	Award Standard Professional Masters of Education
CDEV018	Award Standard Law

2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Teaching Learning and Assessment is fundamental to the institute and its operation and there are many policies and procedures that support these processes.

IT Sligo's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2016-2018 (LTA) sets out the underlying philosophy, general principles and key objectives to create and maintain a vibrant and sustainable learning and teaching community. The strategy is now being updated and a new strategy to cover the next four years will be developed in conjunction with our CUA partners drawing on the expertise of the teaching and administrative staff, student representatives and external stake holders.

Chapter 3 Assessment of Learners of the Quality manual and the Institute's Marks and Standards V29 provide a framework for the proper assessment of candidates learning and to ensure that all candidates are treated fairly and in a consistent manner. These documents cover the assessment of the learning as specified in the Approved Programme Schedules, and to the decisions regarding the overall award grade of a candidate. Mark and Standards V29 and the Exam regulations are key documents that set out the operation of examination, continuous assessment, selection of external examiners, role of external examiners and conduct of candidates during examinations. Student results are reviewed by an exam board after each examination sitting in consultation with external examiners and are ratified by Academic Council. These documents are supported by a range of additional procedures which provide further details and application forms for a range of academic processes which the student may need on their academic journey.

The development of GURU to manage the examination process has continued in 2019-2020. All external examiners are now able to access and review examination papers and provide feedback to internal examiners in a secure and efficient way through the software. The external Examiners report is also submitted through GURU. Further improvements to include the review of continuous assessment material and the nomination of external examiners through GURU are planned for the coming academic year.

Representative from IT Sligo attended the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) group meetings hosted by QQI and Dr Perry Share and Dr Niamh Plunkett are representing the institute on the network. Changes to strengthen the academic integrity are planned for 2020-2021. An update in regard to Research integrity is available in section 4.0.

[Chapter 3 – Assessment of learners](#)

[IT Sligo Marks and Standards V29.](#)

[EXAM035 Exam regulations procedure](#)

[EXAM 007 Request for Special Consideration procedure](#)

EXAM013 Consideration of External Examiners Report

[EXAM027 Examination Feedback and Appeal Procedure](#)

[EXAM019 Request for deferral of examination\(s\) Procedure](#)

[EXAM024 Disciplinary Procedure for Student \(Examinations\) Procedure](#)

[EXAM030 Application of Extension of CA Deadlines Procedure](#)

[EXAM031 Application to Exit with an Embedded Award Procedure](#)

[EXAM036 Repeat Examination Procedure](#)

3.0 Learner Resources and Support

IT infrastructure

There are 850 PCs and 60 Macs in computer labs throughout the college that are used for teaching and learning and are available to students to use outside of class time. There are also 133 PCs in the Library that are exclusively available to students. Printing facilities are available to students in the library and in computer labs. The majority of PCs are connected to a 1GB network connection with a 10Gb link to the Internet. Remote students can connect to the computer lab PCs over the Internet to get access to specialist software for their course. This is supplemented with Virtual Desktop services for computing students. Eduroam Wifi services are available to students throughout the campus and in the college car park which can be accessed using their own personal laptop or smartphone.

Microsoft Office 365 services are provided to all students of the Institute giving them access to the full suite of Office applications as well as online services such as email, etc. IT Services run a student helpdesk during term time for any technical issues that may arise. This is currently working as a virtual helpdesk using an online ticketing system. They also provide a short-term equipment loan service for student to borrow laptops and AV equipment.

Moodle is the online learning management system and Adobe Connect and Microsoft Teams is used for live online lectures with Panopto used for the recording of lectures. Through HEAnet brokerage service, students can avail of discounts on laptops and mobile broadband services.

Student Support Services aim to provide a comprehensive and caring service to help our students achieve their full academic and personal potential. Our motto is “Caring for our Students”. The Student Support Services Officer is available to see students about any personal, general or welfare issues. Support services include:

- ❖ The Admissions Office provides on-going support in such areas as admissions, registration, grants, fees and examinations.
- ❖ Our Access Office support students who have special learning needs, a disability or any circumstance which might need individual consideration. A learning support tutor who works with the Access Officer is available to assist students with special needs such as dyslexia or other specific learning challenges. The Access Office also administers the Student Assistance Fund and the 1916 Bursary.
- ❖ Our Careers Office provides career guidance for all students.
- ❖ Our counselling services will help students to embrace positive living and work through any concerns they have.
- ❖ Disability Support Services Officer: Working with the Access Office, the Disability Support Services Officer will work with staff and students to identify assistive technologies appropriate to the needs of students and help them to obtain optimal use from supports available.
- ❖ Our Pastoral Care Service offers personal support and advice to students of all faiths and none who contact them and are always ready to help.

- ❖ Our student health services, which are free of charge, are available five days a week to help keep students fit and healthy.

IT SLIGO Students' Union (ITSSU) has three officers and a number of part-time staff to provide ongoing support, guidance and representation. ITSSU works closely with Institute management to ensure that student welfare and facilities are first class. See www.itssu.ie for more details.

For more information please see our website: <https://www.itsligo.ie/student-hub/student-support-services/>

Peer to Peer mentoring:

In September 2019, all first full-time year students were invited to participate in Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Programme. Mentors were recruited & trained from Years 2 and 3. Five lunchtime sessions (lunch provided free of charge) on various themes were delivered to help students make the transition to third level. Themes included: Students Union; Student Support Services; IT Services, Exams, Timetables and Managing workloads. Highlights from a review of the programme included: 94% of respondents found the programme worthwhile, 47% of respondents felt anxious and said that participation in the programme made them feel less so, 7% of respondents said the thought about dropping out of their programme but that participation in the programme helped change their mind.

Academic Student Supports:

Under the remit of the Centre for the Enhancement of Learning & Teaching (CELT) our Student Support Centres were established in 2018, playing a pivotal role in student success. Over the past 2 years they have expanded to meet the needs of all our students and staff. Our aim is to provide a safe and encouraging environment to not only support students' academic needs but to build their confidence and self-esteem. Our range of academic support centres enable students to tackle challenges in Maths, Academic Writing, Engineering and English Language.

Provision of support for Maths, Academic Writing and Engineering is through:

- Drop-in Centres (Pre Covid-19 pandemic)
- One to one online tuition – scheduler for bookings available on Moodle
- Recorded Tutorials on Moodle
- Upload Maths Problem /Engineering Problem facility
- Video demonstrations on Moodle

English Language Support Programme:

Funding secured through the National Forum SALTE Initiative provided the opportunity to support students for whom English is not a first language across the CUA. Led by IT Sligo, the aim of this programme is to help improve students writing & communication skills as well as speaking and reading.

- This fully online programme brings live online coaching direct to students' smartphone, tablet or PC.

- Students get follow-up online materials, videos, webinars and interactive tests that they can use anytime, anywhere - at home on the couch or anywhere in the world.
- Students can avail of English Language Support regular live online contact between them and the online English Language tutor with feedback, test results and progress reports etc delivered directly to students.

We also want to support our academic staff who often find it difficult to support students for whom English is not their first language. This programme therefore offers support to both students and staff.

Library Facilities:

Yeats Library traverses 3 floors, C600+ study spaces, 13 seminar rooms, an Archive Room, shelving and a special collections room. Students have access to a wide range of databases, journals, books and other resources such as Research@THEA. The library staff engage with students both in person and online and support the development of library literacy skills through the provision of tutorials and webinars. A series of libguides serves to address many student/ staff queries. <https://library.itsligo.ie>

International Students:

The International office supports the international student body in tandem with the mainstream services. International student ambassadors serve as a conduit from the International office to present and future students. The International office aim to provide the international student body with both a cultural and academic experience and organise a series of events to support this intention throughout the academic year.

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

Developing and systematising the quality assurance approaches in relation to research was a CINNTE recommendation (13) and below indicates the current status.

Quality assurance of research is embedded within the Institute’s overall quality assurance manual/processes. It is the responsibility of the Academic Council, delegated to its Research and Innovation Committee. Operational management is through the Research Office.

The research chapter of the QA manual also exists as a stand-alone document – the *Code of Practice for the Quality Assurance of Postgraduate Research at IT Sligo*. As such, it is the primary research QA resource for staff, students and other stakeholders. It sets out the context of research in the Institute and then details every part of the process flow, from student selection and registration, through monitoring to examination. It details the standards of research degrees, ethics standards, the roles and responsibilities of supervisors, students and examiners, project management processes and requirements for the preparation of a thesis. A copy of the Code of Practice can be found [here](#).

The Code of Practice is fully aligned with national and European research programme quality assurance codes, including: QQI Topic-specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Research Degree Programmes; Ireland’s Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes (QQI); HEA National Framework for Doctoral Education, the ‘Salzburg’ Principles, the ‘Salzburg II’ Recommendations; National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland.

The Code of Practice is routinely reviewed by the Research Office and the Research and Innovation Committee. Updated versions are produced approximately every two years. A 2021 version is currently being prepared that will incorporate a new process of Career Development, Training and Networking Planning (including Training Needs Analysis) for postgraduate students (see Case Study 6 Research), a new Workplace Research Collaboration Agreement process (see Research Case Study 1(c)), and new Research Integrity provisions.

The following changes were made to forms associated with the Research Code of Practice to formalise the forms used in Research, to remove unnecessary GDPR data and make more accessible on the staff portal.

Form RES003_001	Application for Entry to Postgraduate Degree programme register
Form RES003_002	PG Student progress form student update
Form RES003_003	PG Student progress form supervisor update
Form RES003_004	Application for transfer to PhD Register
Form RES003_005	Notice of Intention to apply to transfer to the PhD register

5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

To champion positive equality, diversity and inclusion in our recruitment and selection processes, all IT Sligo recruitment advertisements include the following statement:

‘IT Sligo offers a modern, dynamic and inclusive working environment, in which equality and diversity is embraced, and applications are welcome from all. A range of flexible working options support staff in balancing their work and home life. The Institute is a member of the Athena SWAN Charter, and as part of its work towards achieving gender equality welcomes applications from female applicants.’

The Institute endeavour to ensure that all interview panels are gender balanced with a minimum of 40% male/female representation. Furthermore, the HR manager completed interview training in 2020 with Governing Body members who chair interview panels in addition to running a Recruitment & Selection training workshop with the Institutes’ management teams.

On commencement the institute recognises the importance of supporting new staff members as they commence their employment in IT Sligo by ensuring an appropriate induction occurs. The HR team organise a formal induction to provide staff with information, promote the culture and values consistently and provide opportunities to meet other staff.

As a response to the CINNTE review (recommendation 8), the Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT) has developed a bespoke **Online Academic Induction** for all new academics which can lead on completion to the attainment of a Digital Badge. This digital badge can be completed at their own pace and is hosted on Moodle and linked to HRCore the system for management of HR records and training for staff. Each of the six topics comprises several short videos to provide advice, structure, and guidance to new academic staff. A short quiz at the end then enables badge completion. *Reference HR050 Starter, Induction & Probation.*

The **CELT Moodle page** provides a host of Teaching & Learning topics to support staff. These are also presented as short informational videos which have been developed by IT Sligo academics. CELT regular hosts webinars and seminars by internal and external guest presenters and staff are informed of all events well in advance.

IT Sligo is committed to supporting staff to develop their skills and competence through the acquisition of academic qualifications, in line with the needs and objectives of the Institute. These objectives include: - Acquisition of a Level 10 qualification or equivalent - Acquisition of qualifications relating to strategic objectives - The development of online learning. The available supports are set out in HR041 IT Sligo Policy

on support for further study leading to academic qualification. The process of identifying development needs is the Performance Management and Development Scheme (PMDS) where objectives are agreed, and development needs discussed. Resources are made available and approvals prioritised to those applications which most closely match the Institute's strategic objectives. Since 2019-2020 IT Sligo now offers all permanent staff of IT Sligo a semester free allocation for the purposes of completion of their PhD or other Doctoral level qualification

All HR related procedure can be found on the internal staff portal.

