

Institute of Technology, Sligo

Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report 2020

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



The Cyclical Review Process

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Part 1

Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures

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

1. Overarching Institution Quality Policy

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

The Institute of Technology, Sligo (ITSligo) has been an integral part of the education and development landscape in the North West of Ireland since it opened in 1970 as a Regional Technical College. Having developed substantially since then, it now offers a wide range of flexible contemporary programmes from apprenticeship, through higher certificate and degree level courses to taught postgraduate and research awards. The student body is drawn from full time students who move to, or reside in the region, and an ever-increasing number of students who study on line - in some cases at great distance from the physical campus.

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

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

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

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

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

As with all other IOT's, ITSligo operates within a highly developed regulatory framework. Effective management of the Quality Assurance activities is a complex blend of regulation, policy development, procedural knowledge, quality culture, stake holder engagement and continuous improvement. Ensuring that this quality assurance culture permeates and informs all the activities of the Institute is a delicate balance. On one hand there is the need for the Institute to meet the

explicit QA requirements set out nationally and internationally to maintain and protect the institutional award standards and on the other hand to continue to maintain the reputation and the ability of the Institute to be responsive to rapidly changing learner and stakeholder requirements. The organisation has a [quality manual, policies, procedures](#), guidelines and other documents in place to ensure its programmes are developed, validated and maintained in accordance with the requirements of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), the Quality and Qualifications Act 2012 and the determinations of QQI. These quality assurance documents are overseen by the Governing Body, Academic Council and its committees and the management team to ensure the provision of the highest quality of academic provision for its learners.

2. Quality assurance decision-making fora

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

The Institute is governed by a Governing Body of 19 people and the President. The President resides over an executive committee including VP's in the areas of Registrar and Academic Affairs, Innovation and Engagement, Online Development, Secretary/Finance and Corporate services, and three heads of Faculty. There is a senior management group comprising the executive team and 8 Heads of Departments and 12 Heads of non-academic departments. The non-academic members oversee the management of marketing, admissions, student access and support, staff development, human resources, IT support, finance etc. and ensure the academic processes are supported.

Alongside these operational structures there is also the academic council who are responsible for the quality assurance of all the academic activities within the institute. The academic council is the primary vehicle for driving academic improvements, innovation and change. The Academic Council has established a number of committees that carry out specific duties and tasks which can then be approved or ratified by Academic Council. The participation of a wide spectrum of academic, non-academic and management on these working committees ensure that robust discussions take place and that a consensus approach to changes affecting the academic processes is achieved. The committees are listed below but are subject to continuous review and are changed as the need arises e.g. in the future it is envisaged there will be a need for more focus on the Technical University (TU) which will necessitate a change to the committees.

- Planning and Coordination committee
- Academic Processes committee
- Research and Innovation committee
- Learning, Teaching and Assessment committee
- National Higher Education Strategy committee
- Collaborative Monitoring and Review Academic Committee

In quality assurance the majority of the remit in regard to policy and procedures will fall to the Academic Processes Committee.

The Registrars area oversee the validation of new programmes in line with approved procedures. Programmes are generally validated for a period of five years and in the interim the Programme Boards drawn from the specific lecturers on the programme and learner representatives have responsibility for the monitoring of each specific programme. Student results are reviewed by an exam board after each examination sitting in consultation with external examiners and are ratified by Academic Council.

The Academic Processes Committee has a special responsibility to ensure that the policies, procedures and processes of the institute meet external regulatory requirements and that fairness and consistency is enshrined throughout the student life cycle starting with admissions and finishing with graduation.

Confirmation of QA Policy and Procedures

1. Programme Design and Approval (ESG 1.2)

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

Validation refers to the process by which the Academic Council of the Institute, following a recommendation from an External Peer Review Panel, formally recognises a module or a programme as constituting a body of learning leading to a specified award in a designated discipline area.

Approval of a programme refers to the process by which the Governing Body of the Institute, with a recommendation from the Executive Committee formally agrees to provide the resources to deliver the validated programme of learning. Chapter 2 of the [Quality Manual](#) outlines the academic policies, procedures and guidelines used in the Institute for the validation of all academic programmes and the approval process for delivery of these programmes. The Quality manual and associated documents set out a rigorous process with key control points and feedback mechanisms that oversee the process from the initial design idea to validation and final approval of new programmes.

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

2. Programme Delivery and Assessment (ESG 1.3)

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

As part of the programme validation, documents are required to present a teaching and learning strategy and an assessment strategy. This ensures that the student is central to the planning of assessment and are given the tools needed to ensure the best possible outcomes on their chosen path of study.

Chapter 4 of the Institute Quality Manual specifies the methods by which programmes are monitored. Once a programme has been validated and approved for delivery, the process of monitoring the on-going delivery needs to be enacted. This provides a formal mechanism for quality assurance and facilitates two-way communication between staff and students, maintaining a high level of engagement with programme operational issues. The programme monitoring process also includes a formal channel for feedback to be provided by students and staff into programme design, development and delivery. One of the ways in which this is done is via the Programme Board which is scheduled to meet four times in the academic year with an agenda identified for each meeting. Programme boards, in line with ESG 1.9 make decisions on programme content, design and delivery. The Programme Board is also an opportunity to take stock of student performance and also provides a forum for the student voice. This is a valuable opportunity to reflect on student expectations and experience in relation to the programme. IT Sligo continues to engage in the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) programme to enhance the effectiveness of feedback from elected class representatives and to respond to feedback from students. This engagement in NStEP will ensure a continued effective communication mechanism between students and the programme board/academic staff.

[Chapter 4](#) of the Quality manual and related procedures outlines how programmes once validated are modified and monitored.

[Mark and Standards](#) and the Exam regulations are key documents that set out the operation of examination, continuous assessment, selection of external examiners and conduct of candidates during examinations.

The Institute conducted a pilot of GURU, a secure online submission system for examination papers and external examiner feedback and reports. This system will provide a more efficient method of recording and disseminating external examiner feedback that is provided in reports, as well as ensuring greater security and oversight in the examinations process. Following the pilot the institute will review feedback on the use of the system, with a view to making a decision on its full adoption.

Information about the Learning, Teaching and assessment strategy is available [here](#)

There are many policies and procedures that support all these processes. All of these can be accessed by staff through a Staff Document Portal and any that are relevant to students are accessible on the Website for example those related to [examinations](#), [student supports](#) etc

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

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

The Code of Practice for the Quality Assurance of Postgraduate Research is Chapter 8 of the Quality Manual and also a stand-alone document available on the website for staff, students and other stakeholders. It sets out the context of postgraduate research at the Institute, the process flow, the quality assurance of all elements of the process and all relevant procedures, forms and the Code of practice which can be found [here](#).

The Quality Assurance of research is managed through the Code of Good Practice for the Conduct of Postgraduate Research at IT Sligo. This document, as part of the overall Institute's Academic QA system, sets out the research environment and research process at IT Sligo, including procedures that are followed at key stages of the process (such as registration, monitoring and examinations). The Institute organises its key research areas through Strategic Research Centres (SRC) (primary areas of focus) and Recognised Research Groups (RRG) (emerging areas). The current Strategic Research Centres are:

PEM – The Precision Engineering and Manufacturing Centre

CRiSP – The Centre for Research in Social professions

CERIS – The Centre for Environmental Research, Innovation and Sustainability

The current Recognised Research Groups are:

- The Nanotechnology and Bioengineering Research Group (Nano-Bio)
- The Mobilities Research Group
- The Mathematical Modelling Research Group
- The Clinical Health and Nutrition Research Group (CHANCE)
- The Cellular Health and Toxicology Research Group (CHAT)

The associated Procedures/Forms are:

RES/CoP/F01 Postgraduate Student Registration Form

RES/CoP/F02 Research Registration/Transfer Proposal Assessment Report Form

RES/CoP/F03 Student Progress Form

RES/CoP/F04 Supervisor Progress Form

RES/CoP/F05 Transfer Between Registers Form

RES/CoP/F06.1 External Examiner Report Form (Masters), 6.2 (PhD)

RES/CoP/F07.1 Internal Examiner Form (Masters), 7.2 (PhD)

RES/CoP/F08 Notice of Intent to Submit Form

RES001 Research Ethics Policy

RES002 Research Ethics Procedure

The Institute has re-structured to place a Vice-President for Research, Innovation and Engagement on its Executive Committee.

4. Student Lifecycle (ESG 1.4)

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

Admission

There are a number of admission routes for learners to provide access to education for a diverse range of learners. This includes students who apply through the CAO process as well as mature learners who apply by direct entry. The institute used the NFQ as the basis for entry for all programmes. There are a variety of Level 6 to Level 10 programmes available see [here](#). Information for applicants applying for 1st year or advanced entry is located [here](#). IT Sligo is part of the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR). HEAR is a college admissions scheme that offers places on reduced points and extra college support to school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds who are resident in the Republic of Ireland.

There is a separate system for direct entry and advanced entry to the on-line / part time programmes. In this case applications are reviewed and approved by a designated person within each programme. The Institute has in place a procedure for the recognition of prior learning (RPL), which includes non-formal and formal learning as well as prior certified learning. The 'myexperience.ie' platform which is shared with GMIT and Letterkenny IT facilitates these applications. The toolkit includes an information website and an online RPL application tool for candidates looking for access or advanced entry to a higher education programme

Induction

An induction programme is in place for all full time and part time (online) students. This is considered to be a key element of the student experience. There is a well structured student orientation programme over two days and the first year full time students are also supported through a PEER mentoring programme.

Access Office

The role of the Access Office is intended to encourage and support students who have not been traditionally represented in third level education. Specifically, the Access Office provides support services and access routes for education for students with disabilities, specific learning difficulties, those from disadvantaged backgrounds and mature students, to make the transition to third level education and to participate fully and progress within the course of study.

