



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Quality in Action in Irish Higher Education 2020

Collection of Case Studies from Higher Education Institutions

Case studies from the following institutions are included:

1. Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT)
2. Cork Institute of Technology (CIT)
3. Dublin City University (DCU)
4. Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT)
5. Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT)
6. Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT)
7. Institute of Technology, Carlow (IT Carlow)
8. Institute of Technology, Sligo (ITS)
9. Institute of Technology, Tralee (IT Tralee)
10. Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT)
11. Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT)
12. Maynooth University (MU)
13. National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI Galway)
14. Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI)
15. Trinity College Dublin (TCD)
16. Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin)
17. University College Cork (UCC)
18. University College Dublin (UCD)
19. University of Limerick (UL)
20. Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT)

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Introduction

QQI is the Irish state agency with responsibility for the external quality assurance (QA) of tertiary education in Ireland. As one of its functions, QQI monitors and reviews the internal QA of higher education institutions (HEIs) and – as part of this remit – each publicly-regulated HEI in Ireland submits to QQI an annual institutional quality report (AIQR) for the previous academic year.

In addition, this year, each institution was invited to submit up to three case studies of practice in the following ten thematic areas:

1. Process of levelling qualifications on the NFQ (DABs)
2. Teaching, Learning & Learner Assessment [and/or technological enhancements]
3. Learner Experience [engagement, impact, national and international]
4. Research – Ensuring Quality and Impact
5. Academic Integrity
6. Assessing the impact of research
7. Engagement and Collaboration - with Industry; Societal/Civic Engagement
8. Widening access, progression and RPL
9. Transnational Education
10. Developing QA for merging or newly established institutions

Case studies were also submitted in respect of a number of additional themes and these are included in section 11, 'Additional Themes'.

This document contains all case studies received in response to QQI's call that are not published in full in QQI's synthesis report, *Quality in Irish Higher Education 2020*. QQI has also included in this collection a number of case studies extracted directly from the AIQRs.

Each case study is published in the name of the institution and has not been edited by QQI.

1. Process of Levelling Qualifications in the NFQ

CIT: Description of Validation and Professional Regulation of Taught Programmes

The validation (accreditation), monitoring and periodic review of academic programmes in Cork Institute of Technology is carried out under CIT's academic and quality assurance regulations as agreed with Quality and Qualifications Ireland.

For new taught programmes, validation is predicated on successful completion of both internal and independent external quality reviews. These include a review of the content and structure of the proposed programme and of the staffing, resourcing levels and supports envisaged. The final decision on validation is taken by the Governing Body of CIT on the advice of the Institute's Academic Council.

Executive responsibility for the implementation of procedures for the validation and quality assurance of programmes lies with the Office of the Registrar & Vice-President for Academic Affairs. Programme validation is generally granted for five years, after which a review of the operation, enduring quality and continuing relevance of the programme is carried out to establish its eligibility for renewal of validation. This Programmatic Review is carried out on a school/college basis and takes into account the operational and strategic context as well as programme-level elements. The continuous monitoring and development of the academic programmes is a matter for the programme boards, which are comprised of heads of academic unit, programme staff and learner representatives. Assessment results and decisions on progression and award classification require ratification by the Academic Council.

Feasibility Study

The CIT programme validation process requires that a Feasibility Study is produced for every programme proposed for development. This study presents a detailed projection of the resource requirements of the new programme, vis-à-vis the projected intake and demand trajectory over a five-year period. The Feasibility Study is reviewed by a Working Party of the Institute Executive Board. Except for those rare cases where a programme is of extraordinary strategic significance, proposals require a sound business case to pass this feasibility review, otherwise they are halted by the Institute Executive before they go into full development.

QA of Teaching and Learning Modules in Programmes

The design of the formal module descriptor enforces the systematic capture of fundamental elements of the teaching and learning strategy at the module level, defining and describing the module learning outcomes, indicative content, the assessment and re-assessment formats and weightings, and the delivery formats, including the extent of independent learning expected.

At the programme level, CIT's processes for initial programme validation and programmatic review require departments to comment on the teaching and learning strategy for each programme in the programme self-evaluation report submitted to the external expert panel. The information contained therein, and the qualitative feedback obtained by the panels from their meetings with learners, graduates and lecturing staff, is complemented by quantitative student performance data which give an indication of the success of the programme teaching and learning strategy in relation to the achievement of the learning outcomes by the different cohorts of learners.

The overall programme document provides a curriculum map showing where the intended programme learning outcomes are achieved. Peer reviewers are asked to ascertain that each programme outcome is supported by a sufficient number of modules to ensure it can be achieved by the average learner, irrespective of elective choice. Furthermore, an assessment matrix for each programme is reviewed to ensure that the time and nature of the assessment tasks is appropriate. Reviewers will frequently address issues such as assessment clustering or over-reliance on one form of assessment methodology.

At an earlier stage of programme (re-)development, the appropriateness of the proposed teaching and learning strategies is investigated when academic units seek advice on their programme proposals from employer groups or industry advisory panels. Thus, industry feedback was a significant factor in the decision of the CIT Faculty of Business & Humanities to extend the inclusion of significant work placement periods to the furthest extent possible across its complete portfolio of programmes.

Involvement of PRSBs

Where fields of employment are subject to professional regulation, or where successful professional practice is predicated on professional registration, CIT programmes may also need to achieve and maintain recognition or accreditation from professional bodies or from statutory regulators, such as CORU or the Marine Survey Office in the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport.

While CIT is cognisant of the primacy of its obligations as a public provider of higher education and training under applicable HE legislation and academic quality frameworks, the Institute also ascertains itself that the professional requirements of each field are taken into account to the requisite degree in programme validation or review processes. Conversely, even outside of regulatory contexts CIT endeavours to familiarise the relevant professional organisations with its academic quality assurance procedures and criteria. In addition to inviting engagement in the context of various industry liaison fora, the Institute may arrange for representatives of regulatory or professional bodies to sit in on academic review panels as observers or, if appropriate, may invite representatives of such bodies to participate in academic review as a panel member. CIT programmes are currently recognised by ca. 30 separate professional organisations.

2. Teaching, Learning & Learner Assessment [and/or Technological Enhancements]

AIT: The Academic Writing Centre at Athlone Institute of Technology

The Academic Writing Centre (AWC) at Athlone Institute of Technology first opened its doors in 2015, at a time when many other third-level institutions in Ireland were developing similar services. Over the past five years the centre has become firmly established, and is now central to fostering academic excellence across the AIT student body. It delivers immediately tangible transformative benefits to many students.

The AWC is run as part of the wider Student Resource Centre, but it has a distinct, stand-alone identity – in the form of a highly visible physical presence (an office just off the main campus canteen), and a dedicated writing tutor who handles the day-to-day running of the centre and delivers the bulk of its engagements. This strong identity has been vital to its success: both students and staff know where to find the AWC, and who the writing tutor is.

The writing tutor post is a part-time (20 hours per week) assistant lecturer position, and additional tutoring is provided by other academic staff with appropriate expertise. Rather than using peer tutors or postgraduate students for writing support (as is the case in some other institutions), at AIT tutoring is provided entirely by lecturers, ensuring quality and consistency. Having a main appointed writing tutor allows for new initiatives and continuous development of the writing centre project. It also provides a single point of contact for academic staff looking to call on the AWC's services, or simply wanting to seek advice and discuss general ideas for improving students' writing.

Currently, a total of 27 staff hours go into the writing centre, with 80 students on average reached each week. The AWC provides a mixture of one-to-one appointments, one-off group workshops and class sessions on request. It also provides an extensive and carefully curated set of digital resources via the Moodle platform. One-to-one sessions are available to all students, bookable online on a first-come, first-served basis via the highly effective Yellow Schedule booking system. Drop-in slots are available whenever there are no pre-booked appointments. A marked shift in the nature of student engagements over the last five years clearly indicates how well embedded in student life the AWC has become: at the outset, most one-to-one appointments were referred by lecturers; today the vast majority of students using the centre self-refer.

Class sessions – sometimes one-off, sometimes with follow-up sessions – are typically requested by individual lecturers to address a specific writing or research skills issue, or to provide guidance ahead of an upcoming assignment. There is considerable crossover here, with many students first encountered during class sessions going on to become one-to-one attendees.

Although it is difficult quantitatively to assess the impact of the AWC on actual academic writing standards across the institute, its value to students is plainly demonstrated in the most recent Irish Survey of Student Engagement, where the centre's services feature prominently amongst the positive responses. And the flexible, highly accessible one-to-one service means that tutors are very often able track dramatic and long-lasting benefits for individual returning students

AIT: An Enhancement Initiative: Taking a Programmatic Approach when Reviewing Assessment using TESTA

The Department of Sport and Health Sciences, in collaboration with the AIT Learning and Teaching Unit, engaged in a review of assessment across all programmes in the department, using the TESTA approach. This review involved the participation of key stakeholders including all teaching staff in the department, students and the department administrator. The purpose of the review was two-fold as in addition to examining assessment approaches across the department, using TESTA was piloted by the department in order to determine suitability for replication across the institute as part of a continuous review process.

TESTA is an evidence-led approach to understanding assessment patterns across full degree programmes in order to improve the quality of student learning. The purpose of TESTA is to help programme teams identify enhancements for student learning based on evidence and assessment principles.

Led by the Head of Department, the review involved 17 Sport & Health lecturers and 21 lecturers from other discipline areas for 2018-2019. The review was facilitated by Professor Tansy Jessop, Pro Vice Chancellor Education, University of Bristol. TESTA uses three methods to gather evidence about the typical assessment experience of students:

- Programme audit (evidence from documents and the programme team)
- Assessment Experience Questionnaire (based on established assessment principles)
- Focus groups with students

After receiving ethical approval, the Learning and Teaching Unit and Department of Sport and Health Sciences worked together to collect data between February and March. 131 (36%) of students from across the four-degree programmes: BSc in Health Science & Nutrition; BSc in Sports Science & Exercise Physiology; BSc in Athletic & Rehabilitation Therapy and BSc in Physical Activity & Health completed the electronic Assessment Experience Questionnaire (AEQ). This was supplemented with qualitative data from focus groups involving 13 students from the final and second years, conducted by researchers in the Learning and Teaching Unit, with all programmes represented.

In April 2019, two days were allocated to undertaking the programme audit, which involved gathering evidence from all programme coordinators. Due to the high response rate to the AEQ, the BSc Sport Science and Exercise Physiology was selected as a case study for further examination, with lecturers identifying common key areas for enhancement of all programmes. This process involved identifying positive aspects of programmes from the staff perspective in addition to aspects which needed to be addressed. The comprehensive case study report included a summary categorisation of all assessments across the programme, a comparison between the assessment on the case study programme and similar TESTA programmes. Finally, TESTA allowed for the identification features emerging from across all programmes in relation to volume of assessment, the ratio between formative and summative

assessment, the variety of assessment and the role of feedback in learning. Key ideas were incorporated into an action plan, which will form the basis of for the review of programmes in the department. The TESTA experience, particularly the impact of the process for staff in one department in addition to findings from the case study will be further disseminated in the institute through Academic Council, the Academic Standards and Quality Committee and other relevant fora.

GMIT: First Year of Intake on BEng in Engineering (Common Entry)

This was the first year of the intake on the BEng in Engineering (Common Entry for a range of mechanical engineering programmes). The programme was introduced to aid student transition through allowing students to choose the mechanical engineering specialisation they wish to pursue at the end of their first year of study.

It helps students make an informed choice by introducing students to all the offered specialisms within the first stage of their programme. This new entry route proved popular, with a third of students choosing the undenominated programme entry route rather than a specialised degree. Students will choose a specialist programme at the end of stage 1. The School Management will monitor the impact this has on the distribution of students between the mechanical engineering programmes and student retention.

LIT: Blended and Online Learning Policy Highlights

A key priority of LIT's Strategic plan 2018-2022 is to *"enhance our flexible model of education to include new online and blended programmes that increase student enrolments, support continuous professional development (CPD) and enable life-long learning"*. This is also embedded in the Teaching and Learning Strategy 2018-2023 as a goal to *"develop a set of best practice principles to guide the integration of TEL where appropriate"*. To support this development a working group (16 members from LIT Staff from various areas across the Institute) was set up in October 2017 to create a policy on Blended and Online Learning. The working group met five times between October 2017 and May 2018 to discuss, review and develop the policy. The working group undertook an initial information gathering exercise which included a review of policies and reports at a national and international level across the sector. LIT's Blended an Online Policy is in line with QQI Topic Specific Guidelines on the Provision on Blended Learning Programmes.

The Blended and Online Policy 2018-2023 classifies and defines what Face-to-Face, Blended and Online Learning is within the LIT context. Following on from this the policy looks at blended and online learning within the organisation, programme and learner experience context. The policy provides an overview of different learning design approaches/frameworks that can be used and recommends that following a learning design model or framework should be done as part of the programme design stage to ensure that judicious consideration has been applied to the structure and sequence of the learning activities and assessment. To support the planning and design process of blended and online modules/programmes at LIT, the policy includes templates as part of a mapping exercise to identify any resources or technical setup that may be required for delivery or assessment. These templates provide an opportunity to align the learning activities to the assessments strategy.

Programme Delivery Mode (Delivery Mode = F, B, O (F = face to face, B = blended, O =online))			
Module Title:			
Learning Design Model / Framework:			
Module Components	Delivery Mode	Details	Resources Required
Induction			
Lectures			
Practical / Workshop			
Tutorials			
Work Placement			
Other			

The policy provides guidance on technical and operational supports that need to be considered in the design stage and a number of support guides have also been developed to assist staff in designing blended/online modules/programmes, as well as an overview of the different learning design modes/frameworks that can be implemented. As part of the implementation of the policy the templates have been integrated into the New Programme Design Guidelines to ensure that all new online modules/programmes will have completed these templates and can be included in the Validation programme document.

NUI Galway: Student Digital Pathways

NUI Galway has undertaken a project to look at improving the organisation, processes, and underlying technology we use to manage our students' journey at NUI Galway from registration to graduation. Investing in our Student Records solution through the **Student Digital Pathways** initiative will bring significant advantages in

- Understanding the capabilities (people, processes, technology & data) needed over the next 10 years
- Improvements in the administration of our students' journey
- driving a significant reduction to complexity and risk
- allowing the development of more flexible modes of learning

The University Management Team has provided funding to progress this major review of the Student records administration processes and systems. The 2018/19 funding enabled the project team to progress the procurement preparation and institutional readiness phase of the project.

A governance structure has been established consisting of a Programme steering group which is chaired by the Registrar and Deputy President and a Project Board for the current phase chaired by the Academic Secretary. Alongside this, in recognition of the broad impact of the programme, a Sub-Committee chaired by the Dean of the College of Business Public Policy and Law has been formed to manage the policy and organisational aspects of the programme. A specific working group has been set up from this committee to look at the two key areas of Curriculum Design and Management and Class Scheduling and Timetabling.

Dedicated staff have been recruited to the project team and a number of workshops have been completed focusing on the analysis of the current and future business capabilities which the solution will be required to deliver. The project utilises a Capability model approach to identify and develop requirements which will sustain for the next decade. The project is run on the Prince II methodology. As part of this work a large number of University processes will be refined, changed and implemented. The policies which underlie these processes will also be refined to reflect the changes. The harmonisation of the Curriculum Design & Management, Class Scheduling and Timetabling as well as the other aspects of the Student Lifecycle; Recruit, Enroll, Delivery of Teaching and Learning, Progression, Graduation and the underlying support aspects of Student & Academic Administration and Student Support and Wellbeing will all be addressed within the project. This is being conducted through wide engagement within the University and bench-marking to external similar 3rd level institutes. The project addresses all student types within NUI Galway. The project has a timeline of four years.

TU Dublin: Learning from and Engaging with Assessment and Feedback (LEAF) Project

Context

Assessment strategies have been shown to have a significant impact on shaping how students learn and how they develop key employability skills. This is an issue that is being grappled with internationally as academics, academic leaders and policy makers adapt to a changing environment. Within the City Campus, this has been a focus for much discussion for a number of years, as the national student survey, internal student surveys and other student-led fora have indicated that this is an issue for students. The programme annual monitoring process, through the Q5 form, includes provision for each Programme Committee to consider a particular theme of importance each year, and Assessment Feedback was an agreed theme for the review of 2012/13 and again in 2014/15.

Following discussion of the responses of Programme Committees at the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategies Committee and other fora, in 2017 it was agreed that they would invite Teaching Fellowship submissions from multi-disciplinary cross-institutional teams to design and implement an 18-month project to result in an Institute-wide strategy to enhance practices in assessment and feedback.

The Project

The LEAF project team was the successful team, comprising 18 academics from across City Campus, representing all colleges. Also included were two further members who represented the student voice: the Director of Student Affairs and the Students' Union Education Officer.

Learning from best practice nationally and internationally, and research from staff, students and quality documents, this project has developed a set of recommendations to enhance practices in, and experiences of, assessments and feedback in TU Dublin. This research led approach allowed the student, academic and experts voices to inform the research in terms of identifying the key issues and recommendations.

Findings

Key issues identified in the project include the following:

- The timeliness, amount and quality of assessment feedback.
- Expectations need to be aligned so that the student can identify what constitutes a successful assessment.
- Most often there is a monologue rather than a dialogue approach to assessment feedback.
- The need to ensure the closure of the feedback loop.
- Assessment and feedback may not be consistent across a programme.
- Assessment and feedback are not core in the academic quality framework.
- Assessment and feedback need to be resourced.
- Assessment needs to be clearly aligned with graduate attributes.
- Organisational change, incorporating top down and bottom up approaches, is necessary to effect change.
- The student voice is vital.
- Technology is not being used widely for assessments.