Chapter 6 – Selection, Appointment, Appraisal and Development of Staff.

Other documents from HR area that were issued / revised during the review period.

HR005 Parental Leave Procedure

HR052 PhD Write Up Semester Free Allocation Procedure

HR053 ITSligo COVID-19 Remote Working Procedure

6.0 Information and Data Management

The Institute is committed to managing data in a manner that is compliant with relevant legislation (e.g. GDPR and Freedom of Information). The Freedom of Information Act 2014 as applies to IT Sligo provides that every person has the following legal rights:

- access official records held by the Institute
- have personal information held on them corrected or updated where such information is incomplete, incorrect or misleading
- be given reasons for decisions taken by public bodies that affect them

These rights mean that people can seek access to personal information held on them no matter when the information was created and to other records created after 21st April 1998. This applies to Institute staff as well as the general public. The Institute will accommodate any requests for information received in writing. Access will be provided, by allowing inspection of the original record or by arrangement and consistent with the need to protect privacy and the public interest. The institute is committed fully to providing records in whatever format data is held in accordance with the act (excluding any exempted material or records as allowed under the Act). Records may also be refused on administrative grounds where the record doesn't exist, where they have already been released or where disruption of work of a function or the college would be caused.

FOI Requests must be in writing (including by email) and addressed to the Freedom of Information Officer: FOI Officer, Institute of Technology, Ash Lane, Sligo. foi@itsligo.ie.

All non-personal FOI requests and decisions related to them are recorded on an FOI Disclosure Log which is published on the IT Sligo website (see <https://www.itsligo.ie/foi/publications/>)

The disclosure Policy applies to members of the Institute staff and Governing Body, all of whom are expected to use this policy as appropriate.(Protected Disclosure policy Comm003)

[Website link to Personal Data protection Principles](#)

[Data Protection Policy](#)

[Data Protection Procedures GDPR003](#)

[Data Breach Procedures GDPR004](#)

[Data Access Management Procedures GDPR005](#)

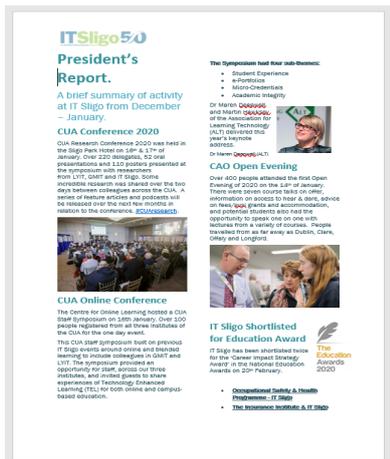
7.0 Public Information and Communication

IT Sligo publishes information on the Institute’s strategic objectives, and on its extensive range of fulltime and online programmes, through publications, media and public enquiries, news releases and across IT Sligo online platforms. The releases are published on the news section of itsligo.ie and are also distributed to regional and national media outlets. The production, approval and distribution of Institute news releases is co-ordinated by the Communication Office.

Press releases are distributed on a weekly basis to regional and national media and periodicals. These press releases have led to numerous print, radio and television coverage throughout the year. We use Kantar Media software to monitor media coverage and report to the President’s office on a regular basis. See example below of RTE feature in April 2020 where Faculty of Science support for preparation of reagents for the COVID-19 testing labs. [Link to article](#)



The Communications office creates a printed newspaper every quarter which is distributed on campus and to 6,000 homes and businesses across the Northwest region from North Mayo to Southwest Donegal. The newspaper highlights all the main news of the institute and helps promote courses and events throughout the year. Since the pandemic we have had to move from a quarterly printed newspaper to a weekly email newsletter.



A report is issued to the Governing Body from the Communications Office every six weeks. The 'President's Report' gives a round-up of news, events, updates and achievements of the Institute. The report is also shared with staff via the internal portal.



Each year the Communications office produces the Institute's Annual Report which is shared via our website.

On a daily basis the office update students, staff and wider community via our very active social media channels including; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. This includes the production of videos, photography and other branded content. The communications office also updates the website on a regular basis and began working with the Marketing Department in transferring to the newly designed and updated website at the later part of the 2019/20 academic year.

The Communications Office works very closely with colleagues in promoting and coordinating events throughout the year including; Science Week, Engineering Week, International Women's Day, Conferring and regular conferences. This includes booking venues, speakers, photographers and promoting externally through media and social channels. The pandemic moved all of these events online in 2020 with webinars organised on regenerating business, tourism and careers. In 2019/20 the office took a central role in the planning of the 50th anniversary celebrations of the institutes including a specially commissioned book, video and programme of events. Unfortunately, most of the 50th events were cancelled due to Covid-19.

The marketing function within the Institute is responsible for promoting both the CAO based programmes and the online programme offering in order to ultimately recruit full time and part time students to the institute. Programme information is provided as part of the internal programme development process. That information is used to feed public information marketing collateral such as webpages, prospectus, programme brochures and subject specific advertising campaigns.

The Institute communicates with CAO applicants and stakeholders through the school’s liaison function and digital marketing channels. That involves school visits and presentations, open day events on campus and attendance at recruitment and careers fairs off campus. Information evenings for parents both on campus and off campus were organised to help educate them on the CAO process. The online team communicated with stakeholders such as employers and regional partners and directly to applicants mainly through digital communication channels working within the GDPR data policies within the institute & CAO.



The institute conducts general awareness campaigns through social media (in line with the social media policy COMM009), print media, radio and billboard advertising. Direct communication takes place with applicants through email and occasionally by post and phone campaigns. This included a 32 page newspaper sent to all IT Sligo CAO applicants by post including a letter from each head of department showcasing all IT Sligo could offer them as a student.



During 2019/2020 academic year a new website was launched for IT Sligo to make it easier for the public to access information on student recruitment activities and programme information. All student recruitment activities were flipped virtually following the coronavirus outbreak and subsequent lockdown in March 2020

Virtual information events took place in June, live social media events took place, a virtual campus tour was made available on the website and new videos were commissioned. Multiple communication channels were opened up through facebook, Instagram and *whatsapp* in addition to the phone and email channels, allowing the institute to continue communicating with interested parties and ensure the recruitment of students for September 2020 intake.

8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

Once a programme of learning has been validated and delivery commenced, the process of monitoring and on-going management of the programme commences. There is a formal mechanism for QA that facilitates two-way communication between staff and students that included a channel for feedback to inform programme design, development and delivery.

Academic quality assurance relating monitoring of programmes is managed through:

- Programme Committees
- School Policy Committees
- Periodic School Reviews
- Periodic Programme Reviews

The Programme Committee facilitates the routine monitoring of a programme to ensure that it is being delivered according to the approved programme schedule, identify impediments to student learning (through for example, monitoring student performance, analysing students results), collecting feedback from students regarding the delivery and assessment strategies and engaging with External Examiners. Key to this is a Programme Monitoring Report (EAP7), prepared for each year before 31st October. The Programme Committee is required to analyse multiple sources of data including student retention and recommend actions to be taken. The Head of Faculty, together with the Heads of Department review Programme Monitoring Reports and prepare a summary of actions for the Faculty.

The Faculty Policy Committee facilitates the overseeing and implementation of the Faculty Plan. Its primary focus is the implementation of strategic initiatives rather than operational issues such as Interpretation of the Institute Strategic Plan in respect of Faculty activities, academic developments, advising the Faculty on physical resource implications or staff recruitment in specialist discipline areas.

The periodic review of faculties and programmes is completed through the Programmatic Review (PR) process every five years. This is separated into two stages Faculty Planning (completed first) and then Review and Revalidation of programmes. Typically, the Faculty Planning process encompasses the entire activities of the Faculty, within the wider sphere of education, business and the community. The revision of programmes may comprise the review of a single programme or of a suite of programmes. Extensive documentation of the proposed changes to programmes is then reviewed by a internal and external panels comprised of members selected internally, other higher education institution nationally and internationally, professional bodies and members of the business community.

In addition to the monitoring of academic activities the QA also encompasses the periodic review of professional support units.

A process for the review of services under the registrar's function is under development. The Institutes goal for developing higher quality is centred on its staff and their ability to assess and to continuously improve quality and performance. One such mechanism is through Periodic Quality Reviews which involve two interrelated processes: (i) internal self-assessment by staff; and (ii) external peer review by independent experts. Self-assessment involves staff assessing quality and performance of their unit and comparing or benchmarking it against national/ international best practice. It also involves generating and implementing ideas that can increase quality and performance as part of the operational planning process. Peer Review involves inviting independent peers from other organisations to evaluate the self-assessment process, provide insight and ideas and then issue recommendations on how to improve quality and performance within the unit. A process for the review of services under the registrars' function is under development with the library the first unit to be reviewed in the academic year 2020-2021.

The proposed Quality Review process has a number of key stages:

1. Approval of Review List
2. Self-assessment including Benchmarking
3. Selection of Review Team
4. Review Visit and completion of Review Report
5. Agreement of Action Plans
6. Reporting of Review Results
7. Annual Progress Reports

[Chapter 4 On going Management and Monitoring of Programmes](#) covers the activities of both the Programme committee and the Faculty Policy Committee.

[Chapter 5 School planning and Programme Revalidation Process](#)

9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

1. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Chartered Society of Forensic Sciences
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc Hons Forensic Investigation and Analysis (Level 8)
Date of accreditation or last review	February 2021 (Educational Accreditation Paper Surveillance)
Date of next review	Scheduled Surveillance Visit in Q4 2021

2. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Institute of Biomedical Sciences
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc Hons Biomedical Science (Life Sciences) (Ulster University award but co-delivered by IT Sligo)
Date of accreditation or last review	14 February 2018
Date of next review	Q1 2023

3. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	Awarding Body
Name of body:	Ulster University
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc Hons Biomedical Science (Life Sciences)
Date of accreditation or last review	14 November 2019
Date of next review	Programmatic Review 2024

4. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	Awarding body
Name of body:	IT Sligo and NUI Galway
Programme titles and links to publications	Level 9 Postgraduate Certificate in Medical Technology Regulatory Affairs Level 9 Postgraduate Diploma in Medical Technology Regulatory Affairs
Date of accreditation or last review	Programmatic Review 2019
Date of next review	Programmatic Review 2024

5. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	Awarding Body
Name of body:	NUI Galway and IT Sligo Joint Award
Programme titles and links to publications	Certificate in Medical Technology Regulatory Affairs and Operations Level 8 Certificate in Medical Technology Regulatory Affairs and Quality Level 8 Higher Diploma in Medical Technology Regulatory Affairs and Quality Level 8 MSc Medical Technology Regulatory Affairs Level 9
Date of accreditation or last review	Programmatic Review 2019
Date of next review	Programmatic Review 2024

Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	CIWEM- Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management
Programme titles and links to publications	Environmental Science with Ecology (Levels 6, Level 7 and Level 8) , BSc in Environmental Protection (Level 7) , BSc in Environmental Science (Level 8) , Cert in Water and Wastewater Operations (Level 6) , Cert in Drinking Water Treatment Operations (Level 6) , Cert in Wastewater Treatment Operations (Level 6) , Higher Cert in water and wastewater operations (Level 6) , MSc in Environmental Health and Safety

	Management (Level 9) , Cert, PG Diploma and MSc in Water Services Management , PG Diploma and MSc in Environmental Protection .
Date of accreditation or last review	2020
Date of next review	2025

Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	IOSH - Institution of Occupational Safety and Health
Programme titles and links to publications	Occupational Safety and Health (Level 7 and Level 8 - fulltime), Occupational Safety and Health Management (Level 6 , Level 7 and Level 8 - online), MSc in Environmental Health and Safety (online)
Date of accreditation or last review	2014
Date of next review	IOSH currently revising their accreditation process - expect later 2021

Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	CIWEM- Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management
Programme titles and links to publications	Environmental Science with Ecology (Levels 6, Level 7 and Level 8) , BSc in Environmental Protection (Level 7) , BSc in Environmental Science (Level 8) , Cert in Water and Wastewater Operations (Level 6) , Cert in Drinking Water Treatment Operations (Level 6) , Cert in Wastewater Treatment Operations (Level 6) , Higher Cert in water and wastewater operations (Level 6) , MSc in Environmental Health and Safety Management (Level 9) , Cert, PG Diploma and MSc in Water Services Management , PG Diploma and MSc in Environmental Protection .
Date of accreditation or last review	2020
Date of next review	2025

Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA (Hons) in Interior Architecture Part 1 validation.
Date of accreditation or last review	24th & 25th September 2018
Date of next review	2023

Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Chartered Accountants Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	BA (Hons) in Accounting
Date of accreditation or last review	25-05-2016
Date of next review	2021

Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Engineers Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	BEng in Electronic and Computer Engineering HC in Electronic and Computer Engineering
Date of accreditation or last review	17-03-201January 2021
Date of next review	TBC after outcome of accreditation visit

Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Engineers Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	BEng in Mechanical Engineering HC in Mechanical Engineering

Date of accreditation or last review	17-03-2011/January 2021
Date of next review	TBC after outcome of accreditation visit

Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	CORU
Programme titles and links to publications	Master in Social Work
Date of accreditation or last review	11/2019
Date of next review	Q3 2024

Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	CORU
Programme titles and links to publications	BA Honours Social Care Practice
Date of accreditation or last review	02/2020
Date of next review	Q1 2025

Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Register of Exercise Professionals of Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc. [Hons] Public Health and Health Promotion , Level 8; BSc. [Ord.] Health Science and Physiology , Level 7; BSc. [Hons] Health Science & Physical Activity , Level 8;
Date of accreditation or last review	May 2020 Review pending completion (by March 2021)
Date of next review	May 2022

9.2 Collaborative Provision

1. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Joint/double/multiple awards
Name of body (/bodies):	University of Ulster
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc (Hons) Biomedical Science (Life Sciences) programme online BSc Hons Applied Medical Sciences (Joint Ulster / IT Sligo award)(Online)
Date of last review	November 2019
Date of next review	2022

2. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Joint Program – BEng (Hon) in Electronic & Computer Engineering Double Degree – Joint Program TUTE students only receive ITS Level 8 award if they transfer to ITS and complete all 60 ECTS credits in Add-On year.
Name of body (/bodies):	Institute of Technology Sligo and Tianjin University of Technology & Education
Programme titles and links to publications	BEng in Electronic & Computer Engineering BEng (Hon) in Electronic & Computer Engineering (Add-On)
Date of last review	Collaboration commenced in September 2017.
Date of next review	Ministry of Education (P.R. China) Joint Program audit is scheduled for June-21. ITS review should be scheduled Q3 '21.

3. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Joint/double/multiple awards
Name of body (/bodies):	National University of Ireland Galway

Programme titles and links to publications	MSc in Medical Technology Regulatory Affairs (Online) Higher Diploma in Medical Technology Regulatory Affairs and Quality (Online)
Date of last review	2019 (as part of Programmatic Review)
Date of next review	2024

Collaborative provision	Linked Provider
Name of body (/bodies):	Insurance Institute of Ireland (III)
Programme titles and links to publications	Special Purpose Award x 2 SG_BINSU_S07 Certificate in Insurance Product Advice - APA SG_BININ_S07 Certificate in Insurance Practice-CIP Higher Diploma Level 8 60 credits- due to commence July 2021 SG_BINSU_S08 Higher Diploma (in Business) in insurance Management- MDI
Date of last review	01.09.2018 for SPA's Regular reviews in-line with ITS Academic Policy & Procedures, Marks & Standards etc.
Date of next review	01.09.2021
Collaborative provision	Linked Provider
Name of body (/bodies):	Life Insurance Association (LIA)
Programme titles and links to publications	Special Purpose Award x 4 SG_BPROF_S07 – Certificate in Professional Financial Advice SG_BRETI_S07 – Certificate in Retirement Planning SG_BCRED_S07 – Certificate in Credit Union Operations SG_BDCPE_S07 – Certificate in DC Pension Scheme Trusteeship Single Subject Certificate Sales & Customer Service for Insurance and Financial Products SG_BFINA_O09 Postgraduate Diploma in Business in Financial Planning – approval stage.
Date of last review	Regular reviews in-line with ITS Academic Policy & Procedures, Marks & Standards etc.
Date of next review	01.09.2021

9.3 Articulation Agreements.

Articulation agreements - Total number	2
Articulation agreement 1:	Memorandum of Understanding between Institute of Technology Sligo (IT Sligo) and Moate Business College
Name of body (/bodies):	Moate Business College
Programme titles and links to publications	L7 BA in Fine Art L8 BA (Hons) in Fine Art
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	Agreed at Academic Council January 2020 Signed February 2020
Date of next review	2024 in line with Programmatic review
Detail of the agreement	Advanced entry to IT Sligo's Fine Art programmes at Level 7 and Level 8 Stage 2 from Art Craft and Design QQI Level 5 Moate Business College

Articulation agreement 2:	
Name of body (/bodies):	Cavan Institute of Further Education
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Science (General) Level 7 180 ECTS
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	Consortium agreement June 2019
Date of next review	Academic year 2023/24
Detail of the agreement	Students undertake year 1 of the BSc at Cavan Institute and on successful completion of year 1 gain entry into year 2 of the BSc at IT Sligo. Differential validation panel held in November 2018. Approved by academic council June 2019.

Annual Quality Report Institute of Technology Sligo

PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

ENHANCEMENT AND IMPACT

Reporting Period 2019 – 2020

PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1 Strategic QA Updates

The Institutes strategic plan which as 6 overarching objectives related to

1. Students
2. Learning and Teaching
3. Research, Development and Innovation
4. Partnerships and External Engagement
5. Shaping and Influencing Economic, Social and Cultural development
6. Organisation and Governance

It is reviewed by the Executive committee on a quarterly basis and is reported to the HEA via the Compact document. The original Compact shows the alignment between the Institute's and national objectives/actions and the achievement of these are planned using existing available resources. The objectives selected for the Compact focus on key aspects of higher education (student supports, flexible learning, internationalisation) and on corporate aims (such as good governance and technological university ambitions). These are key to the success of the Institute as a regional provider of HE and a leader in online delivery; and to achieving its KPIs of (i) growing to 10,000 students (base of 5,800), (ii) doubling the number of graduates (base of 1,500) and (iii) becoming a technological university. With reference to the first objective which is centred on our students, the Institute has through various initiatives (HEAR, DARE, PATH 2 & PATH 3, articulation agreements, Joint degrees, apprenticeships, new programme types, modes of delivery etc) have created an educational environment which supports a diversity of learners.

The CRM system for online student application was successfully implemented. Following implementation, a comprehensive process improvement end to end review of all stages of the system was undertaken and updates are being introduced in the next reporting period. A number of quality initiatives have been put in place through the Centre for Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and the Centre of Online Learning in the reporting period to support the continuous professional development of staff and the teaching and learning environment (bespoke CPD initiatives in remote teaching, PG Cert in Teaching & Learning, financial support for Doctoral programmes etc.) which is the focus of the second objective related to Learning & Teaching.

Considerable resources have been dedicated to strengthening the research, development and innovation base of the Institute with appropriate QA process put in place such as an Institutes Research Ethics committee and a formalised support structure for research students. The Research committee of Academic Council has oversight for the QA pertinent to research activities in the Institute. A new initiative in the reporting period, work-based learning degrees supports our engagement with industry further. Initiatives to support the objectives related to

the Institutes external engagement, building strategic partnerships and influencing the economic, social and cultural development of the region was advanced during the reporting period through initiatives such as winning funding from EI to support clustering of the manufacturing sector and a second project to create a Digital Manufacturing Centre with Sligo and Leitrim Co Council, a new collaborative agreement with LIA to expand links with the Insurance industry, and the delivery of Lean Sigma MOOC as a response to an expressed need from industry. Primary and secondary school children engaged with the Institute through Sligo Science <https://sligosciencefestival.ie/> and SciFest <https://scifest.ie/Sligo/Index.html>. Significant work was undertaken in relation to the Athena Swann application during the reporting period. A previously alluded to a new Governance position was established during the reporting period and four audits completed.

Connacht Ulster Alliance (CUA)

The Connacht Ulster Alliance of GMIT, LYIT and IT Sligo made significant progress towards meeting the Technological University (TU) criteria during the reporting period. The table below illustrates the key milestones achieved by the CUA project during the reporting period.

Date	Milestones
August 2019	Establishment of a Transitions Sub-group.
November 2019	Establishment of the CUA TUI Industrial Relations Forum.
November 2019	Meeting of Shadow Governing Bodies of the CUA met in Co. Donegal.
	Heads of Faculty/Faculty Sub-group established.
February 2020	Inaugural joint Heads of Departments and Heads of School/Faculty meeting in Galway.
March 2020	CUA Executive Project Lead appointed.
	Due Diligence process commenced.
September 2020	Inaugural Joint Governing Body Sub Committee meeting. First draft of submission document issued.

Examples of collaborative projects completed during the period include recognition of prior learning supports, hosing of three CUA research colloquiums/conferences, joint corporate procurement procedures, joint/cross institute supervision of research students, establishment of CUA EduCampus Forum and the €2.84m iNOTE (Digital Capacity Development Project). The CUA collaborative project known as iNOTE (Innovative Opportunities Transforming Education) Project, received €2.844m from HEA's Innovation and Transformation fund (2018). The project runs from 2019 – 2022. Key outputs to date include DigitalEd.ie which has provided significant support for online and remote teaching and learning for all staff across the three CUA partners during the Covid-19 emergency.

Policy & Procedure development: A series of procedures and policies were reviewed for their currency and others developed where an identified need was required. The pandemic had an impact on the number progressed in semester 2 of the reporting period.

Programme development:

A number of new programmes were developed and validated during the reporting period.

1. Higher Certificate in Science in Health and Medical Information Science
2. Higher Certificate in Science in Health Data Analytics Level 6
3. Certificate in Science in Practices in Health Informatics Level 6 SPA
4. Certificate in Medical Technology, Regulatory Affairs and Operations Level 8
5. Certificate in Commissioning, Qualification and Validation Level 9
6. BSc in Science in Health and Medical Information Science
7. BSc Pharmaceutical Science
8. BEng (Hons) in Mechanical Engineering
9. BEng in Mechatronic Systems (WBL)
10. BEng (Hons) in Robotics and Automation Engineering
11. BEng (Hons) in Electronics and Self Driving Technologies
12. Certificate in Road Safety Audit and Engineering Level 9
13. Certificate in Geotechnical and Structural Engineering Level 9
14. Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Business and Information Computing Technology (ICT)
15. Masters of Science in Computing in Data Science
16. Certificate in Learning, Teaching and Assessment Level 9
17. Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Interior Architecture and Design

Link to all programmes on the website is [here](#)

Designated Awarding Body

The Institute's DAB action plan was initiated with the short-term actions achieved in the reporting period as detailed in section 2.3

