

Institutional Review Report 2025

Atlantic Technological University



CINNTE 



Dearbhú Cáilíochta
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann
Quality and
Qualifications Ireland

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Foreword

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training in Ireland. One of QQI's most important functions is to ensure that the quality assurance (QA) procedures that institutions have in place are effective. To this end, QQI carries out external reviews of higher education institutions on a cyclical basis. This current QQI cycle of reviews is called the CINNTE cycle. CINNTE reviews are an element of the broader quality framework for institutions composed of Quality Assurance Guidelines; each institution's Quality Assurance Procedures; Annual Quality Reports (AQRs); and Dialogue Meetings. The CINNTE review cycle runs from 2017-2024. During this period, QQI will organise and oversee independent reviews of each of the universities, the institutes of technology and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI).

Each CINNTE review evaluates the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of each institution. The review measures each institution's compliance with European standards for quality assurance, regard to the expectations set out in the QQI quality assurance guidelines or their equivalent and adherence to other relevant QQI policies and procedures. CINNTE reviews also explore how institutions have enhanced their teaching, learning and research and their quality assurance systems and how well institutions have aligned their approach to their own mission, quality indicators and benchmarks.

The CINNTE review process is in keeping with Parts 2 and 3 of the [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area](#) (ESG 2015) and based on the internationally accepted and recognised approach to reviews, including:

- the publication of Terms of Reference;
- a process of self-evaluation and Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER);
- an external assessment and site visit by a team of reviewers;
- the publication of a review report including findings and recommendations; and
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken.

This QQI CINNTE review of Atlantic Technological University (ATU) was conducted by an independent review team in line with the Terms of Reference in Appendix A. This is the report of the findings of the review team. It also includes the response of Atlantic Technological University (ATU) to the report.

1.1 The Review Team

Each CINNTE review is undertaken by an international team of independent experts and peers. The 2024 institutional review of the Atlantic Technological University (ATU) was conducted by a team of six reviewers selected by QQI. The review team was trained by QQI on 28 August 2024. The Chair and Coordinating Reviewer undertook a planning meeting with ATU on 23 September 2024. The main review visit was conducted by the full team between 10 and 15 November 2024.

CHAIR

Dr Benjamin Calvert

Dr Benjamin Calvert is Vice-Chancellor University of South Wales. Ben started his academic career as an undergraduate studying Social Sciences and later a PhD focusing on British tabloid press coverage of share ownership and privatisation during the 1980s. He was then a lecturer at the University of Central England, teaching Media and Cultural Studies. Later, he was a senior lecturer at the University of St. Mark and St. John, Plymouth and in 2002 moved to the University of Gloucestershire where he would eventually become Dean of the Faculty of Media, Arts and Technology. Ben has published in the fields of pedagogy and the study of television. He trained as a QAA reviewer for their Review of Educational Oversight method and has been an external examiner in various institutions.

Ben joined the University of South Wales in 2015 as Pro Vice-Chancellor for Learning, Teaching and Student Experience implementing a new Student Experience Plan and overseeing improvements in student metrics across the university. He became vice-chancellor in 2021. Ben has had external roles within Wales and the UK including as a member of the UK Teaching Excellence Awards Panel, of the Advance HE Steering Group on External Examining, HEFCW's Student Opportunity and Achievement Committee and the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment. Currently, he is Deputy Chair of Universities Wales and Chair of Global Wales.

During the pandemic he was Chair of the Welsh Government COVID Guidance Group working with government, public health officials and other stakeholders in developing frameworks for the continuation of learning through the pandemic. He sits on the Boards of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and Methyr Tydfil College and is also a member of the Board of Trustees at UCAS and Chair of UCAS Media.

Ben is a Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and a Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales.

COORDINATING REVIEWER

Nicole O'Neill

Nicole O'Neill is TU Dublin's Education Innovation Manager. Nicole works across the Quality Framework and Learning, Teaching & Assessment Teams.

Currently she is leading the development of a new student feedback system, the expansion of communities of practice to support learning, teaching and assessment and developing a support platform for programme co-ordination.

Nicole has over 12 years' experience as a quality assurance officer and has vast experience co-ordinating reviews and evaluating collaborative provision. She also has extensive experience working with both staff and students in developing and implementing new academic policies and regulations and contributing to the evolution of a dynamic quality culture.

INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE – QUALITY ASSURANCE

Nolusindiso Kayi

Nolusindiso Kayi is the Senior Manager: Strategic Research Projects in the Office of the CEO at South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

Nolusindiso has been working in the South African higher education system for more than 20 years. Nolusindiso joined SAQA from Universities South Africa (USAf) where she was Senior Manager: Student Success. Prior to that, she was the Director: University Research Support and Policy Development at the Department (Ministry) of Higher Education and Training (South Africa).

Nolusindiso has worked for several universities in research management including Stellenbosch University, University of the Western Cape and University of Cape Town. Her portfolios focused on supporting and advancing research in South Africa, on research grants management and support for early career researchers, policy development for higher education, supporting the internationalisation of higher education in South Africa and evaluation of research and creative outputs. She has a master's in business administration from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVE

Ronan Emmet

Ronan Emmet is a senior HR leader with a blend of industry experience and academic collaborations. He currently serves as Learning, and Talent Management Leader at Boston Scientific in Cork, a position he has held since 2014.

Ronan has experience in partnering with higher education institutions to create new talent programmes. He has collaborated with universities to develop and deliver tailored learning and development initiatives, ensuring transitions for students entering the professional world.

Ronan is a graduate of Dublin Institute of Technology and the National University of Ireland Galway. In addition to his industry expertise, Ronan is pursuing the Barrister-at-Law degree from the Honourable Society of King's Inns. This legal dimension enhances his professional skill set, providing an understanding of employment law and regulatory frameworks.

Throughout his career, Ronan has led global initiatives in talent management, learning and

development, and organisational effectiveness. His experience in designing and implementing HR processes, tools, and solutions has had a positive impact on employee engagement and talent retention.

LEARNER REPRESENTATIVE

Jade Stanely

Jade Stanely is a research postgraduate student at South East Technological University (SETU), Carlow campus, with a background in bioscience and biopharmaceuticals. Currently, she is completing a PhD focused on developing bioplastics using sustainable alternative starches.

Throughout Jade's time at SETU, she has been actively involved in various campus initiatives. Jade had the privilege of judging student projects for SciFest, showcasing innovative programmes like *Innovative Materials for Industry 4.0*, and volunteering wherever needed to support both students and staff. Additionally, Jade served as a student representative in the QQI CINNTE review, contributing to the access and disability section.

Jade is also a member of the Green Campus society, and the peer mentor programme. As a peer mentor, Jade has become well-versed in student services and helping first-year students transition into college life by providing guidance and support.

HIGHER EDUCATION REPRESENTATIVE

Professor Sokratis Katsikas

Professor Sokratis Katsikas received a Diploma in Electrical Engineering from the University of Patras, Greece, in 1982; a Master of Science in Electrical and Computer Engineering from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, USA, in 1984; and a PhD in Computer Engineering & Informatics from the University of Patras, Greece, in 1987.

In 2019 he was awarded a Doctorate Honoris Causa from the Department of Production and Management Engineering, Democritus University of Thrace, Greece.

He is the Director of the Norwegian Centre for Cybersecurity in Critical Sectors (NORCICS) and

Professor with the Department of Information Security and Communication Technology, Norwegian University of Science and Technology. He is also Professor Emeritus of the Department of Digital Systems, University of Piraeus, Greece.

In the past he has been the rector of the Open University of Cyprus (2018-2020); Rector and Vice-Rector of the University of the Aegean, Greece (1997-2006); General Secretary of Telecommunications and Posts of the Hellenic Government (2009-2012); Chair of the National Council of Education of Greece (2013-2015); Chair of the Council for Higher Education of Greece (2013-2015); Member of the Board of the Hellenic Authority for the Security and Privacy of Communications (2008-2009); Chair of the Steering Committee of the EUA Institutional Evaluation Programme (2015-2019); and member of the Board of the Hellenic Authority for the Quality and Accreditation of Higher Education (2006-2008). In May-June 2023 he served as Minister of Digital Governance in the interim (caretaking) government of the Hellenic Republic.

In 2006 he was invited to join the pool of expert evaluators of the Institutional Evaluation Programme of the European University Association. In 2008 he became evaluation team chair and between 2011 and 2019 he was sitting on the Programme Steering Committee. He served as the Chair of the Programme Steering Committee between 2015 and 2019. Within the EUA IEP framework he has evaluated more than 20 higher education institutions in Slovakia, Portugal, Turkey, Romania, Ireland, Montenegro, Lebanon, North Macedonia, the Czech Republic, and Poland.

He has carried out, individually or as a chair/member of a team, several evaluations of universities, and of individual study programmes at undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels, in Greece, Romania, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Georgia.

In 2023 he was listed in the Stanford University list of the top 2% most cited scientists worldwide. He has authored or co-authored more than 300 journal papers, book chapters and conference proceedings papers. He is serving on the editorial

board of several scientific journals, he has co-authored/edited 52 books and conference proceedings and has served on/chaired the technical programme committee of more than 900 international scientific conferences, including GLOBECOM 2006, 2012, and 2015. He is a member of the Steering Committee of the ESORICS Conference (chair 2017-2023), and he is the Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Information Security (Springer).





Section 1

Introduction and Context



Section 1: Introduction and Context

1.2 SUMMARY AND CONTEXT

Atlantic Technological University (ATU), a multi-campus university, was established on 1 April 2022 as a designated awarding body (DAB) under the Technological Universities Act (2018). It was formed through the merger of Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT), Institute of Technology, Sligo (IT Sligo), and Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT). On 1 November 2023, St Angela's College joined ATU. ATU is now the third largest university in the Republic of Ireland, with nine campuses across Donegal, Galway, Mayo, and Sligo. Currently, students at ATU make up a population of 26,697, studying on 600+ academic programmes from pre-degree to doctoral level.

ATU campuses are distributed across a large geographical region of 25,277 km², covering 36.2% of the national landmass. This Northern and Western Region has distinctive features which provide a unique context for ATU. The region is sparsely populated but also includes significant urban areas. The region's landmass covers 90% of the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. Cross-border economic activity plays a significant role in driving growth within this region, and approximately 15,000 people cross the border for work or study each day. ATU operates as an anchor institution in the region, working collaboratively with government, industry and community stakeholders to act as catalysts for social, cultural, and economic development.

In the 2023/24 Academic Year, ATU's student population included 564 research students of which 204 were registered for a PhD, 5,389 online students, 1,683 apprentices and 2,162 international students. Students coming from alternative access

routes amounted to 30% of the student population with 16% coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. ATU provided over 690 programmes of which 73% were undergraduate and 27% were postgraduate. There were 5 craft apprenticeships, 7 consortium-led apprenticeships, 550 major awards and 143 minor awards. ATU had 2,529 staff of which 55% were academic and 45% professional, management & support. 41% of the academic staff had a PhD.

The inaugural ATU Strategic Plan (2024-2028)¹ was launched in April 2024. Its development followed an extensive period of consultation, both within ATU and with external stakeholders. The ATU Vision is to become an "internationally renowned university that enhances the quality of life in their region and creates a sustainable future for all and the ATU Mission is to enrich their region by delivering academic and research excellence working collaboratively with regional, national and international partners. The key themes, Guiding Lights in the Strategic Plan, are Enabling Education, Engaged Research, Connected Ecosystem, Organisation Transformation, and Sustainable Future.

Based on the information provided to the review team and discussions with ATU management, staff and students during the main review visit, the review team are conscious of factors outside the university's direct control that will need to be resolved so that ATU can fully implement its strategic plan and meet the performance objectives agreed with the Higher Education Authority (HEA)².

While these factors lie outside the scope of this review, the review team is of the

¹ <https://www.atu.ie/about/governance/strategic-plan>

² <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2022/06/ATU-Performance-Agreement-2024%E2%80%932028.pdf>

opinion that it is important they be highlighted as their resolution will have a significant impact on ATU's ability to implement the recommendations set out in this report.

Observations

As highlighted in the OECD review of technological university academic career paths, contracts and organisation in Ireland³, "The current academic career structure of Ireland's emerging TU Institutions, the organisation of academic work, and the management and leadership structures of Technological Universities are impediments to an expanded research profile and research-informed teaching; to deeper engagement with knowledge needs of communities and regions; and to a wider offer of flexible learning to meet the nation's reskilling and upskilling needs". The review team notes that the academic career structure has not changed since the formation of ATU and that in comparison with other universities, both nationally and internationally, technological university career pathways lack a professorial grade. The review team is of the view that the inclusion of a professional grade would allow the university to grow its research activity and attract and retain staff with the relevant expertise and experience to lead significant research portfolios. How ATU can meet its place-based mission to leverage research expertise for the benefit of innovation in the region without having the ability to attract research talent at the highest level is not clear.

The review team also noted that ATU is currently managed by an interim management team and utilising the legacy faculty and school structure. The review team is of the view that ATU will not become a fully integrated university that can fully address its strategic vision and ambitions while it is without a final management structure and organisational design that is aligned to its strategic intent and organises resources on a university-wide basis. The review team notes that a business case has been submitted by ATU to the

Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) and a management structure agreed for ATU but is awaiting full approval. It is the view of the review team that this needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency so that the university can reorganise its three legacy staffing structures into a university structure and become a fully integrated university that can realise its strategic ambitions.

The review team also noted that there is significant ongoing pressure on accommodation in the region. During the main review visit, students, staff, and senior managers informed the review team that students have had significant difficulty in recent years finding adequate and affordable accommodation and this has had an impact on student health and wellbeing, and on their ability to focus fully on their studies. The review team acknowledges that ATU has submitted proposals to erect purpose-built student accommodation for five campuses in Sligo, Letterkenny, Castlebar, Mountbellew and Galway. The review team hopes that ATU will be sufficiently supported to work in partnership with others to address this accommodation challenge.

1.3 APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MANAGEMENT

ATU has established a governance structure to oversee the implementation of quality assurance and enhancement policies across the university. This governance structure includes a Governing Body, a University Planning Team (UPT) and an Academic Council with seven committees. The committees include Academic Planning and Strategy, Academic Programmes, Academic Standards and Policy, Research and Innovation, Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA), and Student Experience and Access. There is evidence of a clear reporting and communication structure between the three main governance fora that is underpinned by mechanisms for reporting. This includes formal reports from the President as Chair of

³ https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/a-review-of-technological-university-academic-career-paths-contracts-and-organisation-in-ireland_2b7ee217-en.html

the UPT. The UPT meeting minutes are available at each Governing Body meeting and formal reporting from the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar as Secretary of the Academic Council is provided to Governing Body through provision of the Minutes of Academic Council Meetings and to alternate UPT meetings.

Prior to designation, each of the three legacy Academic Councils approved the same set of examination regulations, so that students within ATU are assessed using the same marking schemes and standards. Since its establishment, ATU has continued to implement other legacy quality assurance policies and procedures, whilst developing and transitioning to new ATU policies. ATU established a Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team (QAET), funded by the HEA Transformation Fund, who undertook extensive consultation to develop a suite of new ATU policies and procedures that benchmarked to:

- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015)
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016)
- Sector-Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies (DAB) (2016)
- QQI Topic-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines.

At the time of the review, 22 new policies had been approved at ATU. Funding for the QAET is continuing until June 2026, to enable a full suite of procedures to support these policies to be developed.

ATU's approach to quality assurance and enhancement places a strong emphasis on delegated responsibility through programme boards in schools / faculties, with centralised governance. This approach includes a role for the student voice, with student representation included at all levels. For example, elected student representatives (sabbatical officers) sit on ATU's Governing Body, Academic Council, clubs and societies' registration, and finance committees. Class representatives also sit on programme boards.



Section 2

Institutional Self-Evaluation
Report (ISER)

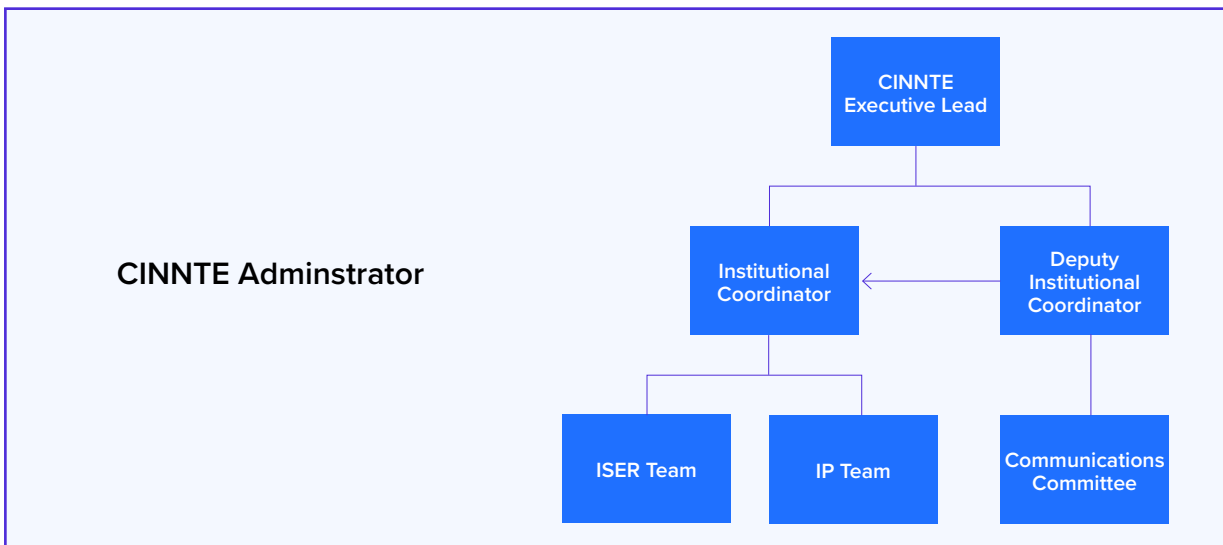


Section 2: Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)

It was clear from submitted documentation and sessions during the main review visit that the process conducted by ATU to produce the ISER was comprehensive and that staff and students across the university were engaged in its production. The review process began in 2023 when an Institutional Coordinator and an Executive Lead were appointed to manage. A steering group was established including broad representation from across ATU’s staff and students. That broad engagement is demonstrated by the large number of representatives in the steering group (61). The review team heard during discussions with ATU teams throughout the review visit, confirmation of the extent of this engagement. Details included in ATU’s ISER illustrate the comprehensive representation in the steering group from across all levels at ATU, across academic, professional services and the student body.⁴

The inclusion of 18 members of the Students’ Unions from across the range of regional campuses in the steering group is notable. Figure 1, from Appendix 5 of the ISER, also illustrates the executive oversight and governance throughout the institutional review structure. The schedule of meetings, conducted by various ATU teams, involving coordination, communications, Academic Council, the Governing Body and all-staff meetings, of which there were three, is also recorded in the ISER. This exercise was extensive and appears to have been organised thoroughly and diligently.