Assessment and Feedback tool trials

Nine Assessment and Feedback tools identified from the literature were trialled on more than 40 programmes across City Campus as part of this project. They included peer mentoring, successive weighted assessments, video assessments, feedback and marking rubrics, audio and video feedback online quizzes and feedback in place of a grade. Their usefulness was then examined from both the student and academic perspective in terms of addressing the key issues outlined above.

Recommendations

In order to effect significant change, the report argues that a multi layered multi-faceted approach is necessary. A wide range of recommendations is identified at university, programme, module and student level and they can be seen at the end of the final report.

<https://arrow.tudublin.ie/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1018&context=tfschcafrep>

It is recognized by the LEAF team that instigating change can be challenging, but this set of recommendations provides a basis from which to initiate discussions across the whole university and provides opportunities for a variety of strategies that will improve the learning and teaching experience.

UCD: Defining Educational Excellence (Curriculum Review and Enhancement Project)

Situation

Under Strategic Initiative 2 of the UCD Strategy 2015-2020: Defining educational excellence, UCD aims to deliver a world-class learning experience for its students. In setting out its objectives and vision for 2020, UCD recognised that excellence in teaching and curriculum design must be supported across governance and operational structures.

Task

UCD introduced a modularised curriculum in 2005. Ten years on, programmes had not been reviewed at a University-wide level and there was a concern of an over-emphasis on modules to the detriment of programme coherence and cohesion. To address the opportunities and challenges presented by the maturing modular curriculum, UCD initiated a University-wide project in 2015: the Curriculum Review and Enhancement Project (CRE process).

Recognising the CRE process as the pivotal point in this joined-up approach to reviewing the educational content of the University, this case study addresses the adaptation of Academic Regulations and systems around CMS (Curriculum Management System) in response to the project and the adaptation of University governance (delegated authority) to drive the change. Additionally, this case study interweaves curriculum review and enhancement, underscoring UCD's commitment to QA/QE. The CRE process demonstrates a commitment to the student learning experience and to evaluating structures to determine if they are fit-for-purpose and capable of supporting the delivery of four key themes identified to enhance that learning experience. It not only promoted self-reflection and QA/QE ethos in curriculum design and delivery, the process employed by the University was externally reviewed to inform future institutional-level projects.

Action

The CRE process provided the University with the opportunity to create greater programme cohesion and coherence by identifying how individual modules fit into broader programme objectives. The process placed a strong emphasis on the articulation of outcomes, with a focus on coherently organising, delivering and assessing curricula to embed and assure these outcomes for students¹.

Conducted over a 15-month period, with a four-stage methodology, the CRE process was led locally by Project Champions. It resulted in the publication of programme vision and value statements and programme learning outcomes for 598 taught programmes, as well as a curriculum mapping exercise whereby contributing modules were mapped to the programme outcomes.

While Academic Regulations were kept under annual review, a full re-draft had last taken place to support modularisation (September 2006). Informed by the learning from the CRE process, the University decided it was timely to evaluate the regulations to determine whether they could

¹ Further information about the CRE process is available at www.ucd.ie/teaching/projects/archive/curriculumreviewandenhancement

make a more significant contribution to UCD's current strategic priorities. In 2016, Academic Council established a working group whose primary objective in reviewing the regulations was to determine how new Academic Regulations could best support students to learn and progress in their programmes. The working group was chaired by the Registrar and made up of student, faculty and staff representatives from across the University. Informal and formal consultation was undertaken with targeted individuals and groups, the Students' Union, and all faculty and staff using a variety of consultation and survey methods. Survey feedback and consequent actions were published for faculty, staff and students to view.

As an outcome of the CRE process and the review of Academic Regulations, it was recognised that the structures overseeing approval of academic programmes and their quality required review and approval at various governance boards. The principle of allowing a governance board at the appropriate level to approve changes within the broad Academic Regulations framework was agreed allowing the University Boards to focus more on strategy and broader quality issues.

Recognising that education excellence requires operational and systems support, the University's structures and processes for implementing student-related delegated authority decisions have been enhanced during this time. An Academic Regulations Implementation Group devised and delivered the technical and operational solutions required to implement the new regulations (major modifications were required to Banner, CMS, the Research Management System and SISWeb).

Results

In addition to the programme vision, value statements and learning outcomes mentioned above, recommendations from the CRE Steering Committee were incorporated into the Education Strategy 2015-2020: Our Students' Education and Experience. The process also provided an opportunity for module co-ordinators to reflect on how their modules fitted into programmes as well as opportunities to engage with students – further enhancements of the quality process. As highlighted by the external reviewer, the CRE process encouraged faculty to see modules as important pieces contributing to the programme, rather than as standalone elements. Some examples of key changes made to programme design and enhancement

include the new four-year degree in Social Sciences, incorporation of more in-depth learning experiences via the introduction of 10-credit modules across a range of programmes and development of a Technology Enhanced Learning strategy. The external review indicated that the process had enabled positive change as well as identifying learning points for any future large-scale initiative of this nature.

Supporting UCD's Vision for 2020 and its strategic initiatives, as well as the implementation of recommendations from the CRE process, a new set of Academic Regulations was approved by Academic Council in 2018, to come into effect from academic year 2019/20. They establish a single set of regulations for all taught programmes in the University, and separate regulations for graduate research students. Greater emphasis is placed on ensuring programme coherence, and specific measures are introduced to ensure transparent and fair grading processes, in addition to providing timely and effective feedback to students on all assessed work. New programme structures were introduced to promote both depth and breadth in learning outcomes, and greater efficiency is provided for by devolving decision-making. New possibilities are also provided for, such as integrated assessment across multiple modules and the assessment of learning outcomes achieved outside traditional module structures.

At an operational level, the new Academic Regulations are supported by a new curriculum system. This allows the more comprehensive information required by the regulations at module, major and programme level to be captured and reported on. Examples include key information on degree aware calculation, method and timing of module remediation, feedback activity and timing, greater detail on assessment strategies, grade scales and mark-to-grade conversions. This information is reflected in the curriculum browser. It provides students with greater transparency around the University's academic offerings, allowing them to make informed choices about their majors and modules. The advanced reporting and auditing capabilities facilitate improved governance, and provide greater clarity, flexibility and coherence for faculty and staff.

With regard to governance structures, responsibility for the quality of programmes has been delegated to the most appropriate level. UMT, College Executive, UPB and Governing Boards have different responsibilities at different stages of new programme approval. Module approval lies with module co-ordinators and Schools, with exceptions brought to Governing Boards. From a teaching and learning aspect, responsibility is held by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, VPT&Ls, University and College level committees, as well as local College meetings with School Heads of T&L (support is provided by the Teaching and Learning unit – see section 5 of the ISER).

For certain student-related matters, decision-making responsibility is delegated from UPB to Governing Boards and communicated to UCD Registry for action. This had traditionally been a paper-based system but, following consultation with the relevant Registry teams, Programme Offices, Graduate Schools and Schools, has recently migrated online. This has delivered enhancements in the quality of service provision and governance. A full suite of reports now ensures the University has oversight over such student-related decisions, facilitating improved review, audit and monitoring. It has also delivered a significant improvement in processing accuracy and turnaround time – further enhancing the student experience.

3. Learner Experience [Engagement, Impact, National and International]

AIT: ISSE in AIT – a Successful Collaboration to Enhance the Student Experience

Short Description

ISSE plays a key role to the enhancement of Quality Assurance within AIT. The Institute puts in a significant effort into ensuring it captures and acts upon the voice of the student.

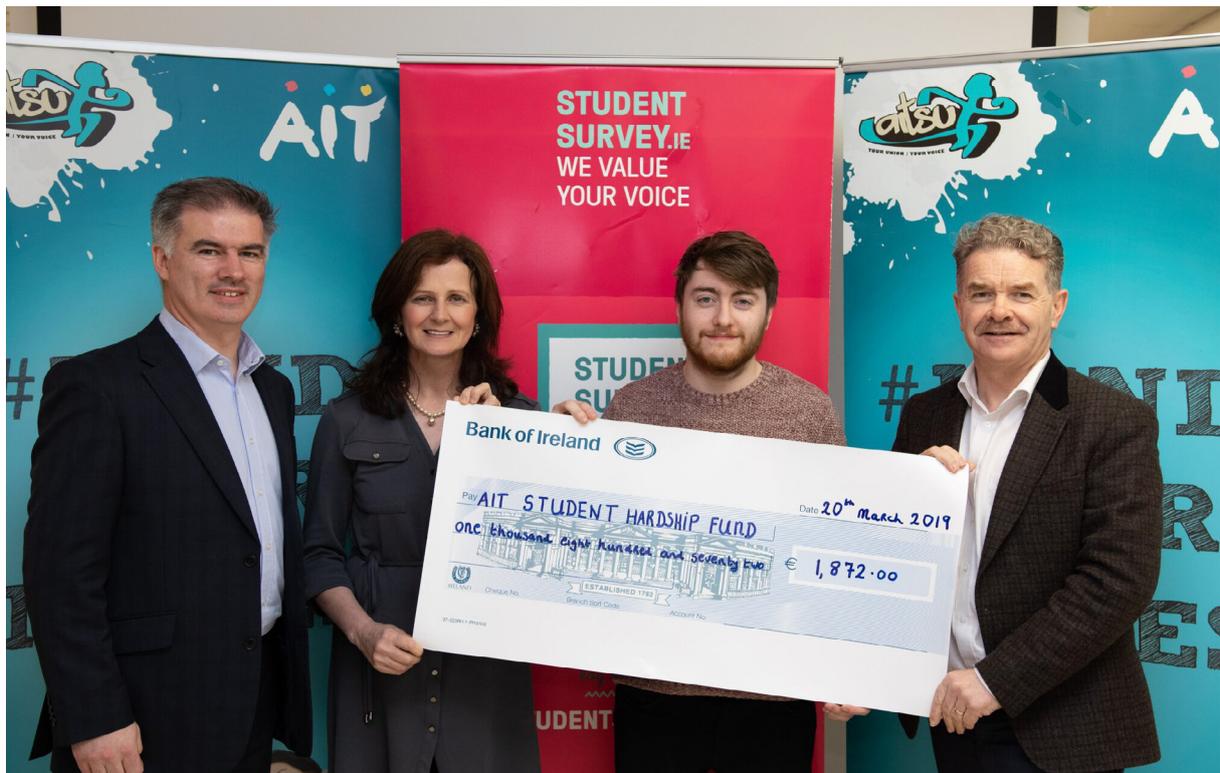
Long Description

The ISSE experience in AIT has been extremely positive since it was first introduced in 2014. Each year the response rates have increased steadily. In 2019 AIT achieved its highest participation rate to date, with 69% of the student cohort engaging in the survey. The survey is promoted on an ongoing basis through social media, posters and face to face interaction with staff and students. Incentives are also used as part of this promotion campaign. Another key motivation for the students is the €1 donated per survey completed to the Student Hardship fund.

A thorough analysis of the results of the survey is carried out annually by the quality office, and a report is circulated to the relevant stakeholders within the institute. An action plan is then implemented based on the information obtained, playing a key role in our continuous efforts to enhance the student experience at AIT.

Presentation of cheque to the AIT Student Hardship Fund

(this represents 1 euro per survey completed in 2018/2019 academic year)



Left to right: Dr Niall Seery, Vice-President Academic Affairs & Registrar, Cora McCormack, Quality Officer, Oisín Moloughney, SU President, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, President of AIT.

AIT: International Mobility in the Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure

In the Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Studies, Athlone Institute of Technology, field based international learning plays an important role in attracting and retaining students. Since 2016, more than 200 students have participated in an international experience, including non-credited short residential study visits, credited semester abroad studies, credited work placements and representing the Institute at competitions. Students from the department have visited more than 20 countries, including France, Italy, Spain, the UK, and Poland in Europe and the UAE, India, Malaysia, and China in Asia, among others.

The short residential field visits have included 30 students visiting Beijing (2016), 50 visiting Dubai (2017 & 2019), 22 visiting Shanghai and 24 visiting Kuala Lumpur. These trips are not credited or formally examined, however preparatory work is expected. Students also submit written reflections. The trips are self-funded, usually costing €1,200. Students are selected to participate through monitoring of their attendance, engagement, and motivation. Interestingly, an entrepreneurial spirit organically emerges among the students to help them subsidise the cost of the trip. This involves students running commercial events and using the profits towards their experience. The age range of students participating has been between 18 and 60, with a mean age of 25 and a standard deviation of 10.81.

The itineraries for the visits included a mixture of academic, cultural and industry related activities. Each trip has five fundamental aims:

1. To enhance the student experience and develop bonds between disparate groups
2. To play a role in retention and progression
3. To promote the students of the Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Studies in AIT to a wider audience
4. To encourage student mobility and develop placement and graduate pathway links
5. To act as a professional development opportunity for HTL staff

Qualitative analysis of the success of the trips indicates that passion, motivation, self-belief, confidence, and planning skills are all enhanced through participation. From a quantitative perspective, students participating on the trips appear to have excellent progression potential, with 94% of students participating completing their course or progressing to further study after their trip.

Students wrote very positively about the fieldtrips, describing them as ‘life-changing’, ‘eye-opening’ and ‘unforgettable’ with a participating lecturer noting that the fieldtrips were ‘exciting, educational experiences for all, leaving students with lasting memories, a respect for the Chinese people and their culture and the possibility for each student to pursue a working experience in China when they graduate from AIT.

IADT: Final Year Matters – Moving On Programme for Final-Year Students

The Students Union and the Student Experience Team piloted the ‘Final Year Matters – Moving On’ programme during 18/19. This is a complementary programme flanking ‘First Year Matters’, IADT’s extended orientation for incoming students. The purpose of the final year programme is to facilitate the launch of students into the world of craft, employability, further study and entrepreneurship. Specifically targeting all undergraduate students in their final year, the programme aims to identify the transferable skills across disciplines, encourage strong mental health in transition and beyond, allow networking opportunities with outside and community stakeholders and instil business and advancement opportunities for the students post-graduation.

The 5-day event offers a variety of considered and valuable proceedings for the student body, and creates a stronger network with external stakeholders in the wider community.

The three themes of IADT’s strategic plan into 2023 are Excellence, Growth and Community. Creating global citizens through the arts, business and technological education is at the heart of the institute’s mission. Final Year Matter, Moving On is proposed as a capstone event to complement the three pillars of IADT’s strategic plan and host a unique programme aimed at further equipping students with what they need to succeed beyond college. Within the journey, there are many transitions; just as our First Year Matters programme addresses the needs of the incoming student to foster a sense of belonging within the institute, FYM Moving On is the ‘bookend’ to launch our graduates into the next part of their journey. As well as an expected impact on student and graduate success, FYM Moving on findings will impact on the curriculum in terms of how disciplines can work to ensure this transition is smooth, will bolster relationships between the institute, the Student’s

Union and the employers. A further leg of the initiative is to explore ways to harness the Alumni networks within and across disciplines to engage with early career graduates.

In addition the programme aligns with the Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 in recognising the increasing importance of transversal skills and will foreground for participants the importance and relevance of skills in creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship, critical and analytical thinking, teamwork, communication and business acumen.

FYM Moving On aims to fill the gap between an undergraduate degree and what lies beyond; employment, further education, entrepreneurship and whatever else the students imagine. The initiative will embolden final year students and focus them on life after college, give them further coping skills and reaffirm the importance of their education. Workshops on interviewing, tax, self-promotion, self-care, networking and leadership will be on offer, with guest speakers, cross institute facilitators and local enterprise partners. For lecturing staff, the FYM Moving On programme is an opportunity to share with new student cohorts across the institute, empower students and develop their teaching skills. How does an accounting lecturer create content for the purely visual learner from film? How does the animation lecturer help the business student to incorporate 'PowToons' into presentations? These challenges are part of the learning for the teaching staff. By working with students outside of a specific discipline, an appreciation for the value of our students across the whole of the institute deepens. In addition, it will provide some insights into how final year curricula can incorporate successful graduate transition into the teaching, learning and assessment practices.

The programme, which was successfully piloted in 18/19, is being further developed in 2019/2020 with funding under the Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement Funding in Higher Education, from the National Forum.

The further development of the programme will consist of three stages which will be conducted over 2019/20. These stages include:

Scoping exercise: to engage with the stakeholders internally and externally to fully establish what are the key requirements from the initiative. This will also explore how the issues arising can be feedback into the programmes of study at curriculum design stage.

Plan Initiative: A series of events, trainings and workshop will be designed and organized to meet the needs of the IADT cohort.

Evaluation: there will be an evaluation undertaken at the end of the programme.

During the scoping exercise, students will have a real input on what they want for the programme. By contextualizing their past 3 – 4 years with a view to their future, students come to value their education and acquired skills in a new light, beyond their disciplines and known networks, in conjunction with the support of IADT and fellow graduates.