1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR)	Update on Status
1	A robust evaluation of Electronic Gradebook(EGB) is planned for the next reporting period to underpin a decision about its future implementation.	<p>Status: not achieved</p> <p>This objective was not achieved due to the onset of the pandemic in semester 2. Although the objective was not achieved the onset of the pandemic afforded opportunities to educate academic staff on the use and value of gradebook which resulted in a number of persons opting to use the tool.</p>
2	Widespread adoption of GURU as the Institute examination management system to occur in Q1 of next reporting period.	<p>Status: achieved</p> <p>This has been achieved. GURU is now used by all academic staff to upload their final exam papers.</p>
3	Introduction of GURU as the software to communicate with external examiners and for the submission of the final report.	<p>Status: achieved</p> <p>All external examiners are now set up on GURU and by the end of 2020 the majority of reports were received through GURU for consideration by the programme committees. Work has started on the management of the nomination process through GURU. The system was set up with the relevant contractual information and the changes to the relevant procedures were drafted. Full implementation is planned for 2020-21.</p>
4	Approval of Academic Council to the revision of a number of procedures	<p>This has been achieved but is an ongoing objective.</p> <p>The review and revision of QA policies and procedures has significantly increased indicating a re-focus on QA activity. A total of 52 new and revised documents were issued in this review period compared to 25 in the previous period. The proposed changes to the Chapters of the Quality Manual were not approved by academic council and further work is required to secure approval.</p>
5	Governing Body Approval to provide Sanctuary Scholarships for asylum seekers. Concomitant procedure and	<p>Status: achieved</p> <p>The process for enabling Sanctuary scholarships was completed during the academic year 2019/20. Five scholarships are available</p>

	application process established for September 2020.	which includes free fees and a maintenance allowance of € 2000 p/a.
6	Finalisation of International Plan.	Status: achieved An International Engagement Plan was drafted and submitted to the various academic committees for consideration in July 2020.
7	Planning the Institutes response to status as Designated Awarding Body.	Status: achieved A short and medium term action plan was approved by Academic Council in May 2020. A committee of Academic Council has been established to guide the Institute through the designated authority process. A more detailed update is available in Part A section 2.3
8	Preparing the Faculty of Business and Social Science for Faculty review/Programmatic revalidation in the academic year 2020-2021.	Status: ongoing The Faculty of Business & Social Science preparations for both a Faculty review and programmatic validation the academic year 2020/21 was hindered by the pandemic and accordingly Academic Council approved that a Faculty review only would be completed in the academic year 2020/21 and a Programmatic validation in 2021/22.
9	Finalising the process for service unit reviews and prioritising services for review over the next 5 year period.	Status: Ongoing A process for reviewing the service unit with the Registrars function was developed during the academic year. The Process mirrors the academic faculty review process. A review of the library is planned for the academic year 2020/21. This is ongoing as the process will require evaluation after the planned library review.
10	Ongoing preparation for the Institute's plan to apply for Bronze Award in November 2020. Staff survey and analysis will occur in next reporting period.	Status: achieved To prepare for attaining an Institutional Bronze Award, IT Sligo established an Institutional Self-Assessment Team (SAT) in June 2019, a representative group of c.30 staff from across the Institute. This group has gathered and analysed an extensive range of staffing data and carried out a staff survey (February – March 2020) to determine views on equality across the institute. A creative approach was deployed to garner a high response rate

		<p>to this survey (see video https://youtu.be/2no44n_S6TY), and a 73% response was ultimately achieved.</p> <p>Meeting regularly (online) the group have analysed data, identified issues and developed an Action Plan and emngaged in consultation. Due to delays imposed by COVID 19 IT Sligo has taken advantage of an extension to submissions and will now be submitting its application in January 2021.</p>
11	<p>Maths Enrichment Programme (MEP) via Maths support Centre</p>	<p>Status: achieved</p> <p>The Maths Support Centre which developed significantly over the academic year 2019/20 is evidenced in the links provided. Tutorials hours were increased, expanded online provision through videos and quizzes and significant engagement with lecturers in the field of Maths with the development of hubs on the website for their material. First year students from the Faculty of Engineering and Design principally engage with the centre.</p> <p>https://www.itsligo.ie/student-hub/maths-support-centre/</p> <p>Promotional video for students of the MSC here. Watch a video the MSC's report of the academic year 2019/20 here.</p> <p>https://infogram.com/maths-support-1h7z2l9mmo1g2ow</p>
12	<p>Enhance supports in the academic sphere to augment support student retention</p>	<p>Status: achieved</p> <p>The Institute has appointed (3/20) a Head of Student Success at senior (SL3) level. This position will help the Institute to develop a strategic and holistic approach to student success. The appointee will work to address issues of student retention and progression, with the broader context of student success.</p>
13	<p>CUA/TU designation preparation</p>	<p>Status: ongoing</p> <p>The work of the CUA undertaken by a Steering Group, four Working Groups and nineteen sub-groups directly involving over 150 staff and students from across the CUA continued throughout the academic year 2019/20. All CUA Working Groups and Sub-groups met at least monthly. All of the outputs from the various groups were communicated to all staff through a CUA-wide portal Please see section 1.1 for further details.</p>

1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Governing Body Meetings	11/09/2019, 09/10/2019, 6/11/2019, 4/12/2019 20/12/2019, 29/01/2020, 26/02/2020, 25/03/2020, 13/05/2020, 17/06/2020, 29/07/2020, 24/08/2020
Audit & Risk Committee	24/09/2019, 21/11/2019, 16/01/2020, 11/03/2020, 02/06/2020 30/06/2020
Academic Council meetings	13/9/2019, 20/9/2019, 26/9/2019, 7/10/2019, 25/10/2019, 19/11/2019, 6/12/2019, 31/1/2020,17/2/2020, 27/3/2020, 1/04/2020 (x 2 meetings),03/04/2020, 1/5/2020, 15/5/2020, 22/5/2020, 12/6/2020, 17/6/2020
Academic Processes Committee	24/9/2019, 8/10/2019, 12/11/2019, 10/12/2019, 17/2/2020, 31/3/2020, 12/5/2020, 26/5/2020
Collaborative Provision Committee	26/9/2019, 10/10/2019, 14/11/2019, 12/12/2019, 1/10/2020, 5/11/2020, 3/12/2020
Learning Teaching and Assessment	24/9/2019, 8/10/2019, 10/12/2019, 29/9/2020, 18/2/2020, 3/11/2020
Planning and Coordination	27/9/2019, 11/10/2019, 15/11/2019, 12/12/2019,21/2/2020, 3/4/2020, 19/5/2020, 3/6/2020
Research and Innovation Committee	26/9/2019, 10/10/2019, 21/11/2019,12/12, 2019, 20/2/2020, 6/3/2020, 28/5/2020, 16/6/2020
Technological University Transition Committee	10/10/2019, 12/11/2019, 20/2/2020, 28/5/20

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

There were no changes to any units of governance during the reporting period, but a new position was developed to support the current governance structures.

Secretarial, Governance & Compliance Manager was appointed. The appointee is the Secretary for Governing Body and the Audit & Risk Committee and other IT Sligo committees as appropriate to the role. The postholder provides an independent, objective consulting service to management with the principal aims of evaluating and improving the effectiveness of risk management and governance processes and will report on internal control compliance across the Institute with respect to internal controls. The role includes management of the Institutes procurement processes, the Procurement Officer, the Corporate Governance Manager and associated administrative support. This appointment addresses a number of the CINNTE recommendations (16, 17, 21) in relation to compliance and documenting status and closure of processes. It will also compliment the work of others VPAA & Registrar in relation to meeting agreed targets.

A new academic role was developed namely a Head of Student Success. The core aspects of this academic role are to enhance student retention rates across the Institute by working with programme boards to develop bespoke action plans, to liaise with FE sector to enhance recruitment from this sector and to develop and lead on student success initiatives in the Institute. This appointment is an overt commitment to Strategic objective 1.

There were a number of changes of personnel in the reporting period - VP Academic Affairs and Registrar, Assistant Registrar, Human Resource Manager, Planning & Operations Manager.

Link to organisational chart: <https://www.itsligo.ie/org-chart/>

1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review

1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

Please delete guide text before submission.

Unit of review for which report has been published during reporting period	Date of completion/reason for conducting review (if not planned) or non-completion (if planned but not conducted)	Links to relevant publications
No reviews occurred during reporting period		

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels¹ involved in IQA

(i) Expert Review Team/Panel Size and Related Processes

None applicable for this reporting period.

	Total	Academic Facultys/ Department	Professional Services/Support Unit	Approval/Review of Linked Provider	Programme Approval	Programme Review	Other
Number of review/ evaluation processes	0						
of those:							
On-site processes							
Desk reviews							
Virtual processes							
Average panel size for each process type*							

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

¹ QQI acknowledges that the terminology used to describe the groups of individuals that conduct peer review/evaluation varies from institution to institution.

(ii) Composition of Expert Review Teams/Panels involved in IQA

Programme validation panels.

Number of panels convened during reporting period: 2019/2020

Type of Expert/ Role on Panel	Total	Gender			Internal	National	International			Institution Type	
		Male	Female	Other, or unspecified			UK, incl. NI	Other European	Outside of Europe	Similar	Different
Chair	8	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	2
Secretary	8	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0
Academic/Discipline Specific	14	7	7	0	0	0	1	0	0	7	7
Student Representative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
QA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Teaching & Learning	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
External Industry /Third Mission	11	21	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11

List of Programmes- 2019 to 2020 is outlined above in Part B section 1.1

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review

The Institute is committed to continually reviewing its processes and involving various stakeholders. The recommendations of the CINNTE report are being continually addressed. In the reporting period, there was a significant focus on reshaping chapters of the quality manual, updating and/or developing policies and procedures where required, putting in place mechanism to close the quality loop, enhancing communications with staff, piloting a CRM system, capitalising on learning from the Institutes' lead in online education through sharing good practice across the Institute, developing an induction programme for new staff and introducing a variety of CPD opportunities.

Compact Self-evaluation Review & Report to HEA

The Institute conducted a review of the objectives (key targets therein) they had set for the on the key aspects of higher education (student supports, flexible learning, internationalisation) and on corporate aims (such as good governance and technological university ambitions) in the reporting period. Of the 35 separate targets set, 31 (90%) were deemed to be achieved or exceeded and 4 (11%) substantially met, with one or two specific metrics not reached. For the common CUA targets, all 4 metric targets were achieved or exceeded and all 9 targets for on-going joint corporate level projects were substantially completed or well progressed. For each action, evidence of achievement was sought in terms of, for example, data from Banner, numbers of access students, list of staff attending training, minutes of meetings, lists of companies etc. This evidence is also the basis for confirming that what is reported as being achieved is what was originally intended by the proposed action. Compact related to reporting period submitted to HEA on March 12th 2021.

Exams Office Audit

An audit of the examination process took place in the reporting period by the Institutes appointed Internal auditors (Deloitte) which highlighted the positive aspects of the process and highlighted areas for improvement that are being followed up through changes to processes and the development of new procedures. An examination conference was held in November during the reporting period to advise academic and administrative staff on examination processes, new developments such as GURU, changes to Marks & Standards etc and to provide a forum for the examination staff and academic staff to discuss issues and gain an appreciation of their roles in the examination process.

Review and Appeals procedure

During the reporting period the Review and Appeal procedure was revised to provide clarity to students on the grounds for review/ appeals, the type of supporting evidence required and timelines for submission. Clarity was also provided in relation to the role of other stakeholders in the process (e.g. lecturers/ Heads of Departments)

Institutes Research Ethics committee

The Institutional Research ethics committee established in Spring 2019 became embedded as an essential QA process of all postgraduate/ staff research activity in the Institution. <https://www.itsligo.ie/ethics/> . Twenty-eight applications were reviewed in the reporting period which resulted in a significant time commitment for committee members and the administrator. In order to make the committee more efficient, more guidelines were provided to potential applicants of the requirements for a complete application and automating aspects of the process. The number of meetings per semester was also increased.

Internationalisation

In the reporting period an international engagement plan was developed which gives the Institute a clear pathway regarding international learners/collaborations etc and is in line with a recommendation from the CINNTE review. This development involved internal and external engagement, comprehensive review and understanding of National and International positions on internationalisation/Erasmus, funding/ supports for International Activity, the Technological Act 2018, the Institutes Strategic plan 2017-2022 and the previous experiences and desires of students and staff. The final iteration of the plan was influenced by the short, medium, and long-term impact that the COVID pandemic would have on Internationalisation. The hitherto focus on mobility coupled with geo-political issues, climate change, sustainability, active citizenship, and the emergence of disruptive technologies also shaped the Institutes need for a more resilient model of internationalisation. The emergent international engagement plan is built on three pillars.

1. Internationalisation at Home
2. Internationalisation Abroad
3. Internationalisation of Research

In addition, each of these three spheres of activity will be underpinned by three sub-themes:

- I. Sustainability
- II. Active 'Global' Citizenship
- III. Language and Intercultural Competence

A set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) has been developed for each pillar. The resourcing of the International plan will be the focus of the next reporting period. One of the first initiatives under the Internationalisation at home pillar is to pilot a Collaborative On-Line International Learning (COIL) project in the Department of Business

with one of our overseas partner institutions in the next reporting period. The results and learning from which will be disseminated across the CUA.