It is also clear to the review team that ATU aligned the ISER to relevant standards and frameworks. These include the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) and to the QQI Cyclical Review Handbook and Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. The structure of the ISER is in line with these external frameworks. ATU aimed to



4 Figure 1, Appendix 5, ATU Institutional Self-evaluation Report (ISER), (2024)

be 'comprehensive and transparent' (ATU ISER, p. 20). The process for developing the ISER, as outlined above, and the evidence from sessions with staff and students during the review visit suggest that those aims were well met and that regular governance processes, such as meetings of Academic Council, were used to keep people informed of the development of the ISER.

There was evidence in ATU's submitted documentation and in conversations during the review visit that the process was one of self-reflection within the context of a new and emerging institution, albeit one based on strong legacy institutions each with its own quality assurance processes. That self-reflection included a review of action plans from earlier reviews in legacy institutions and the setting out of a comprehensive approach to the ISER and its coverage across various themes (ATU ISER, p. 21). Data considered in the self-reflection included annual quality reports (AQRs)⁵, external examiners' reports, performance data shared with the HEA, validation reports and the views of external partners and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). These are clearly highlighted in the ISER (ATU ISER, p.21) and demonstrate a comprehensive set of inputs and evidence used during the process.

It was clear during the review team's meeting with the President and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar (VPAAR) that the development of the ISER was an early mechanism, alongside significant cross-institution policy development, used by ATU to bring people together as 'one university.' The review team heard that the process of self-reflection focused people on collective endeavours and on areas of strength or inconsistency and that this has been used to inform future development. Production of the ISER has therefore helped 'turbo-boost' the integration of the university and helped ensure that momentum around integration has been supported. The speed at which the Academic Council was set up is also considered valuable by the review team for establishing consistency to policy development; the university planning team estimates that 80-90%

of new policies are now complete. It was also clear across the review visit that consultation on these policies has been extensive and robust, with many teams reporting extensive engagement. The review team considers this a significant achievement.

The review team recognises that in the context of an emerging institution it is not possible to take a static view of the process of creating the ISER or, indeed, of assessing the approach to quality and standards in a moment in time. That is because policies and procedures to ensure a robust quality assurance environment were in development alongside production of the ISER and the self-reflection on past exercises. Notably, this work was also taking place at a time, as noted in Section 1.2, when the senior staff structure of the university was not yet approved. The review team acknowledges that ATU was therefore taking on significant tasks, including the review, in the absence of a settled leadership team. Despite this, the review team was impressed by the comprehensive, thorough, and open and self-reflective nature of the ISER within this fluid context.

Alongside the AQRs and other supplementary evidence provided, the ISER is comprehensive, self-reflective and shows a significant and thoughtful development journey for ATU.

Commendations

- The review team commends ATU on the thoroughness of the ISER and its supporting documentation, which details the comprehensive approach taken overall to quality assurance and enhancement at a time of change and integration.
- The review team commends ATU for the speed and extent of policy development and the extent of consultation and engagement in the production of the ISER and the new policy framework, which has been broad and deep.

⁵ https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/quality-assurance-education-training/reviews?sector=All&provider_type=All&document_type=9&year=All&provider_name=Atlantic+Technological+University+%28303%29



Section 3

Quality Assurance and Enhancement



Section 3: Quality Assurance and Accountability

OBJECTIVE 1 – CURRENT QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

3.1.1 Overall Assessment of Quality Assurance Procedures

ATU places significant emphasis on academic quality assurance and enhancement (AQAE) to uphold its mission to achieve academic and research excellence. As stated in the ISER (p. 30), “Underpinning the development of the AQAE Framework is the understanding that quality assurance and enhancement is everybody’s business and therefore devolution with clear oversight was agreed at the outset.” The AQAE Framework is based on four core principles: Academic Excellence, Currency and Relevance, Accessibility and Accountability, and Devolved Quality Assurance. The Academic Council oversees the development and approval of AQAE policies. Procedures that support policies are developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders and reviewed by academic standing committees.

Prior to the establishment of ATU, each of the former legacy Academic Councils approved the same set of examination regulations. These were then approved by the ATU Governing Body, which also confirmed the arrangements relating to quality assurance and access, transfer and progression (ATP) procedures. The policies and procedures of the legacy institutions will continue to apply until such time as new ATU policies and procedures are approved by Academic Council.

The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team (QAET) has developed the AQAE Framework. Policies and procedures within the framework follow a five-step cyclical process: identifying the need, drafting documents, consulting and revising,

approval, and implementation. Policies are typically reviewed and implemented at the start of the academic year.

To ensure accessibility, ATU has created a repository for policies and procedures on its Staff Hub. Policies that are applicable to students are also available to students via its Student Hub and to the public via the university website. Communication and training on new policies and procedures is provided to staff through emails and bespoke training sessions. Section 4 of ATU’s ISER states that feedback provided to the QAET indicates that there are still challenges to ensuring consistent communication and training across ATU. This was further evidenced in feedback communicated to the review team indicating that staff did not have sufficient time to fully engage in all training sessions and therefore not all staff were fully aware of the specifics of all new policies and procedures.

ATU monitors the quality assurance of its programmes through a number of policies (Monitoring Evaluation and Enhancement of Programmes Policy, Programme Design Policy, Programme and Module Revision Policy and Developing and Validating New Taught Programmes Policy). These guide the ongoing evaluation of academic programmes. Programme boards are in place for each programme to monitor design, delivery, and academic standards. These boards are composed of faculty members and student representatives, ensuring that quality is maintained through strategic planning, resource management, and ongoing development. The Programme Board Annual Report (PBAR) is submitted by each programme board and reviewed

by the Head of Department to ensure follow-up actions are taken.

Annual monitoring includes the review of various reports. For example, annual programme board reports, external examiner feedback, student feedback, retention and graduation reports, and implementation of review strategies. Student feedback is critical in shaping programme development, collected through module evaluations, stage surveys, and historically via the National Student Survey (which is currently paused). Section 5.6.1 in ATU's ISER states that feedback received in the National Student Survey shows strengths in staff-student interactions and teaching practice but highlights areas for improvement in collaborative learning, feedback, and quantitative reasoning.

External examiners are appointed to maintain academic standards. They provide impartial feedback on programme quality and student achievement. A survey of active external examiners (ATU ISER, p. 33) confirmed that most felt ATU valued their role and provided accessible documentation. The survey also notes that clearer communication of dates for completion of work and consistency in the way that different departments interact with external examiners and provide material for review could be improved.

Periodic monitoring includes Academic Unit Review, Programmatic Review and Function Review. These are required every five to seven years. These reviews ensure programmes remain relevant, meet academic standards, and address student and industry needs. The review process involves self-evaluation, peer review, and stakeholder feedback.

External monitoring follows the Institutional Review Policy⁶ and ensures ATU's adherence to quality standards as outlined by QQI and European standards. It involves institutional reviews and professional reviews by regulatory bodies.

In February 2024, the QA Staff Survey conducted by ATU noted that staff perceive quality assurance

as central to ATU's reputation and ongoing integration. Most staff agreed that stakeholders are involved in planning and reviewing QA policies, emphasising the importance of consistent and accessible QA procedures.

As highlighted in the review team's commendation, the extent of policy development and extent of consultation on new policy and procedure development has been impressive. However, the review team identified areas for improvement:

While many staff highlighted informal mechanisms for obtaining feedback from students, and the review team recognised a strong culture of student engagement in various practices, these alone are insufficient to provide the comprehensive and routine assurance necessary to confirm a consistent quality of teaching and learning. The review team found that processes for gathering and responding to student feedback were not sufficiently robust or effectively monitored. During the review visit students reported inconsistencies in how formal feedback is collected, both through end-of-module evaluations (QA1 form) and, in some cases, via the class representative function. Given the critical role of the student voice in quality processes, ATU should prioritise an audit of student feedback across all provisions to ensure effective collection, analysis, and follow-up with students. The university should implement clear and effective processes for collecting, evaluating, and reporting on feedback from students, ensuring that data is available to inform decision-making at all levels. This should include full deployment and integration of the student survey processes and the student representative system.

The review team also found the mechanism in place for regularly collecting feedback from research students outside the annual review process was not sufficiently robust, leading to a narrow focus on specific aspects rather than the broader research student experience at ATU.

For ATU to ensure that local level issues of quality are identified and addressed, more robust data is necessary. At senior level, aggregate data can

6 <https://www.atu.ie/app/uploads/2024/10/institutional-review-policy.pdf>

be used to target interventions or to understand progress against KPIs. If key strategies in teaching and learning are delivering effective student outcomes, these should be visible in student outcomes data and feedback. While many ATU staff pointed to informal mechanisms and the review team noted a culture of strong student engagement in many instances of local practice, these are not sufficient for the purpose of confirming that the quality of teaching and learning is sound in all cases. Given the centrality of the student voice to quality processes, a full audit of student voice matters across all provision should be hastened to ensure the effective collection and analysis of feedback and for closing the feedback loop back to students.

While the review team acknowledges the considerable progress made in policy development, they also observe that in some cases, long-standing policies lack accompanying procedures. This has created a sense of stagnation in some places, such as postgraduate research supervision and evaluation, hindering the consistency and speed of aligning practices. ATU should move quickly to ensure that procedures are in place to support key policies and should prioritise areas of risk to the student experience. The lack of procedures is creating some stasis in decision making and inhibiting change, consistency and pace of alignment. This was observable by the review team during sessions with staff.

However, the review team is also of the view that where such procedures are not yet complete, professional good judgment should ensure that baseline standards are met in the interim. For example, processes to ensure that research students are informed of their progress after passing through gateways such as annual review. This should be a general expectation of good supervision and not depend upon formal procedures being in place. Given the extent of student feedback to the panel on this issue, new procedures to ensure that this becomes practice and that the quality of feedback given at annual review is of a high standard, should be expedited.

Overall, the review team concludes that there was sufficient evidence to confirm that ATU's

quality assurance procedures are effective and appropriately aligned to the requirements of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESGs 2015) and have regard to the QQI Core Quality Assurance Guidelines (QAG).

Recommendation

- The review recommends that ATU conduct a full audit of student voice matters across all provision. This should be expedited to ensure collection and analysis of feedback is effective and closes the loop back to students.

3.1.2 GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

This section provides an overview of the QA processes in place across the university, with a particular focus on the governance and management of QA and alignment of departmental activities and institutional frameworks. The progress that ATU has made as a newly established institution will be addressed, focusing on its efforts to align operations, integrate legacy systems, and build a unified organisational culture. The university has made substantial strides in achieving foundational milestones while simultaneously navigating the complexities of transformation. The key areas addressed include external and internal feedback mechanisms, programme provision, and the implementation of new policies and procedures.

ATU's Governing Body was established in April 2022 and is responsible for overseeing the university's strategic direction, compliance with statutory requirements, and decisions regarding budgets, risk management, and performance. It comprises 19 members from different sectors, ensuring broad representation. The Academic Council, responsible for academic affairs and quality assurance, has 69 members and is supported by seven committees. It was formed in January 2023, following an interim Council, and plays a key role in approving AQAE policies, validating programmes, and managing academic quality. The review team acknowledges the size of the Academic Council and questions whether that size should be reviewed by ATU, particularly in situations that require agile decision making.

Operational integration is supported by the university planning team (UPT), which supports the President in strategic decision-making and implementation. Faculty and departmental structures play a critical role in devolving QA responsibilities, supported by policies which guide programme development and enhancement. Continuous improvement is central to ATU's approach, exemplified by the AQR, which informs institutional planning and promotes a culture of reflection and quality enhancement. This layered governance structure ensures a cohesive approach to quality management, fostering academic and institutional excellence.

However, as indicated in its ISER (p.24) and highlighted in Section 1.2 of this report, the university is working with interim structures. There is a risk that long-term decision-making processes and embedding the new structure/s of the merged institution are being hindered.

The university's QA framework is structured to ensure that all academic programmes adhere to a set of defined standards, ensuring quality and consistency across departments. Central to this framework is the approved programme schedule (APS), which is developed in collaboration with students, faculty, and external industry stakeholders. This framework ensures that all programmes are not only academically rigorous but also aligned with industry demands and student needs.

At department level, the primary QA mechanism is the programme board, which operates as the key forum for reviewing the delivery of programmes. The board includes input from student representatives and external examiners, ensuring that programme performance is evaluated from multiple perspectives. These boards convene at least once per semester to review academic delivery, student feedback, and external commentary, thus ensuring the alignment of departmental activities with institutional standards.

The engagement of the student voice is a cornerstone of the QA process. ATU has made significant efforts to incorporate student feedback into the development and review of academic

programmes. Regular webinars and consultations with students, facilitated by the Students' Unions, ensure that students are consulted during the drafting and revision of policies. This has proven effective in maintaining a continuous dialogue between students and academic leadership, fostering a culture of transparency and inclusion.

However, despite these efforts, student engagement in the QA process remains a challenge. The completion rates for QA surveys, such as QA1, QA2, and QA3, remain low. This low engagement has hindered the university's ability to obtain comprehensive feedback, and further strategies are needed to increase participation. As noted in Section 3.1 the review team has recommended an audit of student voice matters.

External feedback is critical in ensuring that the university's programmes meet industry standards and the expectations of professional bodies. Industry engagement is incorporated into the QA framework through regular joint meetings with placement supervisors and professional statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). These stakeholders provide valuable insights into the relevance and quality of programmes, particularly in relation to placement opportunities and workforce readiness.

Additionally, external examiners play an essential role in confirming the academic standards of programmes. Their feedback, along with input from industry and placement supervisors, is integrated into programme board discussions, ensuring that programmes are evaluated against external benchmarks. This feedback loop is essential for maintaining the rigour and relevance of academic offerings, particularly in fields with rapidly changing industry demands.

Feedback from faculty members is another critical component of the QA process. Heads of School/Faculty and academic staff participate in a collaborative approach to programme development, where they provide feedback on policies and procedures. For example, the Annual Programme Board Report document was modified in response to faculty feedback, demonstrating the institution's responsiveness to staff concerns and suggestions. However, engagement with

QA webinars has been reducing over time (ATU ISER, p. 36), and it was reported during review discussions that attendance at these sessions was lower than anticipated. Despite this, the involvement of faculty members seconded to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team (QAET) has allowed for 'real-world' experience to inform policy development, ensuring that new procedures are both practical and effective.

However, some faculty members feel that the staggered implementation of new policies, as outlined in the AQAE Schedule and Document Matrix has caused confusion, with certain changes being introduced before the necessary procedures were in place. It was reported to the review team by academic staff that this phased implementation of policy without full procedures has contributed to a sense of uncertainty and has delayed adoption.

Another challenge, previously outlined in this report, is the lack of a clearly defined faculty structure. The absence of a formalised ATU structure has made it difficult to navigate the relationship between departments and broader institutional policies.

Furthermore, while the introduction of new policies and procedures has led to improvements in programme delivery, it was reported during the main review visit that some legacy industry advisory boards have been dissolved, reducing the channels for direct feedback from external stakeholders. While industry engagement remains strong, the loss of these advisory boards has made it more difficult to maintain consistent industry input across all programmes.

Finally, as highlighted in Section 4.7 of its ISER, despite the university's efforts to ensure continuous professional development for staff, including training on new QA systems and policies, there has been fatigue among staff to engage in further consultations. With numerous surveys and focus groups conducted across different initiatives, staff members during the review also expressed frustration to the review team about the volume of consultations, leading ultimately to a decrease in response rates.

The QA processes in place at the university show a strong commitment to continuous improvement and the active involvement of students, faculty, and external stakeholders. However, several areas require further attention to ensure the full effectiveness of these processes. Increased student participation in feedback mechanisms is essential as detailed in Section 3.5 of this report. Additionally, it was reported to the review team during discussions with staff that better alignment between Faculties and Professional Services is needed to ensure that changes are implemented across the university in a consistent way.

The review team also noted that there is a considerable and complex policy framework for teaching, learning and assessment and similarly for quality assurance and enhancement. Similarly, there is complexity and overlap in the responsibilities of some of the committees of the Academic Council regarding quality assurance processes. There is a risk of confusion here. For example, the duties of various committees of Academic Council in some areas overlap. Academic Standards and Policy Committee reviews all policies for the Academic Quality and Enhancement (AQAE) Framework, but the Teaching and Learning Committee also has a duty to advise on policy and procedure. There also appears to be overlap in processes for managing collaborative partnerships and evidence that some processes, such as research ethics approval, operate differently in different campuses and schools.

The review team questions whether in aggregate, the policy and governance structures are too complex and elaborate and if they will inhibit agility, speed of decision making and indeed the quality of implementation if there are multiple points of guidance and assurance. After a period and once procedures that underpin new policies are in place, the university should undertake a review of its structures with the aim of simplification and enabling greater accountability, clarity of delegated authority, efficiency and pace of decision making. The review team recognises that during integration, consensus building is important and the best way to do that is through broad representation. However, the next phase may present an opportunity to streamline decision-making

processes and to move from governance models built largely on representation or role to ones built on skills.

Implementing clear senior leadership and faculty structures will also facilitate clearer communication about policy changes and help to mitigate the feelings of uncertainty among some staff and ensure a smoother transition as new processes are adopted. The reintroduction of advisory boards may also enhance external stakeholder engagement and provide a more consistent feedback loop.

Overall, while significant progress has been made, there is still work to be done to ensure that the university's QA processes are fully integrated and that they effectively support the achievement of academic excellence and student success.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that ATU undertake a review of its structures with the aim of simplification and enabling greater accountability, clarity of delegated authority, efficiency and pace of decision making.

3.1.3 PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

ATU has an extensive portfolio of programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level targeted at school leavers, graduates and those engaging in lifelong learning and upskilling. In 2023/24 ATU had students registered on over 690 programmes from Levels 6 to 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), leading to awards of Certificate, Diploma, Higher Certificate, Bachelor, Bachelor (Hons), Higher Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma, Master's, and Doctoral Degrees.