LIT: NStEP Institutional Development and Support in LIT

The National Student Engagement Programme (*NStEP*) is a collaborative initiative established by the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), the Higher Education Authority (HEA), and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). LIT became a participant institution in NStEP in 2017, alongside LIT Students' Union, after a call to the sector. On 19th November 2018, LIT undertook the NStEP

institutional analysis workshop bringing together staff and students from across the institute in order to examine and self-assess current practices in student engagement, ensuring that collaboration was at the heart of the partnership. Participants considered the areas of work that should take priority for short to medium term strategic development, filling in short strategy sheets that detailed the needs that had been identified and possible solutions to enhance student engagement. The initial feedback established in the workshop identified that both students and staff acknowledged that the LIT student community has a strong, engaged presence in their programme of study and in their relationship with the Institute. Some of the immediate learning from the workshop consultation was to consider structurally how a fluid channel of communication between LIT, the Student Union, and the Student Council could be enabled. This would increase the range, depth, and value of communication opportunities between the management of academic affairs in the Institute and student representatives across the entire Institute.

The NStEP Strategy 2019-2021, and strategic objective 3, sets out that “supporting staff and students across the sector to foster a culture of partnership” can be achieved by advancing our institutional analysis work through bespoke institutional support that develops student engagement strategically and systematically. Throughout 2020, NStEP’s institutional development stream will focus on the theme of **fostering a culture of partnership**. Following a meeting in LIT in January 2020 with NStEP, discussions centred on a number of areas for consideration and potential collaboration, as identified from the thematic analysis of the institutional analysis workshop outputs.

These areas included:

- The role of students in the design, review and delivery of academic programmes
- Student feedback opportunities in LIT, supported by data, evidence, and follow up
- The role of students in formal LIT processes and procedures, strategy and decision making
- The role of academic and student services in building the institutional capacity of student engagement.

Since the initial workshop in late 2018, LIT has made progressive, significant changes to its academic policies and procedures that enable students to be part of the quality assurance and decision-making mechanisms that shape new programme development and programmatic reviews in LIT. Students equally have a formal voice, through programme boards, to provide student feedback on the conduct of their programme of study, and their teaching and learning therein. The culture of partnership is deemed to prevail, which bodes well for embedding student engagement activities more explicitly and distinctively in future collaborative plans between LIT and NStEP. A number of future initiatives to foster and deepen a culture of staff-student partnership have been identified as part of the LIT-NStEP programme. These include:

- (i) Supporting class representatives in their roles
- (ii) Supporting staff to support class representatives in their roles
- (iii) Developing the communication channels for students to provide feedback and to close off the communication feedback loops
- (iv) To ensure that the data obtained from students, such as that from the annual Student Survey, is utilised to inform, identify, and shape opportunities for improvement in the engagement activities of students in LIT.

LYIT: Embedding the Learner Voice in Review Panels

McManus and Vickery (2018) in their QQI report A Thematic Analysis of Reports on the Accreditation/ Approval/Review of Programmes of Higher Education identified the need for greater student representation on review panels across the higher education sector. As part of the development of our Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) version 3.0 (September 2018) the institute committed to student representation on all of our programme review and programme validation panels. In September the Quality Office in conjunction with the Dept. of Law and Humanities developed a Certificate in Academic Programme Evaluation and Validation (Special Purpose Award). The aim of the programme was to provide learners with the key skills, knowledge and competencies required to participate on a range of panels within an Irish Higher Education setting.

The programme encouraged learners to apply their developing knowledge, skills and competences throughout a series of 3 workshops and in the module assessment. The Teaching and Learning approach adopted key themes from informed national and international research and policy reports; and shared understandings emerging from our grounded experience in teaching practice. This programme utilised a blended learning approach and brought together the best of both face-to-face and online strategies.

The programme was delivered in March/April 2019 with eleven postgraduate learners from a range of subject areas participating. Ten of the learners successfully completed the programme assessment (mock panel report and presentation). The learners have since participated in a range of panels for the institute. Two students participated in Central Service Reviews and five different students took part in 13 programme validations. The feedback from the learners is positive and many of the panel chairs have commented on the excellent and valuable contribution of the learner representatives. It is planned to run the next iteration of the training programme in March 2021.

MU: Annual Incoming Student Survey

The Institutional Research Office undertakes an annual survey of first year undergraduate students registering in the University for the first time. Up to 2014/15 students were invited to complete the survey via email, with the survey invite included in the students' first welcome email to the University.

In 2015/16, a dedicated survey session was added to the student orientation week schedule (students can also complete the HEA Equal Access Survey) and response rates to the incoming survey are now in the region of 80% to 85% each year.

The survey is carried out in collaboration with internal stakeholders in the offices of Admissions, Communications, Career Development, Experiential Learning, Curriculum Evaluation and Accommodation. Each year the questions are reviewed and if necessary amendments made (for example, a new question on the accommodation 'home finder' service in 2017; the inclusion of Instagram as a communication tool in 2018).

The survey report is shared widely with internal stakeholders including the Education Officer of Maynooth Student Union and provides invaluable information on students' decision to study in Maynooth: how students interact with the University; their preparedness and expectations with

regard to education at MU; where they plan to live and if they plan to work. Results of the survey are used to inform change. For example, they have been used to align the marketing and communication strategies, as input to the student accommodation strategy, to enable targeted career guidance and advice, and to monitor and adjust student recruitment and admissions activities.

MU: ISSE Workshop: What can Data tell us about Student Experience?

The Quality Office organized a half-day, interactive workshop entitled '*Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE): What can the data tell us about our students' experience?*' in November 2018. The aim of the workshop was to enhance institutional knowledge about the survey and to raise awareness about the available datasets and their potential for the institution. The workshop was open to academic staff and to colleagues in student facing areas of central administration, teaching and learning support services. Students Union officers and student faculty representatives were also invited to attend.

The hands-on workshop began with a short introduction and overview from the ISSE project manager who spoke about student engagement, the survey, the datasets and their local potential. The workshop was then dedicated to two interactive sessions on interpreting the data, reflecting on themes, and discussing the potential the datasets could represent. Participants were placed in groups with ISSE indicator file printouts available to each group. Attendees were grouped deliberately to ensure that each group had representation from a mixture of backgrounds with a view to the sharing of a variety of points of view. The first session was dedicated to exploring the data while during the second session participants reflected on the potential the datasets could offer to their individual areas, along with how the data could inform future developments in teaching & learning. Feedback on the event from participants was very positive: both staff and student representatives welcomed the opportunity to learn about the datasets. The hands-on approach was commended as particularly valuable. Attendees welcomed the suggestion that this introductory workshop would be repeated at certain intervals in the future, accompanying other, more thematic explorations of the survey data.

RCSI: Library – Process Optimisation Interventions based on Themes arising in Student Surveys

The Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) continues to work with the Quality & Process Improvement Centre (QPIC; Department of Surgical Affairs) to target process optimisation interventions to specific areas identified from consistent themes arising in student satisfaction surveys.

The end-of-semester student satisfaction surveys conducted by the QEO in the 2017-2018 academic year following the opening of the new RCSI Medical School building at No. 26 York Street revealed a substantial decrease in levels of satisfaction with the study space provided in the state-of-the-art RCSI library compared to the previous Library building. Analysis of survey responses indicated

that the primary problem lay in students' use of the space, with substantial non-adherence to seat reservation policy and 'hogging' of seats. The Library convened a multidisciplinary team comprising students, Library staff, staff from Estates and Events with facilitation by QPIC to address the issues, and to benchmark responses against similar initiatives undertaken by UCC, UL & DCU. The Library then implemented a series of measures to better manage demand for capacity in the Library (especially in examination periods), to make additional study space more user-friendly and to modify behaviour around seat occupancy. Interventions included live occupancy data reporting, co-design (with students) of a new Seat Reservation Policy and a #FairSpaceForAll campaign to raise awareness of the new measures. The effect of these measures has been monitored over time, and the 2018-2019 surveys demonstrate that, while study space remains a concern for students, there is a clear view that the Seat Reservation Policy and #FairSpaceForAll campaign have had a positive effect, and an appreciation of the Library's responsiveness to students' needs.

UCD: Student Engagement – Collaboration with the UCD Students' Union (UCDSU)

Situation

This case study, which was developed collaboratively between UCDSU and UCD, demonstrates the effectiveness of student representation at University level and how, through the University's governance structures, the UCDSU influences strategic and operational change.

UCDSU works effectively with UCD in three distinct ways. These are:

1. Representation on the various governance and decision-making structures in UCD, both from an academic and managerial perspective
2. Collaboration with UCD on a number of key local and national projects aimed at providing a better environment for students learning and well-being
3. Involvement in the decision-making process in certain UCD-led initiatives as they are devised, via appointment to temporary judging/evaluation/consultation panels.

Task

At University level UCDSU currently has representatives on four of UCD's eight University Management Team (UMT) subgroups, holds 23 seats on Academic Council, with elected sabbatical officers also holding seats on seven of the nine AC subgroups. This case study focuses on UCD-UCDSU collaboration vis-à-vis the UMT Student Experience Group and Academic Council regarding the University's approach to remediation at two levels: 1) Academic Regulations and 2) fees.

Action

Regarding UCD's Academic Regulations, the Academic Council Executive Committee (ACEC) Regulations Review Working Group was established in 2017 and included UCDSU representation. Following two consultation phases, a revised set of Academic Regulations was submitted to Academic Council (AC) in April 2018. This included a proposal to cap substitution as a remediation option – while grades achieved through resit and repeat attempts were capped, those achieved through substitution had not been. Concern at this proposal was raised at AC, particularly by the UCDSU representatives, and the proposed remediation section of the regulations was not approved. Following the April 2018 AC meeting, the Registrar met with UCDSU representatives to discuss alternative remediation proposals and their possible implications, before bringing options back to the ACEC Regulations Review Working Group for discussion and recommendation to AC.

In relation to remediation fees, UCDSU presented a paper to the meeting of the UMT Student Experience Group (SEG) requesting that the impact of resit and repeat fees be discussed.

On foot of this, the group agreed that a review group be established to carry out an analysis of resit and repeat fees. The UMT SEG Resit and Repeat Fees Review Group was formed, consisting of representatives from the Registrar's Office, academic community, UCDSU, Student Advisers, UCD Assessment, and UCD Finance. A report containing an analysis of current practice and recommended principles underpinning resit and repeat fee charges was brought to the UMT SEG, which endorsed many aspects of the report and agreed to bring a summary of the observations and recommendations for change to UMT for consideration.

Results

As highlighted by this focus on remediation, student representation and participation in University-level committees in UCD is effective in contributing to the enhancement of the student experience. In relation to Academic Regulations, the final proposal, as recommended by the UCDSU representatives and ACEC Regulations Review Working Group and approved by AC in November 2018, resulted in a number of revisions to the remediation regulations originally proposed. Specifically, resit attempts will be grade capped, repeat attempts will be grade penalised, and substitution will not be regarded as a form of remediation – therefore, no penalty or capping will be applied. At an operational level, based on the report and recommendations from UMT SEG regarding resit fees, UMT agreed to reduce the fees as proposed. The result: fees for students who have to undertake resit assessments as a method of remediation was reduced from €230 to €180.

UL: Transforming the Glucksman Library

Opened in autumn 2018, the new library extension was the culmination of a planning process that was informed by many years of user feedback, usage data, international benchmarking and best practice. Through the biannual **library survey (since 2007)**, **the University had a large corpus of feedback on library spaces in terms of what worked and what frustrated library users.** University and international data indicated that effective quiet space for individual work remains a key priority for readers. At the same time, the very high usage of a small number of collaborate spaces in the original library highlighted a need for areas where groups could work together. At a furniture fair during the tendering stage, students were invited to sample different study desks and chairs and give feedback on what they wanted most in the new space. Two student members of the Library Building Design Committee provided insights throughout the process.

Staff visits to the newest, state-of-the-art libraries in Europe and North America provided a bank of images and ideas on international trends. These visits yielded examples of international best practice and pitfalls to be avoided. Popular features in other new libraries were replicated in the Glucksman. Library staff developed a keen understanding of the needs of taught postgraduates from survey feedback, which informed the planning of the Graduate Commons. Awareness of new trends and international best practice led to the inclusion of innovative new spaces, such as the Digital Scholarship Centre and Data Visualisation Lab. The success of the new library extension is evidenced in the most recent library survey by substantial increases in satisfaction levels. Usage data further illustrate the popularity of the building: visits to the library increased by 31 per cent to 1.06 million, the occupancy of bookable group study rooms reached 64 per cent in mid-semester, and 19,322 online bookings were made during 2018/19. Now an exemplar of best practice, the new library extension has drawn a national and international audience of visitors who are planning their own new libraries and learning spaces.

4. Research – Ensuring Quality and Impact

AIT: Development of Individual Student Plans for L9/10 Structured Research Programmes

The Learning and Teaching Unit was engaged to develop an Individual Study Plan (ISP) for Level 9/10 Structured Research Programmes in AIT. The use of the ADDIE instructional design model to frame the approach to development allowed for an iterative process, to incorporate feedback and revisions. The purpose of the ISP was to document the research student's progress and learning throughout the programme.

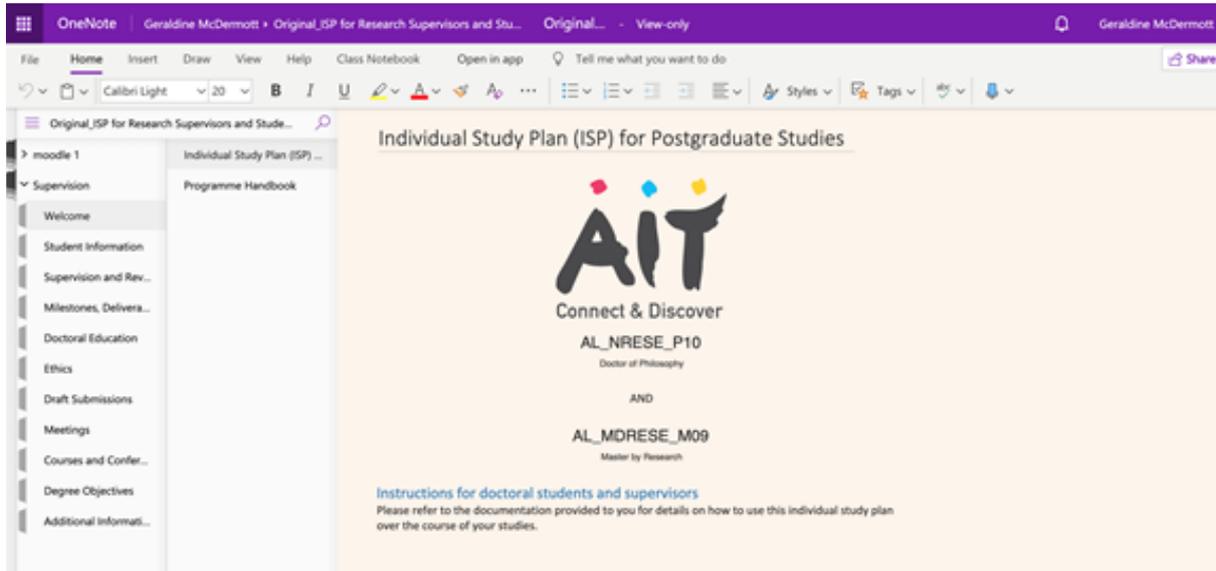
- The tool should be easily accessible by all research supervisors and students and it should be user-friendly.
- A standard template should be used (feedback and revisions are expected in the initial stages).
- Lead in time for setup and staff development was short given that the first intake of new entrants was scheduled for October 2019.

Following extensive consultation, the development of a user-friendly interface that is GDPR compliant was implemented. The Microsoft Office 365 application, Microsoft Class Notebook was identified as a suitable platform. This platform was introduced and used successfully in the Faculty of Science & Health as part of the National Forum funded TEAM (Technology Enhanced Assessment Methods) project, providing proof of concept. The benefits of using Class Notebook are:

- Minimal set up time: AIT staff and registered students already had access to the suite of Office 365 applications, so setup time would be significantly reduced.
- Agile Platform: The Class Notebook platform could be redesigned according to our requirements, reducing the need for a purpose-built platform, thereby greatly reducing costs.
- With Office 365 online, staff and students could access the resource from any location.
- Staff and students were already familiar with the MS Office interface, so requirements for training and support would also be reduced.

A prototype was developed following consultations with the Graduate School (Figure 1.).

Fig. 1: ISP Prototype



Following this, the ISP was presented to a number of stakeholder groups within the Institute:

27 th November 2018	Postgraduate Review Group (PRG)
28 th November 2018	Academic Strategy and Quality (ASQ) Committee
11 th June 2019	As part of an information session on new AIT Procedures, Regulations and Governance for Research, the ISP was presented to Research Supervisors, Deans of Faculties, Directors of Research Institutes, Heads of Departments, Faculty Administrators, and other relevant administrators.
22 October 2019	Research students as part of the induction programme.

The Class Notebook includes key areas for supervision in a hierarchical structure. Initially, this would be shared with research supervisors via the SharePoint app. Features include:

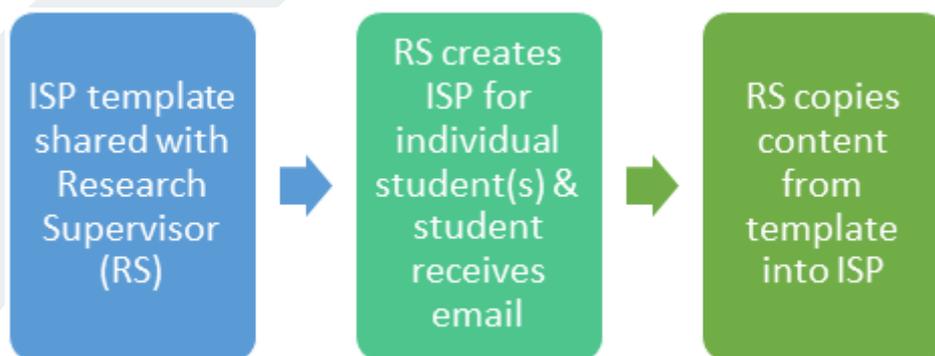
- Version history to reflect changes made by research supervisors and students
- Transparency: authorship of changes is linked to Office 365 login credentials.
- Online/desktop versions available.