In the reporting period, international student applicants who could not access IELTS or TOEFL English language test centres due to the COVID-19 pandemic were provided with the option of undertaking the online Duolingo English Test. This has been extended to 2020/2021 academic year.

The International Office implemented in full the DFHEIS COVID-19 Protocol for the Safe Return of International Students to IT Sligo the commencement of the 2020/21 academic year. The over-riding goal of this protocol was the protection of public health, including all students, staff and the wider community. International students were required to complete a Health & Symptom Check Questionnaire each day for 14 days before and after their arrival to Ireland. The International Office also managed the safe transportation of all international students from their point of arrival directly to their accommodation in Sligo, where they could further restrict their movements for 14 days. These students were further supported via the provision of grocery packs, information on how to restrict their movements and how to shop on-line. International student onboarding and orientation successfully pivoted to a virtual or online support environment. To minimise the effect of social isolation due to COVID-19 restrictions, a series of virtual activities and events (on-line yoga, on-line concerts, Netflix watch parties etc) were organised by the International Office.

An emergency International Student Assistance Fund was also established in Q2 2020 to provide practical financial support to international students and their families disadvantaged financially by the COVID-19 pandemic. Flexible tuition fee instalment payment options were also introduced for international students.

Programmes of Education & Training

In the reporting period two novel types of programmes were developed and ratified by Academic Council.

a) Work based learning programmes for school leavers.

Work-Based Learning (WBL) has been growing worldwide due to both the escalating cost of attending campus-based higher education and the demand from employers for more work ready graduates. In recognition of the identified need a work-based learning programme in the field of mechatronic engineering was developed (BEng in Mechatronic systems <https://www.itsligo.ie/courses/bachelor-of-engineering-in-mechatronic-systems/>). The degree programme is designed for school leavers, the student is placed by IT Sligo in a traineeship position in the workplace for the full duration of the programme, a significant proportion of ECTS are awarded for the achievement of learning outcomes in the workplace and the majority of the theoretical component is

delivered online. A policy for the development and delivery of such programmes has been approved (CDEV004 Work Based Learning Programmes Policy) to provide potential programme development teams the quality assurance/ legal and contractual process around both programme development and delivery. The first cohort of students commenced in September 2020.

b) Fulltime online degree programmes

Case Study 1 New mode of full-time programme delivery to a population of learners who would find college attendance challenging.

IT Sligo secured funding under the HEA's 2018 Innovation and Transformation Fund to develop full-time degree programmes accessible via online learning. The aim of this initiative is to provide flexible, fulltime, online programmes, listed via the CAO, for students who would find it too challenging to participate successfully in an on-campus course. Students may have caring/family business responsibilities, disability, social communication barrier, cost barriers, or geographical isolation. The external partners are: Family Carers, Disability Federation Ireland, MSL ETB & Donegal ETB. This innovative model of learning has been designed to facilitate equal opportunity and access to higher education which can be mainstreamed across Ireland. This model of education has the capacity to transform access to higher education by groups of society who may currently be excluded from the possibility of being able to achieve a higher education degree.

A comprehensive pedagogical analysis and approval process formed the first phase of the project. This included the establishment of an operational steering committee along with the development of three-degree programmes approved & listed on the CAO:

- [Level 8 BA \(Hons\) Writing & Literature Online Full-time](#)
- [Level 7 BSc in Health and Medical Information Science Online Full-time](#)
- [Level 6 Higher Cert in Business Online Full-time](#)

In parallel, a series of support packages were produced. This involved the creation of a specialist Student Support & Programme Development role, focusing on the development and collation of online support packages for pre-enrolment, confidence building, assessment of special needs requirements, mentorship and employability. One to one student profiler sessions were held with applicants along with a short free 15-minute online assessment tool, giving immediate feedback on strengths and challenges. The support services available to applicants were outlined before embarking on their learning journey.

In Spring 2020, a recruitment and enrolment campaign took place. Focused course promotion to targeted groups and marketing material including information on the flexibility of the programmes along with career opportunities, progression options and the extra student supports available.

However, the roll-out of fulltime online programmes has not been without its challenges. A delay in the courses appearing on CAO, in conjunction with the travel restrictions caused by onset of COVID-19 inhibited a full marketing campaign. This was mitigated by a comprehensive online series of promotional activities and two courses instead of three programmes commenced in September 2020.

c) Collaboration Agreement for Work-Based Research Degrees

One particular type/arrangement of research degree that the IT Sligo intends to develop further, particularly in the context of Technological University designation, is a research degree where the candidate is based primarily within a company setting (whether already an employee of the company or coming to the company specifically for the research work). This approach facilitates collaboration and knowledge exchange between academic and commercial partners, thereby encouraging innovative research, while also facilitating achievement of a research degree by the student.

While the quality assurance of the academic elements of the research study remains controlled by the Code of Practice/QQI, work-based research degrees bring a number of additional elements which could, potentially impact on the quality of the research process and the student experience. These include clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the Institute, the company and their agents, management of intellectual property, and the welfare of the student.

To facilitate quality assurance and good governance of these elements, the Institute is introducing a formal collaboration agreement with partner companies. The agreement provides a context for the research degree work, a set of definitions and interpretations for terminology used and covers: The Project; Use and Exploitation of Intellectual Property Rights; Academic Publication and Impact; Thesis; Confidentiality; Limitation of Liability; Force Majeure; Termination and Withdrawal. It provides for compliance with specific external governing conditions, including: The Funding Conditions; Good Data Management Practices; Anti- Bribery requirements; Data Protection; Human Rights/ Anti-slavery provisions; Project Details.

The implementation of the agreement is due in academic year 2021-2021.

The following documents relating to the Programme Development and Approval were revised during the reporting period.

Chapter 2 Quality manual

QA003 Module Writing Procedure – New document

EAP4 Form Modification to an existing Programme of learning Form

CDEV005 Flexible and new models of Prog Design and Delivery.

Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

CPD resources for all staff

In the reporting period IT Sligo entered a partnership with LinkedIn Learning to provide over 16,000 courses over a range of subjects to suit the training and development needs of all staff. Staff can personalise and tailor training to the specific skills needed for their role and professional development. [Linked in Learning at IT Sligo](#)

This resource was particularly helpful in transitioning staff to remote working as it provided training on a variety of tools/ platforms required to work remotely such as MS Teams, SharePoint, One note etc.

Academic staff development

An evaluation of CPD provision to academic staff in the reporting period revealed that whilst a host of CPD programmes/ opportunities are offered by the Institute to academic staff to support their reaching & learning activities, they emanate and are positioned under CELT, COL and HR. Academic staff have reported that this is confusing and prevents their active engagement in CPD. In order to address this issue the Education development manager has commenced the development of a Teaching & Learning Pathway which will collate all resources into one area, provide structure to the resources and support academics map their own teaching and learning developmental needs. The proposed pathway will be housed on the Institutes VLE platform, Moodle and will be rolled out in the 2020/2021 academic year.

Public information and communication

In the reporting period work commenced on revising the Institutes website [here](#). This work was led by the President in association with the Communication manager. Part 1 of this work was completed in the reporting period which principally was student facing content. The complete revisions should be completed in the academic year 2020/21 as will the development of a communication portal and other mediums to communicate effectively as recommended in CINNTE review. This work will enable the enhanced sharing of documents with various stakeholders. A review of the branding guidelines also commenced during the reporting period.

The following documents relating to public information and communication were updated during the review period.

COMM010 Term of Reference for the Information and Consultation Forum

COMM008 Death response plan procedure

[COMM007 Conflicts of Interest Policy](#)

[COMM009 Social Media Policy](#)(previously COMM007)

Support & Resources for Learners

A myriad of supports exists for students of the Institute <https://www.itsligo.ie/about-it-sligo/student-supports/>. The supports vary from academic to pastoral care and span the lifespan of the student with the Student Success Toolbox available to support transitions from thinking about study to the first weeks of college particularly for flexible learners (undergraduate adult, part-time and online/distance students). <https://www.itsligo.ie/student-hub/student-success-toolbox/> to career advice and support to support their transition to employment. All first-year students are invited to participate in leaning profile screening test. In the reporting period, this resulted in referrals to learning support, academic writing support and maths support. All resources/ supports were pivoted for remote access post onset of the Pandemic in March 2020. A further support introduced in the reporting period was Blackboard Ally. This course content accessibility tool focuses on making digital course content more accessible and helps institutions create a more inclusive teaching and learning experience. Traditionally, most educational technology providers focus on the accessibility of the platforms themselves while the content has often been a black box. Blackboard Ally was developed to help institutions understand and tackle the accessibility of this course content in a way that benefits all students. Blackboard Ally works by implementing alternative formats, instructor feedback & guidance and institutional reporting. The alternative formats are created to improve the overall student experience that provide them with the choice and added flexibility that comes with a more personalised approach. A user evaluation will take place in semester 2 2021. Anecdotal evidence indicates that both academic staff and students find the tool helpful.

The following documents related to student support were updated during the review period.

ADM020	Student Fee Collection
ADM035	Deferral of Places on Full Time Programme
ADM033	Withdrawal from a Full time Programme
ADM014	IT Sligo Timetable Policy
ADM017	Student Vetting Procedure

Case study 2 Online students support needs.

The Institute along with their CUA partners LyIT and GMIT were awarded a HEA Innovation in Teaching and Learning award to build digital capabilities in the region over the next 3 years. The iNote project provides opportunities to transform the higher education experience in the CUA institutes. The project includes five work packages.

Work package 3 is focused on the student experience and the provision of effective student support services for online/flexible learners and is being led by IT Sligo. This work package is reviewing the effectiveness of support systems, piloting an on-line student advisor system, assessing learning needs of flexible learners, and enhancing student union services and supports for flexible learners.

In order to fully design and roll-out the appropriate student supports for flexible learners; a baseline of current supports was established through a series of stakeholder focus groups. These findings indicated that the optimum student journey can be defined as a three-stage process with respect to flexible learner student service provision as depicted in Figure 1. Each stage has a series of supports and importantly, in parallel with all three stages is the Student Advisor role. This can be seen in figure 1 below:

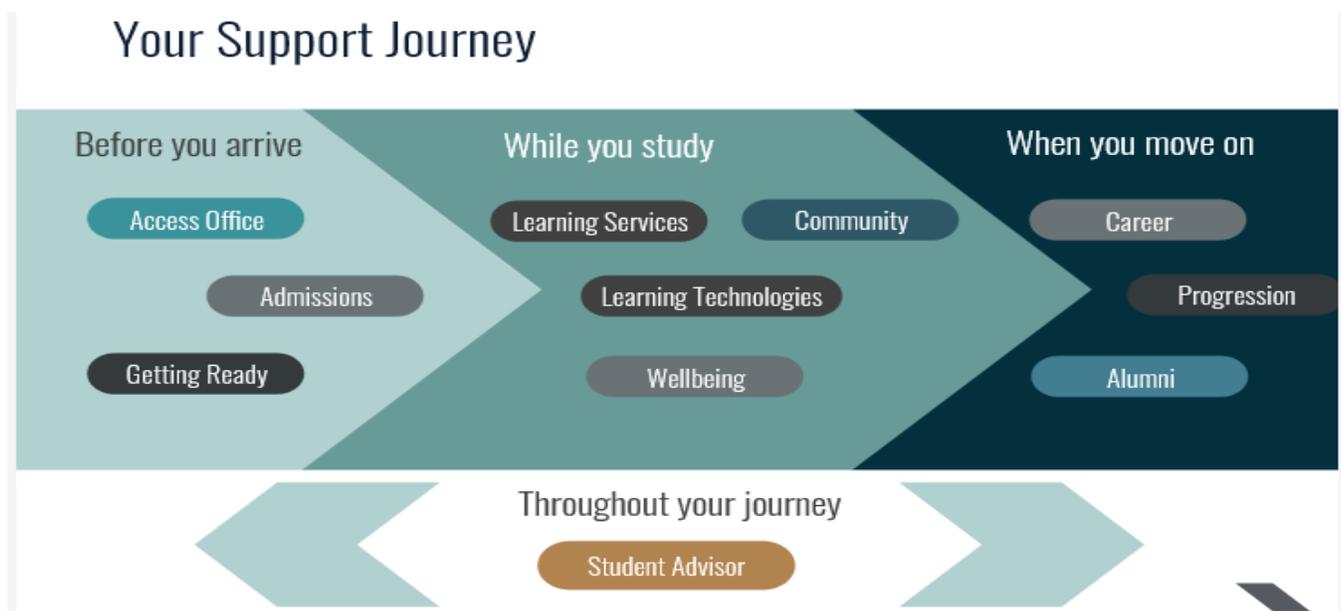


Figure 1: Flexible Learner Student Support Journey

Various supports were researched during the reporting period and are due for evaluation in the next reporting period. Examples under consideration are:

SilverCloud is an on-line counselling software service.