These students were spread across a range of disciplines with 26% in Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction, 2 % in Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary, 10% in Information and Communication Technologies, 12 % in National Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics, 24% in Business, Administration and Law, 11 % in Health and Welfare, 6% in Services, 6% in Arts and Humanities, 1% in Social Science, Journalism & Information, 2 % in Education and 1% in Generic Programmes and Qualifications.

ATU's programmes are characterised by flexibility with multiple entry and exit points. In October 2024, ATU had 1352 different awards, which included 804 major awards, 194 minor awards, 84 exit awards, 41 common entry points, 222 special purpose awards, 7 trade apprenticeships and 5 consortium-led apprenticeships. Of the major awards, 12 awards are at NFQ Level 10, 270 awards at NFQ Level 9, 289 awards at NFQ Level 8, 165 awards at NFQ Level 7 and 68 awards at NFQ Level 6.

ATU is a leading provider in Ireland of online, flexible, and professional development (OFPD) programmes. In 2022/23, 23% of 5571 students were enrolled in online programmes at ATU. Since 2011 ATU has received funding from HEA/ Springboard+⁷ to design and deliver a range of upskilling courses in key growth areas including Biopharmaceutical Science, Computing and Information Technology, Lean Sigma and Quality, Construction, Culinary Skills and most recently in Marine Spatial Planning and Supply Chain Logistics.

After establishment, the ATU temporarily paused the development of new programmes until the new university policies for programme development were approved. The university has subsequently approved and implemented several policies to facilitate the approval of new programmes and the revision of existing programmes.

In the Academic Year 2023/24, 52 new programmes were introduced. These included 12 major awards, 5 special purpose awards and 35 micro-credentials. The 12 major awards included 10 master's programmes and 2 honours degrees. For the 2025 Central Admissions Office (CAO) listing of undergraduate full-time programmes, 7 new programmes have been added and 12 programmes

removed. It was noted that a number of the new programmes will be introduced as a result of ATU winning a tender bid to provide specialised programmes including in disciplines such as veterinary medicine and surgery, and pharmacy. New programmes were also designed to respond to the emerging Green Economy including a BEng (Hons) in Energy Engineering, and an MSc in Applied Marine Conservation.

The review team noted that a significant number of ATU major award programmes receive accreditation from a large range of PSRBs. As of March 2024, 209 programmes are accredited by 40 PSRBs. In addition, ATU's five consortium-led apprenticeships have been developed in conjunction with Freight Transport Association Ireland (FTAI), the Insurance Institute of Ireland and IBEC.

The review team noted the range and complexity of the ATU programme portfolio. The team encourages ATU to consolidate further its programme portfolio and develop a strategy and consider standardising and amalgamating programmes where appropriate. It is the review team's view that the quality assurance of a streamlined programme portfolio will be both more effective and efficient. During the visit, it was confirmed to the review team that a size and shape exercise had been commissioned, recognising that to ensure access, working across a large and dispersed region would mean that some duplication would be necessary in different regional centres. Nevertheless, the review team welcomed the initiative to review this and would encourage ATU senior staff to hasten that process.

During discussions with staff and management of ATU, the review team were informed that the Programme and Module Revision Policy was being proactively used to make modifications to existing programmes in between programmatic review cycles. The review team supports this approach of making modifications to programmes to maintain currency, albeit within a consistent framework that ensures that learning outcomes are not compromised.

⁷ <https://springboardcourses.ie/>

Given the extensive portfolio scale and the complexity of delivery at ATU, the review team also discussed with ATU senior staff the merits of developing a more risk-based approach to quality assurance and the use of data to inform decision making on risk. Doing so, and using outcomes data to target intervention, would allow ATU to ration effort in areas of greatest need and where improvement is required the most. The review team encourages ATU to continue to develop its reporting and data platforms so that data can be used to inform decision making in relation to programme review. This will enable the university to maximise opportunity to address areas of concern. Having good programme level data will also aid evaluation of the impact of teaching innovations on programmes and help ATU make informed decision about its future portfolio.

3.1.4 STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT

ATU is undergoing a significant transformation as it integrates four legacy institutions. This scale of organisational integration requires significant adaptation of HR functions to align with ATU's vision of becoming a competitive, innovative, and inclusive university. The ISER and sessions during the main review visit underscored ATU's commitment to its workforce through referencing adaptive policies, inclusive initiatives, and ATU's focus on continuous improvement.

The establishment of an interim HR structure highlights the university's proactive approach to decentralising decision-making and empowering managers. External consultation regarding organisational design indicates a pragmatic response to the complexities of institutional transformation.

ATU's recruitment framework emphasises fairness, transparency, and inclusivity. Practices such as the use of diverse recruitment panels and on-line interviews exemplify this commitment. However, systemic challenges, including national policy restrictions and the absence of professorial ranks, hinder certain career progression opportunities.

Continuous professional development (CPD) is a cornerstone of ATU's strategy. Initiatives such as the LinkedIn Learning Platform and the Staff Training Hub provide staff with tools to address evolving institutional needs, while leadership development programmes like Aurora⁸ show a commitment to cultivating internal talent.

ATU has demonstrated a strong commitment to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) principles throughout its operations. The EDI Steering Group and Gender Action Plan highlight the institution's proactive approach, with achievements such as the Athena Swan Bronze Award underscoring significant progress.

ATU's comprehensive wellbeing strategy addresses the financial, physical, and psychological needs of its staff. Initiatives such as welfare schemes, remote working policies, and assistance programmes reflect a comprehensive approach to staff support.

ATU is navigating a complex transformation with commendable focus and adaptability in its approach to staff assignment, management, and development. While progress has been achieved, ATU can further strengthen its position as a leading technological university, fostering a resilient, inclusive and skilled workforce aligned with its ambitious vision for the future, through the implementation of EDI initiatives and the Employee Wellbeing Strategy as indicated in Section 10 of ATU's ISER.

3.1.5 TEACHING AND LEARNING

The review team finds that there is a broad and deep culture of enhancement in respect to teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) at ATU, as well as evidence of good practice. ATU's approach builds on the legacies of earlier institutions in an environment that is teaching-led and research-informed. The ISER (p. 50) outlines how accountability for driving enhancement in TLA is organised across ATU as well as the policy development that underpins it. ATU is also developing an inaugural teaching and learning

8 <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/programmes-events/developing-leadership/aurora>

strategy as well as a student success strategy. The latter will cover wider matters including retention but will also include guidance on pedagogy. The themes of the new TLA strategy holistically considers TLA in an integrated university, its connected and sustainable communities, sustainable student success, teaching practice, knowledge application, assessment and feedback, and the teaching and learning environment (ATU ISER, p.50).

Though the strategy is in development, the review team noted the range and variety of approaches to TLA originating from former institutions (ATU ISER, p.51). These include, among others, problem and challenge-based learning, research-informed learning, peer mentoring and work-based learning. To support these approaches, ATU has developed a Teaching and Learning Centre to connect educators, promote collaboration between academic and professional staff that support learning, provide platforms for professional development and recognition, resource sharing and sharing of information about pedagogy. There are a range of resources available through the centre's SharePoint site. Topics addressed include teaching practice, programme development, academic integrity, UDL, CPD opportunities and student support. The work of the centre is organised into three pillars. These relate to research and development, staff and student capacity-building and innovation in TLA and education for sustainable development. The review team agrees that this work appears comprehensive, and research informed.

In 2023/24 5,389 students were enrolled in on-line programmes. Given the student population, there is a significant focus on pedagogies to support online learners. Support is provided for Online Professional Flexible Development (OPFD), with a focus on new provision and developing online delivery, supporting faculty in online delivery, the student experience, educational technologies (Ed Tech) and instructional design support. Online Student Advisors (OSA) are aligned to suites of programmes and provide a single point of contact for online students on all non-academic matters.

The review team was of the view that this was a comprehensive offer for that market and was enhanced by innovation. For example, OSAs have been rolled out following a piloted initiative, ensuring accessibility to all part-time students.

Oversight of teaching and learning comes through the governance structure of Academic Council, with a Teaching and Learning Committee whose remit is to ensure robust quality assurance of programmes, promote inclusion in teaching and learning, and develop policies and procedures. One of its responsibilities is to review the TLA strategy in line with the ATU Strategic Plan, in particular the Guiding Light Enabling Education that covers TLA, learning environments, the future curriculum and the student profile. This cannot be initiated while the new TLA strategy is being developed but as noted above, that does not mean that ATU lacks an extensive programme of existing work to enhance TLA. Prior to designation and supported by funding through iNOTE⁹ between 2019-2022, significant resources were invested in rapid-response digital interventions in the legacy institutions to improve digital capabilities and led to the development of a collation of resources online, Digital Ed¹⁰, to support staff develop their digital capabilities.

During the review, the review team met with the members of the Academic Council Teaching and Learning Committee, the Teaching and Learning Centre and staff from OPFD. The review team also met with academic staff delivering programmes and with students. In these discussions many examples of good practice and engagement were highlighted, for example the embedding of UDL across programmes. 267 staff have achieved a UDL digital badge and there are aspirations for further staff to engage as set out in the performance compact with the HEA. The principles that support ATU's Curriculum Framework and inform programme design and a useful digest of assessment types in the format of a pack of cards are other good examples of the use of UDL. It was evident that staff engaged in supporting teaching and learning are innovative and passionate about their work and that the approach is collegiate and based on a culture of trust.

⁹ iNote: Innovative Opportunities Transforming Education funded by HEA under the Innovation and Transformation Programme 2019 - 2022

¹⁰ <https://www.digitaled.ie/>

The review team was unclear about how the range of practices and pedagogical approaches noted in the ISER come together into a coherent programme of activity. Such a programme should systematically drive the strategic intention of ATU, ensuring that good practice is evidenced, evaluated, and, where relevant, becomes common practice aligned with the key drivers of the ATU Strategic Plan. Consequently, the ISER was more descriptive than evaluative in this regard. There is much to build upon in terms of good practice and staff motivation, and as the new TLA and Student Success strategies are developed there will be an opportunity for greater coherence and consistency in ensuring that institutional requirements in teaching and learning are met.

The review team noted that the First Steps in Teaching programme for academic staff new to teaching was not mandatory. The team questioned how else ATU could ensure the quality of classroom delivery was appropriate in all cases. Related to this, the lack of a systematic way of collecting and learning from module evaluations (the QA1, 2 and 3 process) means that the evidence base for assessing general classroom practice is not robust. The review team was unable to see data that confirmed that this process was embedded and impactful, and students reported that it was not consistently used and that closing the feedback loop was not common. Many of the students that the review team spoke to did not know how their feedback had effected change.

The review team were also presented with examples of good practice in TLA throughout the week, as well as in the ISER and supporting documentation. These were sometimes presented without supporting evidence of impact on student outcomes. In contrast, there was evidence that in some areas, such as the implementation of UDL principles, good practice had been piloted, evaluated and was being mainstreamed in an evidence-based way. Here, good practice was becoming widespread practice or required practice.

The review team also heard from students about the quality of TLA and many were very positive. Some noted the benefits of small class sizes in

ATU, others appreciated the experience of field trips, the passion of lecturers and the quality of support for their teaching. Others expressed some concerns with teaching quality, the cancellation of classes, changes in the timetable and the lack of feedback on views expressed in evaluations. Broadly, these views suggested more issues with the organisation and management of courses than with the quality of teaching delivery.

However, the review team is conscious that this was a small sample size. While ATU conducted a student survey as preparation of the ISER, without robust, routine and regular data via the student voice on their academic programmes it is not possible to tell how widespread these concerns are as individual views cannot be aggregated at trend level. As a consequence, ATU relies too heavily on a culture of trust and requires assurance mechanisms to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning and classroom practice can be rigorously evaluated. That will require a review and strengthening of the student survey process to capture data on completion, on findings, and to give timeframes for feedback being returned to students on what has changed and how their views have been taken into account.

As outlined earlier in this report, the review panel observed that there are areas where staff are adapting their practice to align with the university's new policies and strategic plan. In line with the review team's recommendation to develop good practice into common practice, the university should consider how it ensures that this emerging new practice which is aligned to key strategic initiatives, such as the curriculum design framework, is collected, evaluated and scaled in a more regular and impactful way to ensure that strategic intention is met, particularly as ATU moves to embed new TLA and Student Success strategies.

The university should identify clearer mechanisms for commissioning enhancement activity in keeping with its strategy, evaluating it and turning it into customary practice in teaching and learning. While there is a rich and diverse landscape of pedagogic innovation at ATU it is not always clear how requirements of the university are embedded. The new TLA and Student Success strategies should

incorporate the ‘golden thread’ of expectations that connect the ATU strategy, the performance agreement with the HEA in respect of student outcomes, and effective classroom practice, assessment and processes for enhancement and review.

The university should also review its processes for ensuring that all academics who are teaching students are adequately supported through training and consider whether moving from encouragement to incentivised engagement is the way forward, particularly if mandating training is not possible. Student feedback in the sessions suggested significant divergence of experience of classroom practice in some individual cases, across both undergraduate, postgraduate and research supervision. However, without robust aggregate data via the student voice, calibrating these views and understanding if they are local or general is not possible.

The review team welcomes the initiative to develop a new TLA strategy and a new student success strategy. The team advise that these strategies should operate from the level of principle through to the level of assurance, ensuring that everyone at ATU, at all levels, can assure themselves of the quality of teaching and learning with robust evidence and data. These could provide the ‘golden threads’ that link the overall ATU strategy to performance and to practice in teaching and learning.

However, the new TLA and student success strategies potential for duplication. It was clear that there is a consultation process open on these strategies as well as on wider policy development. The university should ensure strategic alignment and clarity of governance to avoid duplication of effort, complexity and to ensure that accountability is clear. For example, the review team’s suggestion is that the student success strategy might also include guidance on pedagogy. In that model, strategies would have to cross-reference. This could add complexity. The more strategy initiatives that are put in place, the less clear these could become if they create multiple points of action,

monitoring and review. ATU should seek where possible to consolidate strategies and underpin key principles and actions that drive improvements in TLA. If strategy is too widely dispersed, it might inhibit the ability to organise and scale resources to deliver their full impact and prevent effective accountability.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that ATU clarify processes for commissioning enhancement activity in keeping with its strategy, evaluating it and developing it into common practice in teaching and learning.
- The review team recommends that ATU review its processes for ensuring that all academics who are teaching students are adequately supported in training and to consider whether moving from encouragement to incentivised engagement is the way forward, particularly if mandating training is not possible.
- The review team recommends that ATU aim to consolidate strategy and the underpinning key principles and actions that drive improvements in teaching and learning, quality, assessment and enhancement and avoid the risk of too wide dispersal.

3.1.6 ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

Overseeing assessment and tracking of student outcomes against threshold standards is a key function of quality assurance. This requires assessment to be set at appropriate levels, accessible to students with diverse learning styles, ensuring that learning outcomes are met whilst demonstrating threshold standards. Necessary elements include effective assessment design, assessment strategies designed to facilitate engagement with learning, and evidence to assess the impact of different assessment approaches on learner success and achievement. ATU’s Marks and Standards policy (July 2024)¹¹ sets out the university’s approach to assessment. This policy is clearly aligned to external frameworks including the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) to ensure transferability of qualifications and credit. The policy also locates itself within the context of

11 <https://www.atu.ie/app/uploads/2024/10/marks-and-standards-policy.pdf>

the National Framework of Qualifications (NQF) for Irish HEIs in that it illustrates what students need to demonstrate, understand and do at various levels against domains of knowledge, know-how, skill and competence. This framework builds confidence in assessment across the system for employers, students and for staff engaged in TLA.

The ATU Marks and Standards policy is based on sound principles such as enabling students to demonstrate learning in ways that are fair, consistent, valid and reliable. This includes striving for assessment to be transparent and on the level at which students are expected to demonstrate achievement. Assessment should be a vehicle to promote effective teaching and learning for students. Against this policy, each programme is required to develop a programme assessment plan that works at each level of the programme.

The policy outlines the components of the plan in terms of clarity on assessment volume, assessment type, whether assessment is individual or group, assessment dates and how marks will be allocated against different assessment components. The policy requires that due regard be given to the organisation of assessment to ensure that it is manageable at programme level and that there is a balanced schedule of assessment for learners. The policy also sets out requirements for repeating elements of assessment. Student performance during assessment is addressed including how marks are distributed, as well as progression arrangements based on achievement. The policy clarifies how students may seek extensions to assessment through the *Procedure for Requesting Extension to Deadlines*, and the penalties for late submission if such requests are not made, as well as approaches to appeal.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar is responsible for assessment and confirms that proper governance arrangements are in place relating to key components of the assessment lifecycle. This includes the appointment of external examiners, the examination timetable, and the oversight of examination boards. At School/Faculty level, based on ATU's principles of devolved quality assurance, responsibilities are outlined in respect to information and guidance

to external examiners, and implementation of Examination Boards.

ATU has a *Procedure for External Examination (2024)* that outlines the process for nominating, appointing, and contracting external examiners and their key duties. External examiners are required to attend at least one Examination Board a year and provide a report in a standard format by 31 July each year. There are also processes for terminating contracts if the standards of ATU are not being met. ATU also has a comprehensive *Procedure for Examination and Assessment Regulations* that details all aspects of the examination process for all ATU students taking examinations or supervised time-bound course work.

In light of this documentation, the review team is of the view that ATU oversees a comprehensive, robust and timely policy landscape that has been achieved quickly to support consistency across the newly established university. The policies and procedures are clear and accessible.

The ISER does not adequately address the implementation of these policies and procedures across ATU, and perhaps most importantly, their impact on student outcomes. The ISER does detail very good work on enhancement, including the research project on Reimagining Assessment and Feedback for Student Success (p. 52) for which ATU had external funding. There is evidence of an impressive range of projects that are being supported through this work (Appendix 9 of ISER) and the review team was provided with details of comprehensive and innovative assessment resources developed through this work. These include an A-Z of Assessment Card Types, access to a range of assessment resources, assessment masterclasses, and a 'Big Ideas' report from an ATU Assessment Hackathon. The 'Big Ideas' report summarised plans developed at the ATU Assessment Hackathon about how specific assessments could be improved. The ATU Assessment Hackathon also led to a workshop ('Let's talk about assessment') being rolled out across ATU. The review team clearly finds this to be progress in the enhancement of teaching and learning.