The prototype was tested by a number of research supervisors, specifically in terms of ease of access, navigation, usability and suitability.

Feedback loops were integral to the development process.

Implementation

A workshop to present the ISP was delivered to research supervisors in the Department of Sports Science and Department of Nursing. It is envisaged that the template for the ISP will reside in the Graduate School, and to this end, a specific email (isp@ait.ie) was created so that the template is not linked to a personal account. The workflow for ISP set up is currently as follows:



An instructional video was created for research supervisors, to provide a walkthrough of how to set up the ISP. Additionally, both workshops and individual clinic sessions have been provided to facilitate research supervisors, as they set up each ISP for their student(s). This support will continue to be provided by the Learning and Teaching Unit.

Evaluation

It is envisaged that research supervisors and the development team will evaluate the ISP in terms of the following:

- Ease of access
- Ease of use
- Content, i.e. does the template provided match the needs of the supervisor/student?
- Is the ISP fit for purpose?

Supervisors will be invited to provide their feedback in advance of the next intake of research students, i.e. October 2020. Following this, the design of the ISP will be reviewed and revised.

CIT: Open Access Research

Publication of Research and Innovation Outputs (Open Access)

In April 2018, the Open Data Governance Board (established by the Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform) contacted CIT's President, enquiring about the policies and practices of the Institute in relation to the publication of publicly funded research and associated metadata as Open Data.

In its response, CIT confirmed a commitment to establishing a suitable infrastructure, in line with best international practice, which would allow the Institute to advance its Open Access approach to the dissemination of research outputs. A working group which included the Registrar & VP for Academic Affairs, the VP for External Affairs, the Head of Research and the CIT Librarian set

about identifying and evaluating the resources necessary to develop and embed Open Access policies and practices into the research culture of the Institute as it moves towards Technological University status. The group concluded that for implementation of Open Access to be successful, the Institute would need to invest in both software and staff resources. However, there can be no doubt that achieving compliance with Open Access will be critical to the strategic development of research and research quality in CIT, as the Institute's (and thereafter the MTU's) continued ability to win competitive research funding from key funding agencies such as SFI, Horizon 2020, the Irish Research Council and the EU Commission would be conditional on meeting OA requirements in the grant agreements.

As part of this Open Access review, the Research Office and the Academic Council's Research & Innovation Committee conducted a survey of practices for recording and publishing the outputs of research and innovation activities within CIT, which found considerable variance in practices between different Institute areas.

Discussions subsequently commenced between the Research Office, R&I Committee and the CIT Library Service to develop a proposal for a central repository of CIT research outputs. Ways of increasing the impact of published research, for instance by encouraging publication in high-impact fora recognised by Scopus, also formed part of the deliberations. Planned work for the next reporting period includes the launch of an open access repository platform and commencement of work on developing an institutional Open Access Policy, which will complement and strengthen the open access principles already set out in the **Code of Good Practice in Research**.

IT Carlow: Research Development

Institute of Technology Carlow is developing its research competencies centred in six **Centres of Research and Enterprise (COREs)** building research environments with critical mass, high ambition and strong international networks. These are:

designCORE (Product design and design thinking);

engCORE (Engineering systems-applied mechatronics, circuits and systems intelligent built environment);

enviroCORE (Bioenvironmental technologies);

gameCORE (Computer gaming and interactive applications);

healthCORE (Health, wellbeing and rehabilitative science);

socialCORE (Social and Human Sciences research, enhancing professional practice, policy development across early years education, social care and youth work).

Institute of Technology Carlow has Delegated Authority to Level 10 in the research areas of Biological, Molecular and Environmental Science and research approval to Level 10 in Health Science, Engineering and Computing. Expansion of Delegated Authority in all other COREs remains a priority.

In 2016, the Institute published its *Strategic Plan for Research 2016-2020*, much of which has already been implemented and targets achieved. A new strategic plan for research and innovation is currently in development and is due for completion in the next reporting period. Building research capacity and impact is also a key pillar of the Institute's *Strategic Plan 2019-2023*, which includes a commitment to achieving awarding authority to NFAQ Level 10 across all discipline areas.

In order to meet its ambitious research goals and provide a strong basis for securing Technological University status, the Institute has invested heavily in facilities, faculty and postgraduate research. Institute of Technology Carlow continues to deliver on its €150mn physical master plan with the completion in 2014 of a dedicated research centre, the Dargan Centre for Research and Innovation, ensuring an excellent learner experience. Targeted and strategically driven recruitment campaigns have attracted significant numbers of research-active staff to work alongside established researchers. The development of the Institute's research competencies is centred in six Centres of Research and Enterprise (COREs) whose thematic research foci range from product design, to bioenvironmental technologies, computer gaming, men's health and social care.

Investment in postgraduate student scholarships and bursaries has also attracted talented and committed students and it has served to develop staff supervisory capacity and experience. In September 2018, 97% of fulltime academic staff at Institute of Technology Carlow held a Masters / Doctoral qualification or equivalent (up from 83% in January 2012). There has been an increase in academic staff with doctoral qualifications from 18% in January 2012, to 45% in September 2018. The introduction of additional targeted supports for staff development has resulted in an increase in academic staff pursuing doctoral studies, from 2.6% to 14.1% during the same period.

The research programmes are supported by Institute of Technology Carlow's robust and well-established governance frameworks and quality assurance mechanisms. Clear institutional policies and procedures underpin the selection, admission, induction, supervision, monitoring and examination of postgraduate research. Postgraduate researchers have access to high-quality library services and attend structured modules to build their academic and professional skills. In addition, postgraduate researchers have access to an accredited module in the area of Teaching and Learning, which is offered to support them in terms of their personal and professional development.

The research programmes are informed by the National Framework for Doctoral Education and by the Irish Universities' PhD Graduate Skills Statement. Its aim is to advance knowledge through original research and, in doing so, to foster innovative, ethical and evidence-informed practice in research programmes. Importantly, there is clear evidence of demand for research programmes which offer opportunities to students to gain qualifications locally.

LYIT: New Quality Assurance for Doctoral Research

At the start of 2018, the Head of School of Science brought forward a proposal to apply for a level 10 Award, a PhD in Computing. The application process commenced in May 2018 led by the Head of School of Science supported by Executive Board and the Quality Office. A Senior Lecturer for Strategic Development was appointed to coordinate the drafting of documentation and the preparation of the submission document. Within the School of Science, a senior programme team was created. This team included: the Head of School of Science, the Head of Department of Computing, a Senior Lecturer and two academics. Starting in September 2018 an extensive consultation process was undertaken over a three-month period. This involved a series of workshops with staff in the School of Science and the Department of Computing. In addition, a series of briefings were presented to Executive Board and Academic Council. A range of staff meetings and stakeholder engagement events were held. The preparation of the submission document was informed by ongoing consultations with staff, students and stakeholders in relation to the (re)design of curriculum. The self-evaluation process was guided by

data on student enrolments, progression and completion rates, staff numbers and funding. The data maintained by the School as part of the 5 year cycle of School Reviews was utilised.

A draft submission document was developed for January 2019 and submitted to the Programmes Committee of Academic Council for review. In parallel a review was undertaken of Chapter 7 (Research) of our Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH). The Programme development team in conjunction with the Quality Office identified a series of amendments and additions that were required. A number of revisions were made to Chapter 7 and the drafting process was undertaken in conjunction with the Research Committee of Academic Council:

- 7.3.6 Ongoing Monitoring of Postgraduate Research Degrees
- 7.3.7 Ongoing Monitoring of Doctoral Degrees
- 7.4.2 Examination Procedures for a Doctoral Degree
- 7.4.6 Submission (Word count)
- 7.5.2 The Institute Research Ethics Committee (IREC)

A mock panel was conducted in March 2019 and the feedback from this process was reflected in the final submission document and the revised QAH version 3.1. The full panel took place in June 2019 and was successful subject to a series of recommendations. These recommendations required some further minor changes to Chapter 7 of the QAH. The new QAH Version 3.1 was published on the 1st of September 2019 and the changes required for the Level 10 Award were captured in sections: 7.3.6, 7.3.7, 7.4.2 7.4.6 and 7.5.2. The learning from this process has helped enhance our quality assurance of Research and will support future applications for Level 10 Awards in other areas.

5. Academic Integrity

TU Dublin: Academic Integrity – Towards Effective Guidelines and Protocols for embedding Academic Integrity; Epigeum Online Resource

Statutory Context

Section 43A of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Amendment) Act 2019 - Offence to Provide or Advertise Cheating Services², specifies nine academic integrity offences and which constitute five categories of potential breaches including, impersonation, provision of cheating services, advertising of cheating services, and publication of advertisements for cheating services.

Towards Effective Guidelines and Protocols for Embedding Academic Integrity

The increase in number of academic programmes in higher education and the concomitant rise in the range of delivery methods present significant challenges to quality assurance of learning including its rigour. Maintenance of academic integrity is of particular concern; hence, most higher education institutions are now exploring ways to protect and cultivate a culture of academic integrity³. The Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin) is committed to the implementation of systems, policies and procedures towards upholding the highest standards of academic integrity in all its educational and training provisions. The development and implementation of effective guidelines and protocols may involve adoption/implementation of a range of measures and tools for detection and process-driven investigation and penalty for such breaches, including the outlined new legal provision that criminalise them. However, it is a considered view that preventive education, i.e., in methods for designing out, deterrence and discouragement of academic misconduct should be preferred over the predominantly detection and punishment approach^{4,5}. Such arguments bestow responsibility on the University to ensure that both students and staff are well informed of and fully understand what constitute potential breaches of academic integrity, and subsequently their personal responsibilities towards elimination of the potential for learners to accede to related pitfalls.

Learner formation in the process of pursuing education and training provides a pathway in which engagement, practical guidance and reflective practice on academic integrity may be gained. In a dual-pronged approach to embedding academic integrity taken in this case study:

2 Qualification and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019, No. 32, Part 2, Section 43A, pp. 19-21.

3 Benson L, K Rodier, R Enström and E Bocatto. 2019. Developing a university-wide academic integrity E-learning tutorial: a Canadian case. *International Journal for Educational Integrity*. 15.10.1007/s40979-019-0045-1.

4 Chew E, SL Ding, G Rowell. 2015. Changing attitudes in learning and assessment: cast-off “plagiarism detection” and cast-on self-service assessment for learning. *Innovation in Education and Teaching International* 52(5):454–463.

5 Hodgkinson T, H Curtis, D MacAlister & G Farrell. 2015. Student Academic Dishonesty: The Potential for Situational Prevention. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* 27(1): 1-18.

1. Students should have comprehensive understanding of the principles of academic integrity and their importance to learning in higher education. To enable this, students should receive guidance on their personal and collective responsibilities both as individual and learning teams (including group work), ensuring they have a comprehensive understanding of the expected standard, the potential breaches and consequences of such breaches.
2. Academics should also need to be trained not only means for detecting breaches, but also means to adapt their approaches to teaching and assessment that minimise potential for infringement of academic integrity. In this context, academics must always act to the highest standards of academic integrity and ethical conduct, i.e., they need to (among many other things): ensure that learning materials are based on the most up-to-date research and information; provide fair and timely feedback on assessments, and; know how to address threats to academic integrity⁶.

Development of Epigeum Academic Integrity Software

The TU Dublin was part of an **International Consortium** that developed an online resource towards fostering of academic integrity for both students and staff. The project was led by **Epigeum--Oxford University Press** and both students and staff of TU Dublin contributed to the development process (see outline at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=11&v=lvXYm78C24U)

Contents of Student Facing Modules cover:

- Definitions of academic integrity - introduces the key principles and explains how students can demonstrate them in their courses and lifelong learning.
- How to show academic integrity in preparation for course/module - covers working under pressure and exacting assignment deadlines.
- Approach to academic integrity in assignment work - contextualisation of borrowed ideas plus appropriate citation and referencing.
- Confidence building for academic integrity - reflection on practice, including
- How to deal with more complex situations in academic integrity - guidelines for ethical re-use of own work and multimedia referencing concepts.

Contents of Staff Modules cover:

- Definitions of academic integrity - Covers broad concepts of academic integrity, with responsibility for promotion and upholding academic integrity principles bestowed on all staff, i.e. academic and support/professional services staff.
- Promoting a culture of academic integrity - Covers opportunities approaches to demonstrating good integrity practices within one's own sphere of influence.
- Identifying and responding to breaches of academic integrity - Covers reasons for breach of policy and guidelines underpinning academic integrity and compatible responses.
- Teaching, learning and assessment: implications for academic integrity - adaptation through learner-feedback.
- Assessment design choices for academic integrity - assessment type challenges to integrity, including collusion and offsite assessment.

6 Bretag T. 2019. Epigeum Academic Integrity Instructor Manual: Student modules, pp3.

Implementation

The discrete contents of the student facing modules give flexibility to the time required for engagement with the material and also the academic stage/scheduling (i.e., options for right-timing of formative concepts) as crucial approaches to minimising academic integrity violations. The software rollout will be undertaken in 2020-2021 academic year as part of the Transform-EDU Project, whose key objective is to support innovation, transformation and quality improvement in teaching and student learning outcomes. It is intended that the modules will be offered to all students as they join the University, but will also reside with all programmes in the VLE, to be used alongside credit bearing modules that students register for in any semester. The content sequence and cumulative self-testing schemes in the student facing modules also provides rational basis for remediation learning that could be prescribed for students who may have breached academic integrity. The possibility for interfacing the whole or partial elements of the contents as part of the ongoing peer mentoring programme will be tested.

6. Assessing the Impact of Research

NUI Galway: Institutional Review of Research Performance (IRRP)

IRRP was completed in 2018 and its results presented by the Director of Quality to Academic Council.

The aims of IRRP2016 were laid out in a policy document agreed between University management and staff and included the following:

1. Engage all academic staff in the self-assessment of the quality of their own research and to submit three samples of their best research for peer assessment.
2. Conduct a peer assessment and assign quality ratings to (a) research publications, (b) societal impact case studies and (c) research environment reports.
3. Assure greater public accountability and increase further the reputation of NUI Galway and its staff with the wider community.

General Principles: IRRP2016 was a process of the expert review of research quality. Expert reviewers were selected based on their Subject Area expertise, proven research track record and also on their general expertise in conducting research assessments. A single framework for assessing research was applied across all Schools. The following principles guided the development of the IRRP2016 process:

- 1. Equity:** All forms of research output across all subject areas shall be assessed on a fair and equal basis with a strong emphasis on quality as opposed to quantity.
- 2. Equality:** All academic staff members are invited to participate and where the number of research outputs will be determined by individual research profiles and personal circumstances.

Assessment Method: The assessment method closely followed the Research Excellence Framework (2014) in the UK and required the following:

1. Each School provide their (a) best research publications, (b) societal impact case studies and (c) a research environment report.
2. Reviewers assessed the quality of the research outputs and assigned ratings for each
3. Reviewers also provided recommendations and Schools later agreed action plans that would enhance research quality in the future.

Expected Outcomes: The anticipated outcomes from the IRRP Quality Review were considered in advance of the exercise and included the following:

1. Enhance the amount of research being carried out at a higher quality level
2. Enhance the capacity for research, by coaching and mentoring all staff to engage in high quality research

3. Improve PhD recruitment and completion rates
4. Enhance Research funding activity
5. Enhance Research Strategy that is more conducive to producing better quality research
6. Enhance the impact of research for the benefit of society

Submissions: 595 academic staff provided 1,573 research outputs for assessment. This was 88% of maximum possible outputs. Special circumstances were declared for all remaining 12% (e.g. Lecturer A contract). Sixteen Schools also submitted individual Research Environment Reports and 60 Impact Case Studies.

Reviewers: The assessment was conducted by a total of 127 reviewers (46% female) from world leading Universities in the United Kingdom (e.g. Cambridge, Oxford, Kings College London, and Queens University Belfast). Reviewers were also leading practitioners in the research assessment process.

Results: Each school was presented with their results profile and a list of strengths and recommendations. Follow up meetings with the Registrar and Dean resulted in an action plan for each school and where progress will be requested in the following year.

Next Steps: The Registrar and Deans have agreed an action plan for each school. The review reports and action plans are being made available to the public through the quality office web site. IRRP will be run again in 2022-2025. The results of IRRP2016 are currently informing the development of School operational plans and have informed the University's new strategic plan for 2020 - 2025.

UCC: Development of an Assessment Strategy for Research

A central ambition of University College Cork's Academic Strategy, 2018-2022, is the development of a *Connected Curriculum* that will ground student learning in active research and enquiry. Essential to the achievement of this ambition are effective assessment practices which will drive the learning and teaching experience of both students and staff. Priority Three of the Academic Strategy – *Constructively aligning effective assessment practices with learning outcomes* – highlights actions that will frame the evolution of learning and teaching approaches at University College Cork. These actions build on already robust approaches to assessment, bringing to the fore best practice, innovation and novelty that currently exist across the institution.