Epigeum - *Being Well Living Well*– Mental health online support service.

Software Simulation package: To facilitate remote access to labs and practical.

The institute is committed to supporting their growing online student population and continually strive to put in places supports to enable them to achieve their potential.

Third-mission activities, societal and community engagement

In the reporting period the following initiatives took place.

Introduction of Sanctuary Scholarships

In the reporting period the Institute developed a process for awarding up to five sanctuary scholarships on an annual basis. The scholarships were a result of the Institutes' engagement with Diversity Sligo and the Institutes' commitment to widening access. Scholarships are open to those in the International Protection System living in Globe House, Sligo who are ineligible for state supports. The Sanctuary Scholarship consists of a waiver of the fee that normally applies to non-EU students. In addition to the fee waiver there is a bursary of €2k per awardee per annum, which is intended to help towards some costs of attending college. Applications for Sanctuary Scholarships are assessed and disbursed via IT Sligo Access Office. Scholarship awards will be renewable for the normal duration of the approved programme of study, subject to annual review and the satisfactory academic performance and good standing of the scholarship holder. The impact of the changes to the support scheme for students living in Direct Provision announced by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris T.D., announced in August 2020 will be evident at the next application time in Spring 2021.

Community mentoring programme

As a consequence of Path 3 funding a community project The Cranmore Education Mentor Programme -was initiated to support students from disadvantaged areas to consider higher education. The Cranmore Education Mentor Programme is a joint initiative between the Institute of Technology, Sligo and the Cranmore Regeneration Office. It is part of the Higher Education Authority Attract - Transition - Succeed (ATS) project set up to increase the diversity and social mix of the student population within the higher education institutions (HEIs) in the West and North West of Ireland. It is also a key element in the implementation of the Sligo East City, Cranmore and Environs Regeneration Masterplan. The Programme was launched during the reporting period (November 2019). An Education Mentor is based in the Cranmore Regeneration Office three days a week and provides one to one mentoring support to young people and adults as well as engaging with the community to access community-based education, study support workshops and online learning support. The mentor also engages with local schools. The onset of the pandemic in Q1 of 2020 curtailed the face-to-face engagement of the mentor with the community but mentoring continued online. The project is gaining recognition in the community and was shortlisted for the Local Government Awards for Excellence in Community Engagement 2020.

Promoting STEM through Community engagement

The Institute are committed to the promotion of STEM by engaging with the community in an interactive manner. The Faculty of Science have a significant track record through their engagement with SciFest@college since 2008. The SciFest science fair is a national initiative founded in 2006 to encourage a love of STEM through active, collaborative, inquiry-based learning. The Institute also hosts an annual **Sligo Science Festival**, supported by Science Foundation Ireland (SFI). It is a week-long programme of activities and events each November, which aims to make science more interesting and accessible to children and adults alike.

Sligo Science Festival 2019 took place from November 10 – 17th 2019 including the Annual Sligo Science Fair on Sunday 10th November, 2019. The Science fair is a family event, for all ages, explaining science in a fun way, open to the public. See more information on dedicated website www.sligosciencefestival.ie

The festival highlights how science, technology and engineering are hugely relevant to us all in our everyday lives, lead to interesting and exciting career options and develop creativity in our children. The Sligo event is organised by the Faculty of Science at IT Sligo. The events are free and open to schools and the public. Sligo Science Festival [2019 Brochure](#)

Watch our video from 2019 [Click here](#)



Sligo Engineering Fair 2020

The Faculty of Engineering & Design initiated the Sligo Engineering Fair in 2019 to run during national Engineers Week. This is a one-day event aimed at younger children (primary school age) and their families and includes: school engineering projects; hands-on workshops using a range of technologies (robotics; coding; structures; 3-Printing); shows and talks. The Sligo Engineering Fair is part of IT Sligo's Engineering North West project to engage and illuminate the community in the North West on the fun, excitement, challenge and positive societal impact associated with engineering. The project primarily targets young people, particularly girls, and their parents, especially those in disadvantaged social groups. The Sligo Engineering Fair took place at IT Sligo on Sunday 1st March 2020. The public engagement figures for the day were 2386 persons of who 58% indicated

their gender as female, 46% were age 13years or less with visitors travelling from all over the North West-West, Northern Ireland and Dublin. Key learning from the 2020 Fair was that the public have a desire for STEM engagement activities and that participants prefer hands on activities, rather than ‘shows’ and this is being considered moving forward.

Teaching, Learning and assessment

Transition to Remote delivery

Supporting staff and students transition to remote delivery and assessment as a consequence of the pandemic in week 9 of semester 2 was a significant challenge. The existing resources and expertise of the Centre for Online Learning (<https://vle.itsligo.ie/my/>) was deployed to enable academic staff and students transition to the remote environment for the remainder of the semester. Two units of learning were developed to assist this transition namely *Remote Teaching: Road Map* and *Alternative assessments*. The units were self-paced and academic staff were supported by a team of instructional designers to pivot their teaching and assessment material to the online environment. Support was online (individual and group) during the initial level 5 level restrictions in March -May. Over the summer months academic staff were facilitated engage with face to face support. Academic Staff and students were able to access all the pre-existing resources of the centre to support them in the transition.

Staff and students were subsequently surveyed to ascertain their experience of the transition to the remote environment in terms of their technological and training needs.

Engineering Support Centre

Analysis of retention data, examination data, feedback from academic staff and students led to the development of a bespoke resource for engineering students. The aim of this resource was to compliment the “normal” teaching & learning activities associated with some Engineering Programmes and is currently principally aimed at first years and focused on three areas - Electrical principles, physics and mechanics. A further unit on dynamics aimed at final year students was developed to address the expressed needs of students and address the challenges they encounter with this topic. An assessment of students’ examination results indicated that this was a subject that was causing students difficulties. The resource was modelled on the Academic Writing Support centre and the Maths support centre. <https://vle.itsligo.ie/course/view.php?id=7261>

The following documents relating to teaching and learning have been updated during the review period. The changes were made as a result of audit recommendations, to close gaps where there was no QA procedure, introduction of electronic forms and general update of documents to current practice.

- M&S Marks and Standards V29

- EXAM009 Reasonable accommodation in examinations for students with disability or longterm medical conditions Procedure
- EXAM031 Application to Exit with and Embedded Award
- EXAM033 Implementing changes agreed at Progression and Awards Boards Procedure
- EXAM034 European Diploma Supplement Generation Procedure
- EXAM035 Exam Regulations Procedures
- EXAM036 Repeat Examination Procedure and EXAM036_001 Form

Case study 3 Academic writing supports.

IT Sligo have taken a multipronged phased approach to support and develop students' academic writing skills. In 2018, an [academic writing centre](#) was developed which provides 1:1 and group support to students at both under graduate and [post graduate levels](#). In the reporting period a self-directed, interactive online academic writing programme was designed and developed to compliment the output of the academic writing centre. Covering key topics in academic writing, this programme is particularly useful for those transitioning from 2nd to 3rd level, remote learners and lifelong learners returning to education. In addition, it utilises digital badge technology to allow completion of academic writing content to be linked to Module continuous assessment. The programme is divided into 7 units, each unit contains course content, practice activities, downloadable resources, and a final quiz to check understanding. The promotion of Academic integrity is integral to a number of the unit's content. The programme adopts a flexible approach, with options to complete individual units or the whole programme. Digital badges are awarded for each unit completed, with an academic writing digital badge awarded for completion of the entire programme.

A key feature of the online programme is the ability for individual units, or the entire programme to be embedded into modules. To date the programme has been formally embedded with completion linked to continuous assessment in 12 programmes.

Academic Writing Online Programme: <https://vle.itsligo.ie/course/view.php?id=7294>

A further support that was introduced and piloted in the reporting period was Studiosity which is a 24/7 online writing advice service. The two types of support available are:

- Writing Feedback: Review of assessment drafts for academic literacy, including structure, spelling, grammar, punctuation and referencing. No review of content; no editing or proofreading is available.
- Connect Live: a real-life tutor will be waiting online to help students. Live tutors are available 3pm - 12am

The range of academic writing supports are continually under review from the perspectives of academic staff and students. Revisions and additions are made based on feedback collated by CELT on an annual basis.

Case Study 4 Development and Delivery of Online Post Graduate Certificate in Teaching, Learning & Assessment

The Centre of Learning and Teaching in conjunction with the Department of Social Sciences delivered the inaugural Post Graduate Certificate in Teaching & Learning during the reporting period. This programme was developed to address a commitment to support the continuous professional development of academic staff expressed in both the Institutes strategic plan and the Institutes learning and teaching strategy. The programme is an addition to the existing First Steps online CPD programme which provides an introduction to teaching, learning and assessment in Higher education. The aim of the 30 ECTS PG cert is to enable academic staff acquire the critical and reflective skills to establish effective teaching and reflective practice. The programme consists of two 15ECTS modules:

- Effective Teaching and Learning
- Assessment and Feedback to Support Student Learning

The programme is fully online, consisting of weekly on-line lecture/ tutorial. Because of the CUA partnership graduates of the programme have a progression pathway to the Diploma in Teaching and Learning at GMIT and MA in Teaching and Learning thereafter. Programme evaluations have been very positive.

Case Study 5 Using electronic notebooks to enhance laboratory practical sessions, enquiry-based learning and project supervision.

This Quality initiative in the Faculty of Science involved the deployment of electronic notebooks as digital aids for laboratory practical sessions, supervision of projects and enquiry-based learning (EBL). The initiative was funded under the Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement (SATLE) initiative was introduced to streamline the communication/ feedback process between students and staff and reduce the use of paper in the assessment process. The most suitable software NB (Microsoft) OneNote was identified and adopted based on several parameters such as cost, reliability, ease of use and availability. One-to-one visits to staff members at their office were facilitated on request prior to onset of pandemic. Videos explaining how to navigate OneNote were created. In addition, Manual Guide to Class Notebook for staff users and Manual Guide to OneNote for student users were produced. Twenty staff members participated, with one programme (BSc Occupation Safety and Health) adopting eNB platform for all its EBL module across the 4 years. Post introduction, it was evident that the deployment of eNB for UG/PG projects made it extremely easy for students to submit work to their supervisors and for supervisors to make comments or provide feedback on submitted work while students receive feedback real time. In order to support this initiative a network of staff formed to support each other and embed the use of eNBs within the assessment culture of the Faculty of Science. The Initiative will be formally assessed in the next reporting period, but anecdotal evidence indicates that both students and staff perceived positive benefits.