A next step might be to consider more closely the impact of the assessment policy, and of assessment practices, on learner outcomes. It was not clear to the review team if or how ATU routinely collects data that demonstrate the links between efficacy of assessment policy and TLA approaches to student outcomes and attainment. At headline level, for example, The HEA System Performance Agreement outlines the performance indicators agreed with the HEA. This notes a non-progression rate of 25% for the Academic Year 2021/22. Analysis shows correlation to student entry by tariff points, but it is not clear if there is any grouping of performance around assessment type. If the assessment approach is driving engagement with learning, and is fair and inclusive, and the best practices of the Teaching and Learning Centre, through excellent research-informed enhancement, are being embedded, then an effective regime of assessment should play a role in reducing attrition and optimising student outcomes and success. Effective data management would inform ATU if this is the case.

The review team had the opportunity to review an emerging data dashboard for courses. From discussions during the main review visit, it is clear that ATU is working to improve data but that at the moment the university is drawing data from different fields to study trends, and correlation is not easy. Consequently, the ability to evaluate assessment outcomes and how they might be differential across different programmes and student types, has yet to be achieved. The review team recognises that ATU has done excellent and extensive work to set up at speed a robust and comprehensive approach to assessment, marks, and standards of awards. The view of the review team is that the next stage of development for ATU should be a more intelligent use of data to understand the impact of these policies on the outcomes of individual students and how those outcomes might lead to further reflections on assessment design and strategy and its link to wider practices of teaching and learning.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that ATU enhance its approach to data reporting at all levels to ensure that strategic intention and

impact can be measured routinely. In respect to learner assessment and engagement this should include data analytics on assessment performance, completion, retention and progression.

3.1.7 SUPPORTS FOR LEARNERS

ATU has placed significant emphasis on cultivating systems and services that address their students' diverse needs and encourage the student voice through having students actively engage in shaping their educational experience. One of the fundamental pillars supporting this vision is the representation of students within governance structures such as Governing Body and Academic Council, ensuring student perspectives influence critical decisions. These range from strategic planning to quality assurance policy formulation. The Students' Union presidents actively participate in Governing Body and class representatives participate in programme boards. Policies prioritising student input into quality assurance and programme reviews encourage the consideration of the student voice in the university's decision-making.

Student representatives contribute to critical decisions on issues such as accommodation and strategic planning. Students also participate in Academic Council committees and programme boards. However, it was reported to the review team that student attendance at programme boards is not consistent across all programmes. While the review team was informed that feedback from surveys and focus groups informs the development of policies such as the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy, students highlighted to the review team that there have been some gaps in transparency and responsiveness in feedback implementation.

Dedicated feedback mechanisms, including surveys, Power BI data collection, consultations, and student forums, have enhanced representation, enabling students to co-design initiatives and provide actionable insights into pressing challenges such as accommodation, mental health, and accessibility. As the education landscape evolves, the need for inclusive, accessible, and

sustainable support services becomes increasingly critical. Through the fostering of collaboration between students, staff, and external partners, ATU is positioning itself to respond dynamically to student needs while driving innovation in programme delivery and support services.

ATU provides a variety of support services that enhance student wellbeing, academic success, and the wider university experience. These services address diverse needs, including mental health, disability support, academic guidance, and career development and wellbeing services including accessible counselling. The review team was informed by students of the difficulties experienced on some campuses with obtaining timely access to counselling services. Initiatives such as the roll-out of UDL promote inclusive teaching strategies which foster a more accessible learning environment. The Disability Office offers tailored accommodations such as assistive technologies and neurodiversity accreditation, while pre-induction sessions support students with specific needs.

ATU provides a suite of support systems for students entering through Access routes, focusing on initiatives that address academic and financial needs. These supports include the Student Assistance Fund and tailored scholarships like the Sanctuary Scholarship Programme which provide crucial financial relief to students facing economic hardships.

In addition to bespoke learning supports provided to students registered with the Disability Service, academic supports are available to all students and focus on academic writing, maths/ engineering/ Gaelige and practice supports. The Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) programme supports and trains student leaders annually to enhance collaborative learning. There are currently 70 student leaders trained to provide peer support. It was communicated to the review team that 70-100 students are trained to provide peer support. The student success strategy, under development, will focus on inclusivity and retention through initiatives such as the use of online student advisors and inclusion support workers. Another tool to aid students is the Learning Ecosystem Project, which integrates virtual learning environment (VLE) tools

to improve retention and the student experience. Career services provide placement opportunities, industry networking, and interview preparation, ensuring employability-focused support. Transition supports like “Connect for Success” assist first-year and mature students, while the International Office offers tailored induction programmes and practical aid to international students. In conversation with the review team, the views on the effectiveness of induction and support varied among different student cohorts. For example, mature students welcomed flexible sessions to accommodate work schedules. In contrast, research postgraduates expressed concern over specific details not being included, such as ECTS credit value of the modules they were required to take as part of the research programme.

Student accommodation remains a significant challenge in ATU, with the housing crisis straining resources, particularly within the Students’ Union (SU). During the visit, SU representatives spoke of being overwhelmed with accommodation queries as efforts are ongoing to appoint a dedicated Accommodation Officer and establish campus-owned housing. As per HEA Guidelines, the Student Assistance Fund supports Irish/EU students but excludes international students, a gap highlighted by ATU students. The SU also advocates for student needs but faces resource limitations and inconsistent campus representation, with some students reporting to the review team that their SU does not represent their voice. The growing diversity of student needs have increased the demand for support services. As indicated in the 2023/24 ATU Student Counselling and Wellbeing Report, counselling services are in high demand due to rising mental health challenges.

The review team recommends a collaborative approach, by ATU and the SU, to establishing a long-term vision for its partnership. This should identify roles and responsibilities for each organisation and contribute to the university’s integration overall. A formal agreement would offer clarity in terms of the remit of both parties and, indeed, the expectations of ATU in terms of the funding it allocates to the SU. The review team recognises the complexities of the issue, including external policy factors, but is of the

view that the lack of student accommodation is a significant risk to the student experience and requires greater oversight by the university either in partnership with or in the place of the services provided by the SU. The challenge of managing this issue was presented to the review team as impacting upon the wider representative functions that the SU provides. It is not clear that the SU has the capacity or capability to deal with a matter of such importance to students given the nature of the crisis in student accommodation nationally. Students' Unions have a legacy of providing such support, but the current situation may require other measures to be agreed in partnership with the SU, such as an accommodation function within the university.

The ISER highlighted several areas where ATU excels in providing learner support. ATU's application of UDL principles highlights its dedication to inclusivity, which enables diverse learners to engage effectively. This is welcomed by students. The success of the Peer-Assisted Study Sessions programme, which trains student leaders to facilitate collaborative peer learning, is evidence of innovative support. Integrating VLE tools, such as the provision of asynchronous learning resources, the use of learning analytics and real-time feedback algorithms shows progressive innovation in boosting student retention and engagement.

ATU's integration of nine campuses across a wide geographical area presents challenges in terms of resource constraints, legacy structures, and inconsistent service availability. These contribute to administrative delays and discrepancies between campuses (ATU ISER, Section 5.4). It was reported to the review team by both staff and students, that there is survey fatigue amongst students, and some students spoke of limited transparency regarding actionable outcomes from survey feedback. ATU should evaluate these concerns and, while recognising that consistent provision of services across a regional campus is challenging, look to standardise services where practical and possible and address gaps, building on extensive efforts to foster an inclusive, supportive environment for all students.

The Disability Office has undertaken proactive measures, such as personalised campus tours, reader pens, and pre-induction sessions for neurodiverse students. The scaling of services from a single staff member to a team providing online and in-person support is recognised as a significant enhancement for students needing academic guidance. On-campus counselling and health services are available to students to address mental and physical health needs. Initiatives such as neurodiversity accreditation and accessible campus facilities underscore ATU's commitment to a holistic approach to student wellbeing.

During the review visit, the review team heard from students that induction initiatives for mature students, neurodiverse students, and international students effectively address unique challenges, aiding a smooth transition into university life. The International Office (ATU Global Team) also provides comprehensive support, including priority accommodation schemes, airport pickups, and tailored inductions.

ATU's drive to foster a supportive, inclusive, and academically enriching environment for its diverse student body was in evidence in both the ISER and discussions during the review visit.

Commendation

- The review team commends ATU for the effectiveness of its Student Support Services. These include the proactive approach of its disability services, induction initiatives for mature students and neurodiverse students that aid a smooth transition into university life and the effective use of students through peer assisted learning initiatives online and in person. Also commended is the ATU Global Team's comprehensive support, including providing priority accommodation schemes, airport pickups, and tailored inductions.

Recommendation

- The review recommends that ATU, in the context of integration, co-create with the students' union a long-term vision identifying how the union works in partnership with the

university and the responsibilities of each party.

3.1.8 INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

According to its ISER (p. 106), ATU is committed to providing high-quality, accurate data to support decision-making and enhance teaching, learning and assessment, and student services. The university utilises several academic management information systems (MISs) to inform strategic decisions. Given the complexity of IT integration, ATU has dedicated resources to IT projects, including the establishment of a university-wide reporting unit to provide data for informed decision-making and quality assurance.

Key IT initiatives include the Banner Integration Project, which aims to unify the student records management system (SRMS) across ATU, aligning business processes and streamlining data reporting. Academic Module Manager (AMM), a central database for module and programme information, has been expanded across all ATU campuses, with full integration expected after the Banner project.

For student reporting, ATU has developed a suite of dashboards and reports accessible through the Staff Hub, including data on student numbers, retention, progression, and graduation statistics. The Information Compliance Office (ICO) ensures that ATU complies with data protection legislation (GDPR, FOI, and environmental information regulations) and provides guidance on records management. Challenges in data compliance include embedding a culture of data protection, negotiating data-related contracts, and ensuring AI usage is compliant. To address these, ATU plans to train staff, engage legal experts, and develop an AI governance framework.

The review team are of the view that the university requires more robust data to ensure that quality issues are identified and addressed at the local level and that aggregated data at senior level can guide interventions and assess progress on

performance indicators and strategies related to teaching and student outcomes.

The university should focus on improving its data reporting at all levels to measure the alignment and impact of its strategic goals. Regarding quality assurance, the team encourages the university to shift towards using leading and predictive data, rather than lagging indicators, to manage risks to the student experience and enhance real-time performance outcomes, such as retention. Building on initiatives such as learner analytics that were reported as being underway at ATU, could support this goal. The university is also working on improving data reporting for programme review and course monitoring. Currently, however, it appears that data is not reported over multiple years to identify long-term risks or combined to examine different outcomes based on student characteristics. This was evidenced during the review visit when discussing data dashboards with staff. The review team supports the overall direction of ATU towards better integration of data into decision making on quality matters and agrees that continuing investment in data platforms, governance, planning, and staff development is essential to achieving these goals.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that ATU enhance its data reporting at all levels to ensure that strategic intention and impact can be measured routinely. In the case of general data management and governance, building on initiatives such as learner analytics could support this objective and continuing investment in data platforms, governance, planning, and staff development is essential to achieving enhancements.

3.1.9 PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

According to its ISER (p. 106), “The provision of information to a range of stakeholders, internally and externally, is a key component of ATU’s quality assurance system.”

ATU's communication and public information functions are shared university-wide but are primarily overseen by specific university departments (see Figure 64 from the ATU ISER). These functions have an ATU-wide remit, with staff based across multiple campuses. Each member of the University Planning Team (UPT) holds responsibility for communication within their respective areas.¹²

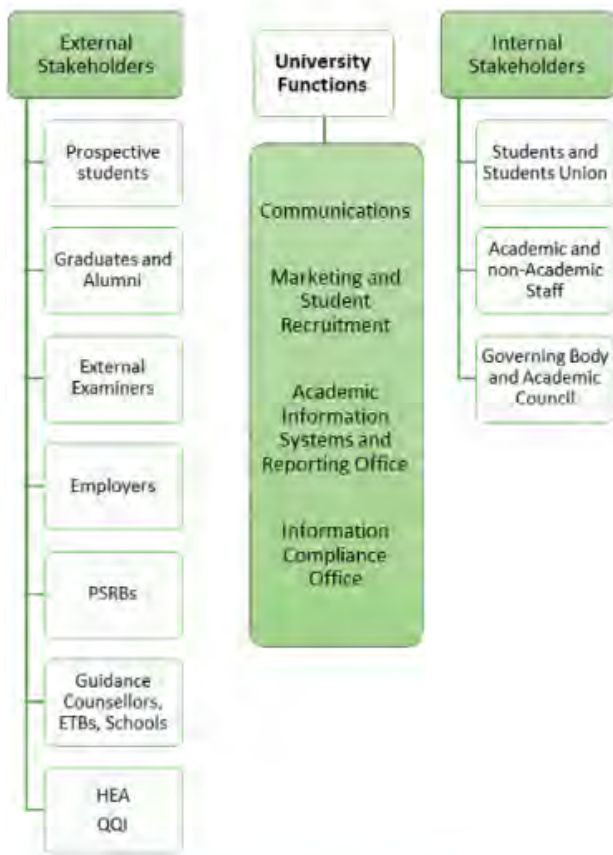


Figure 64: ATU Data and Communication Functions

ATU's communications department and marketing department manage external communication, aiming to build awareness of the university's identity. The launch of the ATU brand and rebranding efforts, including the use of social media and the production of clear brand guidelines, have been key milestones. These efforts are measured using metrics related to media coverage and reach.

ATU's Marketing and Student Recruitment function has created structures to align communications,

focusing on prospective students, guidance counsellors, and lifelong learners. The function ensures that all marketing material provides clear, consistent information across campuses, with an emphasis on helping prospective students make informed decisions. Ensuring consistency across programmes throughout the university's various campuses is a key consideration for the future.

Given its geographical spread, ATU faces challenges with internal communication. The approach used by ATU involves various methods such as all-staff meetings, email, and platforms such as WorkVivo¹³.

ATU's website communicates key information to both internal and external stakeholders. A key objective is to improve accessibility and make content more user focused. The website will be managed in a decentralised manner over time, with responsibilities shared among designated staff across the professional services departments, faculties and schools.

ATU publishes key documents, such as quality review reports, academic unit reviews, and financial statements in its Staff Hub and on the ATU website. Some documents, for instance Governing Body minutes, are available to staff, ensuring transparency.

The review team is of the view that mechanisms for communication and decision-making across functions could be further enhanced. For example, there is scope to improve communications between academic schools and the Professional, Management & Support Units.

3.1.10 OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

ATU plays a central role in fostering educational collaborations and strategic partnerships, which are instrumental in enhancing its academic offerings, supporting workforce development, and driving regional economic growth. During the review visit, the review team saw evidence of ATU's approach to partnerships and drew insight from the ISER

¹² ATU Data and Communications Functions, Atlantic TU Institutional Self-evaluation Report (ISER) 2024, page 106

¹³ <https://www.workvivo.com/>

and discussions with representatives overseeing collaborations and partnerships.

ATU's collaborative strategy has three pillars: community engagement, enterprise engagement and global partnerships. ATU has also established a diverse range of partnerships with industry, educational institutions, and community organisations. These partnerships are aligned with the university's goal of enhancing educational quality and fostering regional innovation.

ATU has broad participation in regional skills forums and national initiatives, such as the Northern and Western Regional Assembly, Regional Chambers of Commerce, Northwest Tertiary Education Cluster and Údarás na Gaeltachta. This collaborative approach demonstrates ATU's strategic commitment to addressing workforce needs. Initiatives such as HigherED4.014, which involves over 150 enterprise partners, highlight ATU's foresight in leveraging industry relationships to improve educational quality and innovation.

ATU's involvement in the Northwest and West Regional Skills Forums reflects ATU's alignment with regional economic priorities which positively impacts workforce readiness. ATU's commitment to community engagement underpins its collaborative efforts to foster regional development and support local enterprises. This is demonstrated through ATU's representation on local community and enterprise plan committees and its active collaborations with local development companies which illustrate a commitment to civic responsibilities.

ATU has demonstrated a strong commitment to cross-border collaboration through re-signing Memorandums of Understanding with partners on both sides of the border, including Ulster University, Northwest Regional College and Donegal Education and Training Board (ETB) to deliver joint programmes, which underscores ATU's commitment to regional integration and international cooperation.

ATU's educational partnerships emphasise programmatic innovation and tailored skills development to address local and regional needs. The documentation ATU provided to the review team comprised examples of innovative programme development. These include bespoke programmes developed for Optum15 and joint initiatives with the National Institute for Bioprocessing Research and Training (NIBRT), which showcase ATU's ability to adapt curricula to industry-specific requirements. In line with national policy, ATU has also codeveloped a number of tertiary degrees in partnership with ETBs that enhance access opportunities for students. Students can access third level education and initially study at a local ETB before progressing to completion of the degree programme with ATU.

ATU places a strong emphasis on obtaining Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) approval for its programmes and aligns its programme review schedule to PSRB accreditation requirements (ATU ISER p.36). As of March 2024, 209 programmes are accredited by 40 PSRBs.

ATU's international collaboration includes membership of the EU GREEN Alliance¹⁶ which includes eight other universities from Spain, France, Italy, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Germany, and Portugal and which is led by the University of Extremadura (Spain). The alliance has ambition to form a 'super campus' with more than 158,000 students and 18,000 staff. EU GREEN considers the subjects Responsible Growth, Inclusive Education, and the Environment. Its universities are all located in peripheral regions of Europe. EU GREEN is one of 60 European University Alliances, creating a broad European educational area. It was launched in January 2023 with funding of over €14M over its first four years.

ATU co-delivers a Joint International MSc in Marine Biological Resources with Ghent University (BE), University of Pierre and Marie Curie (FR), University of Western Brittany, (FR), University of the Algarve (PT), University of Oviedo (ES), University of the Basque Country (ES), Polytechnic University of

¹⁴ <https://www.highered4.ie/>

¹⁵ <https://www.optum.ie/>

¹⁶ <https://eugreenalliance.eu/>

Marche (IT) and University of Bergen (NO). It also delivers a dual award: BEng in Electronic and Computer Engineering with Tianjin University of Technology and Education (China).

ATU has established a collaborations and partnership committee which reports to the UPT and whose remit is to review proposed and existing academic collaborations and partnerships in the university in light of ATU's strategy and resources. Its remit includes all collaborative, joint, and transnational provision, international collaborations and agreements, collaborations with PSRBs, higher and further education collaborations and sports and community agreements.