A review of institutional assessment practices has highlighted the benefits of encouraging more creative, collaborative and dynamic assessment practices. Incorporating recommendations arising from this review, and the actions of Priority Three of the Academic Strategy, a draft *Assessment Strategy*, has been developed. Currently under consultation, the Assessment Strategy provides a high-level vision of proposed future assessment practices at University College Cork. It prioritises the alignment of assessment with module and programme-specific learning outcomes, Graduate Attributes and values in a clear and effective manner. It will deliver excellence in learning, teaching, knowledge generation and dissemination, innovation and connectivity. The *Assessment Strategy* will support transformative learning experiences, developing essential critical, analytical and creative learner skills, all of which will be grounded in academic rigour and fairness. It will provide learners with the tools to become life-long and life-wide learners with the ability to generate solutions for real-world problems.

The proposed *Assessment Strategy* is anchored in:

- **Reciprocity of learning**, fostering learning with and from students
- Recognising the **holistic learning power** of integrated formative and summative assessment
- Recognising the value of providing room for **creativity** within assessment approaches
- **Inclusion, collaboration, engagement and empowerment** of all stakeholders
- **Integration** - the tangible realisation of ideas and activities, including assessment aims, learning outcomes and the development of Graduate Attributes

The *Assessment Strategy* encourages innovation, creativity and novelty across the learning ecosystem, generating a responsive and proactive curriculum that inspires alternate, inclusive and progressive pathways of learning. It provides for:

- **Distinctive Learning** through innovation in assessment practice, particularly in first year
- **Changes in how we Assess Learning**, focusing particularly on novelty in assessment, inclusion and iterative learning across all assessment approaches
- **Changes in how we Quantify Learning**, focusing on operational facilitators that will underpin delivery of the *Connected Curriculum*
- **Evolution**, continual professional development

This framework is built on a foundation of **Quality Enhancement** – practice review, the identification of best practice locally and/or globally, its implementation, continual review, evaluation and evolution. The *Assessment Strategy* will provide authentic assessment of, for and as, learning for the entire learning community. It will support development of an agile, sustainable and responsive *Connected Curriculum* with global reach which will support learners in realising their potential and impact.

UCC: Research-based Learning

University College Cork has a long tradition of research-led teaching whereby teaching staff draw connections between the cutting-edge research in their area and their teaching. Furthermore, learning through research and enquiry, a practice known as research-based teaching and learning, is a cornerstone of a UCC education and this has been reaffirmed in UCC's new Academic Strategy (2018-2022).

The research-based mode of learning more closely mirrors the ways in which knowledge is created within disciplines. Here students are engaged in authentic research activities in their area of study and consequently become inculcated into their discipline and develop ancillary skills such as critical thinking, complex problem solving, project management and communication.

The *Connected Curriculum* pillar of UCC's Academic Strategy provides a framework for the relationship between research and teaching, and supports the development of connections between researchers, students and wider communities. UCC is the first HEI in Ireland to implement a *Connected Curriculum* approach to support students to become engaged learners and to prepare them for the future world of work. Staff are also bringing this inquiring mindset to bear in the development of the curriculum and are encouraged to problematise and critique the other elements of the *Connected Curriculum*, and how these intersect with their discipline or profession.

Student involvement in research-based learning is largely shaped by the discipline or area of study. However, there are generic approaches that can optimize student learning and are more effective in

terms of teaching. These include the following six approaches:

1. ensuring learning through inquiry and research is a design feature of the curriculum;
2. taking a whole programme approach to the incremental development of students' capacity to engage in research;
3. providing opportunities for students to work collaboratively with staff and peers to introduce them to the wider research community;
4. providing authentic learning experiences in the curriculum which mirror research in practice, including work beyond disciplinary boundaries to tackle common or global challenges;
5. enabling students to work/study beyond the walls of the university, in keeping with the driving purpose of research to make a difference in the world;
6. providing opportunities for students to communicate the outcomes of research to diverse audiences which might include other students, academics, external partners, local communities and employers.

A self-evaluation tool has been developed to provide guidance to staff on how to integrate the various elements of the Connected Curriculum. Figure 1 describes approaches for integrating research-based teaching in a module or programme. While the six elements are separated out in the full self-evaluation tool to provide greater clarity, many modules and programmes combine these elements in a range of different approaches and activities.

Fig. 1: Draft self-evaluation tool

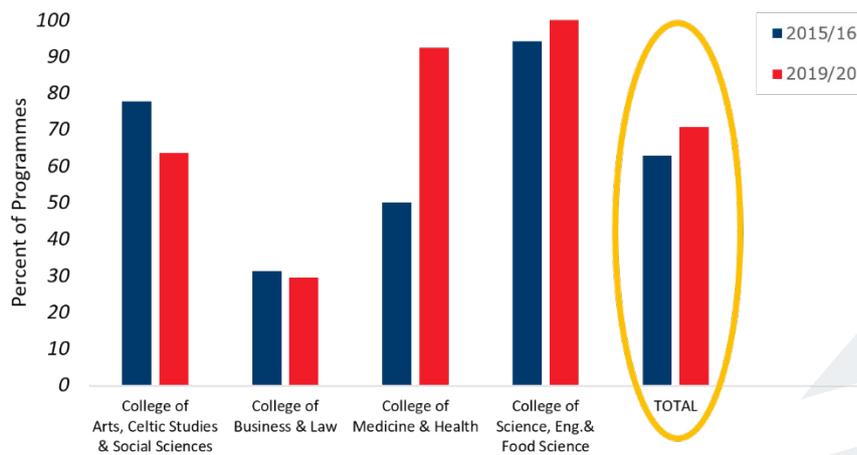
	Introductory element	Structured inclusion	Main focus of learning activity	Main focus of assessment	Element is a design feature
Research based teaching 	Staff reference their own research and cutting-edge research in the discipline as part of the curriculum. Students engage in final year projects or produce dissertations.	Research methods training for students incorporated into study programme from first year on. Research integrity discussed and developed.	Students engaged in research and inquiry from first year on.	Assessments are designed to model authentic research outputs in the area.	Learning through inquiry is structured throughout the programme culminating in students engaging in open-enquiry projects to advance knowledge in the area.

There are many examples of good-practice in research-based teaching, such as the BSc Medical & Health Sciences on which students are taught by academics who are research leaders in the medical and translational sciences and are given hands-on opportunities to undertake research projects in world-class research laboratories. UCC's Research Centres and Institutes are also instrumental in advancing the Connected Curriculum and staff within the Research Centres and Institutes lecture on programmes across several disciplines.

A curriculum review was carried out in UCC in 2015/2016 and subsequently in 2019/20 to identify the extent to which learning through research and inquiry is evident in undergraduate programmes.

It was found that 63% of undergraduate programmes in 2015/16 and 71% of undergraduate programmes 2019/20 had evidence of research-based learning.

Fig. 2: Review of undergraduate programme Learning Outcomes relating to research-based learning in 2015/16 (n=54) and 2019/20 (n=58)



A further module-level review in 2015/2016 showed that 44% of undergraduate programmes exposed students to research-based teaching across the duration of their programme. This provides an important baseline of existing research in the undergraduate curriculum, it uncovers exemplar activities across a range of subject areas and disciplines, and extends the vocabulary around research and inquiry to include discipline-specific approaches and understandings.

We have developed a robust methodology that captures evidence of research integration in the curriculum. This attests that research-based teaching is well established in UCC and is a distinct feature of a UCC education. As well as developing crucial research skills, disciplinary insights and graduate attributes amongst learners, the focus on research-based teaching helps connect the cutting-edge research in our research institutes and centres to the teaching activities and enhance student learning. This work builds on a long tradition of UCC for integrating research, teaching and learning.

7. Engagement and Collaboration with Industry; Societal/Civic Engagement

DkIT: Industry and Academia, Stronger Together – DkIT Corporate Partnership Programme

Increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of industry and Higher Education engagement has seen the development of a strategic and structured framework to support that cause at Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT). The *DkIT Corporate Partnership Programme (CPP)* was developed as the vehicle and framework to facilitate that enhanced engagement process and has become the informed bridge for mutual access to expertise and knowledge between external organisations and DkIT.

The CPP is encapsulated within a formal, but non-legally binding, agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) setting out a range of agreed and specified time-bound activities between DkIT and the partner. The CPP is leveraged as an enabler for exploration and development of ideas across strategy, teaching and learning, research, innovation and broad engagement targeted at the needs of the partner, and supports the Institute in the delivery of its strategic and regional remit, ultimately contributing to the economic, social and cultural development of the region.

DkIT endeavoured to identify and target progressive organisations to become members of the DkIT Corporate Partnership Programme. To date five such progressive organisations across agri-food, heavy engineering, the creative sector, construction and sports technology have signed up to the process, each seeing engagement with third level educational organisations an integral part of their respective strategies. For each the engagement through the CPP has developed a tailored three year agreement and MOU to facilitate engagement traversing areas such as strategy development, programme design and development, access to talented students and graduates and access to research and innovation collaborations.

Since its inception the CPP has delivered in a number of key areas such as supporting DkIT in the development of the Institute's new Strategic Plan 2018-2020, co-development of undergraduate course modules and access to specific industry technology, co-development of bespoke course and outreach delivery of same, guest lecturing of CPP organisation staff, brokered specific access to students adding value to the organisations prospective employee talent pipeline, access to applied research student projects and research and innovation collaboration projects both national and EU funded.

While the DkIT CPP innovative initiative is at an early stage the rewards are evident from all sides. The teaching and learning experience for both DkIT staff and DkIT students has been greatly enhanced. At operational level, this initiative has facilitated greater coherence and integration of approaches and activities between Schools and Functional Areas within the Institute.

External organisations have been afforded a bridge to access fantastic resources in a Higher Education Institute in a "whole of the organisation" approach. As such there is a strong pipeline of organisations in discussions regarding membership of the DkIT CPP. Further development of the initiative will undoubtedly come as we learn forward.

IADT: Inclusive Assessment of ‘Live-brief’ UG Projects

Introduction

The IADT BA (Hons) Animation programme team introduced a ‘live brief’ assessment strategy for the mandatory ‘Towards Professional Practice’ module. The module has been running (in evolving versions) for over 10 years. *A key outcome from this module is that students get some real, authentic industry related experience.* Whilst our DL832 Animation BA’s ‘Towards Professional Practice’ module has since its inception envisaged work placement, internship and ‘formal’ links with industry, the reality has been that such formal linkages have proved (for a variety of reasons) to be difficult to establish and sustain.

If students could not be ‘placed in industry’, how could ‘real’ projects be developed with external clients? This has led us to implementing ‘live-briefs’ as a solution to such industry placement challenges.

Live briefs

A viable alternative to placement in industry is what Professor Susan Orr calls **‘the live brief’**. Our academic programme invites clients (often charities and NGOs) into our programme, bringing their problems with them (often so-called *‘wicked problems’*) and developing responses to these challenges with our students. Clients often bring in modest funding with their projects.

Susan Orr says ‘through live briefs, the students often get access to much higher levels of industry – to the top people.’ Not only do students get access to the clients, they also deal directly with other key stakeholders – especially patients and NGO service-users.

This is true Problem Based Learning, often working with very challenging and difficult subject matter.

Students deal directly with the clients and with other stakeholders, to research, evolve, design, develop, present, manage and produce the project themselves, with guidance from the academic programme team where needed.

Clients and students decide on the subject matter, visual style, production solutions (hardware and software, timings, deadlines and deliverables). Clients are encouraged to meet their student groups regularly, preferably face to face, in order to learn the development and communication process for themselves and, most importantly, in order to stay on top of project messaging.

Such work has learning for all sides, for the students, for the clients and for the academic programme. Such work is real research, because it takes challenging, ‘wicked’ problems and uses an interdisciplinary approach to evolve and develop real solutions. The solutions evolved can be practical and academic.

Assessment of Live brief projects

Our assessment and feedback of such projects began many years ago with a limited (but perfectly valid) ‘industry’ assessment model. The product or output (in our case the animation project

produced with and for the client) was assessed. Each student group member was given the same grade for their work on the project.

We've long since moved to a more 'educational' grading and feedback model, very much based on guidance from IADT's Rebecca Roper and based also on methods highlighted in Palloff and Pratt's 'Assessing the Online Learner' (2008).

At two points in their project, (a formative point just over halfway through their project and a summative point just after the end of their project completion) students are encouraged to do individual VLE Journal postings where they self-assess and where they're allowed to suggest grades for their peers within their student project group.

Students are asked to reflect on their own learning and to justify their grading choices (both self and peer). Students are provided with our Faculty's 'Assessment Lexicon'. At all times, an informal, measured and professional tone is encouraged in their Journal Postings.

As Palloff and Pratt guide in their publication, any student self or peer assessment is 'carefully considered' by the programme team when developing each student's individual assessment and feedback. The student grading through Journals is crosschecked and collated with assessment information, formative and summative, from project presentations, weekly project meetings, client feedback and the assessment of the work itself (both process and product). Many times, the student observations (carefully anonymised) can be fed back to their peers.

Results

The problem of how to provide authentic 'industry' experience for our undergraduates and how to assess, feedback and enhance student learning through such experience requires continual engagement and innovative approaches.

Our programme has no 'one size fits all' solution to this ongoing puzzle. We retain the flexibility to allow our students to learn wherever the opportunity presents itself. We exercise careful judgement in selecting such opportunities, turning down many prospective industry and external projects and 'partners'.

Student learning is paramount in this relationship. As IADT's Dr. Marion Palmer would say '*industry are stakeholders in what we do but our students are our primary stakeholders*'.

On impact, feedback from clients and other stakeholders tells us that our assessment models are having positive impact. Feedback from students and from graduates tells us that our module has great benefits in terms of confidence building and in preparing our students, not only for the workplace, but for the fluid opportunities presented by the world of media outside the college environment.

One completely unanticipated outcome has been that our students, through working with challenging subject material, get early insights into ethical aspects and the real need for sensitivity in dealing with such subjects. As a result, some of our students have been better positioned to subsequently deal with difficult subjects (for example sexual consent and alcoholism) in their own undergraduate Major Project work. Dealing with challenging subjects has allowed our students to challenge their own medium and their own working approaches.

One last observation – this is complex assessment, with feedback from multiple lecturers, from clients and from the students themselves (self-assess and peer-assess). We continue to work to streamline the assessment pipeline and to shorten the time taken to deliver feedback to our students.

IT Carlow: An Innovative Learning Partnership – UNUM and Institute of Technology Carlow

The Project Ireland 2040 National Development Plan aims to build ‘a strong economy, supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills’ comprising ‘a competitive, innovative and resilient enterprise base essential to provide the jobs and employment opportunities for people to live and prosper in all regions.’ The plan also includes an objective to ‘generate the additional capacity necessary on a system-wide basis to support the projected increase in enrolments and to be fully responsive to skills needs at a regional and national level, including life-long learning.’

The Institute of Technology Carlow is a key driver of regional development and was a key consideration in the decision of US Fortune 250 company UNUM to establish their strategic software services centre in Carlow. UNUM’s investment announcement stated that ‘the Institute of Technology Carlow, are genuinely interested in partnering with UNUM to help us succeed’. Since then the development of the UNUM/Institute of Technology Carlow partnership has demonstrated the potential breadth of an industry/higher education partnership. Today almost one third of UNUM Irish employees are Institute of Technology Carlow graduates and the symbiotic relationship between the two organisations is based on co and joint learning and continues to evolve.

The partnership between UNUM and Institute of Technology Carlow is multi-faceted. UNUM have a well-developed corporate social responsibility and engagement strategy that has informed and promoted the interaction with the Institute. From their arrival in Carlow, the company has been interested in building mutually beneficial linkages with the Institute from the outset, providing them with access to potential employees with required skill sets and providing the Institute with access to the expertise of a major international corporation. In addition, the company has invested in software development facilities at the Institute, student placements and internships and graduate recruitment. A senior manager from UNUM is on the Institute’s Governing Body and also on the board of the InsurTech Networking Centre DAC. A bespoke solution for upskilling UNUM employees commenced on a pilot basis in 2018/19. This programme allows UNUM employees to remain in employment but gain new or additional level 8 qualifications with demonstrable impact for the economy and society through the fact that one third of UNUM employees in Carlow are Institute of Technology Carlow graduates. This adds to their personal skill set but also increases employee engagement in UNUM.

The partnership has been developed through the building of a relationship based on trust and respect where all parties’ input is welcomed and encouraged and the partnership is strategically important to both. Institute of Technology Carlow has aligned certain elements of computing modules to include areas of specific interest to UNUM and the company founded the UNUM Software Development Centre (SDC) at the Institute’s Carlow campus.

In 2015/16 the Institute announced a Research Fellowship Programme scholarship programme for employees of UNUM who are suitably qualified Masters or Doctoral candidates intending to pursue research in any discipline with one of the research centre at the Institute to enable and sustain a creative and collaborative research community between the partners.

Key transferable business skills along with technical knowledge, from IT systems management to software development to project management and research, are developed in partnership in a model that ensures graduates are prepared for employment in any international IT organisation.

A highly sought after MSc in Data Science has been developed by the Computing Department with UNUM input and launched. Technology based PhD and MSc graduates are highly sought after by industry for their intellectual capacity and applied skills. In March 2019 it was announced that UNUM were building their capacity in data analytics in Ireland and the statement from the board stated that 'Ireland will be our Data Science Incubation Hub. Institute of Technology Carlow is the collegiate feeder program to our Hub in Ireland'. This follows the successful inauguration of the InsurTech Networking Centre earlier in 2019 in which UNUM is a key industry partner and a member of the advisory board. The overall focus is always on learner enhancement, supporting programmes and research innovation.