For more information, please see our website [here](#).

Student Assistance Fund

The Student Assistance Fund aims to ensure that disadvantaged students receive financial supports to enable them to fully benefit from their studies and in particular to assist them in overcoming financial obstacles which may otherwise cause them to abandon their studies. All students attending Full Time Undergraduate or Postgraduate course of not less than one year's duration are eligible to apply.

For more information, please see our website [here](#).

Retention

IT Sligo wants to attract and respond to the needs of a diverse range of students through the provision of a supportive, inclusive and quality learning environment. Our ability to attract, retain and graduate students are issues that require much consideration. A diverse student population, widening participation and different levels of preparedness for higher education combined with many internal and external issues, all have an impact on retention levels. In recognising that many

factors can be at play in student's early withdrawal from college, it follows that a collaborative approach is required in order to improve student retention rates. In line with the Strategic Plan, the Student Retention Policy has been devised to address the issues presenting to IT Sligo.

Digitary

Institute of Technology Sligo now issues academic documents online through a secure electronic document system. This system enables graduates to access their academic records online and allows recruiters and others to verify the authenticity of these electronic documents via this secure website hosted at Institute of Technology Sligo.

The European Diploma Supplement (EDS)

The European Diploma Supplement is issued to graduates of Higher Education Institutions in addition to their degree or certificate. It provides information regarding the award which is not available on the official parchment such as the skills and competences acquired, the level of the qualification and the results achieved. From 2019/20 EDSs will be issued through Digitary.

These policies and procedures can be accessed on the staff portal and on the website where relevant to learners.

5. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

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

Academic Staff Development

The Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching, CELT, is now fully established as part of the IT Sligo Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy. The aspirations of CELT are to:

- Support staff in attendance and participation in relevant conferences and in networking with colleagues in other HEAs
- Support staff in the attainment of postgraduate pedagogical qualifications
- Provide training and support for staff in activities related to different modes of delivery and assessment
- Develop a schedule of seminars and workshops for staff training
- Nurture a Community of Practice

First Steps in Teaching and Learning

The institute now offers all new academic staff the online Induction module called First Steps in Teaching and Learning. The First Steps - online CPD course aims to provide an introduction to teaching, learning and assessment in Higher Education. This online resource pack is designed to provide a condensed, 'just-in-time' introduction to teaching, learning and assessment for new lecturers. In each section participants will have the opportunity to research and engage with a range of resources, and apply ideas to modules they teach. The First Steps online CPD course was developed by LIN (www.lin.ie).

Continuous Professional Development

IT Sligo is committed to supporting staff to develop their skills and competencies through the acquisition of higher academic qualifications, in line with the needs and objectives of the Institute. The process for identifying development needs is the Performance Management & Development Scheme (PMDS) where objectives are agreed and development needs discussed and application will only be considered where they have resulted from a PMDS meeting. Resources will be made available and approvals will be prioritised to those applications which most closely match the Institute's strategic objectives.

See [here](#).

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

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

IT Sligo's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTA) sets out the underlying philosophy, general principles and key objectives to create and maintain a vibrant and sustainable learning and teaching community. The strategy has been developed by the Academic Council of the Institute, drawing on the expertise of the teaching and administrative staff, student representatives and external stake holders.

The strategy is fit for purpose in the context of rapid change and a diverse student body. It supports the learning and teaching objectives specified in the Institute's Strategic Plan and will inspire continuous improvement in the quality and standard of learning, teaching and assessment.

The strategy is practical, innovative and mindful of financial and resource constraints. It has an implementation plan with measurable outcomes which will be clearly and effectively communicated to the Institute community. The strategy is subject to oversight by the Academic Council and will be formally reviewed by it. The Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy is located [here](#).

The Institute's Marks and Standards is intended to provide a framework for the proper assessment of candidates learning and to ensure that all candidates are treated fairly and in a consistent manner. The stipulations therein relate to marks awarded for Modules, for stages of a Programme and for entire Programmes, based on the assessment of the learning as specified in the Approved Programme Schedules, and to the decisions regarding the overall award grade of a candidate. The current version of IT Sligo Marks and Standards is available [here](#).

Procedures on provision of reasonable accommodation for students are available [here](#), Extension of Continuous Assessment Deadline(s) [here](#) and Request for Consideration [here](#).

7. Resources and Support (ESG 1.5)

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

Student Services

The aim of Student Support Services at IT Sligo is to provide a comprehensive and caring service to help our students achieve their full academic and personal potential. Our motto is “Caring for our Students”. Support services on campus include:

- **ADMINISTRATIVE ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE:** The Admissions Office provides on-going support in areas such as admissions, registration, grants, fees and examinations.
- **ACCESS OFFICER:** Our Access Officer support students who have special learning needs, a disability or any circumstance which might need individual consideration.
- **CAREERS OFFICE:** Our Careers Office provides career guidance for all students.
- **COUNSELLING:** Our counselling services will help students to embrace positive living and work through any concerns they have.
- **PASTORAL CARE SERVICE:** This service offers personal support and advice to students of all faiths and none who come to the service. The pastoral care team is always ready to help.
- **HEALTH:** Our student health services, which are free of charge, are available five days a week.
- **IT SLIGO STUDENTS’ UNION:** ITSSU has three officers and a number of part-time staff to provide ongoing support, guidance and representation. ITSSU works closely with Institute management to ensure that student welfare and facilities are first class. See www.itssu.ie for more details.
- **LEARNING SUPPORT TUTOR:** A learning support tutor who works with the Access Officer is available to assist students with special needs such as dyslexia or other specific learning challenges
- **SPORTS AND RECREATION FACILITIES:** Include track, playing pitch, gym and Knocknarea sports arena.
- **Disability Support Services Officer:** Working with the Access Office, the Disability Support Services Officer will work with staff and students to identify assistive technologies appropriate to the needs of students and help them to obtain optimal use from supports available.
- **Assistive technology Officer:** Assistive Technology (AT) is technology that can assist or help students with their academic work. This refers to any hardware or software that may be used by a person with a disability to perform specific tasks, improve functional capabilities and progress towards maximum independence. The AT service at IT Sligo provides ongoing support and information around the use of technology and how to adapt it to study and learning in 3rd level education.

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

The Higher Education Access Route

The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) is a college and university scheme that offers places on reduced points and extra college support to school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds who are resident in the Republic of Ireland as evidence shows that socio-economic disadvantage can have a negative effect on how well a student does at school and whether they go on to college. HEAR applicants must meet a range of financial, social and cultural indicators to be considered for a reduced points place and extra college support. HEAR is for school leavers under the age of 23 as of 1 January in the year of application to college who are resident in the Republic of Ireland.

The Student Success Toolbox

The aim of the Student Success Toolbox is to support transitions from thinking about study to the first weeks of college particularly for flexible learners (undergraduate adult, part-time and online/distance students). A suite of digital tools has been created to assist flexible learners by helping them assess their own readiness, provide feedback and lay the foundation for successful programme completion. The Student Success Toolbox project is supported by the National Forum for Teaching and Learning Building Digital Capacity fund. It is a collaborative project involving Dublin City University, Sligo Institute of Technology, Maynooth University and Dundalk Institute of Technology, click on link [here](#).

Academic Success Course

IT Sligo collaborated with a number of national and international colleges and universities to produce an 'Academic Success' course for new students. The course aims to prepare students for life at third level and covers everything a student needs from adapting to college life to developing study skills and academic integrity. The course is available through Moodle to all students of IT Sligo. It comprises 3 modules and takes about 5 hours to complete. [Click here](#).

Student Support Handbook

This handbook is given to students at induction but is also available on our website, click on link [here](#).

Maths support

The Mathematics Support Centre is a special inter-school initiative of the institute. It is now well known that many capable students, for a variety of reasons, may find it difficult to achieve the required standards in mathematics to support their degree studies. The purpose of the centre is to support students' mathematics learning across all programmes in the Institute of Technology Sligo by:

- providing a dedicated area with supervised access to help and resources in a relaxed environment
- delivering appropriate support services for students on service mathematics courses
- addressing the mathematics needs of special groups.

Link: <https://www.itsligo.ie/student-hub/maths-support-centre/>

Academic Writing support

The centre is a free writing support service available to all students in the Institute of Technology, Sligo. For many students writing can pose a barrier to academic success. The purpose of this service is to give students the tools to develop their writing skills in one-to-one sessions with qualified tutors. Support is provided in the following areas:

- writing clear, concise and direct sentences
- grammar and punctuation
- how to proof read and revise one's own work
- stages of the writing process
- paraphrasing and quoting sources
- referencing.

<https://www.itsligo.ie/student-hub/academic-writing-centre/>

Library

The Yeats Library provide extensive services and support, particularly in the areas of academic writing, research skills, referencing and study skills, they can be [accessed here](#). Resources for students are provided in the form of programme pages, video clips, guides and access to research databases.

8. Information Management (ESG 1.7)

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

Programme Committee

The Programme Committee is intended to provide a structure for:

- a) routine monitoring of a programme to ensure that it is being delivered according to the approved programme schedule and to identify any impediments to student learning
- b) feedback from staff and students regarding the programme design, development and delivery.

The remit of a Programme Committee is to:

- monitor programme delivery and monitor student performance
- Review feedback from students and staff on the delivery of the current programme
- carry out programme planning and development including modifications of existing programmes and the introduction of new programmes.

While these activities are not necessarily mutually exclusive, for the purpose of clarity and describing the functionality of Quality Assurance it is useful to outline them separately.