A Collaborative Provision of Programmes Policy¹⁷ has been approved to provide a clear framework for the establishment, management, and review of the collaborative provision of programmes in which ATU serves as a partner. ATU's Procedure for Quality Assurance of Collaborative Programme Provision, which is under development, will provide detailed guidance for adapting quality assurance processes to the unique requirements of collaborative educational models (ATU ISER p.98). Collaborative programmes also need to have regard to the principles outlined in the Developing and Validating New Taught Programmes Policy¹⁸, and the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Enhancement of Programmes Policy¹⁹ while also integrating any specific accommodations for collaborative provision. ATU also adheres to the Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Education (OECD/ UNESCO 2005) (ATU ISER, p.98) and has engaged with the University Industry Innovation Network (UIIN).

Through discussions with ATU's external collaborative partners, it was clear to the review team that these partners valued their relationships with ATU, which were built on the relationships formed by each of the legacy institutes of technology. The collaborative partners indicated that they valued engaging with the larger university and the access to a broader range of skills,

expertise and campus locations. It was also clear that ATU places a strong value on external partnerships and has developed a diverse range of strong partnerships as outlined earlier in this report.

It was clear that ATU's collaborations and partnerships are a cornerstone of its mission to enhance its educational offerings, foster innovation, and drive regional development. While ATU has made significant progress, this will be strengthened further in its new organisational design and by the development of an external collaboration strategy (ATU ISER, p.98) which will prioritise collaborations, ensuring strategic alignment and effective resource allocation. The implementation of a comprehensive customer relation management (CRM) system to ensure consistency of approach, will enhance institutional memory, formalise agreements, and facilitate long-term relationship management and feedback loops with all stakeholders. As noted in Section 3.1.2 of this report, the review team has noted an overlap in responsibilities between the Collaborations and Partnership Committee and other committees of Academic Council and has made a recommendation to review this.

Commendation

- The review team commends ATU for fostering diverse and effective external partnerships with a range of stakeholders including regional bodies, employers, collaborative education partners and Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).

3.1.11 SELF-EVALUATION MONITORING AND REVIEW

As detailed in Section 2, ATU took a comprehensive approach to the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) which included extensive consultation with staff across the university. The university presented a balanced perspective, acknowledging both its progress in integrating legacy institutions and the ongoing

¹⁷ <https://www.atu.ie/app/uploads/2024/10/collaborative-provision-of-programmes-policy.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://www.atu.ie/app/uploads/2024/10/developing-and-validating-new-taught-programmes-policy.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.atu.ie/app/uploads/2024/10/monitoring-evaluation-and-enhancement-of-programmes-policy.pdf>

complexities associated with transformation. By candidly identifying areas requiring improvement, ATU's demonstrated a readiness to engage in constructive dialogue with the review panel. It was clear to the review team that ATU is developing a culture of continuous enhancement, which incorporates a strong emphasis on self-evaluation.

Section 3.1 above describes the quality assurance processes that are in place, which provide opportunities for self-reflection and review at programme level, through annual monitoring and programme board meetings and programme review. The quality assurance processes also encompass self-evaluation as part of the Academic Unit and Function Review processes.

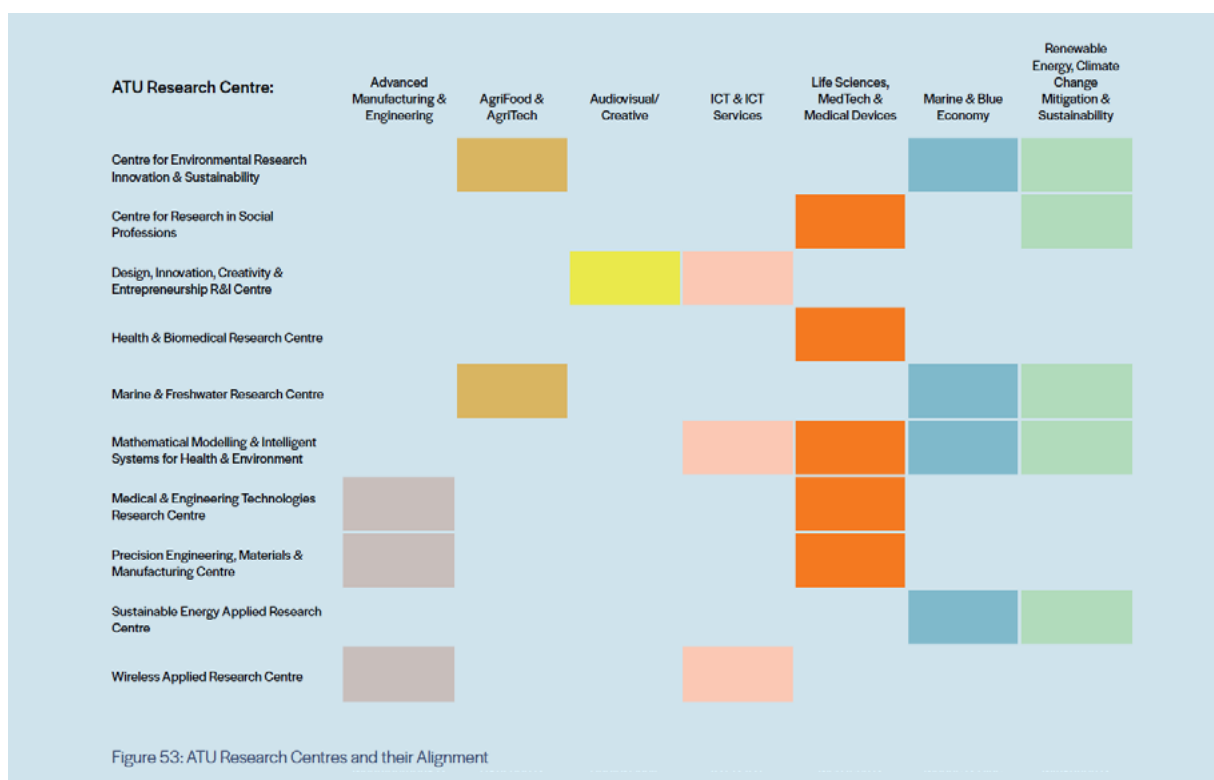
3.1.12 RESEARCH

ATU has built upon its earlier work integrating research activities and quality assurance, carried out during its TU application phase, to develop the ATU Strategic Plan (2024-2028). This has provided an opportunity to reflect on how the university can enhance its research capacity, with a focus on regional innovation and building on existing research strengths. Engaged research, which aligns

with regional, national, and European policies, is a key focus of the strategic plan. The university has recognised the need to invest in research infrastructure, services, and the overall researcher experience to achieve its vision.

The ATU Strategic Plan (2024-2028) identifies key research objectives aimed at enhancing research and innovation, under three pillars: Researcher experience, community and ecosystem; Funding; and Infrastructure and systems (ATU ISER, p. 82). Two primary objectives for achieving impactful research include building research capacity aligned with regional needs and engaging stakeholders in value co-creation, which includes research commercialisation, knowledge transfer, and enterprise development.²⁰

As illustrated below, existing research activity is organised across seven research areas and ten research centres. While this does not reflect the totality of research activity in the university, it illustrates ATU's alignment to regional priorities, and internal complementarity that will inform developments of coherent entities and align to future faculties. ATU has launched a research portal that includes, inter alia, staff profiles, achievements,



20 ATU Institutional Self-evaluation Report (ISER) (2024), Figure 53, p. 81

organisational units, and research outputs. ATU's current research activity against benchmarked targets suggests that the current research income per academic (full-time equivalent (FTE)) lags significantly behind the sector benchmark, as also does EU Horizon²¹ funding, indicating significant room for improvement.²²

ATU offers a variety of research degree programmes. Postgraduate student data for the 2023/24 academic year shows enrolment is concentrated in certain disciplines, suggesting some disparity in postgraduate research across the university. The governance and management of QA for research degrees at ATU is overseen by the Academic Council, its Research and Innovation (R&I) Committee, the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar (VPAAR), and the Vice President for Research and Innovation (VPRI). Interim QA arrangements ensure continuity in the management of research degree students through maintaining legacy procedures from the former institutions. ATU has also approved the Research Degree Policy²³, which unifies procedures for admission, registration, monitoring, and assessment of research degree students. ATU is also advancing a collaborative provision policy for joint awarding of research degrees and continuing successful collaborations in joint doctoral programmes, particularly within the EU GREEN Alliance. The R&I Committee has developed a model joint enrolment agreement to foster mobility and scientific cooperation with European partners.

In 2022, ATU launched the Post-Graduate Research Training Programme (PRTP) to attract and retain top research talent and address enterprise needs through applied research. The PRTPs are designed based on national and international developments in doctoral training, industrial learning, and research skills, incorporating models like the Marie Curie Doctoral Training and Erasmus Mundus Programmes. In its first year, 30 PhD students were recruited into two programmes: MOCHAS (Modelling and Computation for Health and Society) and OSCAR (Operations and Supply Chain Research). The initiative promoted collaboration across ATU and with external partners, positioning PhD students with enterprises. The PRTP initiative is further supported by €20M in funding under the TU RISE²⁴ scheme, co-financed by the Government of Ireland and the EU, aiming to enhance Ireland's strategy for innovation. As part of this, ATU has introduced a postgraduate student bursary scheme for five new PRTPs, funding 60 PhD students focused on regional strategic research. This initiative aims to create a pool of skilled researchers. ATU has also hosted an internal research student conference.

A Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) programme was launched in October 2023, offering a practice-based, flexible four-year doctorate in management education. Twenty students enrolled and two deferred.

The following table provides a benchmark with which to reflect on ATU's current position regarding research metrics.

Indicator	ATU	Sector benchmark
TU Metric - Research Enrolments (2022/23)	4.1% (excludes St Angelas)	5.7% (all System)
Research Income per academic (FTE)	€13,195	€47,719
Horizon (EU Contribution)	€6.1M	TU Average €15.6M
Share of RFAM v RGAM	RGAM approx. 20% RFAM approx. 15%	
Citation Impact (Bibliometrics SciVal)	1.5	SETU 1.42 UCD 1.73

21 https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en

22 ATU Institutional Self-evaluation Report (ISER) (2024), Table 6, p. 82

23 <https://www.atu.ie/app/uploads/2024/10/research-degree-policy.pdf>

24 <https://hea.ie/policy/he-reform/tu-research-and-innovation-supporting-enterprise-tu-rise-scheme/>

The review team has identified areas for potential improvement. Firstly, to assist ATU to achieve the targets set out in the System Performance Framework (2023 – 2028), ATU should develop a clear research and innovation strategy, aligned with the scope and scale of ambition of technological universities. Part of the development of this strategy should be a review of existing research centres and a revision and consolidation of strategic research areas to improve alignment of research with national and regional strategies. A lack of alignment was indicated as a potential risk in the System Performance Framework. This strategy could include the development of new centres in areas such as sustainable tourism as identified in Section 9.6 ISER. The strategy should also address the issue of the high teaching workload²⁵, that was reported to the review team as a factor that is hampering research development.

As indicated in the data from the National Postgraduate Student Survey (2023)²⁶, and reported in its ISER (p.86), ATU should also work towards improving the research student experience. Areas that were highlighted, by the R & I Committee's Postgraduate Survey and by the students whom the review team met, as requiring improvement include orientation to the research programme; training in research skills; access to space and equipment; clarity of procedures related to academic assistance; high-quality, systematic, formal feedback on the outcome of the annual progress review; opportunities for the students to engage with the wider research community; structured research seminar programmes; and opportunities for multidisciplinary events across the university. During the review visit, in discussions with staff, there was some debate about whether to facilitate these enhancements. The establishment of a Doctoral school might be a welcome development.

OBJECTIVE 2 - QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

3.2.1 OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

The university is doing good work in developing

a common culture at ATU in areas such as the pace of policy development and internal communications. Some teams within ATU have actively embraced the opportunity presented through integration to become more efficient and to use the increased resources of ATU to add value to their work and to their partnerships. For example, the marketing team, registrar teams and external engagement teams work in integrated ways and demonstrate a vision for further integration and simplification. During the review week, the review team saw evidence of an open and transparent culture of continuous improvement and an openness to challenge in these teams. The university should consider how it uses these as case studies to illustrate how fostering a common culture can champion positive change. It is notable that many of these areas also demonstrated an understanding of how data can be used for decision making in their practice, and that many of these areas were from the professional services.

The review team noticed that many students identified with their host campus or legacy institution. In some cases, the perception of change had been negative post-integration, noting a lack of clarity in service access and perceived additional 'red tape'. These views were observable albeit hard to confirm at an aggregate level. Nevertheless, this demonstrates that there is continuing work to do in creating a common culture at ATU across all campuses, where staff and students see the benefits associated with change. Encouraging self-organisation of groups to drive initiatives such as the internal research student conference, should be encouraged and supported. Practice that drives renewed identity and community amongst research students such as peer mentoring might also assist.

Commendations

- The review team commends the collegiality of ATU's staff and students and the commitment to the common purpose of ATU which was evident throughout the review visit.
- The review team commends ATU for the agility demonstrated by some of its teams who have taken advantage of integration to

²⁵ In TUs assistant lecturers can be timetabled for up to 18 contact hours a week with students and lecturers for up to 16 hours a week.

²⁶ <https://report.studentsurvey.ie/2023-pgr/home>

embed innovative practice as mainstream, for example rolling out of UDL principles and the Curriculum Design Framework.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that ATU continue to embed a common culture across the university that promotes a proactive and agile culture of quality enhancement, and the benefits of change.

3.2.2 ALIGNMENT OF INSTITUTES MISSION AND TARGETS FOR QUALITY

ATU is deeply invested in aligning its strategic mission with quality assurance and enhancement frameworks. This is strongly articulated in its Strategic Plan (2024-2028). The review team has analysed ATU’s strategy, its key guiding principles, governance frameworks, and the comprehensive targets that steer the university toward achieving its mission. Insights from ATU’s ISER and information received during the review visit has also been considered by the team.

ATU’s mission emphasises its ambition to be “an internationally renowned university that enhances

the quality of life in our region and fosters a sustainable future.” The university’s strategic implementation is structured around five “Guiding Lights,” targeting comprehensive educational, research, and operational transformation.²⁷

The key targets from the Strategic Plan that align with the quality targets include

- Improving access through increased enrolment (26,697 students) with expanded online and flexible learning options.
- Integration of innovative pedagogies and digital learning technologies such as iNOTE.
- Achieving a 10% increase in research-active staff, empowered by significant TU RISE funding.
- Strengthening partnerships with industry through numerous MOUs to enhance research opportunities.
- Fostering strategic regional projects like RISE@ATU.
- Integrating systems such as Banner and GURU for enhanced data management across campuses.



27 Figure 3: <https://atu.turtl.co/story/atu-strategic-plan-2024-to-2028/page/5/2>

- Achieving a 20% reduction in carbon footprint with integrated sustainability initiatives.

As detailed in Sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2, ATU's robust governance framework is pivotal in ensuring that its mission aligns with strategic quality targets. Its Governing Body oversees strategic decisions, ensuring compliance with educational frameworks and legislative requirements and its Academic Council ensures academic integrity and the effective implementation of the Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement (AQAE) Framework. As noted in section 3.1.1, the size of the current Academic Council could be reconsidered to provide more agility in decision making.

The AQAE Framework is central to maintaining academic standards and supporting ATU's mission-driven activities, with a focus on inclusivity through initiatives like Universal Design for Learning (UDL). To facilitate the achievement of the university's strategic objectives, initiatives such as iNOTE have enhanced digital learning environments and pedagogical innovations. In addition, the provision of TU RISE funding has bolstered research potential, enhancing ATU's role as a research hub.

ATU faces a number of challenges to achieving its stated strategic objectives, including the post-merger logistics which pose ongoing challenges. These underscore the need for cohesive operational integration and the finalisation of all AQAE policies and procedures which will be essential for comprehensive quality assurance implementation. To support the achievement of these strategic objectives, it is also important that ATU develop robust strategies to ensure transparent and consistent communication across campuses.

It is the review team's view that ATU continues to make significant strides in aligning its mission with quality objectives, as reflected in its strategic initiatives and robust governance structures. While achievements in research and digital capacity reflect effective leadership and planning, continued focus on communication and comprehensive policy integration will solidify ATU's capacity to meet ambitious strategic goals. Through these efforts, ATU is well-positioned to impact regional

and global educational landscapes, promoting sustainable development through quality-driven practices and strategic partnerships.

3.2.3 INNOVATIVE AND EFFECTIVE PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

The review team is of the view that ATU has an embedded culture of self-reflection and improvement and is building on this while at the same time creating a new regulatory environment in which practices are more consistent and aligned to its strategy and vision. Section 3.1 of this report outlines the many ways in which that enhancement happens, the various initiatives underway to improve quality, and the research-informed and reflective nature of learning, teaching and assessment practice. The review team considers this a sound baseline upon which further enhancement activity can be built. This should include the embedding of new policies supported by the development of key procedures to ensure consistency of practice and ensuring that gaps are closed, for example the closing of the feedback loop to students undertaking module evaluations, or clarity of progression for postgraduate research students passing through annual review or other gateway processes.

Moreover, the overall assessment of the review team, as indicated in Section 3.1.8, is that more can be done to use data to inform and target enhancement activity around key areas of strategic performance, such as retention or differential outcomes of students, and that enhancement should be aligned more closely to the strategic intention of ATU. The development of a new teaching and learning strategy and student success strategy aims to establish a framework of common expectations. This framework will facilitate, evidence, and evaluate innovative practices, harnessing them to drive strategic intentions. This approach will distinguish ATU by transforming good practice into standard practice on a larger scale.



OBJECTIVE 3 – PROCEDURES FOR ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION

3.3.1 OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION

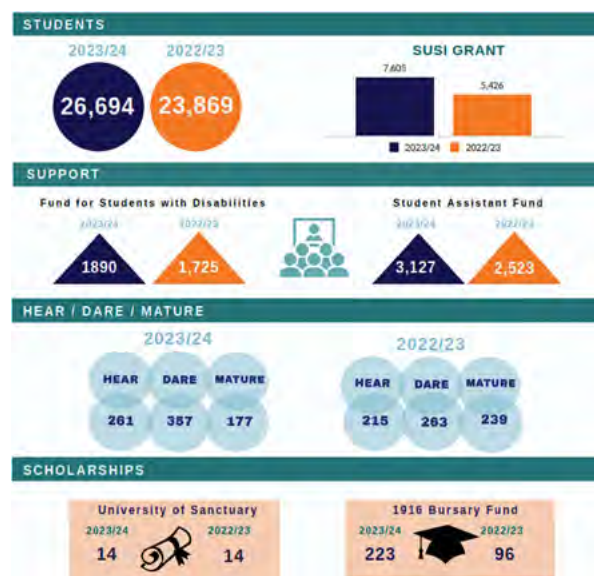
The procedures for access, transfer, and progression (ATP) at ATU reflect a comprehensive strategy aimed at enhancing inclusivity and providing diverse learning pathways for students. ATU's strategic approach to ATP is guided by its Access, Transfer and Progression Policy. The policy aligns with national and university priorities as outlined in the ATU Strategic Plan (2024-2028). ATU demonstrated to the review team that ATU's approach to ATP aligns with QQI Guidelines for Access, Transfer and Progression.