At an institute level the engagement with UNUM is informing policy development regarding programme design and delivery, placement for learners and volunteerism. During the Institute programmatic review processes from 2015, the Institute has greatly increased the work based experiential placement opportunities for learners. Placement learning opportunities are required to adhere to basic general principles, regardless of the length of time spent in the placement. The formal placement opportunity offered by UNUM acts as a gateway to employment in addition to being a programme element.

From the commencement of the relationship the partnership has involved programme design, validation and delivery. The relationship between teaching faculty, professional services and UNUM staff has developed and grown through programme initiatives and also the provision of IT facilities by the company in the Institute.

The UNUM partnership has developed organically over the past 10 years. There is now a host of formal and informal relationships between the two organisations. One strong reason for the duration and enhancement of the partnership is that both are values led organisations. The Institute of Technology Carlow over-arching core value is the learner experience, sustained and enriched by a commitment to knowledge and the achievement of excellence; to the principles and practice of connectedness; to creativity and innovation; and to ensuring high standards of integrity and ethical behaviour in all of its endeavours.

IT Carlow: Collaborative Provision in the Public Sector – Defence Forces and IT Carlow

Institute of Technology Carlow has formal collaborative relationships with six learning organisations, each differing in aspects of their provision but grounded in a quality assurance and enhancement structure that has been recognised nationally and internationally and aligned with the Institute's core learner-centric values. Beyond these formal arrangements, Institute of Technology Carlow has partnerships with public and private bodies that have been enabled to provide for the continuous professional and personal development of their staff building on the frameworks provided by the Institute.

Learning intensive organisations exist in both our public and private sectors. This presents the very exciting prospect of working closely with these organisations in new ways and leveraging collective resources towards a common goal. Institute of Technology Carlow's relationship with the Defence Forces is the primary example of how such a partnership can deliver for both the organisations and the individual learner. It recognises that, increasingly, education is not confined to the lecture hall or laboratory on a HEI campus. It is in the workplace, it is all pervasive and more and more innovative methods of leveraging this for the benefit of organisations need to be found, while better accommodating the responsibilities and aspirations of those individuals in the workplace.

The partnership has seen two public institutions, both with a commitment to education, research and training, to develop a relationship that has become recognised an exemplar of best practice nationally and internationally. In 2016 an international review panel described the collaboration as “unique and a hugely positive development for both organisations”. Within this context, it is important to emphasise that programmes developed through collaborative provision are commonly shared and, while Institute of Technology Carlow has specific responsibilities, quality assurance and enhancement is a shared and integrated responsibility for all parties to the collaboration. The collaboration must be such that there is a full and collective commitment to the European and National (QQI) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance.

The partnership is focused on the principle of lifelong learning and includes the reciprocal delivery of lectures and presentations to the Institute of Technology Carlow student body by Defence Force personnel in areas such as Mechanical Engineering, Law, Leadership and Management, Human Resource Management, Logistics, IT Forensics and Sports Science.

To date over 1,600 Defence Forces learners have received awards from Levels 6 to 9 on the NQF in the areas of Leadership, Management and Defence Studies, Communications and Information Services, Military Engineering Management and Weapons, Ordnance and Munitions Engineering. The partnership extends beyond advanced technology, management and leadership and has also seen the conferral of Master of Arts in Teaching and Learning to learners from the Defence Forces who are involved in the development, delivery, management and review of education and training.

Institute of Technology Carlow has witnessed first-hand the role of continuous professional development in the recruitment and retention of talent in organisations through its activities across the Private Sector, Regional Skills Fora and Regional Economic Development Offices. The model developed with the Defence Forces can be, and has been, adapted for use with many other organisations. The Institute’s ongoing work with ‘Our Public Sector 2020’ particularly under Actions 13 and 14 also highlights the potential of the Carlow learning model for the wider public sector. The success of the Institute of Technology Carlow biennial seminar on Collaborative Provision, held in March 2019 in the Clock Tower in the Department of Education and Skills, demonstrates the appetite for learning models such as the ones which have developed by the Institute of Technology Carlow.

8. Widening Access, Progression and RPL

CIT: Extended Campus and VISKA, EVAVOL – Enhancement of Engagement Activity through the CIT Extended Campus

The **Extended Campus** was established in November 2011 as the Institute's interface to create and support links between CIT, enterprise, and community groups. Its role is to facilitate and support external organisations in engaging in mutually beneficial interactions with the Institute. The services of the Extended Campus encompass supports for CIT academic units on various aspects of graduate formation as well as supports for external organisations with regard to their workforce development, consultancy, and research & innovation requirements. The Extended Campus incorporates the CIT Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Service, a recognised leader in RPL theory and excellent practice nationally and internationally.

During the reporting period, the Extended Campus recorded 141 key engagements under a number of different activity strands. Some of these have led to longer-term projects, work placement or internship opportunities, and/or '**Engagement in Practice**' case studies which are published by the service in various formats to further disseminate knowledge about the possibilities for and benefits of interaction and collaboration. 23 Engagement in Practice case studies were selected for publication in 2018/19.

To further extend its reach and make staff aware of the possible value and range of external interactions and available Extended Campus supports, in September 2018 the Extended Campus also launched a monthly newsletter. This is circulated to CIT staff members via email and is also published on the Extended Campus website, with an opportunity for subscription which was taken up by over 650 regional subscribers within the first year.

VISKA

During the reporting period the Extended Campus was also the research and evaluation partner for the **VISKA (Visible Skills of Adults) project**, an Erasmus+ Key Action 3 Project under the call priority theme of "Employment and Skills: validation of informal and non-formal learning in Education and Training."

VISKA is a collaboration between four partner countries (Belgium (Flanders), Norway, Iceland and Ireland) which is running from March 2017 to February 2020 under the coordination of Skills Norway. VISKA aims to address the European policy priority of diminishing skills mismatch, fostering employability, economic growth and job creation, and social inclusion by making knowledge, skills and competences of adults more visible through validation of informal and non-formal learning. In particular, the project focuses in on the knowledge, skills and competences of low-qualified adults, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in order to enhance their employability, improve their access to education and training offers and support active engagement in society.

Through consideration of current validation practice and implementation of field trials, VISKA centres on qualitative improvement in current validation policies and practices in the four partner countries.

EVAVOL

In Semester 2 of the reporting period, the Extended Campus was furthermore involved in the **EVAVOL** project, dedicated to the development of information and training supports for volunteers interested in the recognition of learning through volunteering.

Co-funded by ERASMUS+, EVAVOL is an initiative of the Spanish Platform of Volunteering (Plataforma del Voluntariado de España) in collaboration with the Volunteering Support Centre of Lazio (Centro di Servizio per il Volontariato del Lazio), the Portuguese Confederation of Volunteering (Confederação Portuguesa do Voluntariado), Meath Community Rural and Social Development Partnership, and Cork Institute of Technology.

The objective of EVAVOL is to develop the first open and multilingual online platform of information, training, guidance and support for volunteers wishing to secure validation of the learning outcomes gained through volunteering.

The process of validating the outcomes from non-formal and informal learning is usually considered to have four phases: identification, documentation, assessment and certification. While in most cases, the work of voluntary organisations can support the identification and documentation of the learning, the learner is usually left with the challenge of securing assessment of such learning outcomes from a formal education provider as part of an official qualification. This is currently one of the main obstacles for the validation of learning from volunteering. EVAVOL aims to address this by specifically supporting volunteers in making the transition from the documentation to the assessment phases.

In the context of this project, the Extended Campus particularly contributed to the development of a process framework for the four phases of validation in the context of volunteering.

IT Tralee: Continued Implementation of Access21@ITTralee

Access21@ ITTralee is a project that has been running for the past two years between the Institute of Technology Tralee and four DEIS schools in Kerry. Once again, Academic Year 2018/2019 saw what is a strong multi-tiered programme, with the key core practices of Pathways to College, Mentoring, Leadership through Service and 21st Century Teaching and Learning, get more and more established in our partner schools. Staff and students from 2nd and 3rd years have now been deeply involved in the efficient running of this programme.

Access21@ ITTralee's overall objective to fulfil key goals set up in 2017 has been reached as:

- the educational aspirations and attainment of Irish second level students from geographical areas where attendance at third level is historically low has been raised;
- partner schools have been supported to develop and promote 21st Century Teaching & Learning environments;

- the STEM/CS capabilities of teachers across the Irish second level education system have been increased; and
- an evidence base that informs policy and structural change is being built.

Furthermore, as the quality assurance in implementing this programme has been rigorously ensured, very noticeable improvements have been recorded in the:

- strengthening in the Access21@IT Tralee concept;
- structuring of the delivery of this programme;
- efficiency in the delivery of this programme;
- strengthening in staff involvement;
- quality of student involvement with key subjects; and
- relationship between IT Tralee students and students from our partner schools.

Access21@ittralee during Academic Year 2018/2019 included:

- Planning Sessions with Participating Schools;
- Practitioner-led workshops;
- Access21@IT Tralee mentor's workshops;
- School Visits (Consultation/Troubleshooting with Teachers);
- Implementation of IT Tralee Access 21 Mentors mentoring in partner schools;
- Campus visits for participating schools;
- Second Access21@IT Tralee College Experience Day;
- Seminar on research findings presented to all participating schools;

Access21@IT Tralee strongly cemented its relationship with management, staff and students in partner schools by the continuation of rolling out five major initiatives:

- The implementation of the **ITT Getting College Ready Calendar of Events**;
- The retainment of an **Access21@IT Tralee Budget** which has been instrumental in ensuring the smooth running of the project;
- Access21@IT Tralee second **Access 21 Experience Day** with over 140 second year students from our partner schools experiencing college life in IT Tralee and being treated to a suite of Tasters, as well as IT Tralee Final Year students showcasing their Final Projects;
- The building up of **IT Tralee Access 21 Mentors** mentoring their mentees in our partner schools;
- The continuation of **IT Tralee Access 21 Student Ambassadors** visiting partner schools and engaging with students by relating their own path to College and the many obstacles on the way particularly struck a chord with DEIS students as a noticeable engagement was recorded.

Furthermore, Access21@IT Tralee hosted another **Access 21 Research Seminar** with the Trinity Access 21 research team presenting the findings of their work for 2014-2018 which reflected an increased improvement in the Access 21 students' confidence in key skills:

- Sense of purpose in education;
- Aspirations and goals;
- Active engagement with education;
- Wellbeing;
- Self-worth;
- Student voice;
- Teamwork & Problem solving;
- Student-teacher relationship.

9. Transnational Education

RCSI: Module Delivery in Years 1 & 2 of Soochow Programme

RCSI established a Dual Degree programme in International Pharmacy with Soochow University (SU) in which students will spend their first two years at SU and their second two years at RCSI. It is widely accepted that there are significant differences in pedagogy and in learning styles between Chinese and Western higher education. In order to prepare potential students for the transition from SU to RCSI, the curriculum incorporates five ECTS credit modules in Years 1 & 2 of the SU programme delivered in Soochow by visiting RCSI staff. These are 'Cardiovascular Health' and 'Gastrointestinal Health'. These modules allow students to familiarize themselves with and gain experience of interactive, case-based teaching and team-based projects, and so prepare them for the transition to RCSI. In addition, the modules were re-designed to reflect local cultural considerations. For example, salt-intake and smoking are the biggest cardiovascular risk factors in Asia (while obesity is the bigger issue in Europe and North America), and so the patient counselling and guidelines in case-based sessions reflect this. Relevant clinical guidelines from both Asia and Europe and North America are compared also to highlight key differences reflecting the 'International' perspective of the programme.

TCD: Enhancement of Quality through Governance, Policy and Procedures – the Case of Global Relations

In recent years, the nature of international partnerships between higher education institutions has evolved beyond research collaboration activities. Opportunities for the development of dual degree programmes, global academic networks and second campuses have emerged.

This has presented Trinity with the opportunity to build on its long record of internationalisation and to expand its international reach. Trinity has embraced these opportunities by putting in place structures that support internationalisation and by developing policies, procedures and processes to guide this growth and to assure the quality of education partnerships, the equivalence of teaching and learning, and the student experience.

Governance

Established as a sub-committee of Council, the International Committee was charged with developing a five-year business plan to meet the strategic targets for international policy and student enrolment outlined in the College's Strategic Plan 2008-2012. In parallel, the Planning Group, a sub-committee of the Executive Officer Group, approved the financial support for Trinity's international ambitions.

The International Committee was reconstituted in 2018/19 as the Global Relations Committee, with a membership and remit to better reflect the new global relations environment.

Strategies

Trinity's first Global Relations Strategy (GRS) was developed in 2012, following the appointment of the University's first Vice-President for Global Relations (VPGR) and the formation of a Global Relations Office (GRO) in 2011. This first explicit public articulation of an internationalisation strategy in Trinity included international student recruitment targets, which involved doubling the number of non-EU students between 2011 and 2016. Following a review in early 2014, and in the context of decreasing state funding and Trinity's Strategic Plan 2014-2019, the level of ambition was increased over a longer timeframe, specifically in relation to non-EU student recruitment and strategic partnerships/articulation agreements. GRS2 committed to a mid-term review, which took place in 2017.

This mid-term review recommended, inter alia, facilitating global partnerships by more direct engagement at a School level. Accordingly, the third iteration of the Global Relations Strategy, GRS3, refers to School Directors of Global Relations in each School. The GRS3 will run to 2023/24 and is built around four pillars: Building global collaborations and partnerships; Ensuring a global student community; Leveraging the global reach and impact of Trinity's research, education and innovation; Supporting the continued delivery of a high-quality student experience. The strategy also renews focus on engagement with Europe, and Trinity is a partner in the European initiative to build a **European Universities Network-CHARM-EU**.

Policies, Procedures and Processes

A suite of policies, procedures and processes have been developed in support of the Global Relations strategies. The first **Dual and Joint Awards Policy** was approved in October 2015. This was followed by the **Non-EU Collaborative and Transnational Education Partnerships Policy**, the **Education Recruitment Agents Policy** and the **Study Abroad Providers Policy**, both approved in June 2016. An **International Partnership Toolkit** was developed in 2017 to support Trinity staff in the development of academic partnerships by providing a guide to partnership types, advice on risk management and due diligence in the development of partnerships, and access to an International Partnerships database. A **Dual and Joint Awards QA Procedure** was approved in June 2019 and is expected to be used in the first review of transnational education in 2019/20. A draft crisis management procedure for students on study/placement abroad is being developed (led by the Director of Student Services), Procedures for the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications (led by the Academic Registry) and a Policy on Quality Assurance of the Year Abroad are in development for 2020/21.

International partnerships to date

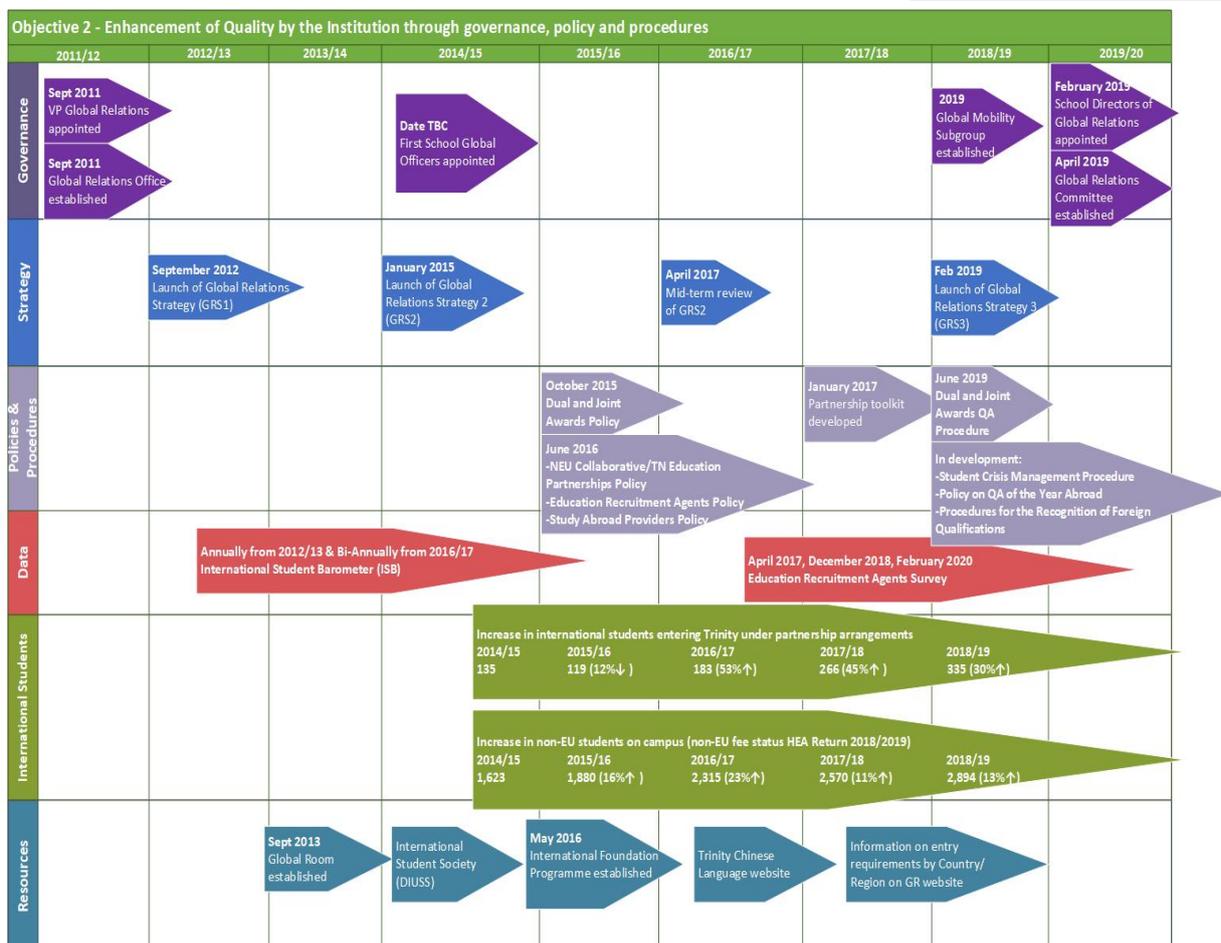
The number and type of international partnerships has increased over the lifespan of the GRS2. From a baseline of one joint programme with Singapore Institute of Technology, initiated in 2011/12, there are now nine Dual degree programmes under the Columbia Framework, and a number of articulation arrangements (including with Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, University of Science and Technology Beijing (USTB)). The first cohort of students from the School of Engineering UM-SJTU Joint Institute entered in 2019/20 under an articulation arrangement.