Information and Data Management

IT Sligo uses data in a number of ways to support quality assurance and the management of the student learning experience and is conscious of doing so in a manner that contributes to quality initiatives in the Institute as recommended by CINNTE review. (R.11) Data is gathered at modular and programme level using agreed templates from the perspective of students and staff. Module leads use modular data to inform their teaching and assessment strategies for the coming academic year. Programme level data is discussed at Programme Boards and is used to inform modifications to programme learning outcomes, content, teaching and assessment strategies. Programme teams are responsible for reflecting on student feedback as well as responding to local data provided to them by the Institute such as retention and progression rates. All initiatives such as peer mentoring, induction, CAO open days etc. are evaluated and the data used to inform required enhancements/modifications. Exit interview data is deployed to ascertain the reasons students chose to withdraw from their programme to ascertain if there are modifiable factors that the Institute can respond to (e.g. assessment types/numbers). Data that emanates from the HEA Statistics unit (Progression data, Higher Education system performance) are all reviewed and shared with staff and considered by Executive. A significant data set that the Institute deploys is that generated from the annual Student Survey. The Institute commits significant resources to promoting the survey as it yields significant data about student engagement and experience of students in relation to a host of issues. The response rate increased by 1% in the reporting period and the responses were used to inform initiatives. The Institute provides the data to all staff at Institute level Faculty, at programme level and compares the annual Institute data set with previous data sets so that trends can be identified and actioned. The Institute also provides academic staff with the qualitative data that the survey collects to support the quantitative data set. The results on the indices that require enhancement informs the work of the subcommittees of Academic Council.

A Head of Student Success was appointed during the reporting period to address retention and work with programme teams and students to address areas where enhancements can be made to the student experience.

A bespoke dashboard was developed to assist the VP AA & Registrar analyse and present data in a more comprehensible manner and when required, in February 2020. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, there has not been the IT resources required to support the deployment of this tool. In the reporting period, data from across the three Institutions that comprise the CUA have been collated in various formats- student numbers, enrolments, growth assumptions etc.

Case Study 6: Introduction of CRM system to manage student applications.

The Strategic Plan 2017-2022 has a key target to almost double student enrolments from 6,000 to 10,000. It was recognised that the processes and systems would need to be enhanced to enable the Institute to operate and interact effectively with increasing numbers of applicants and students from their initial point of contact through to registration. A pilot with MS Dynamics in early 2019 confirmed it could support such process improvement. In the reporting period, a CRM Services provider was engaged to build on our initial applications processing solution. During 2019/20 new application processes were introduced for Erasmus applicants, International (non-EU) applicants, applicants for Online Learning (including Springboard) and Add-on / full-time applicants. The CAO application process remained unchanged. The achievements included:

The replacement of a Banner application front-end with application forms on our website

- MS Dynamics CRM replaced Excel spreadsheets and SugarCRM to process applications.
- Integrated Springboard portal data into Dynamics to negate the need for applicants to apply twice.
- Processed significantly more applications than previous years without increasing resources required.
- Extracted successful applications from Dynamics and uploaded to Banner.
- Introduced live Management Information to monitor the success of applications process by faculty, department and course.

The process was kept under constant review which will lead to further improvements and extensions to the system in the academic year 2020/21 with the ultimate goal of deploying the CRM for the totality of the student body for the duration of their engagement with the Institute.

This quality initiative responds to CINNTE recommendation 28.

Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

The Head of Student Success is the Institutional lead on the National Academic Integrity Network with two other Institute representatives, namely, Head of Online Learning (Student Experience) and Education Development Manager.

IT Sligo have both a student focused academic integrity module and staff focused academic integrity module available and promoted to all students and staff. The modules are cited on the Institutes VLE platform - Moodle. The student focused module is comprised of 3 units- Defining academic integrity, demonstrating academic integrity in my work and Breaches & Difficult situations. Students can earn an IT Sligo academic Integrity Badge upon completion of the module. Link [here](#).

The staff focused module is comprised of 3 units- Exploring academic integrity, breaches of academic integrity Teaching and assessment design. It requires 3 hours online engagement and a two-hour workshop. The module Academic staff can earn an IT Sligo academic Integrity Badge upon completion of the module. Link [here](#).

Unit 3 of the Online Academic Writing Programme that was developed during the reporting period and referred to earlier focuses on *Avoiding Plagiarizing: Citation, Referencing & Paraphrasing*.

Face to face/ traditional units of learning

All students complete a module in year 1 to assist their transition into third level education. Within this module students are taught how to reference, paraphrase and what constitutes plagiarism and a breach of academic integrity. The teaching is supported by the Academic Writing Centre and library who offered both 1:1 and group sessions on referencing/ plagiarism/ paraphrasing etc.

Software

The plagiarism detection software Turnitin is deployed in the detection of plagiarism.

CPD for academic staff

A number of workshops have taken place with academic staff to further develop knowledge and skills regarding Academic Integrity. Dr Mary Mooney, Associate Professor, Trinity College Dublin visited the Institute in December 2019 and hosted a face-to-face workshop entitled: *Dealing with Plagiarism*.

Expanding assessment modalities

As a result of the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic in Q1 2020 and the inability to run traditional examinations academic staff selected to assess their modules via Open Book Exams (OBEs). It was recognized that lecturers would require support to construct authentic OBEs and students would need advice on how to prepare for this mode of assessment. The Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT) in collaboration with the Centre for Online Learning (COL) developed a range of supports to address this requirement.

OBE Guide: Students link [here](#).

OBE Guide: Lecturers link [here](#).

The repository of resources detailed in the QQI 2020 publication *Academic Integrity: resources for remote and online learning, teaching and Assessment* serves as a valuable resource to staff. Students and staff were made aware of their role & responsibilities under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education & Training) Act 2019 in relation to academic cheating.

Procedure: Exam 016 Plagiarism Procedures was revised in June 2019.

3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

QQI QAG Core subsection		Planned actions and indicators
2.6	Teaching Learning and Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Further use of GURU to review planned continuous assessment and the use of GURU for nomination of external examiners. This will provide a single system for the management of all the communication and activities between the internal examiners and external examiners. II. Further expansion of UDL across the Institute. III. Complete responses to Examination processes Audit IV. Continue to support staff engage in remote delivery/ assessment through the provision of targeted CPD based on expressed needs. V. Evaluate supports for online learners <p>Units responsible: Registrars Function/ C.O.L/ CELT/ Academic Council</p> <p>CINNTE recommendation 4/24/18. Strategic plan objectives, 1,2 & 6</p>
2.7	Support for Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Initiation of Student Success Action plan with agreed KPIs.

		Unit responsible: Head of student Success/ Academic Council Strategic plan objective 1
2.4	Staff recruitment, management and development	I. Launch of a designated teaching & Learning pathway II. Embed academic Induction & promote COD opportunities through CELT Unit responsible: Centre for Enhancement of Teaching & Learning Strategic plan objective 2 / CINNTE recommendation 8
2.3	Programmes of education & Training	I. Gain Professional Body (Engineers Ireland) re-accreditation for the following programmes - BEng in Electronic Engineering - HC in Electronic Engineering - BEng in Mechanical Engineering - HC in Mechanical Engineering - BEng(Hons) Civil Engineering [ab initio] - BEng(Hons) Civil Engineering [two-year add-on] - BEng in Civil Engineering - HC in Civil Engineering Unit responsible: Faculty of Engineering & Design Strategic plan objective 2, 4
2.9	Public information & Communication	I. Development of a Crisis communication policy II. Ratification of a Communication Policy III. Completion of Website update Unit responsible: Executive committee

		Strategic plan objective 6 / CINNTE recommendation 8
2.2	Document approaches to Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Revisions to QA manual – Chapters 2, 3 & 4 II. Review policy in respect of all aspects of awards / academic documents/exemptions for awards to ensure they meet needs for on-line and current awards. <p>Unit responsible: Registrars Function/ Academic Council:</p> <p>CINNTE recommendation 4/5 /24</p>
2.1	Governance And management of Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Develop a Linked Provider Procedure II. Review Collaborative provision Chapter of QA manual III. Reflect on current collaborations and leanings that can be applied/ introduced to IT Sligo. IV. Continue to progress D.A.B. Action plan <p>Unit responsible: Registrars Function/ Academic Council:</p> <p>Strategic plan objective 2 . CINNTE recommendation 15</p>
2.8	Information & Data management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Extension of CRM to wider student body. II. Facilitate access to historical transcripts and broadsheet through scanning and digitisation of records. III. Enhance access to electronic records through increased use of Digitary CORE for issuing of parchments. <p>Units responsible Registrars / Examination Office Unit /C.O.L. / Executive</p> <p>Strategic plan objective 6</p>

3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

As per the QA manual the Faculty of Engineering & Design and Faculty of Science response to their Faculty review conditions and recommendations were conducted during the reporting period. The panels were satisfied that the conditions and recommendations had been responded to or were in the process of being responded to. The review panel was comprised of the Chair of the Planning and Coordination committee, two members of the original panel and the Registrar.

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Library Services	Spring 2021	None to date
Faculty review: Department of Business, Tourism and Social Sciences	Spring 2021	Spring 2016
Programmatic review	Autumn 2021	Spring 2016* Academic Council permitted extension as preparatory work disrupted by COVID 19 pandemic

3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Faculty of Science Faculty of Science and programmatic Review	Spring 2024	Spring 2019
Faculty of Engineering & Design Faculty of Engineering & Design and programmatic Review Spring 2024 Spring 2019	Spring 2024	Spring 2019
Institutional review if remains a IoT	Spring 2018	Spring 2018
Institutional review if TO designation January 2022	Autumn 2023 (18 months post designation)	N/A

4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

IQA Response to Emergency Situations/Covid-19 Pandemic

The Institute took a whole systems approach to managing the impact of COVID 19 on their QA/E processes. The planning process commenced in February 2021 through the convening of the Critical Incident team which was comprised of key personnel in the Institute. This preplanning meant that on March 13th the Institute was in a position to pivot all face to face delivery to remote delivery, albeit at different levels/degrees of proficiency.

The President established under the auspices of the Academic Council two taskforces to consider the impact of the pandemic in the short to medium term (End of academic year 2019/20 - Academic year 2020/21) and in the long term (Five years hence). Taskforce 1 was led by the Registrar and comprised of personnel from all of the Institutes function- academic, student services, IT services, Health & Safety, Students Union, estates etc. It took due cognisance of the emerging guidance from various sources to inform decision making, for example QQI, Government of Ireland. The purpose of taskforce 1 was to plan for the successful completion of academic year 2019/20 and the roll out of academic year 2020/21 through various lens based on the community incidence of COVID-19. Intrinsic to the work of this taskforce was the identification of the resources and processes required to enable all staff and students engage in their respective roles effectively in a manner that supported their health and wellbeing. Due cognisance was also paid to the Council of Registrars working principles which were developed to support and expedite a positive transition experience for new undergraduate entrants in the Institutes of Technology in the academic year 2020-1.

The initial work of Taskforce 1 was to undertake a SWAT analysis. This activity identified a number of existing strengths of the Institutes due to their leading position in the online education space which meant there was pre-existing expertise and resources available to support the refocusing of delivery. A particular support was the existence of a Centre of Online Learning (C.O. L.) which was resourced with key personnel to support online delivery/ assessment and training of staff and students. An additional strength was the manner that the activity of CELT dovetailed into that of C.O.L. Another advantage of the Institutes leadership place in online delivery space was the reality that approximately 40% of programmes would not be impacted in any significant way by the pandemic once virtual labs were established as they were already delivery online. Notable weakness were identified in relation to academic staff (whose predominant mode to delivery was face to face) competence to employ a variety of teaching/ learning and assessment strategies in the online space for a sustained period of time, PMDS ability to deliver all the ancillary services to students and staff remotely as many processes were not automated, lack of hardware, variable broadband and an environment in need of immediate modifications to complied with the safety regulation. A host of opportunities were identified such as the adoption of new modes

of teaching and assessment, the reconfiguration of a proportion of laboratory work to remote engagement and the opportunity to capitalise on learnings garnered from imposed restrictions (e.g. remote meetings etc)

The immediate priorities of the Taskforce were the continuance of programme delivery, putting in place processes to support academic governance, enabling all student and ancillary services to be accessible remotely, providing staff with the necessary hardware/ software to enable them to execute their role, the adoption of a common communication platform and making the Institutes environment compliant with the emerging public health guidelines.