3.3.2 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION

ATU's ATP policy forms a cohesive framework that addresses the needs of under-represented groups and ensures pathways are available from NFQ Levels 6 to 10. As indicated in section 8.7 of ATU's ISER, to facilitate students who wish to transfer to an alternative programme of study, ATU provides an early internal transfer opportunity to new students, and an opportunity for continuing students to transfer to another ATU programme.

ATU's policy is aligned with national policies such as the National Access Plan²⁸ which ensures a consistent approach to equity and inclusion. As indicated in figure 4, ATU actively attracts socioeconomically disadvantaged students and students with disabilities through tailored initiatives, such as the All-Ireland STEM Passport for Inclusion programme which is funded by Microsoft Ireland²⁹, Science Foundation Ireland³⁰ and the Department of Education and through the national Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH)³¹. This is divided into PATH 1 (supporting Initial Teacher Education (ITE)) which aims to support the access, retention, and success of student teachers from

lower socio-economic groups, PATH 2 (financial support to selected students through the 1916 Bursary Scheme), PATH 3 (Higher Education Access Fund) which is intended to provide funding to support the development of regional and community partnership strategies for increasing access to higher education for specified groups, PATH 4 (projects to support Universal Design and programme provision for persons with intellectual disability) and Path 5 (supports Traveller and Roma engagement in higher education).³²



As described in the 2023/24 Access and Widening Participation Annual Reports, ATU provides a significant suite of support systems for students entering through Access routes, focusing on initiatives that address academic and financial needs. These supports include the Student Assistance Fund and tailored scholarships like the Sanctuary Scholarship Programme which provide crucial financial relief to students facing economic hardship. The increased number of students seeking accommodation and financial support underscores the success and growing demand for these programmes.

28 <https://hea.ie/policy/access-policy/national-access-plan-2022-2028/>

29 <https://www.microsoft.com/en-ie/aboutireland>

30 <https://www.sfi.ie/>

31 <https://hea.ie/policy/access-policy/path/>

32 Figure 4, ATU Access and Participation 2022/23 - 2023/24

ATU also offers flexible modular options and non-traditional entry points, enhancing access for part-time learners and those with prior learning experience. ATU's approach to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is characterised by clear processes and international collaborations that have driven innovations in RPL management. As outlined in Section 8.6 of the ISER, ATU has established an RPL Implementation Group to ensure systematic oversight and encourage increased application of RPL pathways. ATU's RPL approach has been informed by the National RPL in Higher Education Project³³ which resulted from collaboration with HE partners in Ireland, the USA and Canada to foster a global perspective. To build on this work, ATU needs to further enhance awareness to inform potential students about RPL opportunities and benefits, enhancing the public understanding of how prior experiences can facilitate educational achievements.

Section 8.7 in the ISER outlines that ATU has an overall 1st year progression rate of 75%, which is broadly in line with the progression rates in other TUs. The retention rates for Level 8 programmes (82%) are significantly higher than those for Level 6 (75%) and Level 7 (68%). ATU outlines in its ISER that these figures reflect national trends.

Effective governance is central to the successful implementation of ATP policies. ATU uses a data-driven approach to enhance transparency and accountability in decision-making processes and has integrated PowerBI for data analysis, which has significantly enhanced ATU's ability to track student performance and programme outcomes. As indicated to the review team through a demonstration of the PowerBI dashboards, the technological infrastructure that supports data analytics to streamline reporting and expand the scope of data-driven insights requires further development to assist in the real-time tracking of the performance of students from different entry routes.

OBJECTIVE 4 – PROVISION OF PROGRAMMES TO INTERNATIONAL LEARNERS

ATU has significantly advanced its internationalisation strategy. Currently enrolled at the university are 2162 international students, including from Europe and non-EU countries, primarily India and Canada. This strategy is guided by principles embedded in the recently developed ATU Global Development Plan.

To support international students, ATU provides tailored services such as airport pickup, structured induction programmes, and dedicated pastoral care. Inductions include academic, university, and community-focused elements, ensuring students receive comprehensive guidance upon arrival. The university also prioritises accommodation for first-year international students through agreements with private providers. Despite these efforts, section 5.6 in the ISER notes that students have highlighted areas for improvement, such as extending library hours during examination periods and enhancing housing support services. Additionally, it was reported to the review team that some international students lack a sense of belonging, which underscores the need for continued focus on inclusivity.

Students communicated to the review team that international students at ATU benefit from small class sizes, accessible lecturers, and opportunities to engage in research. Students commented that the curriculum promotes the use of international examples and fosters global perspectives, enabling students to develop employability skills aligned with 21st-century requirements. Initiatives like the 'Internationalisation at Home' digital badges and COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) ensure that internationalisation extends beyond physical mobility, providing virtual exchange opportunities for students and staff.

Internationalisation at Home includes internationalisation of the curriculum, intercultural training, and the use of international student ambassadors on campus. COIL is an approach to supporting virtual student exchanges and is used

33 <https://www.priorlearning.ie/about>

to provide an alternative exchange mechanism for students who are either not in a position to undertake physical exchanges or to provide additional exchange opportunities for students.

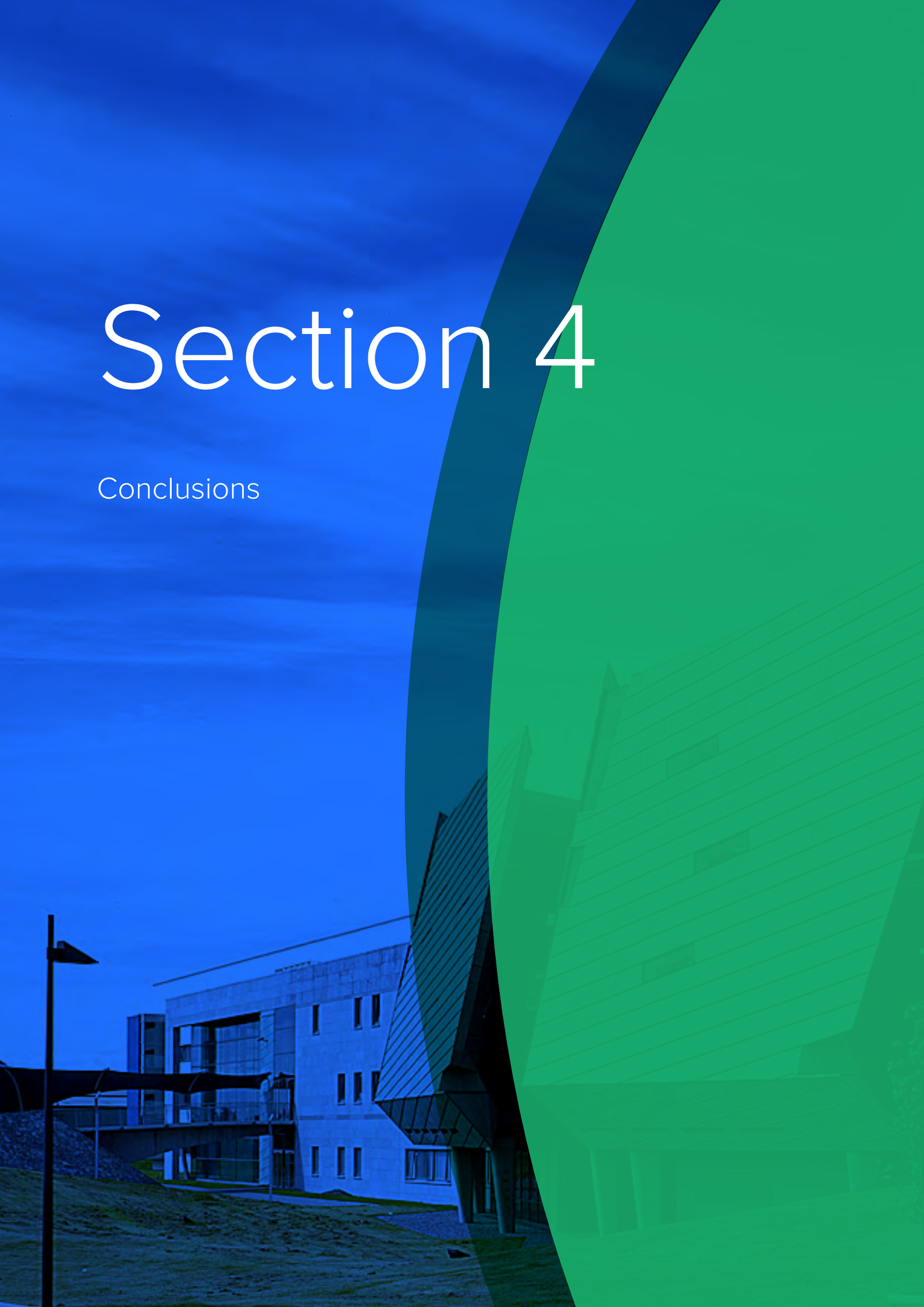
ATU fosters integration through its international society, student clubs, and cultural events. Outreach initiatives, such as EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) activities and food kitchens, further enhance community engagement. Senior student ambassadors play a key role in organising festivals and events, creating opportunities for interaction and mutual understanding. However, feedback from students indicates that enhancing social integration and addressing cultural barriers remain areas for growth.

While it was reported to the review team in sessions with both staff and students that ATU's efforts have invigorated its campuses and enhanced cultural diversity, challenges remain. The review team was informed that there are administrative difficulties related to visa requirements for international students in participating in Erasmus programmes due to Schengen visa limitations. There are also difficulties, as noted in Section 1.1, in finding accommodation. The university is proactively addressing some of these concerns, such as creating an international hardship fund and employing consultants to refine its strategic approach to global engagement.



Section 4

Conclusions





Section 4: Conclusions

OVERALL FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The review team would like to thank all the ATU Staff involved in the review, and in particular Dr Orla Flynn: President, Dr Billy Bennett: Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar, Dr Michèle Glacken: Vice President Students, Teaching and Learning and Registrar CINNTE Institutional Executive Lead, and Dr Jacqueline O'Toole: Institutional Review Coordinator for the comprehensive approach taken towards this review. During the review process, ATU displayed a proactive and open attitude, promptly providing additional information and clarifications as requested by the review team. This responsiveness ensured that the review team had access to comprehensive data for a well-rounded assessment. Furthermore, ATU's willingness to engage openly during discussions exemplified its commitment to collaboration and transparency. This approach not only reinforced trust but also underscored ATU's focus on aligning its processes with best practice and demonstrating accountability in its journey as a newly established technological university (TU).

ATU's approach to the review demonstrates a commitment to honest reflection and transparency in assessing its achievements and challenges. The university presented a balanced perspective, acknowledging both its progress in integrating legacy institutions and the ongoing complexities associated with transformation. By candidly identifying areas requiring improvement, ATU showed an earnest dedication to fostering a culture of continuous enhancement and learning. This reflective stance aligned with the core principles of quality assurance and underscored ATU's readiness to engage in constructive dialogue.

It was evident to the review team that ATU has developed strong foundations for their unified quality assurance system and has made significant progress in a short period of time. It was clear that there was strong alignment between the ATU's new Mission, Strategic Plan and HEA Performance

Compact which have been reflected in the quality assurance procedures and work plans. The review team evidenced a strong culture of collegiality within ATU which has supported the development of these new unified approaches.

ATU has demonstrated a credibility in its pedagogical approach with a strong emphasis on providing an inclusive learning environment and strong commitment to implementing Universal Design for Learning. ATU also demonstrated a clear ambition for continuous improvement and has made a strong investment in developing the infrastructure to support the achievement of its strategic plan. It was clear that there is whole institutional approach and commitment to quality enhancement.

The review team identified clear areas of good practice in ATU and has highlighted some of these areas in this report. The review team has also made a number of key recommendations, the implementation of which will assist ATU to build on its work to date and further enhance the effectiveness of its quality assurance policies and procedures.

COMMENDATIONS

- The review team commends ATU on the thoroughness of the ISER and its supporting documentation, which details the comprehensive approach taken overall to quality assurance and enhancement at a time of change and integration.
- The review team commends ATU for the speed and extent of policy development and the extent of consultation and engagement in the production of the ISER and the new policy framework, which has been broad and deep.
- The review team commends ATU for the effectiveness of its student support services. These include the proactive approach of its disability services, induction initiatives for

mature students and neurodiverse students that aid a smooth transition into university life, and the effective use of students through peer-assisted learning initiatives online and in person. Also commended is the ATU Global Team's comprehensive support, including providing priority accommodation schemes, airport pickups, and tailored inductions.

- The review team commends ATU for fostering diverse and effective external partnerships with a range of stakeholders including regional bodies, employers, collaborative education partners and Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).
- The review team commends the collegiality of ATU's staff and students and the commitment to the common purpose of ATU, which was evident throughout the review visit.
- The review team commends ATU for the agility demonstrated by some of its teams who have taken advantage of integration to embed innovative practice as mainstream, for example the rolling out of UDL principles and the Curriculum Design Framework.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The review recommends that ATU conduct a full audit of student voice matters across all provision. This should be expedited to ensure collection and analysis of feedback is effective and closes the loop back to students.
- The review team recommends that ATU undertake a review of its structures with the aim of simplification and enabling greater accountability, clarity of delegated authority, efficiency and pace of decision making.
- The review team recommends that ATU clarify processes for commissioning enhancement activity in keeping with its strategy, evaluating it and turning it into common practice in teaching and learning.
- The review team recommends that ATU review its processes for ensuring that all academics who teach students are adequately supported in training and to consider whether moving from encouragement to incentivised

engagement is the way forward, particularly if mandated training is not possible.

- The review team recommends that ATU aim to consolidate strategy and the underpinning key principles and actions that drive improvements in teaching and learning, quality, assessment and enhancement and avoid the risk of too wide dispersal.
- The review team recommends that ATU enhance its approach to data reporting at all levels to ensure that strategic intention and impact can be measured routinely. In respect of learner assessment and engagement this should include data analytics on assessment performance, completion, retention and progression.
- The review team recommends that ATU, in the context of integration, co-create with the students' union a long-term vision identifying how the union works in partnership with the university and the responsibilities of each party.
- The review team recommends that ATU enhance its data reporting at all levels to ensure that strategic intention and impact can be measured routinely. In the case of general data management and governance, building on initiatives such as learner analytics could support this objective and continuing investment in data platforms, governance, planning, and staff development is essential to achieving enhancements.
- The review team recommends that ATU continue to embed a common culture across the university, that promotes a proactive and agile culture of quality enhancement, and the benefits of change.



Section 5

Commendations and Recommendations



Section 5: Top 5 Commendations and Recommendations

TOP 5 COMMENDATIONS

1. The review team commends ATU on the thoroughness of the ISER and its supporting documentation, which details the comprehensive approach taken overall to quality assurance and enhancement at a time of change and integration.
2. The review team commends ATU for the speed and extent of policy development and the extent of consultation and engagement in the production of the ISER and the new policy framework, which has been broad and deep.
3. The review team commends ATU for the effectiveness of its student support services. These include the proactive approach of its disability services, induction initiatives for mature students and neurodiverse students that aid a smooth transition into university life and the effective use of students through peer assisted learning initiatives online and in person. Also commended is the ATU Global Team's comprehensive support, including providing priority accommodation schemes, airport pickups, and tailored inductions.
4. The review team commends ATU for fostering diverse and effective external partnerships with a range of stakeholders including regional bodies, employers, collaborative education partners and Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).
5. The review team commends the collegiality of ATU's staff and students and the commitment to the common purpose of ATU, which was evident throughout the review visit.

TOP 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Effectiveness of Processes to capture and act upon Student Feedback and the Student Voice**
The review recommends that ATU conduct a full audit of student voice matters across all provision. This should be expedited to ensure collection and analysis of feedback is effective and closes the loop back to students.
2. **Effective Use of Data to Inform Decision Making in QA/QE**
The review team recommends that ATU enhance its approach to data reporting at all levels to ensure that strategic intention and impact can be measured routinely. In respect to learner assessment and engagement this should include data analytics on assessment performance, completion, retention and progression.
3. **Students Union**
The review team recommends that ATU, in the context of integration, co-create with the students' union a long-term vision identifying how the union works in partnership with the university and the responsibilities of each party.
4. **Systematic Learning from Good Practice**
The review team recommends that ATU clarify processes for commissioning enhancement activity against its strategy, evaluating it and turning it into common practice in teaching and learning.

5. Simplification of governance and clarity of procedures

The review team recommends that ATU undertake a review of its structures with the aim of simplification and enabling greater accountability, clarity of delegated authority, efficiency and pace of decision making.

OVERARCHING STATEMENTS ABOUT QA

It was evident to the review team that ATU has sufficiently met the four objectives of the CINNTE review:

1. ATU demonstrated that it is implementing effective quality assurance procedures, including those for taught programmes, research and collaborative provision as summarised in the Annual Quality Reports and CINNTE Self-Evaluation Report which were provided to the review team.
2. ATU demonstrated that it is proactively developing new unified QA governance, policies and procedures that are aligned to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), QQI Core Statutory Guidelines for Quality Assurance and QQI Sector-specific Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies.
3. ATU demonstrated that the new procedures for access, transfer and progression are aligned to the QQI Policy for Access, Transfer and Progression.
4. ATU demonstrated that its procedures have shown due regard to the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners and have informed the review team of their intention to submit for the QQI International Education Mark in March 2025.





Section 6

Institutional Response



Section 6: Institutional Response



Atlantic Technological University (ATU) is pleased to acknowledge receipt of the CINNTE Institutional Review Report. As President, I wish to extend my deep gratitude to the Review Team for their comprehensive and rigorous evaluation of ATU's quality assurance and enhancement arrangements and for their constructive and positive feedback.