- Monitor programme delivery and monitor student performance
- Identifying on-going issues related to delivery and student progress on current programmes
- Planning, organising and reviewing student induction
- Analysing examination results
- Responding to External Examiner Reports
- Identifying resource requirements
- Monitoring student progress
- Documenting actions and decisions.

A primary function of a Programme Committee is student performance analysis and Programme Development.

ISSE

The Irish Survey of Student Engagement is open to first year, final year undergraduate, and taught postgraduate students in participating higher education institutions each February – March. The main purpose of the survey is to provide benefits to each institution and its students by helping to improve feedback and appropriate action. Objectives include:

- To increase transparency in relation to the student experience in higher education institutions
- To enable direct student input on levels of engagement and satisfaction with their higher education institution
- To identify good practice that enhances the student experience
- To assist institutions to identify issues and challenges affecting the student experience
- To serve as a guide for continual enhancement of institutions' teaching and learning and student engagement
- To document the experiences of the student population, thus enabling year on year comparisons of key performance indicators
- To provide insight into student opinion on important issues of higher education policy and practice
- To facilitate comparison with other higher education systems internationally

IT Sligo works closely with the Students Union, Class representatives and staff to encourage students to participate in this survey.

First Destination Survey

The HEA First Destinations Survey is carried out every year, approximately six to nine months after graduation, and the results of this survey benefit policy makers, students, guidance counsellors, teachers and all with an interest in education. Graduate destinations data reflects higher education's contribution to the economy through the provision of graduate labour from undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, and gathering and communicating graduate destinations data is particularly relevant in the current economic climate in Ireland.

Key Performance Indicators

The Institute has a number of Key Performance Indicators that it uses in both its Strategic Plan and its Mission Based Performance Compact with the HEA.

The current strategic plan can be found at <https://www.itsligo.ie/about-it-sligo/publications/>

In line with all public sector and private sector organisation policies and procedures have been revised in line with the General Data Protection regulations (GDPR)

Policies

Data Protection Policy [GDPR001](#)

Data Retention Policy GDPR002

Procedures

Data Protection Procedures GDPR003

Data Breach Procedures GDPR004

Data Access Management Procedures (applicable to IT Department) GDPR005

These policies and procedures can be accessed on the staff portal [here](#)

9. Self-evaluation and Monitoring (ESG 1.9)

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

Programmatic Review

The Programmatic Review process was evaluated and it was agreed that the process would be enhanced by separating the process of Programme Revalidation from the process of School Planning. Furthermore, these two processes do not need to occur at the same time.

There are therefore two stages.

- The planning of a School for its future development
- The revision of programmes for the purposes of revalidation.

Typically, the School Planning process precedes the revalidation process and encompasses the entire activities of the School, within the wider sphere of education, business and the community. The whole School will carry out a Planning process every 5 years. The revision of programmes may comprise the review of a single programme or of a suite of programmes. In any case, the entire process must normally be carried out at least once every 5 years. The procedures and practices outlined in this section are in accordance with the established practice of the Institute, with best practice of the IT sector and with international best practice. This is achieved by ensuring that membership of the internal and external evaluation panels comprise personnel from the Institute, from other higher education institutions in Ireland and from overseas, members of the business community and of professional bodies. Chapter 5 of the Institute Quality Manual covers this. See [here](#).

Academic Quality Structures

Academic quality structures have been streamlined across the Institute and consist of:

- Programme Committees
- School Policy Committee

Purpose and Functions of Programme Committees

The Programme Committee is intended to provide a structure for:

- a) routine monitoring of a programme to ensure that it is being delivered according to the approved programme schedule and to identify any impediments to student learning
- b) feedback from staff and students regarding the programme design, development and delivery.

The remit of a Programme Committee is to:

- I. monitor programme delivery and monitor student performance
- II. Review feedback from students and staff on the delivery of the current programme
- III. carry out programme planning and development including modifications of existing programmes and the introduction of new programmes.

While these activities are not necessarily mutually exclusive, for the purpose of clarity and describing the functionality of Quality Assurance it is useful to outline them separately.

- I. Monitor programme delivery and monitor student performance
- II. Identifying on-going issues related to delivery and student progress on current programmes
- III. Planning, organising and reviewing student induction
- IV. Analysing examination results
- V. Responding to External Examiner Reports
- VI. Identifying resource requirements
- VII. Monitoring student progress
- VIII. Documenting actions and decisions.

A primary function of a Programme Committee is student performance analysis. This is key to the identification of necessary programme modifications, programme terminations and new programme development. A Programme Monitoring Report (EAP7), is prepared for each year of each programme and submitted to the Head of Department annually on or before 31st October. The inclusion of key performance indicators (KPI) to allow five year trend analysis is an important part of the monitoring process.

The Programme Committee is required to analyse the data and recommend actions to be taken (with persons responsible identified). The Head of School, together with the Heads of Department review Programme Monitoring Reports and prepare a summary of actions for the School. This is presented to Academic Council for approval. See Chapter 4, [here](#).

School Policy Committee

The School Policy Committee is concerned with overseeing and implementing the School Plan. Because it is not concerned with operational issues it confines its business to actions required to ensure implementation of strategic initiatives.

The tasks include, but are not confined to:

- Interpretation of the Institute Strategic Plan in respect of School activities
- Appraising academic developments
- Advising the School on physical resource implications
- Advising the School on likely staff recruitment and development of specialist discipline areas.

Chapter 4 of the Institute Quality Manual covers this. See [here](#).

Risk Register

The purpose of the Risk Register policy is to ensure that risks to IT Sligo are identified, analysed and managed so that they are maintained at acceptable levels. The goal is to identify risks and determine how they may be treated, tolerated, transferred or terminated. IT Sligo is committed to establishing and maintaining a systematic approach to the identification and management of risk. The objective is to protect the assets and reputation of the Institute and to ensure its continued financial wellbeing and to support better decision making through a good understanding of risks and their likely impact.

Risk register policies and procedure can be found on the Staff portal for internal staff.

10. Stakeholder Engagement (ESG 1.1)

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

Validation and Approval of Learning

Validation refers to the process by which the Academic Council of the Institute, following a recommendation from an External Peer Review Panel, formally recognises a module or a programme as constituting a body of learning leading to a specified award in a designated discipline area.

Approval of a programme refers to the process by which the Governing Body of the Institute, with a recommendation from the Executive Committee formally agrees to provide the resources to deliver a programme of learning.

In exceptional circumstances, a newly validated programme may not be approved for delivery where circumstances have materially changed within the Institute since the programme was submitted to the External Peer Review Group for validation.

The Registrar establishes a Panel of experts to consider the validation of the programme. The Validation Panel comprises:

1. Chairperson (normally a senior academic from another Institute of Technology or University or a suitably qualified person from the world of work);
2. Two senior academics with relevant qualifications and experience in the area under evaluation (typically one member from an Institute of Technology and another member from a University); and
3. A representative from the world of work, preferably with state-of-the-art experience in the discipline area under consideration.
4. The Assistant Registrar or nominee as rapporteur.

All of the Panel members are external to the Institute and there should be a balance of gender on the Panel. The submission documents are circulated to the Panel no less than three weeks before they visit the Institute to conduct an oral validation meeting with the programme development team and staff. Chapter 2 of the Institute Quality Manual covers this. See [here](#).

Strategic Plan Consultation

The Institute fully engages with Stakeholders in its consultation process for the development of the Strategic Plan. A series of meetings with external stakeholders, was conducted during the period of the development of the strategic plan.

11. Engagement with Other Bodies (ESG 1.1)

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

Policy and Procedures for Collaborative and Trans-National Provision and for Programmes leading to Joint Higher Education Awards

The Institute defines collaborative provision as any programme directly leading to a HE award (QQI or professional body) which is delivered in part or in whole through an arrangement with a partner organisation. A partner organisation may be another education provider, professional body, business or community organisation.

There is a range of different forms of collaborative provision. There may be collaboration in the development and validation of the programme, in the academic monitoring of the programme, in the teaching, in the assessment, and in the awarding etc, or a combination of any of these. Anyone one of the partners may or may not be a lead partner.

In order to ensure the academic quality of these emerging multiple-provider, customer led, programmes it is essential that providers of higher education have robust procedures in place to adequately protect the learner and to ensure that each programme as delivered is of a recognised national and international standard. Where two or more providers are collaborating in the development, validation and delivery of a programme, and maybe in joint awarding, then procedures must be in place to not only protect the learner but also the providers.

Chapter 14 of the Institute Quality Manual covers this. See [here](#).

Professional Body Recognition

Many of the Institutes Programmes have Professional Body Accreditation. Guiding Principle 7 of the Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy is the reflective practice and experience of our educators is valued. Educators are actively supported by the Institute in the development of their own professional knowledge, research, skills and competencies and to be capable of responding to the external environment through feedback and dialogue with employers and professional bodies.

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

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

Website and Publications

IT Sligo publishes information on the Institute's strategic objectives, and on its extensive range of fulltime and online programmes, through publications, media and public enquiries, news releases and across IT Sligo online platforms. The releases are published on the news section of itsligo.ie and are also distributed to regional and national media outlets. The production, approval and distribution of Institute news releases is co-ordinated by the Communication Office. Recent and archived news release are available to view [here](#).

IT Sligo has published a Strategic Plan for 2017 -2022 which sets out the key objectives of the Institute over the five years. This is available to the public on the IT Sligo website. Hard copies are also available on request. The Institute publishes an Annual Report within six months of the end of each academic year. This summarises main activities and achievements during the period in review.

[All publications can be viewed here.](#)

The Institute Website is www.itsligo.ie

Publication of Quality Assurance Evaluation Reports

Reports relating to AIQR (Annual Institutional Quality Reports), Programme Validation, Programmatic Review, and CINNTE will be published on the IT Sligo website, [here](#).