The priority of the continuance of programme delivery required the provision of training and support to both students and staff to enable the continued engagement with delivery for the remaining 5 weeks of semester 2. Bespoke training was provided by the Centre for Online Learning [COL](#), Centre for Enhancement of Learning & Teaching [CELT](#) and the [Human Resources Department](#). In recognition of the range experience of academic staff delivery competence in the online space, a series of bespoke educational resources were developed to address varying competency levels with the goal of enabling all academic staff engage with delivery at a basic level initially so that the Institute could assure themselves that all students were being actively engaged in their studies. Staff as members of the CUA were also able to access the Digital Teaching and Learning education platform. [DigitalEd.ie](#) to assist them build the digital capabilities and pedagogic expertise required to design, deliver and support flexible and online learning programmes in the immediate lockdown and for the upcoming academic year. The Institute adopted MS Teams as the hub to support programme delivery, communication and collaboration.

All planned terminal examinations were converted to alternative assessments. The goal of the Institute was to assist academic staff develop authentic assessments that upheld the principle of academic integrity and did not require on campus attendance or online proctoring. Again, both COL and CELT supported this activity through one-to-one tutorials, online group tutorials and a series of webinars based on the best available evidence at the time provided through QQI and other global networks. A range of assessments were subsequently developed such as Open Book Examinations, WIRIS Quizzes, case studies and oral examinations. Engagement with external examiners was supported through the office of the Assistant registrar. All exam boards were held remotely via MS Teams.

Bespoke training was also developed to support students' engagement with remote delivery and alternative assessments such as OBEs, hitherto not deployed widely in the Institute. (OBE Guide: Students link [here](#). OBE Guide: Lecturers link [here](#).) Students in receipt of reasonable accommodations via their LENS were provided by the Access office with alternatives for the remote assessment/ examination environment.

In tandem to above, was the development of a process that provided Academic Council with oversight of the modifications to teaching and assessment and their potential impact on programme learning outcomes. A significant modification for many programmes was the need to develop alternatives to work placements which were in the main due to commence during the lock down of March 2020. All programme boards were required to convene and document any proposed changes. Heads of Departments who serve as members of AC were required to present orally to Academic Council any modifications that had a potential impact on programme learning outcomes and the strategies that were being proposed to counteract same. All changes were recorded centrally and approved by Academic Council. In order that no student was disadvantaged by the pandemic and their ability to engage in their studies and the Institutes ability to fulfil all programme learning outcomes, the Academic Council agreed an addendum to the Institutes Marks & Standards for the remainder of academic year 2019/20.

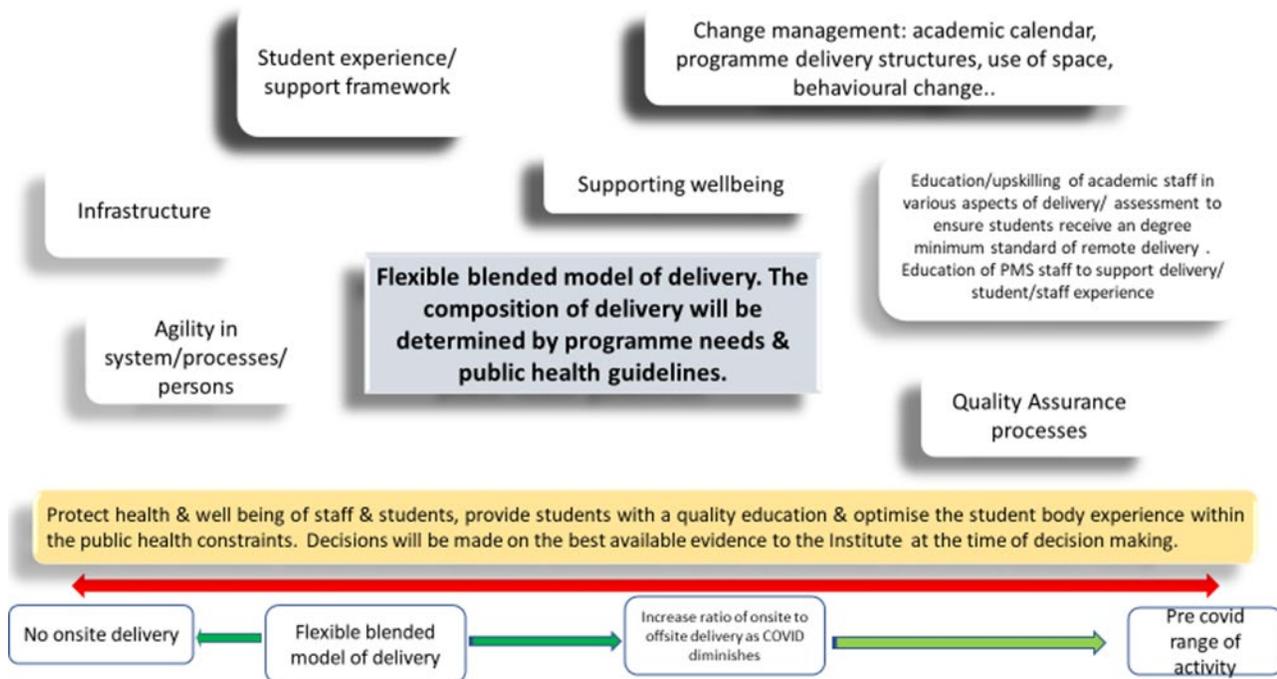
The Institutes IT services provided staff and students* (*where feasible) with the required hardware/software to engage remotely.

All other student services that support the academic endeavour of the Institute were pivoted to the remote environment- library; disability/ access office/careers etc. In addition, all non-academic services such as health care, counselling, pastoral care were repositioned to serve the students remotely.

Students on outward Erasmus placements were requested by the Institute to return home for their own safety and arrangements made with the linked institution that they could continue with their mobility remotely to achieve the required learning outcomes. This arrangement worked well from all parties' perspectives. The International student body were supported through this challenging time by the International office. Where feasible from a programme Boards perspective students who wished to return home were facilitated to do so.

In parallel to closing out semester 2 of the academic year, planning for programme delivery for the academic year 2020/21 commenced. Programme delivery was centric with all other elements considered requisites to support the proposed flexible blended model of delivery.

Figure 1. details the conceptual model that guided taskforce 1 planning for the commencement if Academic year 020/21.



A significant outcome of the Taskforce was a set of seven principles related to programme delivery for the academic year 2020/21. The principles supported the Institutes commitment to the provision of a quality education, being agile enough to respond to the community incidence of COVID, optimising the student experience and doing so in a manner that protected the health wellbeing of both students and staff. The principles agreed by the Academic Council in June 2020 and set in train a number of activities that called out all the functions of the Institution. A dedicated committee of Academic Council was established to deal with the Academic Quality Assurances processes related to the pandemic for the academic year 2020/21. Staff and students were surveyed in May/ June 2020 regarding their experiences of remote delivery to date and to identify their training and technological/ resources needs for the forthcoming academic year. The findings were used to inform the supporting resources that were initiated for the academic year 2020/2021.

A COVID 19 Return to work team was established in May 2020 and subsequently developed a Return to Work Protocol. The parameters surrounding delivery had to align to this protocol.

The Students Union worked collaboratively with the Registrars function to support the student body. They led out on initiatives such as the compiling and distributing care packages to students who had to restrict their movements or self-isolate due to COVID-19. They provided virtual social and emotional support to the international student body. They communicated key messages through a variety of social media platforms to ensure that all students were in possession of the most update information relevant to the Institute.

Responding to the first 6 months of the pandemic posed a considerable number of challenges for the Institute which were dealt by cross functioning working, the commitment of staff and students to their education and effective communication. Only a small number of programmes which relied heavily on placements and/or studio work were unable to complete their programme learning outcomes. Arrangements to complete same were put in place for the beginning of the academic year 2020/2021. A significant learning from the first 6 months experience of dealing with the pandemic is the need for system and process agility, change management and transformative leadership skills.

Case study 7 Embedding UDL in Programme development, delivery and assessment.

The Institute committed to embedding Universal Design for Learning across all programmes in the Strategic plan 2017-2022. This was recognising the heterogenous student population of the Institute and that with this heterogeneity the Institute need to provide the student body with the conditions they need to succeed in from a Teaching & Learning perspective. In 2021, HEA funding for students with disabilities will be aligned with HEI compliance with UDL. UDL is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all students equal opportunities to learn. It provides a variety of strategies and resources to help meet diverse learning needs, improve accessibility to learning and increase student success. Raising awareness was the initial part of the journey, followed by the introduction of UDL digital badges.

Under the auspices of CELT, a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) a Working group was established in 2019 with academic and professional services staff from all three Faculty's and functional areas with a common goal in creating an inclusive culture in teaching, learning and assessment.



In the reporting period, three distinct Seminar projects were undertaken by the UDL working group to progress the Institutes commitment to UDL, namely the development of a bespoke UDL toolkit, the audit of a number of modules for UDL compliance and the introduction of modifications to module manager to assist academic staff embed the principles of UDL during module/ programme development. The development of the bespoke toolkit drew on the work of UCD (‘Toolkit for Inclusive Higher Education Institutions, From Vision to Practice ‘) as well as the UDL principles and guidelines from the creators of the UDL principles CAST. The Toolkit offers a strategic

institution-wide lens to assess progress, identify opportunities for improvement, and create a bespoke action plan to develop a whole institution approach to inclusion, with the aim to ensure every student feels welcome, that they belong, and valued.

The toolkit was subsequently deployed during to audit a number of modules. Each module was given a UDL compliance score. Subsequent to the audit each module owner was met by a UDL team member who provided feedback and robust recommendations to increase UDL compliance for the module. The UDL team member provided the necessary support and advise to each lecturer to implement changes required to ensure the module became inclusive and fully UDL compliant.

Academic Module manager was modified to support academic staff embed the principles of UDL during Module and Programme Design in relation to the development of Learning Outcomes, the selection of Teaching & Learning Strategies and Assessment modalities. This support is provided through the addition of pop-up fields and hyperlinks to useful documents and resources. These changes are intuitive to use, and guidance videos are available on these on the CELT Moodle page to support lecturers.

A specific UDL Moodle page has now been created to host all UDL activities and showcase developments through recorded guest presentations, digital badges, workshops, videos from badge participants highlighting initiatives, projects etc. <https://www.itsligo.ie/administration/registrar/udl/>. The next reporting period will see activities which will further embed UDL in the Institutes curricula.

Case Study 8 – Research Student Career Development, Training and Networking Plan

Active planning and engagement in their career development, and potential training and networking opportunities leading to a more rounded individual is an important aspect of the research process for postgraduate research students. To facilitate and encourage this, the Institute is introducing a new part of the research quality assurance process, where the students formally identify, with the support of their supervisor, their training needs and complete a Career Development, Training and Networking Plan (CDTNP), initially spanning the first 2 years of the research degree period and which will be reviewed on an annual basis. As part of this CDTNP, the students will also complete a Training Needs Analysis form.

The CDTNP provides research students with a formal framework for reflecting on personal, professional and career development aspirations, identifying any gaps in skills, knowledge and experiences and developing a plan for achieving the research, career, training and personal aspirations. Such a process will be very beneficial to the students because by developing, implementing and reviewing the CDTNP, they will be able to:

- Better recognise their strengths and identify areas for improvement
- Fully realise and maximise their potential as researchers
- Be more proactive in seeking and making most use of the development opportunities that are available within and outside the Institute
- Be equipped with more advanced skills, knowledge and techniques to carry out excellent research
- Improve their ability to work effectively in their current roles and are well prepared for future positions they may aspire to hold, within or beyond the Institute
- Become a world-class researcher, who can make a real-world impact on the wider environment
- Successfully pursue their career aspirations either in academia or beyond

The CDTNP will be supported by an accredited Graduate Education Programme which provides students with a structured programme that includes key Generic and Transferable Skills, as well as discipline specific training. The document to support this plan have been drafted. Approval of the QA processes and implementation are planned for 2020-2021.