In addition, the International Foundation Programme (IEP) was developed (2015/16) in partnership with Marino Institute of Education to facilitate entry for international students to UG degree programmes from countries and systems that do not lead to direct entry into Trinity. Students choose from one of two pathways currently on offer – Pathway A in Law, Business, Economics and Social Sciences and Pathway B in Engineering, Science and Health Sciences.

Supports for International students

There has been significant growth over the last six years in non-EU student numbers (1,123 in 2011/12 to 2,897 in 2018/19). The Global Relations Office has developed a specialised international student experience team to meet the specific support needs of these international students. The Global Room was launched in 2013 as a student support hub and social space. Seven Global Officers have been appointed across nine Schools/Areas to work between the Schools and GRO on recruitment, marketing, partnership development, alumni activities, and to provide support to incoming and outgoing students.

Under GR3 it is planned to build on Trinity’s achievements to date by further diversifying the student body, expanding our international partnerships, providing more opportunities for students to study abroad and continuing to integrate students into the global Trinity community.



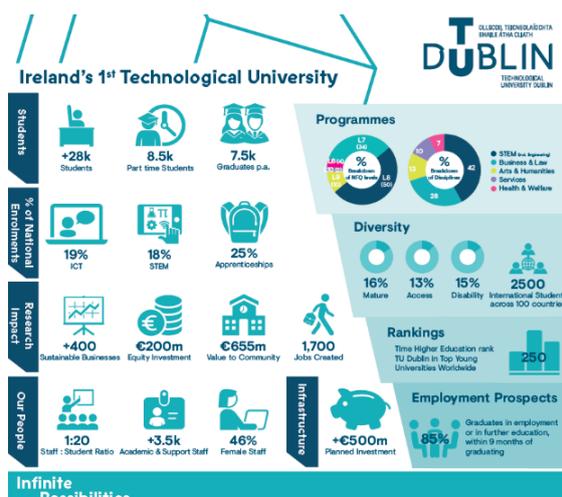
10. Developing QA for Merging or Newly Established Institutions

TU Dublin: Development of a QA-QE Framework for TU Dublin

Context

On 1 January 2019, Ireland’s first Technological University (TU Dublin) was established when Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB) and Institute of Technology Tallaght (ITT) merged. Three independent quality assurance frameworks continue to be implemented across the three constituencies of the former independent institutes. However, to meet its statutory obligations and to further enhance excellence in the education provision and experience, TU Dublin is developing a new quality framework that builds upon the existing robust quality structures of the former individual institutes. An Academic Quality Project Team was established to develop a new unitary quality that can support academic innovation and incorporate best practices to ensure programmes and practices align to the objectives of an engaged technological university that addresses specific challenges and expectation.

Fig. 1: TU Dublin Profile



A number of designated functions of TU Dublin require/support engagement with wider society, namely⁷:

1. Provision of education and training that reflect the needs of citizens, business, enterprise, the professions and other stakeholders in its catchments, and facilitating learning by flexible means.

⁷ The Technological Universities Act (2018)

2. Provision of broad-based education, intellectual and personal development that will enable graduates to contribute responsibly to social, civic and economic life in innovative and adaptable ways.
3. Service to the community and public interest through strong social and cultural links supporting creativity.
4. Promote and embed the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion.

Development of the TU Dublin Quality Framework

As a Designated Awarding Body, with the authority in Irish law to make awards⁸, the distinctive mission and functions accords TU Dublin the scope to be unique in its approach to programme offerings. This requires a flexible and systemic approach to quality, in order to achieve and maintain excellence in its mission, and to define the unique positioning within the HE sector in Ireland and internationally. The strategy for embedding quality culture to support quality enhancement, i.e., continuous improvement, requires a robust quality framework that builds upon the quality assurance of the merged institutions. An Academic Quality Project Team was established to develop the new quality framework and started by defining the principles and philosophical perspectives that will underpin the new quality framework. The aim of the project is to develop a quality system that will not only encourage and support student-centred practices but will ensure a student-centred learning environment.

Approach to Embedding Quality Culture Supporting Continuous Improvement

After determining the objectives and the underpinning principles, the nature of the new quality system, and specifically its role towards upholding academic standards, while concurrently driving continuous improvements, means a shift of emphases to QE while recognising the importance of QA. The approach taken represents Academic Quality as a continuum with;

- One end being the very rigid QA system characterised by adherence to rules and metrics which ensures accountability and conformity through tightly controlled and well-defined audit processes involving root-cause analyses and prescriptive corrective actions. The advantages being equity; accountability; clarity; measurability; objectivity; and transparency; all desirable characteristics in any publicly funded higher education institution and could be seen as strengths in the new TU Dublin quality system. However, disadvantages include: impedance to innovation; normalising effect; poor handling of contextual/uniqueness, and; the focus on metrics and not underpinning processes to meet metrics, therefore, often viewed by academics as top-down process without linkage between quality work and outcomes of a QA process^{9,10,11,12}.

8 Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, [No. 28]. 81 pp.

9 Harvey, L. & Williams, J., 2010, 'Fifteen years of quality in higher education', *Quality in Higher Education*, 16(1), pp. 4–36.

10 Anderson, G., 2006, 'Assuring quality/resisting quality assurance: academics' responses to 'quality' in some Australian universities', *Quality in Higher Education*, 12(2), pp. 161–73.

11 Barrow, M., 1999, 'Quality-management systems and dramaturgical compliance', *Quality in Higher Education*, 5(1), pp. 27–36.

12 Cheng, M., 2011, "Transforming the learner' versus 'passing the exam': understanding the gap between academic and student definitions of quality", *Quality in Higher Education*, 17(1), pp. 3–17.

- On the other end of the continuum is a Quality Framework characterised by lesser reliance on rigid rules and metrics, instead providing clear principles and processes, allowing for valid interpretation in different ways. Flexibility in aligning to this system is allowed for where, based on sound premises, viable principles and processes can be adopted. The advantages here are in the recognition of varying contexts, uniqueness and circumstances, hence will encourage and support innovation in practice. These positive characteristics are again desirable in a quality system that will foster and encourage a quality culture. Possible disadvantages include: Lack of accountability or responsibility; Diversity of standards/interpretation; Could allow for poor practices/low standards to pervade; Difficult to identify and address weakness; Lack of transparency and hence difficult for stakeholders to understand; direct comparisons may be difficult.

Considering the above outline, the challenge for the TU Dublin team is in making the decision on where to objectively position the new TU Dublin quality system between the two extreme ends of the continuum to maximise the advantages of both, while curbing the highlighted disadvantages. Another challenge that the project team faces is to ensure the new system will be sufficiently informed by external stakeholders to continually improve teaching, learning, (including research practice) and the overall student learning experience. The goal is to develop a system that is primarily characterised by quality enhancement procedures.

Approach to Development of the Unitary Quality Framework for TU Dublin

It is common for academic quality enhancement in higher education to be seen as simple augmentation of quality assurance. In such a model, quality assurance is on the opposite end of a continuum to quality enhancement and there is a progression from quality assurance processes leading on to quality enhancement processes¹³. In this way, quality enhancement is dependent on quality assurance¹⁴, and the data from the quality assurance is used to inform quality enhancement.

However, it has been argued that the most successful model, within which the quality of the learning experience can be improved more effectively and efficiently, is where quality enhancement processes, such as educational development, are combined or integrated into quality assurance processes to create a more holistic approach to quality enhancement^{15,16,17}. In this model, quality assurance and quality enhancement are integral parts of the same process and can be designed to assure and support a student-centred learning environment. This model has been adopted for the new quality system within TU Dublin. It will be enabled by structured stakeholder engagements such as with community, industry and professional bodies, with the student as an active participant in all such engagements. The QE themes noted on Figure 2 accentuate the essential attributes and values that are currently informing the TU Dublin's QA-QE design processes. The principles were aligned to the goal of developing a Quality Assurance-Quality Enhancement (QA-QE) system that will continue to support innovation, while integrating best practice in all aspects of education in TU Dublin.

13 Dill, D.D., 2000, 'Designing academic audit: lessons learned in Europe and Asia', *Quality in Higher Education*, 6(3), pp. 187–207.

14 Elassy, N., 2015, 'The concepts of quality, quality assurance and quality enhancement', *Quality Assurance in Education*, 23(3), pp. 250–61.

15 Danø, T. & Stensaker, B., 2007, 'Still balancing improvement and accountability? Developments in external quality assurance in the Nordic countries 1996–2006', *Quality in Higher Education*, 13(1), pp. 81–93.

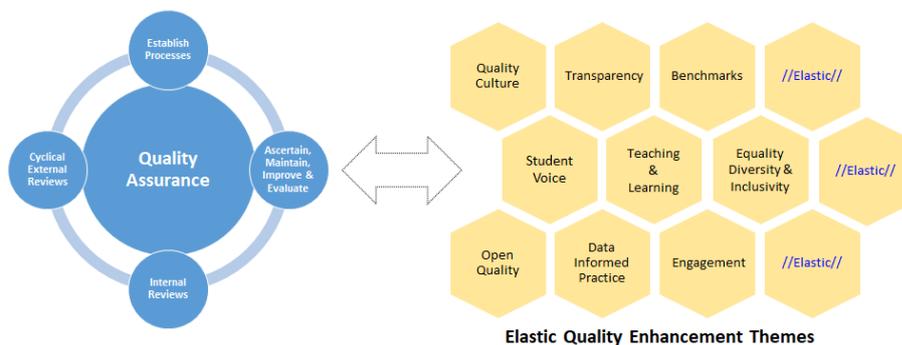
16 Gosling, D. & D'Andrea, V.-M., 2001, 'Quality development: a new concept for higher education', *Quality in Higher Education*, 7(1), pp. 7–17.

17 Gosling, D. & D'Andrea, V.-M., 2001, 'Quality development: a new concept for higher education', *Quality in Higher Education*, 7(1), pp. 7–17.

Once the objectives, principles and model were agreed, the Project Team set out to develop the quality system, which will include all academic quality assurance and enhancement policies and procedures (Handbook for Academic Quality Enhancement) and assessment policies and regulations (Marks and Standards document). Development of the new quality system is ongoing as part of the transformation process divided into the following activity steps:

1. Review of three current quality systems
2. Definition of objectives, underlying principles and characteristic for new QA-QE system;
3. Mapping to external policies, principles and guidelines;
4. Drafting of Handbook for Academic Quality Enhancement and Marks & Standards;
5. Stakeholder Consultations and Review of Draft;
6. Revision of Handbook for Academic Quality Enhancement and Marks & Standards documents;
7. Formal Adoption and Phased Activation into Practice.

Fig. 2. TU Dublin Quality Framework—Covers establishment of internal QA-QE processes and implementation principles, cyclical internal and external review principles founded on peer-review process with pervasive continuous quality enhancement themes, supported by transparency aimed at developing/maintaining public confidence. The indicated elasticity recognises that while the indicated QE themes are currently compelling, with continuous improvement they will upgrade to standard practices as additional considerations emerge



UCD: Proposal to establish South China-Dublin International College

Situation

This case study outlines the quality improvements which UCD has sought to implement in its consideration of the establishment of a second joint international college in China, as well as future quality enhancements which have been identified as part of this process.

As background, UCD established its first joint international college in China in September 2011, following approval from the Chinese Ministry of Education for UCD and Beijing University of Technology to create the Beijing-Dublin International College (BDIC).

In relation to the second joint international college proposal, the UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science began a collaboration with South China Agricultural University (SCAU) in 2012 to offer a range of collaborative taught programmes, initially in a joint 2+2 degree format¹⁸ and then a joint 3+1 format¹⁹. Each of these individual collaborative programmes received academic and strategic approval at the time in line with UCD's programme development and approval framework.

Task

In 2017 June, the presidents of the two universities agreed that they would explore the establishment of a joint international college modelled on BDIC in Beijing and to be named the South China-Dublin International College (SDIC).

Action

Detailed work then began between the UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science, the UCD School of Biology and Environmental Science and their counterpart schools at SCAU to develop a formal proposal to give this effect. In February 2018, the UMT Global Engagement Group endorsed the strategic merit of UCD progressing its discussions to establish a joint college with SCAU, and UMT approved that decision. At that point, guidance was sought from the Registrar (who had been closely involved with the establishment of BDIC, UCD's first joint international college in China) on the composition of a formal Due Diligence Working Group to review the proposal, and who might best chair that Working Group.

A Due Diligence Working Group was formed, comprising representatives of the relevant Schools, the Provost of BDIC, the Dean of Students and representatives from the International Office, Finance Office, Legal Office, Human Resources (HR), and the Safety, Insurance, Operational Risk and Compliance Office. Chaired by UCD's Director of Strategic Planning, the Working Group met four times between September and November 2018 and undertook a site visit to SCAU in Guangzhou in December 2018. In its due diligence, the Working Group considered the overall proposal, the proposed legal agreement for the establishment of SDIC, the tax implications of UCD's involvement in SDIC, the HR implications of recruiting staff to work in SDIC, the cost recovery model for reimbursing UCD for its teaching in SDIC, the overall fit with UCD's strategy in China, and the student support facilities available in SCAU. It also developed a register of the potential risks associated with the project, and their associated mitigation strategies.

The Working Group concluded that, given overall similarities between the proposed SDIC and BDIC, UCD's experience in establishing BDIC and the lack of impediment in any of the areas examined, there was no reason for the project not to proceed.

18 Stages 1 and 2 at SCAU and Stages 3 and 4 at UCD.

19 Stages 1 to 3 at SCAU and Stage 4 at UCD.

Results

Accordingly, the recommendations of the Working Group were considered by the UMT Global Engagement Group in February 2019, together with an advanced draft of the proposed contractual agreement between UCD and SCAU to establish the joint international college (subject to Chinese Ministry of Education approval). The UMT Global Engagement Group endorsed the strategic merit of the final proposal, and recommended that it be presented to UMT and the Academic Council to endorse the establishment of the joint college, following which the Governing Authority would receive the final recommendations of those two bodies for its ultimate approval.

From a quality enhancement perspective, UCD has sought to learn from its experience of establishing a first joint international college in China to ensure a smoother due diligence and approval pathway for the establishment of SDIC.

11. Additional Themes

AIT: Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA)

The importance of carrying out a DPIA before the project starts

One of the departments within AIT contacted the IDCO in relation to a new record management system proposed to be used by the department. A high level of personal and special category data is processed by that function. The IDCO met with the contact within the department in order to discuss the requirements and gather information to carry out a DPIA. There is a commonly held belief that any company offering record management systems will have already taken all the steps necessary to ensure that data is protected within the system they are providing. This is not always the case, as different data privacy laws apply in different countries. Where the system being considered is supplied by a company whose base is outside of the EEA, there is a risk that the data privacy elements for the system are not as robust as the GDPR requires. In this case the base for the company on which the DPIA was to be carried out lay outside of the EEA and this was initially considered to be the first and highest risk.

At the time of the assessment there was a legal challenge to the validity of both the standard contractual clauses (SCC) (in place to accommodate the transfer of personal data between EEA countries and Third Countries) and to the Privacy Shield (which allows for the sharing of personal data with registered companies in the USA). These challenges had to be considered when carrying out the DPIA. The situation with the legal challenges made this risk difficult to mitigate as there was uncertainty around the outcome. AIT could not take on a third-party supplier where the agreement we were basing the privacy security on could be found to be weak.

Another consideration to be taken into account was the security around Cloud based service hosting. While the company were able to provide verifications of a robust security structure and protocol, the use of data for a purpose other than that which it was collected raised some concerns. The privacy laws in the system's host country could potentially allow access to the data outside of the authorised users. The lack of control and uncertainty over privacy protocols, underpinned by the instability of the SCC and the Privacy Shield, combined to raise the level of risk. One way to partially mitigate this risk was to apply a strict retention period to the data. Given that some of the student data could be required for up to five years and possibly longer due to National funding requirements and audit processes, the mitigation factor could not be significantly reduced. Pseudonymisation of the data after a specific period could reduce the impact but would not sufficiently address the risk.