The CINNTE Institutional Review is an important milestone for ATU, the first such review since our designation as a Technological University on 1 April 2022. Through the self-evaluation process, the CINNTE Review has provided a timely and important reference point for ATU to assess its quality assurance and enhancement framework. The recognition of our approach to quality assurance and to the review itself is reflected in the commendation on *'the thoroughness of the ISER and its supporting documentation, which details the comprehensive approach taken overall to quality assurance and enhancement at a time of change and integration.'*

Preparation for the Institutional Review was undertaken simultaneously with the development and approval of our Strategic Plan (2024-2028). While separate processes, they both involved extensive engagement with our students, our staff and our external stakeholders along with a careful reflection on our mission, vision and values. ATU's continued progress towards full integration is illustrated in the recognition by the Review Team of the *'collegiality of ATU's staff and students and the commitment to the common purpose of*

ATU which was evident throughout the review visit.' Also noted as a significant achievement for ATU is the speed and extent of quality assurance policy development, supported by extensive cross-function staff consultation and engagement. An important conclusion is that ATU is in full compliance with relevant national statutory and European quality assurance requirements and guidelines.

At the time of the Review Team visit, our organisation structure and senior leadership team composition had not yet received final Government approval. I am delighted to share that we have now received approval to recruit our senior leadership team, and that this recruitment process has commenced. This will involve the appointment of 10 members to the senior leadership team, including Deans to lead each of the four new Faculties. As noted in the CINNTE report, this will enable ATU to *'become a fully integrated university that can realise its strategic ambitions.'*

As we approach the third anniversary of our formation, the scale of transformation continues apace. This is underpinned by ATU's inaugural Strategic Plan (2024-2028), and our dedicated focus to pursue best practice in all our activities for the benefit of our students, our region, our stakeholders and wider society. The Review Team observed that ATU is deeply invested in aligning its strategic mission with its quality assurance and enhancement framework and that this is strongly articulated in the five 'Guiding Lights' that serve as key areas of prioritisation in the Strategic Plan (2024-2028). These reflect ATU's commitment to tackling critical challenges facing the region and beyond, in sustainable ways, with an emphasis on collaboration and creating a dynamic environment for growth, innovation, and shared success. In this regard, we commit to building on the Review

Team's commendation of ATU '*for fostering diverse and effective external partnerships with a range of stakeholders including regional bodies, employers, collaborative education partners and Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies*'.

ATU places strong emphasis on our students and their overall experiences, from their initial engagement with us as learners, through their entire learning journey at ATU, and indeed after they leave us to engage with an ever-changing and complex society. In this regard, I welcome the commendation on '*the effectiveness of its Student Support Services that aid a smooth transition into university life*'. Our commitment to consolidating our engagement with our diverse student body and with the Students' Union was also recognised by the Review Team's positive commentary on student inclusion across a range of governance structures.

ATU accepts and welcomes the recommendations contained in the CINNTE report. These align well with the conclusions drawn in the ISER itself. Good progress has been made since the Review Team visit on the recommendation to enhance our approach to data reporting as we continuously reflect on ways to enhance and improve how we gather, manage, analyse and use data. In addition, the focus on consolidation of policy and strategy has commenced.

The student voice matters in ATU, and we acknowledge the recommendation that we further enhance student feedback through a full audit of the student voice across all provision. Progress in this area since the Review Team visit includes the formal involvement of student representatives at University Planning Team strategic planning workshops.

We are currently preparing a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) which will be mapped into the Strategic Plan operational plan. We commit to a transparent

reporting of the implementation of the QIP through all our quality review processes.

May I reiterate my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Review Team, chaired by Dr Ben Calvert, Vice-Chancellor at the University of South Wales, for the constructive dialogue with students, staff and external stakeholders in November 2024. The Review Team arrived during a time of significant transformation for ATU, and we appreciate their input and expertise in assisting us in this stage of our development. I would also like to express my thanks to the Tertiary Education Monitoring and Review Division in QQI who provided ongoing support throughout the review process. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to those who met with the Review Team during the site visit, including students and staff from across ATU, members of our Governing Body and external stakeholders, and also to all those who worked hard in the background and showed such strong leadership to ensure that the CINNTE Review progressed efficiently and effectively. Míle Buíochas!

Dr Orla Flynn,
President Atlantic Technological University
(March 2025)

Appendices

The background features a photograph of a golf team in blue and white uniforms, with a large green circular graphic on the right side. The text "Appendices" is centered in white.



Appendix A: Terms of Reference for the Review of Technological Universities

The Terms of Reference for the review of the Technological Universities are an adaptation of the CINNTE review [Terms of Reference for Designated Awarding Bodies](#). These Terms of Reference provide an enabling framework to facilitate and further enhance the institutional review process of the new institutions.

Section 1 Background and Context of the Review

1.1 CONTEXT AND LEGISLATIVE UNDERPINNING

In 2016 QQI adopted a [Policy for Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions](#), which sets out the scope, purposes, criteria, model and procedures for the review process. These are detailed in this handbook.

The [Technological Universities Act 2018](#) provides for the establishment of technological universities, as well as setting out their functions and governance structure. These Terms of Reference provide supplemental information for the quality review of new technological universities within the CINNTE Review Cycle Schedule 2017-2024.

The CINNTE schedule of cyclical reviews has been revised to reflect the planned establishment of technological universities; the institutional review of each new technological university is planned to commence 18 months from the date of establishment of that technological university with submission to QQI of the institutional self-evaluation report (ISER).

1.2 Purpose

The [Policy for the Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions](#) highlights four purposes for individual institutional reviews, as set out in the CINNTE handbook. These are consistent in these Terms of Reference, with some amendments to the measures as highlighted below:

Purpose	Achieved and Measured Through:
<p>1. To encourage a QA culture and the enhancement of the student learning environment and experience within institutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emphasising the student and the student learning experience in reviews • providing a source of evidence of areas for improvement and areas for revision of policy and change and basing follow-up upon them • exploring innovative and effective practices and procedures • exploring quality as well as quality assurance with a focus on the development of an integrated quality system within the new institution
<p>2. To provide feedback to institutions about institution-wide quality and the impact of mission, strategy, governance and management on quality and the overall effectiveness of their quality assurance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emphasising the governance of quality and quality assurance at the level of the institution • pitching the review at a comprehensive institution-wide level • evaluating compliance with legislation, policy and standards • evaluating how the institution intends to identify and measure itself against its own benchmarks and metrics to support quality assurance governance and procedures • emphasising the improvement of quality assurance procedures
<p>3. To contribute to public confidence in the quality of institutions by promoting transparency and public awareness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adhering to purposes, criteria and outcomes that are clear and transparent • publishing the reports and outcomes of reviews in accessible locations and formats for different audiences • evaluating, as part of the review, institutional reporting on quality and quality assurance, to ensure that it is transparent and accessible
<p>4. To encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the expertise of international, national and student peer reviewers who are independent of the institution; • ensuring that findings are based on stated evidence • facilitating the institution to identify measurement, comparison and analytic techniques, based on quantitative data relevant to its evolving mission and context, to support quality assurance • promoting the identification and dissemination of examples of good practice and innovation

Section 2 Objectives and Criteria

The overarching theme for the institutional review of a newly formed technological university is: ensuring a forward-looking perspective.

2.1 REVIEW OBJECTIVES

Enhancing academic quality and excellence should be a key goal of each newly formed technological university. It is recognised that these new institutions will need to move from an implicit strategy based on the sum of the dissolved institutions, to a common global mission, strategy and goals, and that it will take time to mainstream an institution-wide quality assurance system, and to implement institution-wide procedural change.

The objectives for the CINNTE Review are framed within this context. Whilst the review process will be forward-looking, it must also ensure trust through transparency and commitment to a culture of quality assurance.

OBJECTIVE 1

To review the effectiveness and implementation of the QA procedures of the new technological university through consideration of the procedures set out in the annual quality report submitted by the university.

The scope of information in respect of quality assurance contained in the annual quality report (AQR), or otherwise reported, includes reporting procedures, governance and publication. It is recognised that the procedures that governed quality assurance in the dissolved institutions may not be unified in one single document at the time of submission of the AQR and/or review process. There may, therefore, be a number of individual procedures set out in the AQR that reflect former institutional approaches, and supplementary information may be requested by the review team in the form of documentation or interviews in advance of, or during, the review process.

The relevant outcomes of the last review of the former institutions should be addressed and resolved, and the development of the new unified quality assurance system in place since the establishment of the new institution, evaluated. The review team will also consider the effectiveness of the AQR and institutional self-evaluation report (ISER) processes implemented across the new technological university.

The scope of this objective also extends to the technological university's overarching approach to assuring itself of the quality of its research degree programmes and research activities in the context of its establishment as a new institution, and to the effectiveness of the procedures for the quality assurance of its collaborations, partnerships and overseas provision.

OBJECTIVE 2

To review the enhancement of quality by the technological university through governance, policy and procedures.

In the new technological university, institution-wide governance, policy, procedures, mission, goals and targets for quality may not be fully established at the time of the review. In this context, the process – and progress – towards developing these elements will be evaluated, and the methodology and design of quality assurance, as well as transitional governance approaches, will be considered.

OBJECTIVE 3

To review the effectiveness and implementation of procedures for access, transfer and progression.

2.2 REVIEW CRITERIA

Criteria for Objective 1

The review report will include a specific qualitative statement on the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of the new institution and/or the extent of their development and/or implementation. The report will also include a specific statement on the extent to which the quality assurance procedures can be considered as compliant with the [European Standards & Guidelines](#) (ESG) and as having regard to QQI's statutory [Quality Assurance Guidelines](#) (QAG).

The criteria to be used by the review team in reaching conclusions for this objective are:

- [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(ESG 2015\)](#);
- [QQI Core Quality Assurance Guidelines](#);
- [QQI Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Universities and Other Designated Awarding Bodies](#);
- The technological university's own objectives and goals for quality assurance, where these have been determined.
-

Where appropriate and actioned by the institution, additional QQI guidelines may be incorporated:

- [Topic Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes](#)
- [Topic Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Providers of Research Degree Programmes](#)
- National Framework for Doctoral Education

Criteria for Objective 2

The Review Report will include a specific qualitative statement on the enhancement of quality by the institution through governance, policy, and procedures. This statement may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements and recommendations in reference to this objective in the context of the newly formed institution. If identified, innovative and effective practices for quality enhancement will be highlighted in the report.

The criteria to be used by the team in reaching conclusions for this objective are:

- The new institution's distinct mission and vision, or the plans and process in place for their development.
- The goals or targets for quality identified by the institution and/or the plans or process in place for their development.
- Additional sources of reference identified by the institution.

Criteria for Objective 3

The report will include a qualitative statement on the extent to which the current procedures being implemented in the new institution are in keeping with [QQI Policy for Access, Transfer and Progression](#).

- Key questions to be addressed by the review for each objective in the context of the new institution:
- How is a new unified quality assurance system being planned for and developed?
- How are quality assurance procedures and reviews being implemented in the new institution?
- What transitional quality assurance arrangements have been put in place? What reflections would the institution make on these?
- Who takes responsibility for quality and governance of quality assurance in the newly established, multi-campus, geographically spread institution?
- How effective are the current internal quality assurance procedures of the institution?
- How transparent, accessible and comprehensive is reporting on quality and quality assurance across the institution? What documentation and supporting information is available?
- How is quality promoted and enhanced?
- Are there effective innovations in quality enhancement and assurance?
- How is the new university developing a common mission, strategy and goals for quality?
- How has information on transitional arrangements been communicated?

Section 3 The Review Process

3.1 PROCESS

The primary basis for the review process is this handbook

3.2 REVIEW TEAM – TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITIES

QQI will appoint an external review team to conduct an institutional review of each new technological university. The size of the team and the duration of their visit will depend on the size and complexity of the institution but in general the review team for a technological university will consist of 6 persons. Each review team includes a chair and coordinating reviewer, and may be supported by a rapporteur, who is not a member of the team, to take and collate notes of meetings. A single team may undertake the review of two different institutions.

Reviewers are not QQI employees, but rather peers of the institution. The institution will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed composition of their review team to ensure there are no conflicts of interest, and QQI will ensure an appropriate and entirely independent team of reviewers is selected for each institution. QQI has final approval over the composition of each review team.

There will be appropriate gender representation on the review team. The team will consist of carefully selected and trained and briefed reviewers who have appropriate skills and are competent to perform their tasks. The team will operate under the leadership of the review chair.

The review team for the institution-wide review of the newly formed technological universities will be appointed in keeping with the following profile³⁴.

1. A review chair

The role of the Chairperson is to act as leader of the review team. This will be an international reviewer who is a (serving or recently former) senior third-level institution leader – usually a head of Institution or deputy head of Institution or a senior policy advisor who:

- Possesses a wide range of higher education experience, with specific experience of creating a new university and/or of merging higher education institutional contexts.
- Demonstrates a deep understanding of the complexities of the higher education system and of establishing a new higher education institution.
- Understands often unique QA governance arrangements; and
- Has proven experience in the management of innovation and change.

2. A Coordinating Reviewer

The role of the coordinating reviewer is to act as secretary to the team as well as to be a full review team

³⁴ QQI seeks guidance from the institution on the profile of a specific review team. The institution is consulted in advance, prior to confirming the team.

member. This is usually a person with expertise in the higher education system and prior experience in participating in external reviews. As the coordinating reviewer is responsible for drafting the report, he or she will possess proven excellent writing abilities.

3. A student reviewer

The role of the student reviewer is to represent the student voice in the review team. The student reviewer will, typically, be an Irish or international student with significant experience of higher education or an undergraduate student who has completed a quality assurance training programme and/or has had a role in institutional self-evaluation and/or review.

4. An external representative

The role of the external representative is to bring the “third mission” perspective to the review team, **specifically in the context of the establishment of a new technological university**. By way of example, they may have specialist knowledge in some or all of the following areas:

- External expectations of graduate skills and competencies,
- Issues and trends in industry and/or the wider community,
- The external perception of the new institution and its activities,
- Quality assurance practices in other sectors,
- Knowledge of the area identified in the specific institutional reviewer profile.

In addition to the specific roles above, the full review team complement will include a range of experts with the following knowledge and experience:

- experience of higher education quality assurance processes within a newly established institution and/or merging institutional context,
- experience of postgraduate research programmes,
- experience and proven ability in the advancement of teaching and learning,
- experience of a higher education institution with similar profile and/or mission.

All elements of the CINNTE cyclical review process, and guidance on conducting the institutional self-evaluation process are detailed in this handbook.

3.3 PROCEDURE AND TIMELINES

The outline set out in the policy (below) will be elaborated further and timelines will be set out to accompany it, through discussion and consultation.

Step	Action	Dates	Outcome
Terms of Reference (ToR)	Completion of an institutional information profile by QQI Confirmation of ToR with institution and HEA	9 months before the Main review visit (MRV)	Published Terms of Reference
Institutional Profile	Forwarding to QQI of the institutional profile	6-9 months before the MRV	Published Institutional Profile
Preparation	Appointment of an expert review team Consultation with the institution on any possible conflicts of interest	6-9 months before the MRV	Review team appointed
Self-evaluation	Forwarding to QQI of the institutional self-evaluation report (ISER)	12 weeks before the MRV	Published ISER (optional)
Desk review	Desk review of the ISER by the team	At least 1 week before the initial meeting	ISER initial response provided
Initial meeting	An initial meeting of the review team, including reviewer training and briefing	5 weeks after the ISER, 7 weeks before the MRV	Team training and briefing is complete. Team identifies key themes and additional documents required
Planning visit	A visit to the institution by the chair and coordinating reviewer to receive information about the ISER process, discuss the schedule for the main review visit and discuss additional documentation requests	5 weeks after the ISER, 7 weeks before the MRV	An agreed note of the planning visit
Main review visit	To receive and consider evidence on the ways in which the institution has performed in respect of the objectives and criteria set out in the Terms of Reference	12 weeks after the receipt of ISER	A short preliminary oral report to the institution

Step	Action	Dates	Outcome
Report	Preparation of a draft report by the team – 1st draft submitted to QQI	6-8 weeks after the MRV	QQI Review Report
	Draft report sent to the institution for a check of factual accuracy	12 weeks after the MRV	
	Institution responds with any factual accuracy corrections	14 weeks after MRV	
	Preparation of a final report	16 weeks after MRV	
	Preparation of an institutional response	18 weeks after MRV	Institutional response
Outcomes	Consideration of the review report and findings by QQI together with the institutional response and the plan for implementation	Next available meeting of QQI committee	Formal decision about the effectiveness of QA procedures <i>In some cases, directions to the institution and a schedule for their implementation</i>
	Preparation of QQI quality profile	2 weeks after decision	Quality profile published
<i>The form of follow-up will be determined by whether ‘directions’ are issued to the institution. In general, where directions are issued, the follow-up period will be sooner, and more specific actions may be required as part of the direction.</i>			
Follow-up	Preparation of an institutional implementation plan	3 month after decision	Publication of the implementation plan by the institution
	One-year follow-up report to QQI for noting. This and subsequent follow-up may be integrated into annual reports to QQI	1 year after the MRV	Publication of the follow-up report by QQI and the institution
	Continuous reporting and dialogue on follow-up through the annual institutional reporting and dialogue process	Continuous	Annual quality report Dialogue meeting notes
Note: The total period from start to finish is approximately 15 months but will depend on QQI committee meeting dates.			