Freedom of Information

Section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014 requires FOI bodies to prepare and publish as much information as possible in an open and accessible manner on a routine basis outside of FOI, having regard to the principles of openness, transparency and accountability as set out in Sections 8(5) and 11(3) of the Act. This allows for the publication or giving of records outside of FOI provided that such publication or giving of access is not prohibited by law. The scheme commits FOI bodies to make information available as part of their normal business activities in accordance with this scheme.

The Institute's Publication Scheme is available to view and download. Under the Freedom of Information Act 2014, public bodies such as IT Sligo are required to publish a Disclosure Log. This log contains information of the types of requests received under FOI 2014 since 1st January 2015 and the decisions made in response to those requests. Disclosures are listed in the date order of when the request was received by IT Sligo. For privacy reasons, identifying information such as the name of the requester will not be included in the disclosure log.

Section 22 of the Protected Disclosure Act 2014 requires the publication of an annual report relating to the number of Protected Disclosures made in the preceding Calendar year and also for the publication of information with regard to any actions taken in response to Protected Disclosures made. This report must not result in persons making disclosures being identifiable.

The FOI section of the website is at <https://www.itsligo.ie/foi/publications/>

Student Charter & Service Level Agreement

The Institute of Technology Sligo (IT Sligo) provides educational opportunities to the maximum sustainable extent through high quality teaching, and research and development. IT Sligo is a regional Higher Education Institution with a national dimension and international perspectives. IT

Sligo has a particular duty to support the development of its region in economic, social and cultural terms.

Recognising the history and traditions of its region, IT Sligo is founded on moral and ethical values and the principles of equality, justice and academic freedom.

The Institute has in place a student charter and service level agreement, alongside procedures relating to these.

Student Charter

Service Level Agreement

The Student Charter & Service Level Agreement can be found at

Student Complaint Form

Student Code of Conduct

IT Sligo Criminal Convictions Policy

All of these policies can be accessed [here](#).

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

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

Not applicable at this time

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

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

Quality Assurance Policy

It is the policy of IT Sligo to have procedures in place to ensure that the quality of its programmes and awards meet the internal specifications and those of other bodies empowered to make specifications. The Quality Assurance policy is framed within the context of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), the Quality and Qualifications Act 2012 and the determinations of QQI.

- It is informed by the mission, vision and strategic development of the Institute (ref current Strategic Plan, proposals for TUQF and draft ISO draft International standards for QA in Education)
- Is designed to ensure the quality of awards, programmes and the teaching and learning process
- It provides for openness, transparency and accountability in the work of the institute.
- It is subject to continuous review and improvement underpinned by evidence based analysis
- It is published and available publicly

The Quality manual is regularly updated in line with QQI Core and Topic Specific Guidelines.

NFQ LEVEL 9 RESEARCH DISCIPLINE AREA VALIDATION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

'Level 9 Research Discipline Area Validation Policy and Procedures' sets out the procedures to be followed in seeking to validate new research discipline areas (OECD/Frascati Specific Field of Science Codes) arising from Delegation of Authority to award research degrees at level 9 from Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). The quality assurance policies and procedures described herein are part of a broad institutional Quality Assurance System which supports or makes direct provision for:

- the linking of particular research degree programmes to the Institute's Strategic Plan and Research Strategy, and to relevant national strategies.
- the formation of postgraduate students as work-ready graduates and/or early career researchers through structured research training
- the building of individual and institutional research capability in a collegial and stimulating environment
- the building of the necessary research infrastructure
- the maintenance of award standards.

The Institute will validate new discipline areas where there is a sustainable capacity to provide relevant Masters Degree programmes.

The Level 9 Research Discipline Area Validation Policy and Procedures, covers this, see [here](#).

15. Collaborative Provision (ESG 1.1)

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

Policy and Procedures for Collaborative and Trans-National Provision and for Programmes leading to Joint Higher Education Awards

The Institute defines collaborative provision as any programme directly leading to a HE award (QQI or professional body) which is delivered in part or in whole through an arrangement with a partner organisation. A partner organisation may be another education provider, professional body, business or community organisation.

There is a range of different forms of collaborative provision. There may be collaboration in the development and validation of the programme, in the academic monitoring of the programme, in the teaching, in the assessment, and in the awarding etc, or a combination of any of these. Anyone one of the partners may or may not be a lead partner.

In order to ensure the academic quality of these emerging multiple-provider, customer led, programmes it is essential that providers of higher education have robust procedures in place to adequately protect the learner and to ensure that each programme as delivered is of a recognised national and international standard. Where two or more providers are collaborating in the development, validation and delivery of a programme, and maybe in joint awarding, then procedures must be in place to not only protect the learner but also the providers.

Chapter 14 of the Institute Quality Manual covers this. See [here](#).

16. Additional Notes

Any additional notes can be entered here.

Not applicable at this time

17. Internal Review Schedule

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

Year	2018/19
Areas/Units	School of Engineering and Design Faculty Planning and Programmatic Review School of Science Faculty Planning and Programmatic Review
Number	2
Link(s) to Publications	https://www.itsligo.ie/about-it-sligo/administration/registrar/quality/programmatic-reviews/

Year	2019/20
Areas/Units	School of Business Faculty Planning
Number	1
Link(s) to Publications	Not available yet

Year	2020/21
Areas/Units	School of Business programmatic review.
Number	1
Link(s) to Publications	

Year	2021/22
Areas/Units	
Number	1
Link(s) to Publications	N/A

18. Engagement with Third Parties Section

Details of engagement with third parties, including:

1. Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies
2. Collaborative Provision
3. Articulation Agreements

1. Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of Arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	5
Awarding Bodies	
QA Bodies	

First Type of Arrangement (PRSB/Awarding Body/QA Body):	PRSB
Name of Body:	Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)
Programme Tiles and Links to Publications	
Date of Accreditation or Last Review	24th & 25th September 2018
Next Review Year	2023

Second Type of Arrangement (PRSB/Awarding Body/QA Body):	PRSB
Name of Body:	Chartered Accountants Ireland
Programme Tiles and Links to Publications	
Date of Accreditation or Last Review	25-05-2016
Next Review Year	2021

Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Engineers Ireland
Date of last review or accreditation	17-03-2013
Next review year	Q1 2020

Type of Arrangement	Professional Accreditation
Name of the Body	Chartered Society of Forensic Science
Programme Title	BSc (Hons) Forensic Investigation and Analysis
Date of last review or accreditation	Jan 2019
Next review year	Jan 2024

2. Collaborative Provision

Provide details of 10 collaborations. These should be the TOP 10 collaborations based on the number of students currently enrolled in them. For Designated Awarding Bodies, details of ALL linked providers should be included.

Joint research degrees	0
Joint/double/multiple awards	2
Collaborative programmes	2
Franchise programmes	0
Linked providers (DABs only)	0

Type of arrangement:	Joint/double/multiple awards
Name of the Body (Bodies)	University of Ulster
Title of programme	BSc (Hons) Biomedical Science (Life Sciences) programme online BSc Hons Applied Medical Sciences (Joint Ulster / IT Sligo award)(Online)
Date of last review	November 2019
Next review year	2022

Type of arrangement:	Joint/double/multiple awards
Name of the Body (Bodies)	National University of Ireland Galway
Title of programme	MSc in Medical Technology Regulatory Affairs (Online) Higher Diploma in Medical Technology Regulatory Affairs and Quality (Online)
Date of last review	2019 (as part of Programmatic Review)
Next review year	2024
Articulation Agreements	?

Parts 2-6

Institution-led QA – Annual Information

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

Part 2: Institution-led QA – Annual

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

Section 1: Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Developments

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

The robustness and dynamism of the Institute's quality assurance systems and quality enhancements is core to the Institute achieving the six high level objectives of the Strategic plan for 2017-2022. The Strategic Plan objectives details how the Institute will contribute to present and future students' education and personal development; development of staff to both maintain and strengthen leadership in technology enhanced learning, to build research expertise at the individual, national and international level, to strengthen partnerships with second level schools/ETBs, employers and community, to shape and influence the Economic, Social and Cultural Development of the region through initiatives such as supporting social enterprises and business start-ups. The final objective relates to organisation and governance which highlights the Institutes commitment to provide robust governance, accountability and appropriate processes. The Strategic plan is guiding the development of learning & teaching activities, staff development, regional, national and international engagement, research and innovation, programme development and underpinning quality processes. Each of the objectives is underpinned by a series of actions, the progress on these actions is reported using an internally developed online tracking system. The Institute has been granted delegated authority through QQI for all provision, including collaborative and joint awards, up to and including taught and research level 9. The Institute through the appointment of a VP for Online Learning, VP research and Innovation and an Educational Development Manager in the preceding reporting period have been able to progress significant enhancements in the number and type of external engagements regionally, nationally and internationally. The Research and Innovation office have developed further the Institutes role in the provision of on line programmes through developing and supporting the on line student with initiatives such as online student advisors and augmenting the skills of the on line lecturer through targeted educational initiatives and supports such as instructional designers. The Institutes commitment to both staff and student development has been actioned through the embedding of the Centre for Learning and Teaching in the reporting period. The activities of the later are focused on meeting the needs of academic staff and students. An example of an initiative in the reporting period was the development of a PG Cert in Teaching and Learning, open to any member of staff who engages with students in the educational arena. All staff are funded to participate in this programme.

IT Sligo completed their Mission-Based Performance Compact (Higher Education Authority) for the three-year period 2018-2021 in the reporting period. The Compact report drew on the Strategic plan 2017-2022. The Compact document identified a number of qualitative and quantitative metrics across the HEA's 6 key metrics which inform the operation and direction of the Institute over the next three years.