While the company engaged fully with the process it was necessary for the IDCO and the contact for the Function to review and discuss whether choosing to accept the risks identified and implement the new system was a reasonable way to proceed. Given the sensitive nature of the data, it was decided that it would be necessary to explore alternatives in order to locate a system that did not pose the risks associated with the first provider. The DPIA had helped to identify risks which were unacceptable given the nature of the personal data.

Following a search, the department liaison found a number of alternative systems, which were based within the EEA. One system had implemented a privacy by design approach when developing the modules and were able to address any questions AIT posed in relation to security of the data

and other general data protection queries. A DPIA was carried out on the quality of this system and its data processing standards. The risk factor result from the DPIA was 'low risk' and therefore acceptable. The department in question decided to engage the other service provider.

A data protection audit was carried out in the Information and Compliance Data office in order to identify areas where improvements could be made. While changes were being implemented across the Institute, there wasn't a strong process quality check for a number of procedures. To address this and other recommendations made in the audit report, a number of actions have been taken. These include an Institute Consent to Processing procedure with a checklist and template form which will assist to record the collection of consent – where consent forms part or all of the lawful basis for data collection.

In order to implement the GDPR throughout the Institute, the IDCO had held meetings to determine the risks in each area. These meetings helped to identify processes that might require a DPIA. The audit report recommended a change to the format of these meetings so that they would be more recognisable as a pre-DPIA investigation. A standardised question list was recommended. This is currently being developed.

DCU: Data used to inform Annual and Periodic Programme Review

APR and PPR are developed as a tool to facilitate critical reflection on a programme based on data and information from 3 sources:

- **Student profile and performance data** (including progression, award classification profiles, student growth, entry tariff information, widening participation information)
- **Student feedback information** – either feedback provided during programme award boards, informal feedback, or student surveys. The DCU Quality Promotion Office provides a 3-year consolidated report of ISSE results at subject area, and where possible programme level to support annual and periodic programme review. Student feedback received at modular level as part of the Quality and Enhancement of Student Teaching (QuEST) also informs the student feedback element of annual programme review.
- Module reports submitted by **external examiners**.
- Additional student performance information is reviewed during periodic programme review, including **prior education attainment profiles of registered students, graduate and outcome information** from the HEA First Destination Report among others.

Units are encouraged and supported by the institutional research function within the university to collect and use both quantitative and qualitative information to support self-assessment. This data may include,

- A student statistical profile pack, providing a range of student applications, intake, progression and other profile information.
- For academic areas under review, information relating to the number of research active staff within the area, and the proportion of research outputs published within top quartile journals.
- Irish Student Survey of Engagement reports, relevant to the Area under review (e.g. School/ Faculty level reports) are provided to the quality review teams to support self-assessment
- Information and data on overall budgets within the area under review, with further data on research income, including the source of research funding

- Information on space allocated within an area under review
- Information and data pertaining to benchmark performance in key areas, including rankings, research performance and comparable funding benchmarks.
- Where appropriate, the presentation of bibliometric reporting systems, including SciVal to report on and benchmark research outputs published in journals reflected in the Scopus Database.

IADT: Changes to Deferral Processes leading to greater Quality Assurance

In 2018/19, the Office of Academic and Student Affairs in IADT undertook a review of how it recorded deferrals, including both modular and yearly deferrals, on its student database, Banner. The aim of this review was twofold – a) to keep in mind the principles of GDPR in reference to applications for deferrals by students and b) to allow staff using the system, to clearly see a deferral status of either a module or a year, at a glance on Banner, without having to refer to any other source.

A GDPR

In relation to GDPR concerns, a paper-based system is currently used to process deferrals. This has some issues around data protection as the forms move from the student, to the Faculty, and then on to Academic Affairs and to the Registrar. At each stage, there is an opportunity for data leakage. The concern was that paper based systems can be prone to data leakage, and the process, as it was run at that time, had a risk for potential data breach, which was of great concern to us.

B Clear Information recorded on Banner

In relation to staff using Banner, deferrals were not recorded directly on the system which meant that, where there was a query on a deferral, staff would need to refer back to the original forms. This meant that the information wasn't readily available to them and that staff in the office were required to review forms that had already been reviewed, thereby allowing confidential information to be re-shared. As stated above, this was of concern to us but what was also of concern is that staff had to disengage from their current task to review forms when the information should be more readily available to them.

We reviewed what could be done in terms of managing both these needs and how this could be related back to Banner.

For a Leave of Absence (full year deferral)

We already had a code of DR which means that the full enrolment has been deferred, this automatically defers them from all their modules. This status has a rule associated with it that manages their fee liability depending on the date on which they have deferred.

For Modular Deferrals

We created new enrolment statuses that would reflect a partial or modular deferral which gave a clear indication to staff as to the students deferral status. Related to this, we were mindful that these new statuses should denote their fee payment situation so that the Fees Team could ascertain this by simply viewing the student status. These statuses referred back to our original enrolment statuses so that they would be easily remembered by staff.

These include:

Enrolment Status	Code	Note
Registered	RG	This means that the student is fully registered and has paid all due fees
Registered – Conditional	TR	This means that the student is registered by has not yet paid any or part of their fees
Partial Deferral	RD	The student has deferred some modules but not all, and has paid all fees (related to RG above)
Partial Deferral – Conditional	TD	The student has deferred some modules but not all, and has not yet paid any or part of their fees

Also, in the Course Information Section on Banner, we included created new codes that denoted which modules had been deferred and to when and also allowed for automatic grade entry to reflect this at the point of examination grade entry. These include:

Code	Note	Automatic Grade Input
DA	Module deferred to the next Autumn session	IA
DS	Module deferred to the next Summer session	IS

These changes are made at source, i.e. in the Academic and Student Affairs office as soon as the deferrals are approved.

These changes were trialled at the Summer 2019 and Autumn 2019 Exam Boards and were very successful. The advantages of the new process were:

- Gave a clear indication of the student deferral status to those viewing the Banner record, i.e. in Fees or in a Faculty Office
- Automatically inserts a deferral grade which means that Faculty Staff don't have to manually input one per module deferred

Further changes to the deferral system are ongoing and this will involve moving the paper based system to a digital format in such a way as to limit the circulation of information to only those who need to sign off on the deferral process.

IT Sligo: Teaching, Learning and Assessment – supporting the CPD of Staff

The following case study details the manner in which Institute is addressing its strategic objective related to Learning and Teaching. The institute recognise that one of the keys to successful student engagement and student success is through the provision of CPD activities to academic staff to support them in utilising current teaching, learning and assessment strategies appropriate to the student body. CPD commences on academic induction. The conduit to the provision of the initial induction and sustained CPD engagement is through the Centre for Enhanced Learning & Teaching

(CELT) which is managed by a doctoral prepared Educational Development Manager.

Academic Induction page: In the reporting period, an academic Induction Moodle page was developed which addresses six key topics pertinent to the new lecturer in ITS. On completion academic staff can gain the Online Digital Badge in Academic Induction which is documented on CORE HR and used as part of PMDS.

CELT Moodle page: The CELT Moodle page was revamped during the reporting period to support anyone with a teaching & learning role in the Institute. The page supports a range of topics to support teaching staff through short videos created by IT Sligo academic staff, guest presentations, workshops as well as support with completing forms and understanding procedures and processes at the Institute.

Bespoke activities: have also being developed to address identified needs of academic staff. An example of such an activity is PhD writing bootcamps for staff. The School of Business and Social Sciences and the Academic Writing Centre (under the remit of CELT) supports writing bootcamps throughout the year for academic staff in the School of Business and Social Sciences undertaking a PhD. The writing bootcamps give PhD staff four hours of dedicated writing time, five times per semester, alongside one-to-one writing support and advice from the tutor. The writing bootcamps have been a great success with all attendees (and their supervisors) noting a subsequent improvement in their writing.

An online **Post Graduate Certificate in Teaching, Learning and Assessment** was developed and validated in the reporting period with delivery to commence in the next reporting period.

Digital Badge for Universal Design in Teaching & Learning.

In 2021 HEA funding for students with disabilities will be aligned with HEI compliance with UDL. As part of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning's open access digital badge initiative, AHEAD and UCD Access & Lifelong Learning have teamed up to create the digital badge for Universal Design in Teaching & Learning. To raise awareness initially in the Institute of the principles underpinning UDL, CELT has supported the roll out of the introductory development course on UDL, in ITS which leads on successful completion to eligibility for the digital badge. Twenty academics were eligible to receive the badge in the reporting period.

UL: Annual Strategic Planning Process

While fulfilling their obligations to publish a five-year strategic plan, a number of universities have become aware of the need to be more flexible when striving to meet the changing environment in which they operate. In considering the current challenges within the higher education sector in Ireland, the performance of the University against the existing strategic plan and the emerging new Higher Education Performance Framework with the HEA, the President, with the support of Executive Committee and the Office of Strategic Projects and Transformation, embarked on an annual strategic planning process. There was wide engagement with the campus community and relevant external stakeholders in developing the new strategic plan, which covers the period 2019–2024.

The new annual strategic planning process enables an agile approach that allows for goals and targets to be adjusted annually, with a five-year horizon, to address changing local, regional, national and sectoral requirements and opportunities and to build the academic reputation of the institution. A key outcome of the engagements referred to above was the recognition of the need to align the new strategic plan and its objectives and performance measures with the annual strategic

planning process and the academic, as opposed to the calendar, year to ensure optimal strategic, financial and resource planning.

The implementation of the new strategic plan, aligned to the annual strategic planning process, will empower divisions, faculties and academic units to devise their own associated annual plans to support the implementation of the University's strategic plan. While these supporting plans will be annual, they will be written in the context of the institutional plan's five-year cycle. In addition, a suite of institutional strategies are being developed to support the implementation of the institutional strategic plan and the development of local annual plans.

Other key characteristics of the new, dynamic strategic planning process are as follows:

- plans are adjusted annually to address changes in targets, opportunities, and regional and sectoral requirements;
 - » schools, faculties and professional services are empowered and supported in 'owning' annual plans with a five-year horizon and aligned to the University strategic goals and targets;
 - » plans are academically led, within resource constraints, collaboratively developed with other units and external partners and executed with the aim of maximising sustainability;
 - » plans will be considered by Executive Committee when it develops the annual budget and support plans;
 - » the process will lead to a more two-way iterative process of bottom-up and top-down planning;
 - » accountability and responsibility is clearly articulated and defined, with more independence given to the faculties; and
 - » resource allocation will be aligned to maximising the academic reputation of the University.

UL: Preparing for CINNTE Review

Preparations for the institutional review commenced in February 2018 with the agreement of a project plan governing all aspects of the CINNTE review process to the post-review phase. Executive Committee delegated responsibility for routine operational oversight of the institutional quality review process and its project management to the Vice President Academic Affairs and Student Engagement (VPAASE), who was supported by the Quality Support Unit (QSU).

1. Personnel

Self-evaluation team

In October 2018, the VPAASE appointed Dr David Fleming to chair a team to undertake the self-evaluation exercise and prepare the ISER in advance of the review panel visit. The VPAASE wished to appoint someone with experience of core University activities but who was not part of the University's management structure. An employee of UL since 2005, Dr Fleming is Assistant Dean (Academic Affairs) in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and a member of Academic Council.

The self-evaluation team was selected to represent a cross-section of the campus community. The 21-member team includes 16 staff members and five students and is supported by the office

of the VPAASE, members of the QSU and a technical writer. Gender balance was considered when establishing the composition of the team.

The five student representatives actively engaged in the team's work. Given the focus of the review's terms of reference, an international student was randomly identified. The respective presidents of the Students' Union (UL Student Life) and the Postgraduate Students' Union accepted the invitation, as did an undergraduate and a postgraduate student.

The staff members on the self-evaluation team were selected on the basis of having demonstrable interest and expertise in quality improvement. Of the 21 members of staff on the team, four (including the chair) represent the four faculties, five represent support departments (Graduate and Professional Studies, Student Affairs Division, QSU, International Education Division) and associated companies (Plassey Campus Centre) and one represents Governing Authority.

Since November 2018, the self-evaluation team met regularly in the initial phase of the exercise to undertake the data-gathering and analytical activities described in section 4 below. Communication to and feedback from the team relating to drafts of the ISER during the writing phase were undertaken by email.

Steering group

A steering group was formed to lead and support the self-evaluation (or 'core') team in its work. The steering group comprises the core team chair, a member of Academic Council, an academic staff member from the Faculty of Science and Engineering, the QSU Quality Officer, the Mature Student Access Officer and a postgraduate student. From February to June 2019, the steering group met fortnightly to coordinate project activities and direct the work of the core team.

2. Process milestones

- Feb 2018 Project management plan adopted
- Oct 2018 Dr David Fleming appointed to lead the self-evaluation team
- Nov 2018 Self-evaluation team recruited
- Nov 2018 First meeting of self-evaluation team and induction
- Mar 2019 Meeting of QQI representatives with VPAASE and members of core team
- Spring 2019 Regular meetings of steering group and self-evaluation team
- June 2019 First draft of ISER completed
- Sept 2019 ISER reviewed by Executive Committee
- Oct 2019 ISER reviewed by Academic Council and noted by Management Council
- Nov 2019 ISER noted by Governing Authority
- Nov 2019 Finalisation of ISER and appendices
- Dec 2019 ISER sent to QQI: 16 December

3. Keeping the campus community informed

On 21 December 2018, the Director of Quality informed the University community of the forthcoming institutional review by email. On 6 December 2018, the chair of the core team and Director of Quality met with Management Council to brief them on the review process. In April 2019, memoranda on current and future activities were circulated to Executive Committee, Academic Council and Management Council, while a general email update was sent to the campus community.

To keep the general campus community informed of the review and abreast of developments, a dedicated web page was added to the QSU website in November 2018. The page provides information on the self-evaluation exercise and the forthcoming review visit and contains links to the QQI Handbook, the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and a list of both ISER teams. Once the final ISER and appendices were sent to QQI in December 2019, the report itself was uploaded to SharePoint (the University's internal file-sharing portal) for dissemination to the campus community, the members of whom were alerted to this by email from the VPAASE.

4. Data-gathering activities

The first meeting of the core team in November 2018 included an induction and planning workshop to help the team identify what it considered to be the University's main quality assurance and enhancement activities. As well as focusing on identifying what formal QA activities applied to the University's four core areas, i.e. teaching, learning, research and services, the workshop provided team members with an opportunity to get to know each other.

The core team met on six occasions. At its third meeting, the team reviewed and assessed how the University had implemented the recommendations of the 2012 review. It also began the process of an in-depth analysis of how the University complies with ESG and QQI guidelines. The results of that analysis form a significant portion of the ISER.

During the spring of 2019, core team subgroups were formed to analyse the University's QA/QE activities with respect to each of the areas under review:

- research
- governance
- access, transfer and progression
- international learners
- compliance

The subgroups consulted widely in their respective areas and presented their findings to the core team in May 2019. Following discussion, the reports were finalised in June and used to inform the ISER.

An early decision was made to avoid contributing to 'survey fatigue' by using pre-existing survey data wherever possible, along with focus group activity. Following an email invitation to all students from the VPAASE, two student focus groups were held on 19 March 2019 with a random selection of students. Scheduled by the student representative on the ISER steering group, both focus groups were facilitated by final-year students with note-taking services provided by the QSU. One group provided feedback on how the University deals with assessment and feedback while the other dealt with learning resources.

Facilitated by an external consultant, three staff focus groups were held on 2 April. Members of staff were selected from departments and support units. Comprising 15 senior members of academic and support staff, the first group considered a number of QQI core guidelines (CG), including governance and management (CG 1); documented approach to quality (CG 2); staff recruitment, management and development (CG 4); and self-evaluation, monitoring and review (CG 11). The second group of 12 academic staff considered programmes of education and training (CG 3); teaching and learning (CG 5); and assessment of learners (CG 6). Comprising 12 professional service or support staff, the third group examined how the University dealt with information and data management (CG 8) and public information and communication (CG 9).

The results of both student and staff focus groups were considered by the core team on 7 May and were cited, where relevant, throughout the ISER report.

A quality team leaders' forum, which normally convenes as part of the quality management system, met on 11 June 2019 to consider and deliberate on the University's quality systems as they apply to support divisions. Members were asked to contribute case studies of enhancements undertaken as a result of quality review recommendations or customer feedback.

5. The ISER

The writing and editing of the ISER involved extensive consultation. With reference to the outcomes of the data-gathering activities described above, the chair began writing the initial draft of the report in spring 2019. That first draft was reviewed by the core team and the VPAASE in June and July, and the second draft was given to a technical writer in August. The next version of the ISER and all finalised appendices were reviewed in September by the core team, Executive Committee, Management Council, Academic Council and Governing Authority, and amendments were made accordingly. The final ISER was submitted to QQI on 16 December 2019, and the main review visit is scheduled for March 2020.

WIT: Developing an Academic Risk Policy

The Academic Quality Committee has identified academic risk and academic risk reporting as a key theme of importance for the future. The committee developed a policy document that creates a clear pathway for understanding and codifying academic risk occurrences and the reporting responsibilities arising for risk events. This will not alone be implemented in the Institute, but the design framework has also been published at the sixth International Conference on Higher Education Advances (HEAd'20) for consideration by peers outside of our community.

The Academic Risk Policy was considered in detail by the Audit and Risk Committee. A by-product of developing the overall quality assurance framework was to highlight the extent to which each oversight function (i.e. Governing Body, Academic Council, and Executive Board) is aware of and responding to their obligations and more significantly how errors or instances of non-compliance are currently managed and reported.



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