As part of QQIs CINNTE review process, the Institute underwent a review during the previous reporting period (Q 2 2018). The Institute was commended for: its engagement with a wide array of stakeholders - internally and externally; its culture of collaboration: cross-institutional and intra-institutional, its leadership in online learning, strategies for promoting higher education access to the-conventional student body, commitment to a quality student experience and for preparing graduates who are fit for purpose on graduation. In Q 1 of this reporting period, an Action plan was agreed following collaboration with Academic Council, the Institutes Senior management team and QQI. The action plan addresses a number of key areas for enhancement – the continuation of reorganising the Quality assurance system, the management of change in a proactive manner, the evaluation of its current HR policy, culture and organisation structure to support the Institute meet the TU criteria, balancing dynamic responsiveness and strategic direction and the development of policy and practice to support internationalisation and transnational activities.

The Institute has a risk committee which is underpinned by the risk management policy and chaired by the President. The Institute as an entity, and individual functions all hold their own risk register. Each area is accountable for identifying risks, controls and instigating mitigating actions where required.

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

A role of Quality Administrator was assigned to the Assistant Registrar for a fixed 9-month contract from March 2019. The aim of this role was to progress various quality projects across 6 key areas which were identified as priority from the Institutional Review in the previous reporting period. The appointment resulted in a number of quality enhancements being advanced (see section 4.1)

The Institute adopted the ECU Athena SWAN principles and the Athena SWAN Charter in November 2018 indicating their commitment to enhancing and promoting gender equality for staff and students across the Institute. In Spring 2019, the Institute approved and advertised an EDI Manager post and an open call was sent to all staff seeking members for the self-assessment team (SAT). The SAT convened in June 2019, with a training session from Advance HE. An EDI Committee of Governing Body had been established in the previous reporting period.

As per the Technological Universities Act 2018, the Institute continued to work in partnership with GMIT and LYIT towards meeting the eligibility criteria to attain TU status and develop the appropriate plans and arrangements for managing academic, financial and administrative matters in preparation for achieving designation as a TU. Working groups have been established across the three Institutes which look at the strategies, processes and practices within the Institutes to explore how the Institutes can continue working together in areas such as research, governance, integration of IT services and academic planning. This will involve more extensive consultation with internal and external stakeholders, such as students and staff, companies, representative bodies of business and community, and professional bodies. <http://cualliance.ie/about.html>.

A designated Institute based Connacht Ulster Alliance Project officer was appointed in the reporting period whose role is to engage with staff in recognising their role in the changing HEI landscape and providing them with a voice for making a meaningful contribution to the development of the TU

submission. During the reporting period, a significant focus was placed on the internal communication and consultation process with the key internal stakeholders, and with monthly updates provided to relevant Institute bodies such as Academic Council, Information and Consultation Forum and Governing Body. A number of institute-wide staff consultation events took place, with keynote national and international speakers drawn from across the sector to share learnings and stimulate discussion around the shaping of a TU for the W/NW region. A costed action plan was developed to ensure the TU metrics would be achieved, with the express aim that IT Sligo will be TU ready by April 2020. This plan included the development of a number of TU Qualified Master programmes, increased investment in Presidents Bursaries and the introduction of CUA research bursaries to encourage collaborative research activities.

At CUA level, the membership of Steering Groups expanded and a Working Group to focus on Finance and Corporate Engagement was established. A number of Subgroups ranging from Students Union, Teaching and Learning to IT and Corporate Governance were established resulting in the active participation of over 100 colleagues across the partner institutes in various SGs. Each Subgroup has developed its own Terms of Reference and Work Plan. Work has commenced on joint policy development/harmonisation in the following areas – HR, Finance, Corporate Governance, GDPR/Data Protection and IT Policies. A staff qualifications audit was completed, and a student profile compiled. Progress has been made in the completion of a Financial Sustainability exercise with work underway on a consolidated financial plan which will incorporate a consolidated Programmes and Budgets and five year projects, consolidated staff growth, consolidated fiancé strategy and consolidated capital expenditure. On the research front, significant progress has been made in identifying and enhancing areas of research strength and cooperation. Under Academic Planning and Related Engagement, a number of key developments have been achieved included the combined analysis of ISSE Survey results and the development of a draft common flexible/online learning framework which has to be approved by the Academic Councils of the three partner institutes. The iNote project, a CUA collaborative initiative building digital capability in Higher Education, received funding of 2.84m. 3 project work package teams have been established and progress is on track towards meeting the first year project objectives

The Institute continued to work collaboratively with its cluster grouping (West-North west regional cluster) to ensure strategic programme provision across the region and to identify student pathways within and between institutions, meeting the needs of students and employers. Examples of collaborative working include the HEA Path Project.

1.3 The schedule of QA governance meetings.

The Institute of Technology Sligo Governing Body met on 12 occasions during the reporting period. The Institute of Technology Sligo Academic Council met on 13 occasions during the reporting period. The six committees of Academic Council (Academic Processes, Planning and Coordination, Learning and Teaching, Higher Education Forum, Research & Innovation) met on a range of times [Range: 2-9].

The Institutes Risk Committee met on eight occasions.

The Institutes Research Ethics committee met on two occasions.

QA Governance meetings	Date
Governing Body meetings	13/9/2018, 10/10/2018, 25/10/2018, 12/12/2018, 30/1/2019, 25/2/2019, 27/3/2018, 15/5/2019, 19/6/2018, 10/5/2018, 7/8/2019, 11/9/2019
Risk and Audit committee	3/10/2018, 5/12/2018, 28/1/2019, 18/2/2019, 13/3/2019, 1/5/2019, 5/6/2019 24/9/2019
Research Ethics Committee	6/3/2019, 13/6/2019
Academic Council meetings	Dates: 05/09/2018, 11/09/2018, 12/10/2018 26/10/2018, 05/12/2018, 14/12/2018, 11/02/2019, 15/03/2019, 05/04/2019, 09/04/2019,03/05/2019, 13/6/2019, 17/6/2019
Academic Processes committee	03/10/2018, 07/11/2018, 29/11/2018, 12/12/2018 16/01/2019, 20/02/2019, 10/04/2019 27/05/2019
Learning Teaching and Assessment committee	8/10/2018, 15/11/2018, 26/2/2018, 15/1/2019 9/4/2019, 21/5/2019
Collaborative Provision Committee	21/1/2019, 26/9/2019
Research and Innovation Committee	4/10/2018,15/11/2018,13/12/2018,21/2/2019 21/3/2019, 11/4/2019, 2/5/2019, 23/5/2019
National Higher Education Strategy Committee	03/10/2018, 7/11/2018, 12/12/2018,16/1/2019 20/2/2019
Planning and Coordination	5/10/2018, 9/11/2018, 7/12/2018, 18/1/2019 8/2/2019, 22/2/2019, 12/4/2019 27/5/2019, 20/9/2019

Section 2: Reviews in the reporting period

2.1 Internal reviews that were completed in the reporting period.

New Programme validations 2018/2019		
Programme Title and NFQ Level	Date of Panel visit	Date of Academic Council approval
Differential Validation with Cavan Institute of Education. BSc General entry Degree- Year 1	5.11.18	14.12.2019
Certificate in Language & Intercultural Tourism (NFQ Level 6) Special Purpose Award	10.1.19	14.12.2018
Master of Science in Biopharmaceutical Processing (NFQ Level 9) Post Graduate Certificate in Biopharmaceutical Processing (NFQ Level 9) (Special Purpose Award)	3.4.19	3.5.2019
Post Graduate Certificate in Teaching, Learning & Assessment	5.4.19	13.6.2019
Certificate in The Archaeology of Ireland - International (NFQ Level 7) (Special Purpose Award) Certificate in The Archaeology of Ireland (NFQ Level 7) (Special Purpose Award)	5.4.19	13.6.2019
Master of Arts in Professional Leadership (NFQ Level 9)	9.4.19	13.6.2019
Higher Certificate in Ecology and Environmental Science (NFQ Level 6) Higher Certificate in Agri-food Science (NFQ Level 6) Bachelor of Science in Ecology and Environmental Science (NFQ Level 7) Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Ecology and Environmental Science (NFQ Level 8)	11.4.19	13.6.2019
Certificate in Professional Financial Advice (NFQ Level 7) Special Purpose Award Certificate in Retirement Planning (NFQ Level 7) Special Purpose Award Certificate in DC Pension Scheme Trusteeship (NFQ Level 7) Special Purpose Award Certificate in Credit Union Operations (NFQ Level 7) Special Purpose Award	8.5.19	13.6.2019
Master of Science in Bioprocessing (NFQ Level 9) Post Graduate Certificate in Science in Bioprocessing (NFQ Level 9)	13.5.19	13.6.2019
Higher Certificate in Science in Property Services and Facilities Management (NFQ Level 6) Certificate in Property Services (NFQ Level 6) Special Purpose Award Certificate in Facilities Management (NFQ Level 6) Special Purpose Award Post Graduate Certificate in Mechanical & Electrical Quantity Surveying (NF Q Level 9)	14.5.19	13.6.2019
Master of Science in Health Promotion Practice (NFQ Level 9)	15.5.2019	13.6.2019

Master of Science in Health Promotion and Project Management (NFQ Level 9) Post Graduate Diploma in Science in Health Promotion and Project Management (NFQ Level 9) Post Graduate Certificate in Science in Health Project Management (NFQ Level 9) Post Graduate Certificate in Science in Health Promotion & Wellbeing (NFQ Level 9) Higher Certificate in Health and Exercise Science (NFQ Level 6)		
Master of Science in Public Health Nutrition (NFQ Level 9) Master of Science in Sports and Exercise Nutrition (NFQ Level 9) Post Graduate Diploma in Science in Sports and Exercise Nutrition (NFQ Level 9)	16.5.2019	13.6.2019
Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Construction Project Management & Applied Technology (NFQ Level 8) Higher Certificate in Science in Applied Construction Technology (NFQ Level 6)	17.5.2019	13.6.2019
Master of Engineering in Geotechnical and Structural Engineering (NFQ Level 9) Post Graduate Certificate in Engineering in Road Engineering and Design (NFQ Level 9) Certificate in Bridge Engineering (NFQ Level 9) (Special Purpose Award)	27.5.2019	13.6.2019
Master of Arts in Creative Practice (NFQ Level 9)	7.6.2019	13.6.2019

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

Number of new Programme Validations/Programme Approvals completed in the reporting year as per above	36
Number of Programme Reviews completed in the reporting year: Programmatic reviews were conducted in May 2019 in the Faculty of Science and Faculty of Engineering and Design.	2
Number of Research Reviews completed in the reporting year (as part of Programmatic reviews)	2
Number of School/Department/Faculty Reviews completed in the reporting year. Two Faculty reviews were conducted in February 2019: Faculty of Science and Faculty of Engineering and Design.	2
Number of Service Unit Reviews completed in the reporting year	0
Number of Reviews of Arrangements with partner organisations completed in the reporting year.	0

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

Composition of Panels	%
Internal	15
National	81
UK	2
EU	0
Student	2
Other- Industry representation	19

Chair Profile	%
Internal	19
Similar Institution	43
Different Institution	38
International	0

Section 3: Other Implementation Factors

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

IT Sligo uses data in a number of ways to support quality assurance and the management of the student learning experience. Data is gathered at modular and programme level using agreed templates from the perspective of students and staff. Module leads use modular data to inform their teaching and assessment strategies for the coming academic year. Programme level data is discussed at Programme Boards and is used to inform modifications to programme learning outcomes, content, teaching and assessment strategies. Programme teams are responsible for reflecting on student feedback as well as responding to local data provided to them by the Institute such as retention and progression rates. All initiatives such as peer mentoring, induction, CAO open days etc. are evaluated and the data used to inform required enhancements/ modifications. Exit interview data is deployed to ascertain the reasons students chose to withdraw from their programme to ascertain if there are modifiable factors that the Institute can respond to (e.g. assessment types/ numbers).

A significant data set that the Institute deploys is that generated from the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE). The Institute commits significant resources to promoting the survey as it yields significant data about student engagement and experience of students in relation to a host of issues. The response rate increased by 9.8% in the reporting period. The Institute provides the data to all staff at Institute level Faculty at programme level and compares the annual Institute data set with previous data sets so that trends can be identified and actioned. The Institute also provides academic staff with the qualitative data that the survey collects to support the quantitative data set. The results on the indices that require enhancement informs the work of the subcommittees of Academic Council.

The Institute also have a close working relationship with their student's union and work with them to respond to data they collect from the student body. An example of same in the reporting period was in relation to the scheduling of Semester 1 examinations. The students provided data which indicated that students wished to have semester 1 exams scheduled prior to the Xmas holiday period rather than the current practice of after Xmas. The source and robustness of this data was discussed at Academic Council on a number of occasions during the reporting period and a decision was made based on the survey data and other data sources to pilot the rescheduling of semester 1 exams for a two year period commencing in the next reporting period.

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

During the reporting period, two of the Institute's Faculty's underwent Programmatic reviews. Under the Institute's quality assurance procedures, this must take place at least every 5 years. It is a very significant part of the quality assurance process as it enshrines the concept of continual improvement and development based on self-evaluation. A Programmatic Review is a self-monitoring quality-assurance activity carried out by the Academic Council of the Institute. At IT Sligo, the process is divided into two parts: (a) Faculty Planning, and (b) Programme Revalidation. The self-evaluation process included the production of documentation by the Faculty and formal evaluations by an external review Panel. The overall process was overseen by the Academic Council. The Head of Faculty managed the process within the Faculty and the Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar had overall responsibility for managing the process on behalf of the Academic Council. The external panel visits were conducted in February and May after a substantial period of planning at Faculty, Department and programmatic level. The process yielded significant benefits to both Faculties as it confirmed the quality and robustness of their processes and through their engagement with the external panels and other stakeholders provided them with direction for the future growth and development. The process also tested the robustness of the QA systems and has provided direction for enhancement in some areas.

Faculty of Science: Faculty Planning Review

Faculty Planning Panel Visit	February 11 th and 12 th
Participants	External Validation panel, President, Faculty Management Team, Programme Chairs, other senior members of academic staff, students, graduates and with external stakeholders (e.g. industry links).
Outcome	<p>Eight commendations were made in relation to strength of industrial engagement, growth in online delivery and that enhances the increase of the impact of the Faculty nationally and internationally, level of research output and numbers of postgraduate enrolments and the number of new programmes validated over the period.</p> <p>Eleven recommendations were made in relation to technical support for activity, student feedback, using available data (HEA, ISSE, research) to benchmark current activity, oversight of post graduate students progression and supervision, staff placements and student/industry feedback.</p>

Faculty of Engineering & Design: Faculty Planning Review

Faculty Planning Panel Visit	February 12 th & 13 th
Participants	External Validation panel, President, Faculty Management Team, Programme Chairs, other senior members of academic staff, students, graduates and with external stakeholders (e.g. industry links).
Outcome	<p>Five commendations were made in relation to the Faculty's online presence, its scale and its expansion over the past five years, staff engagement with online learning, faculty engagement with, and</p>

	<p>establishment of positive relationships with industry and the evidential two way process this engagement is built upon, the Institute's recent capital developments and plans for further developments (e.g. YADA) and for their student placements.</p> <p>Ten recommendations were made into completion of all previous recommendations, ensuring sufficient human resources, systems, student supports and quality assurance mechanisms are in place to support online delivery and to support work placements, ensuring that there is sufficient technical support for research and online learning, standardising work placements, setting achievable KPIs, need to recognised pathways for academic staff to gain additional advanced qualifications and the development of a strategic plan around research and development that is informed by their interactions with industry to ensure relevancy of future activity.</p>
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Faculty of Science: Programmatic Validation

Faculty Programmatic Validation panel visit	May 9 th & 10 th											
Participants	External Validation panel, President, Faculty Management Team, Programme Chairs, other senior members of academic staff, students, graduates and with external stakeholders (e.g. industry links).											
Outcome 23 commendations & 47 recommendations conditions dispersed across the Faculty, Department and individual programmes.	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Faculty</td> <td>3 recommendations</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Department of Environmental Science</td> <td>21 recommendations</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Department of Life Sciences</td> <td>6 recommendations</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Department of Health & Life Sciences</td> <td>11 recommendations</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Research</td> <td>6 recommendations</td> </tr> </table>		Faculty	3 recommendations	Department of Environmental Science	21 recommendations	Department of Life Sciences	6 recommendations	Department of Health & Life Sciences	11 recommendations	Research	6 recommendations
Faculty	3 recommendations											
Department of Environmental Science	21 recommendations											
Department of Life Sciences	6 recommendations											
Department of Health & Life Sciences	11 recommendations											
Research	6 recommendations											
Number of programmes revalidated	106											

Faculty of Engineering & Design: Programmatic Validation

Faculty Programmatic Validation panel visit	May 7 th & 8 th	
Participants	External Validation panel, President, Faculty Management Team, Programme Chairs, other senior members of academic staff, students, graduates and with external stakeholders (e.g. industry links).	
Outcome:	Faculty	1 Commendation, 5 recommendations & 1 condition

35 commendations, 46 recommendations & 3 conditions dispersed across the Faculty, Department and individual programmes.	Department of Computing & Electronic Engineering	4 commendations, 5 recommendations
	Department of Mechatronic Engineering	6 commendations & 10 recommendations
	Department of Mechanical & Manufacturing Engineering	7 commendations, 10 recommendations & 1 condition
	Department of Arts, Design and Architecture	4 commendations and 9 recommendations
	Department of Civil Engineering and Construction	13 commendations, 7 recommendations & 1 condition
Number of programmes revalidated	104	

3.3 A description of other implementation issues.

An Institutional wide Research ethics committee was developed to provide advice and approval to research projects requiring ethical approval outside of the remit of the Faculties Research ethics committee. The main projects the committee review are research projects that post graduate research students and staff of the Institute are involved in. A Research ethics policy and procedure was developed to underpin the research ethics committees at Institute and Faculty level. Research committee members received training in May 2019 on their role. Applicants apply online. Two meetings were held between January and June 2019. <https://www.itsligo.ie/research/ethics/>.

An online English language programme for students whose first language is not English was successfully piloted in the reporting period and as a consequence will be rolled out across the CUA in the next reporting period supported by external funding.

IT Sligo became the first IOT to develop and deliver a Master of Arts in Social Work and were the first Higher education Institution in the country to undertake the CORU approval process for the aforementioned Masters programme and for the Bachelor of Arts in Social Care Practice in the reporting period. In order to meet CORUs statutory requirements and fulfil the criteria for approval a number of policies, procedures and process required development or updating. In the reporting period an Attendance for Social Sciences procedure and Professional Code of Conduct Procedure were developed and validated by Academic Council.

Part 3: Effectiveness and Impact

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

1. Effectiveness

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

During the reporting period, the effectiveness of QA policies and procedures was reflected in the positive outcomes of the two Programmatic reviews that occurred and the significant number of new programmes that were recommended to the academic council by external panels for approval. No programme was not progressed for approval. Both the programmatic reviews and establishment of new programmes tested the robustness of the policies and procedures underpinning both these processes. The subcommittees of Academic council were very active during the reporting period. The subcommittee of Academic Council-academic processes reviewed a number of procedural revisions and the development of new procedures and policies as outlined in section 4.1. They also reviewed all external examiner nominations and put forward their recommendations to academic Council.

The subcommittee Planning & Coordination reviewed all of the EAP1s (Programme planning document) and met with all programme development teams to ensure that all aspects of the proposed new programme from establishing marketing need to granular details such as unit cost had been considered sufficiently before permitting the programme development team progress further on the planning pathway. The Planning and Coordination committee also reviewed any proposed modification through the EAP 4 system to any existing programmes establishing the need and potential impact of the change at programme and wider. All of the P & C committee recommendations were advanced to Academic Council for approval. Workshops on completing the EAP 1 and EAP4 forms were led out by the Chair of the P & C committee to ensure consistency in the forms documentation. The workshops were recorded and are available for all staff on CELT Moodle page. A review of all the procedures in the exam area took place in the reporting period which resulted in a number of revisions and new procedures/ processes being reported. The majority were successfully progressed through Academic Council during the reporting period with a number due to be progressed further in the next reporting period.

External examiners reports were reviewed at programme level with actions taken by programme boards as warranted. From an administrative perspective, the deficits in the External examiner process in relation to communication about their role reporting and payment process were addressed during the reporting period with the establishment of an information hub for external examiners

2. Impact

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

The impact of the QA policies in relation to the Faculty review/ Programmatic review resulted in programmes being revalidated. Changes permitted under the process resulted in programmes being reformatted to ensure the best possible outcome for students (e.g. common first semester in Computer Science programmes, assessments reviewed to ensure diversity of assessments to match the diversity of student learning styles, increased efficiencies through merging similar modules for delivery and highlighting where additional resources were warranted or could be redeployed). The impact of the implementation of the Research Ethics procedure and the establishment of the research ethics committee has meant that post graduate research students and staff can have their projects reviewed internally in a transparent manner.

The revision to both the exam deferral and special consideration process has reduced the risks associated with dealing with the fee and third part evidence that was part of the previous paper-based procedure. The convening of a deferral committee has meant that Heads of Department are not responsible for reviewing deferral requests and students are assured all requests are treated in an equitable manner across the institute.

3. Themes

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

Programme documentation

A thematic analysis of conditions and recommendations and panel discussions was conducted at the end of the reporting period, based on the new programmatic validation panels that occurred during the reporting period. Thirteen panels took place to review 37 programmes –NFQ level 6-9. A number of the programmes had a number of embedded programmes therein. Programmes that receive conditions cannot be given approval by Academic Council until they have been addressed to their satisfaction. The review revealed that where conditions were advanced, they primarily were linked to insufficient mapping of Programme outcomes to the relevant QQI standards, insufficient specific learning outcomes, limited marketing analysis presented, inappropriate titles and limited specifics in relation to teaching & learning strategies. Programme teams were able to articulate any deficits in discussion with panel members. In light of this analysis, written guidance for programme teams were developed and shared with academic staff with plans to develop a new programme template in the next reporting period.

New programme structures

Development of taught Masters programmes with an ECTS distribution of 60% of the total available ECTS loads centred on primary research.

The common ECTS distribution load of a 90 ECTS programme [60 ECTS taught component: 30 Research] was changed in this reporting period in the case of a number of new Masters programmes (10). There was an identified need to develop Masters programmes which allowed students to engage in research at a deeper level. This was particularly relevant for students who were engaged in research that emanated from their workplace. The metrics in relation to research students for Institutes seeking technological university status was another driver for this change. The changing ECTS distribution challenged programme teams to consider the taught element [30 ECTS] in terms of content and assessment. The larger research component also required considerable reflection on programme teams' expertise and capacity to supervise potential research projects. The subcommittees of academic council and Academic Council took considerable time reflecting on the infrastructure required to support the programmes and potential students. Validation panels sought evidence from programme teams of their capacity to engage in such programmes.

Transition from paper based to online processes

As detailed previously, a number of exam office procedures have transitioned to online during the reporting period. This transition to online is also evidence in the Access area with the development of an online Childcare funding application in conjunction with the existing SAF application and the development of an on-line disability & learning support registration form for students – with provision to upload all documents.

Widening access

During the reporting period, 70 students entered college through the HEAR programme. To support their transition to third level a pre-entry induction programme was implemented. HEA PATH 3 funding resulted in the recruitment of a Community Education Mentor to work with the Cranmore Regeneration Project and IT Sligo to support the progression and transition of students to higher education. HEA PATH 2 funding enabled the Institute to provide bursaries to 18 students over their full degree programme. In November 2018, the Institute partnered with AsLam to become an Autism Friendly Campus. In addition, the Access office participated in the national College Awareness week – working with 3 schools and 200 students by facilitating events on campus. A number of events were held on campus such as Science week, Engineering week etc which attracted primary, post primary and the community onto campus.

Part 4: Quality Enhancement

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

4.1 Improvements and Enhancements for the Reporting Period

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

The following table details the procedures, policy and guidelines approved by Academic Council during the reporting period.

	Policy/ Procedures/ guidelines approved
26.10.18	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Equality Opportunities Policy 2. Marks & Standards Version 28: Capping applied to repeat examinations/ assessments
14.12.18	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Res 001 Research Ethics Procedure 2. Work Based Learning Programme Policy 3. Revised EAP 1 and EAP 4 templates 4. Attendance for Social Sciences procedure 5. Professional Code of Conduct Procedure 6. Derogation of New programme guideline for Engineering & Design.
11.2.19	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Principle of attaching ECTS to research degrees
15.3.19	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Academic Plan template agreed
3.5.19	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exam007 Request for consideration for affected-exam-performance Procedure 2. Exam019 Request for Deferral of an examination subject or subjects Procedure
13.6.19	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exam016 Plagiarism 2. Exam024 Disciplinary Procedure for Student (Examinations) 3. EXAM029 The Exam Paper Generation Process Procedure 4. Exam030 Application for extension of CA deadline(s) procedure 5. LIB013 Submission of Master Theses (Partial Fulfilment) to the Library Procedure 6. LIB014 Submission of Undergraduate Dissertations to the Library Procedure 7. Marks and Standards (Version 29)

The following Table details the collaborations, consortium agreement and Memorandum of Understanding approved by Academic Council during the reporting period

Collaborations approved	Life Assurance Association
Memorandum of Understandings approved	TU Dublin in relation specified apprenticeship programme
Collaborations approved	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Haute Ecole Louvain en Hainaut, Belgium 2. Castlebar College of Further Education
Consortium Agreement:	Cavan Institute of Further Education re delivery of year 1 BSc General Entry Science Programme

- New Document Manual Policy and Procedure approved and training material made available to all staff.
- Dedicated Quality Space established using SharePoint, for all master documentation and tracking of versions.
- Review and update of a variety of procedures in the exam area, following the format of the newly approved Document Manual Policy and Procedure. The most significant procedure in this area was EXAM029 Exam Paper Generation Procedure which was updated to reflect the full implementation of GURU planned for September 2019 and the effect on the Exam Paper Generation Process. Training was provided to both academic and administrative staff.
- The transition to a paperless examination office commenced with the automating of two procedures. The implementation of these procedures have reduced the risks associated with the previously paper based procedures, saved exam office administrative time and enhanced the student experience.
- The establishment of an Institute wide deferral committee to ensure there is a consistent approach to decision making in this arena.
- Quality induction material made available and accessible to academic staff on the IT Sligo Centre for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT) Moodle page.
- Student Academic Calendar created for students containing critical dates for the academic year
- Programme validation guidelines developed for academic staff based on a thematic review of all programme validation panel reports to establish the areas that required further development in programme documentation.
- Guidelines for validation panels developed.
- Validation panel report and response templates developed.
- Development of an induction page for External Examiners.
- The piloting of the Electronic Gradebook on Banner (EGB) continued in the reporting period, but was extended across the Institute. The system is becoming more acceptable to academic staff and is supporting the accuracy of examination data entry. Academic staff are supported in the implementation of EGB by bespoke training videos and School administrators.
- A report based on the piloting of GURU was presented to Academic Council with the recommendation that GURU be implemented across the Institute was accepted. GURU to be implemented across the Institute in the next reporting period. Significant preparation for its introduction in terms of revisions to procedures, training etc. was conducted in the reporting period.

4.2 Quality Enhancement Highlights

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

Case Study 1: Engagement & Collaboration with Industry. Apprenticeship in Higher Education.

The following case study which details the Insurance Practitioner programme responds to the Institutes Strategic objective related to Partnership and External engagement. The end of this reporting period witnessed the first iteration of the programme come to a successful completion with the graduates being conferred early in the next reporting period.

The Insurance Practitioner apprenticeship programme is Industry Led. The initial proposal was submitted to the apprenticeship council by Zurich Insurance and while the apprenticeship council endorsed the concept of the Insurance Practitioner apprenticeship, it recommended that there would be broader industry representation and that the apprenticeship would be available to a broad range of employers. The Insurance Institute of Ireland (III) developed the programme proposal on behalf of the industry, developing the learner specifications and setting up the initial consortium steering group (CSG). The III approached Institute of Technology Sligo (ITS) to assist in the design, validation and delivery of the programme to the occupational profile specified by the industry CSG. The industry CSG appointed ITS as the Coordinating Provider, with the brief to develop a national programme using distance learning technologies. The strong industry representation was key to a successful implementation, with the focus on a programme which met the needs of the insurance industry, with a focus on preparing future leaders in the insurance industry. Also key was the involvement of SOLAS, HEA, QQI and THEA who advised in the start-up phase of programme development.

The brief to deliver a National Programme was achieved at launch in September 2016, with the launch of a 3-year BA (Honours) in Insurance Practice - with 67 apprentices employed by almost 40 employers with an apprentice in every ETB area. The students are employed by insurance companies across Ireland and take the learning through online and blended learning from their home base, with mentoring support from senior executives in their companies. The Insurance Practitioner apprenticeship operates a day release alternance model which means that the apprentices take their ITS classes on day release rather than the block approach adapted by the traditional employer. This was designed to compensate for the removal of the training allowance from the apprentice and delivers a more cost-efficient delivery for both the employer and apprentice. The use of on-line technologies allowed a truly national programme of scale to be developed and large global players and small brokers among the employers providing apprenticeship opportunities.

The students achieve a consistent delivery and assessment supported from ITS, who also oversee the overall quality assurance of the programme, and the III with regular face to face days where the apprentices have the opportunity to meet with their lecture team. The programme includes embedded insurance qualifications leading to professional designations required to demonstrate competence in a regulated industry.

In 2017 the CSG proposed the expansion to include companies who provided life insurance. The Life Insurance Association (LIA) are now delivery partners and play an active role on the CSG. The involvement of the III and LIA as industry representatives have a number of advantages. As

educational organisations the III and LIA understand the challenges of delivering and validating a work-based programme and are key in activating the industry to recruit apprentices.

The strengths of the industry partnership and the guidance of the CSG has ensured a sustainable apprenticeship delivery model, which provides capacity for development in the regions, and has substantially increased the national uptake by females in apprenticeship programmes, with females representing over 40% of each intake. The development of the Insurance Practitioner apprenticeship provides the blueprint for the development of a sustainable apprenticeship with national reach and industry engagement.

Case Study 2: Teaching, Learning & Learner assessment: Supporting the continuous professional development 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 utilise 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.

Case Study 3 Theme: Learner experience

In order to support the Institutes student cohort achieve success, the Institute committed to developing and expanding a number of learning support initiatives in the reporting period. Examples of same are the expansion of the Assistive technology Service, Academic Writing and Maths Support Service.

Assistive Technology Service:

Students can access the assistive technology service via a referral from the Access office or self-referral. Students access the service regardless of stage-undergraduate/ post graduate and have varying disabilities and diagnoses.

In this reporting period, all year 1 students were invited to have their learning needs profiled on admission via Quicksan. This data was analysed by the assistive technologist and appropriate actions taken to support the student (e.g. referral to learning support tutor, academic writing centre, received access to Read & Gold software etc.).

Structure of Service:

1. Referral: All students are contacted on the same day of referral (the following Monday if late on a Friday) and invited to meet. They are offered dates which are no more than 2 – 3 days after referral. All students are met within a week of being referred.
2. Initial Meeting: Students complete the “Matching Person to Technology Assessment” with the Assistive Technology Officer. This session is spent researching the best match for each student. All technologies prescribed are individualised and altered to suit the specific needs of the student.
3. Technology Training: Follow up meetings are spent teaching and supporting the students on the selected technologies. These can be carried out in small groups or 1:1. Most students tend to prefer a 1:1 meeting. Once the student has mastered the technology, they trial it. Some students take 2 or 3 sessions to master the technology, and others may take longer depending on the level of support required. Training and support are also offered to any staff involved with the student.
4. Ongoing support: If the student is happy with the technology and progressing, the Assistive Technology Officer is available to provide ongoing support. If the student is not satisfied with the technology, the process is started again, until the student is content with the technology.

Academic Writing Centre:

The Academic Writing Centre established in the reporting period offers advice and support on all aspects of academic writing to all students of IT Sligo, both on-campus and online. Students can avail of 1:1 or small group appointments in person or online with an experienced writing tutor. The centre has developed a suite of tutorial content, writing tools & techniques and online resources

for students based on a student and staff survey to identify need. In the next reporting period, the centre will work in collaboration with academic staff to deliver timetabled tutorials and workshops for students to address writing issues such as literature review, critical analysis, and academic writing style. These practical workshops are designed to equip students with the tools and techniques needed to develop their academic writing skills.

Maths Support Centre:

The Maths Support Centre was set up in 2012, when it provided two hours a week of support to all students. In 2019 it greatly increased its capacity with the expansion of its team. This greatly increased its contact time with students and the breadth of services it could offer them. There are currently three tutors working in the Maths Support Centre: Maths Support tutor (24 hours per week), PhD student (6 hours per week) and Lecturer (3 hours per week). The Maths Support Centre provides additional guidance and tutoring to all students who are encountering difficulties with the mathematical components of their programmes. It's a free resource that students can access in different formats; through drop-in sessions, one-to-one tutorials, online tutorials, study groups, exam revision courses or online videos and resources.

Part 5: Objectives for the coming year

5.1 Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Plans

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

1. A robust evaluation of EGB is planned for the next reporting period to underpin a decision about its future implementation.
2. Widespread adoption of GURU as the Institute examination management system to occur in Q1 of next reporting period.
3. Introduction of GURU as the software to nominate external examiners and for the submission of the final report. The submission of final report in GURU gives IT Sligo one repository for all final reports as well as a facility to track feedback to external examiners in order to close the quality loop.
4. Approval of Academic Council to the revision of a number of procedures e.g. Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure, Review and Appeals Procedure, EAP7 process (programme monitoring report), bringing surveys online and the finalising to the updated Quality Manual.
5. Governing Body Approval to provide Sanctuary Scholarships for asylum seekers. Concomitant procedure and application process established for September 2020.
6. Finalisation of International Plan.
7. Planning the Institutes response to status as Designated Awarding Body.
8. Preparing the Faculty of Business and Social Science for Faculty review/Programmatic revalidation in the academic year 2020-2021.
9. Finalising the process for service unit reviews and prioritising services for review over the next 5 year period.
10. Ongoing preparation for the Institute's plan to apply for Bronze Award in November 2020. Staff survey and analysis will occur in next reporting period.
11. Maths Enrichment Programme (MEP): The Maths Support Tutor will build on our outreach services to 2nd level students with the recommencement of Maths Enrichment Classes at the IT. free classes are available on new dedicated webpage: www.itsligo.ie/mep
12. Enhance supports in the academic sphere to augment support student retention.

5.2 Review Plans

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

There is only one service unit review planned for the next reporting period and that will involve the Library services.

No academic review will occur in the next reporting period.

5.3 Other Plans

The Institute will focus on advancing with their CUA partners (LYIT and GMIT) their preparation for Technological University Status. This will involve the continuation and intensification of inter-institutional working across all sectors in the three Institutes of Technology.

Part 6: Periodic Review

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

6.1 The Institution and External Review

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

An action plan was developed following two separate facilitated sessions with Academic Council and the Institutes Senior Management team during the reporting period to respond to the recommendations advanced by the CINNTE review team. The plan addresses 6 areas namely:

1. Quality System
2. HR Policy & Culture
3. Planning, managing and evaluating change,
4. Dynamic responsiveness and strategic direction
5. Organisation Structure
6. Internationalisation and Transnational activities

The action plans detail the activities that need to occur to respond to the review team's recommendations pertinent to each of the above themes. Persons responsible and timelines are also detailed. The action plan was treated as a life document during the reporting period with actions being put in place as required. A twelve-month review was prepared at the end this reporting period and sent to QQI.

6.2 Self-Reflection on Quality Assurance

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

The QA processes in relation to Programmatic reviews and new programmes identified some issues (documentation, timing etc.) that need to be addressed to enhance efficiencies and the robustness of our quality processes around Programmatic reviews and programme validations. These will be actioned in time for the next programmatic review in 2021. An initial initiative was the development of a Quality Calendar which provided staff with the dates for key QA activities during the year in order to assist them in planning. The initial transition process to a paperless medium has proved successful so will be broadened during the next reporting period. The nuances pertinent to online students need to be reflected in policies and procedures (e.g. Exam regulations to include issues pertinent to online proctoring). An identified need for a repository for all QA procedures is being addressed but needs to be localised to Department level as appropriate. There is a need for a rolling schedule of training on QA procedures/ processes to be developed in order that all staff are aware of current processes.

6.3 Themes

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

The strategic objectives of the Institute shape the developmental themes.

The Institute are committed to widening participation, fostering inclusion, and attracting a more diverse population. Measures in process to address these aspirations include working with parents in areas of deprivation (facilitated through Path 3 funding), finalising a sanctuary scholarship scheme, working with local FE colleges to develop pathways for their students into the Institute. The Institute are committed to supporting students to reach their full potential through the provision of supports such as the academic writing and maths support centres.

The Institute is committed to the ongoing development of CELT to provide staff supporting students with the best available evidence to underpin their activities. Staff needs are surveyed and addressed through bespoke training. The Institute is committed to enhancing the quality of their online delivery through the provision of appropriate supports to staff to develop their skills in this area, researching the required supports of online students, review programme provision on an annual basis and liaising closely with stakeholders to ensure the programmes delivered are meeting their needs as employers, employees etc.

In this reporting period the Institute has developed a suite of Masters programmes which facilitate students undertake more in-depth work based projects. The research centres of the Institute continue to undertake cutting edge research and develop alliances with other national and international researchers. Staff of the Institute continue to publish and present their research outputs and have been the recipient of various awards. The Vice President for Innovation & Research has developed links at local, national and European level to support the development of SMEs in the region and provide an avenue for more research alliances.

The Institute through their engagement and proactive response to a breadth of stakeholders are Shaping & influencing economic, social and cultural development both regionally and nationally. The Innovation Centre continues to support business start-ups and works closely with the IDA to attract employers to the region. The Institute is committed to robust governance and accountability and continually reflects on strategies to improve same.