Appendix B: Main review visit Schedule

DAY 1, MONDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2024

GOVERNANCE, QUALITY ASSURANCE AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Time	Group	Roles	Purpose
09.00 – 09.30	Institutional Coordinator	Institutional Coordinator Cinnté Executive Lead	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator and Executive Lead
09.30 – 10.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
10.00 – 10.30	President and Registrar	President, ATU Vice-President, Academic Affairs and Registrar	Discuss institutional mission, strategic plan, roles and responsibilities for Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE)
10.30 – 10.40	Team Preparation		
10.40 – 11.40	University Planning Team	President, ATU Vice-President, Academic Affairs and Registrar Vice-President, ATU Integration Vice-President, EDI and OFPD Vice-President, Finance and Corporate Services Vice-President, Research and Innovation Vice-President, Cross-Border Engagement and Head of College, ATU Donegal Head of College/Faculty of Engineering and Design Vice-President, Finance and Corporate Services Head of School of Business, ATU Galway-Mayo Head of Galway-Mayo College and Head of the School of Engineering Galway Head of ATU St Angelas Campus	Discuss institutional mission, strategic plan, roles and responsibilities for QA and QE.
11.40 – 12.05	Private Review Team Meeting, Tea/Coffee		

12.05 – 12.50	Governing Body	<p>President, ATU</p> <p>Secretary to Governing Body</p> <p>Member of Governing Body - Student Representative</p> <p>External Member</p> <p>External Member</p> <p>External Member</p> <p>External Member</p> <p>External Member</p> <p>Staff Representative</p> <p>Staff Representative</p> <p>Staff Representative</p> <p>Staff Representative</p> <p>Staff Representative</p>	Discuss mechanisms employed by the Governing body for monitoring QA and QE and how it ensures effectiveness.
12.50 – 13.00	Team Preparation		
13.00 – 13.45	Academic Council	<p>Vice-President, Academic Affairs and Registrar</p> <p>Head Librarian, ATU Galway-Mayo</p> <p>Lecturer, Department of Science and Applied Physics, ATU Galway-Mayo</p> <p>Lecturer, Early Childhood Education and Care, ATU Galway-Mayo</p> <p>Lecturer, Department of Business, ATU Sligo</p> <p>Lecturer, Environmental Science, ATU Sligo</p> <p>Lecturer, Department of Biopharmaceutical and Medical Science, ATU Galway-Mayo</p> <p>Director of Architecture Accreditation and Programme Chair, Lecturer, ATU Sligo</p> <p>Lecturer, Galway International Hotel School, ATU Galway-Mayo</p> <p>Head of Dept of Early Education and Social Studies, ATU Donegal</p> <p>Head of Department of Mechatronics, ATU Sligo</p> <p>Head of Department of Business, ATU Donegal</p> <p>Student Support Coordinator, Wave Programme</p> <p>Administration to Academic Council</p>	Discuss role of Academic Council in academic governance and monitoring of QA and QE and how it ensures effectiveness. Discuss strategic management and QA structures, including arrangements for QA at the centre, faculties and schools/ departments.
13.45 – 14.30	Lunch		

14.30 – 15.10	Quality Office and Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team	Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team/IEM Project Manager Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team Assistant Registrar, Policy and Regulatory Affairs Assistant Registrar, Quality Standards and Compliance Quality Assurance Administrator – Compliance Head of Department of Business, ATU Sligo	Discuss design of AQAE Framework and experience of implementing quality assurance throughout the University.
15.10 – 15.20	Team Preparation		
15.20 – 16.05	Heads of Faculty	Head of School of Science and Computing, ATU Galway-Mayo Head of Galway International Hotel School, ATU Galway-Mayo Head of Faculty of Business and Social Science, ATU Sligo Head of Faculty of Science, ATU Sligo Head of ATU St Angelas Campus, ATU St Angelas Head of Faculty of Engineering and Technology, ATU Donegal Head of Faculty of Business, ATU Donegal Head of Faculty of Science, ATU Donegal	Discuss how the University monitors the effectiveness of its QA and QE processes and structures including how the outcomes are enacted in an appropriate, consistent and timely manner.
16.05 – 16.20	Team Preparation		
16.20 – 17.05	Heads of Department	Head of Department of Tourism and Sport, ATU Donegal Head of Department of Social Science, ATU Sligo Head of School of Nursing Health Sciences and Disability Studies, ATU St Angelas Head of Department of Life and Physical Sciences, ATU Donegal Head of Department of Creative Education, ATU Galway-Mayo Head of ATU Mountbellew Agriculture College, ATU Galway-Mayo Head of Department of Engineering Technology (Trade Apprenticeships), ATU Sligo Head of Department of Business and Accounting, ATU Galway-Mayo Head of Department of Electronic and Electrical Engineering, ATU Galway-Mayo	Discuss Quality Management processes at the Department level and how their effectiveness is ensured.
17.05 – 17.30	Private Review Team Meeting		

DAY 2, TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2024**STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

Time	Group	Roles	Purpose
09.00 – 09.30	Institutional Coordinator	Institutional Coordinator	Clarify issues from previous day and review today
09.30 – 10.15	Members of Academic Council (AC) Academic Programme Committee and UPT Academic Planning and Programmes Committee (APPC)	Lecturer, Architectural Technology and Sustainable Construction, ATU Donegal Head of Faculty of Business and Social Sciences, ATU Sligo Assistant Registrar, Academic Programme Planning and Accreditation Assistant Lecturer, Department of Mechatronic Engineering, ATU Sligo Lecturer, Department of Civil Engineering and Construction, ATU Sligo Head of School of Design and Creative Arts, ATU Galway-Mayo Finance Manager, Research, Innovation and Engagement, ATU Sligo Director of Civil Engineering Apprenticeships, ATU Sligo Coordinator, Consortium Apprenticeship Manufacturing, ATU Galway-Mayo Lecturer / Lead, Development of Master of Business in Professional Practice in Management and Development, ATU Galway-Mayo	Discuss role of Academic Council Programmes Committee and UPT APPC in governance of QA procedures for approval of new programmes and modifications to current programmes.
10.15 – 10.25	Team Preparation		
10.25 – 11.10	Members of Academic Council Teaching and Learning Committee and Teaching and Learning Centre, Online Flexible Professional Development	NTUTORR University Lead Head of Teaching and Learning, ATU Sligo Lecturer, Department of Enterprise and Technology, ATU Galway-Mayo Lecturer, Marketing, ATU Sligo Head Librarian, ATU Donegal Student Union Officer for Academic Life, ATU Sligo Head of School of Education, ATU St Angelas Lecturer, Teaching, Learning and Student Engagement, ATU Donegal Senior Lecturer, Academic Integrity, ATU Galway Mayo Head of Innovation, OFPD, ATU Sligo VP EDI and OFPD	Discuss role of Academic Council Committee in governance of QA procedures for Teaching and Learning, the role of the Teaching and Learning Centre, OFPD, Teaching Ed and Library
11.10 – 11.35	Private Review Team Meeting, Tea/Coffee		

11.35 – 12.20	<p>Student Representatives - Undergraduate Students</p> <p>Student Representatives - Online Students</p>	<p>BEd (Hons) in Home Economics and Biology, ATU St Angelas</p> <p>BA (Hons) in English and Psychology, ATU Sligo</p> <p>BEd (Hons) in Home Economics and Religious Studies, ATU St Angelas</p> <p>Bachelor of Architecture (Hons) in Architecture, ATU Sligo</p> <p>BSc in Physics and Instrumentation, ATU Galway-Mayo</p> <p>BSc (Hons) in Physics and Instrumentation, ATU Galway-Mayo</p> <p>BSc (Hons) in Environmental Science and Ecology, ATU Sligo</p> <p>Bachelor of Law (Hons), ATU Donegal</p> <p>Bachelor of Arts in Law in Criminal Justice, ATU Donegal</p> <p>Bachelor of Architecture (Hons), ATU Sligo</p> <p>Bachelor of Business (Hons), ATU Sligo</p> <p>Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Construction Project Management and Applied Technology, ATU Sligo</p> <p>Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Home Economics and Religious Education, ATU St Angelas</p> <p>Cert in Engineering in Lean Sigma Quality, ATU Sligo</p> <p>BA (Hons) Mechatronics</p> <p>PgDip in Computing and Cloud Technologies, ATU Sligo</p> <p>Cert in Lean Yellow Belt, ATU Sligo</p> <p>PgDip in Big Data and Artificial Intelligence, ATU Donegal</p> <p>Cert in Science in Biopharmaceutical Processing, ATU Sligo</p> <p>Cert in Lean Yellow Belt, ATU Sligo</p> <p>Higher Diploma in Science in Medical Science, ATU Galway-Mayo</p>	<p>Discussion with students from all Faculties to include representation from different years, disciplines, onsite and online.</p>
12.20 – 12.30	Team Preparation		

12.30 – 13.15	Student Representatives - Postgraduate Students	MA in Universal Design for Learning, ATU Sligo Postgraduate Certificate in Universal Design for Learning, ATU Sligo Doctor of Business Administration MSc in Clinical Measurement Physiology, ATU Sligo MSc in Clinical Measurement Physiology, ATU Sligo MA Professional Leadership, ATU Sligo PhD Track, Professional Leadership, ATU Sligo MA Social Work, ATU Sligo MA Social Work, ATU Sligo Doctor of Business Administration	Discussion with postgraduate students from all Faculties to include representation from different years and disciplines
13.15 – 13.50	Lunch		
13.50 – 14.35	Access and Widening Participation Staff	Vice-President, Students, Teaching and Learning and Registrar Academic Affairs Manager (Admissions) Assistant Registrar, Academic Recognition (incl. RPL) Disability Learning Support Officer, ATU Galway-Mayo Tertiary Education Project Coordinator, ATU Donegal University Student Services Manager (Access and Widening Participation), ATU Donegal Senior Careers and Learning Pathways Manager, ATU Galway-Mayo Head of Department of Mechatronics, ATU Sligo Traveller Education Officer (Northwest) Access and Widening Participation Officer, ATU Sligo Student Services Manager (Disability and Learning support), ATU Galway-Mayo	Discuss QA aspects of student recruitment, admission, progression with particular reference to entrants via Access routes
14.35 – 14.45	Team Preparation		

14.45 – 15.30	Access and Widening Participation Students	<p>PME in Home Economics, ATU St Angelas</p> <p>BSc in Pharmaceutical Science with Drug Development, ATU Sligo</p> <p>BSc (Hons) in Medical Biotechnology, ATU Sligo</p> <p>BEd (Hons) in Home Economics and Religious Education, ATU St Angelas</p> <p>BSc (Hons) in Computer Networks and Cybersecurity, ATU Sligo</p> <p>BB (Hons) in Sport and Business, ATU Sligo</p> <p>BSc (Hons) in Pharmaceutical Science with Drug Development, ATU Sligo</p> <p>BB (Hons) in Sport and Business, ATU Sligo</p> <p>BB (Hons) in Business (ATU Sligo)</p> <p>BSc (Hons) in Forensic Investigation and Analysis, ATU Sligo</p> <p>BSc (Hons) in Health Science and Physical Activity, ATU Sligo</p> <p>BA (Hons) in Social Care Practice, ATU Sligo</p> <p>BSc (Hons) in Human Nutrition, ATU Sligo</p>	Discuss quality of student experience for those admitted via Access routes
15.30 – 15.40	Team Preparation		
15.40 – 16.25	Student Union Officers	<p>President, SU ATU Donegal</p> <p>President, SU ATU St Angelas</p> <p>Vice-President for Welfare, ATU SU Galway Mayo</p> <p>Vice-President for Education, ATU SU St Angelas</p> <p>Deputy President for Education, ATU SU Galway Mayo</p> <p>Vice-President Mayo Campus, ATU SU Galway Mayo</p> <p>Vice-President for Academic Life, ATU SU Sligo</p> <p>Vice-President for Wellbeing and Engagement, ATU SU Sligo</p>	Discuss student engagement and student role in the University in QA, Strategic Planning and other decision-making processes
16.25 – 16.45	Private Review Team Meeting, Tea/Coffee		

16.45 – 17.30	Staff supporting implementation of undergraduate curriculum, systems and administration	<p>Operations Manager, Faculty of Engineering and Design, ATU Sligo</p> <p>Academic Affairs Manager (Examinations and Conferring)</p> <p>Academic Affairs Manager (Registration, Fees and Grants)</p> <p>Academic Data Reporting Officer</p> <p>Academic Systems Senior Staff Officer, ATU Galway-Mayo</p> <p>School Administrator Faculty of Business, ATU Donegal</p> <p>Instructional Designer, OFPD</p> <p>Instructional Designer/Learning Technologist</p> <p>School Administrator, Science and Computing, ATU Galway-Mayo</p>	Discuss involvement in QA and QE and in the supporting student lifecycle.
17.30 – 17.40	Team Preparation		
17.40 – 18.25	Staff from Student Support Services	<p>Head of Student Success</p> <p>Student Services Manager, ATU Sligo</p> <p>Head of Student Health and Wellbeing</p> <p>Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Manager (ATU Respect)</p> <p>Student Experience Officer, OFPD</p> <p>Head of Online Student Experience</p> <p>Careers Officer, ATU Sligo</p> <p>Pastoral Care Lead</p> <p>N-TUTORR ATU Student Empowerment Coordinator</p> <p>Academic Writing Instructor, ATU Sligo</p>	Discuss involvement in QA and QE and in supporting the student lifecycle
18.25 – 18.45	Private Review Team Meeting		

DAY 3, WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2024

RESEARCH AND ATU STAFF

Time	Group	Roles	Purpose
09.00 – 09.20	Institutional Coordinator	Institutional Coordinator	Clarify issues from previous day and review
09.20 – 10.05	Research and Innovation	Vice-President, Research and Innovation Head of Research, ATU Sligo Head of Research, ATU Galway-Mayo Director, WiSAR Lab and Technology Gateway, ATU Donegal Co-Director of Health and Biomedical Research Centre (HEAL), ATU Sligo Senior Lecturer, Marine and Freshwater and Research Centre, ATU Galway-Mayo Lecturer, Centre for Special Educational Needs, Inclusion and Diversity, ATU St Angelas Assistant Registrar (Academic Recognition and Research Quality) ATU Integration Project Manager for Research and Innovation, ATU Sligo	Discuss the implementation of QA and QE procedures for research.
10.05 – 10.15	Team Preparation		
10.15 – 11.00	Members of Academic Council Research and Innovation (R and I) Committee	Head of Department of Natural Resources and the Environment, ATU Galway-Mayo PhD student, Department of Life and Physical Sciences, ATU Donegal Senior Lecturer, Research Development, ATU Donegal Senior Lecturer, Research Development, ATU Donegal Head of Department for Enterprise and Technology, ATU Galway-Mayo Lecturer, Nutritional Biochemistry and Food Science, ATU Sligo Head of Department of Health and Nutritional Sciences, ATU Sligo Assistant Lecturer, Operations and Supply Chain Management, ATU Donegal	Discuss role of Committee in governance of QA policy and procedures for research and innovation.
11.00 – 11.20	Private Review Team Meeting, Tea/Coffee		

11.20 – 12.05	<p>Research Supervisors</p> <p>Post-Doctoral Researchers</p>	<p>Lecturer, Home Economics, ATU St Angelas</p> <p>Head of Department of Environmental Science, ATU Sligo</p> <p>Senior Lecturer, Systems and Control Engineering, ATU Sligo</p> <p>Senior Lecturer, Operations and Supply Chain Management, ATU Donegal</p> <p>Senior Lecturer, Economics, ATU Galway-Mayo</p> <p>Lecturer, Computing, ATU Galway-Mayo</p> <p>Associate Lecturer, Data Analytics ATU Donegal</p> <p>WISAR Lab/Lecturer, Engineering, ATU Donegal</p> <p>Postdoctoral Researcher in Climate Resilience, ATU Sligo</p> <p>Postdoctoral Researcher in 5G RF at WiSAR Lab, ATU Donegal</p> <p>Postdoctoral Researcher, Cli-PhI Project</p> <p>Postdoctoral Researcher at MFRC in Offshore Renewables, ATU Galway-Mayo</p>	<p>Discuss Staff experience of research management and supervision, the relationship between teaching, research and innovation, QA and enhancements and the impacts on the research student experience.</p>
12.05 – 12.15	Team Preparation		
12.15 – 13.00	Graduate Students (research)	<p>PhD, Microplastics Detection, ATU Sligo</p> <p>PhD, Marine Science, ATU Donegal</p> <p>PhD, MOCHAS, ATU Sligo</p> <p>PhD, MOOCs within Irish and UK Higher Education, ATU Sligo</p> <p>PhD, Hand-Eye Coordinated Speech Fluency, ATU Sligo</p> <p>PhD, Materials Science, ATU Sligo</p> <p>PhD, Renewable Energy Engineering, ATU Sligo</p> <p>PhD, WiSAR, ATU Donegal</p> <p>MRes, Marine Science, ATU Galway-Mayo</p> <p>PhD, Marine Science, ATU Galway-Mayo</p> <p>PhD, Control and Machine Learning</p> <p>PhD, Materials Science, ATU Sligo</p> <p>PhD, Artificial Intelligence, ATU Donegal</p>	<p>To discuss QA and QE procedures with postgraduate research students</p>
13.00 – 13.40	Lunch		

13.40 – 14.25	Academic staff from all Faculties	Lecturer, Computing, ATU Sligo Senior Lecturer, Law, ATU Donegal Lecturer in Science, ATU Sligo Head of Home Economics, ATU St Angelas Senior Lecturer, Science and Health, ATU Donegal Senior Lecturer, Learning Analytics Focus, ATU Galway-Mayo Senior Lecturer, Politics and Social Policy, ATU Sligo Lecturer, Department of Electric and Mechanical Engineering, ATU Donegal Senior Lecturer, Accounting, ATU Donegal	Discuss involvement in QA and QE
14.25 – 14.45	Team Preparation		
14.45 – 15.30	Staff from Human Resources including Staff Recruitment, Staff Development and EDI	Vice-President, Finance and Corporate Services (HR and Governance) HR Manager HR (Industrial Relations) Manager HR (Employee Relations) Manager HR Manager, ATU St Angelas HR Operations Manager Staff Development Coordinator, N-TUTORR Project Staff Development Officer EDI Manager EDI Manager Staff Development Officer, ATU St Angelas	Discuss HR procedures and Staff Development that support QA and QE among all staff
15.30 – 15.45	Private Review Team Meeting, Tea/Coffee		
15.45 – 16.30	Staff from Finance and Campus Infrastructure Staff from Marketing and Communications	Vice-President, Finance Finance Manager Cybersecurity Project Manager Estates Manager, ATU Donegal Facilities Manager, ATU Sligo Senior Technology Officer for Digital Campus Health and Safety Manager Marketing Engagement Manager Strategic Marketing Manager Campaigns and Creative Manager Alumni Officer Communications Manager Communications Editor, ATU Magazine Website Manager	Consider funding prospects and opportunities to further develop the campus facilities to support teaching, research and the wider student experience Discuss involvement in QA and QE, supporting the student lifecycle and fulfilling requirements to publish information internal and external to ATU
16.30 – 16.40	Team Preparation		

16.40 – 17.25	University External Engagement including Collaborations and Partnerships	Vice-President, Enterprise and Engagement Assistant Registrar (Academic Programme Planning and Accreditation) Head of External Engagement, ATU Donegal Head of Enterprise and Engagement, ATU Sligo Vice-President, Cross Border Responsibility and Head of College, ATU Donegal Senior Lecturer, Department of Electronic and Mechanical Engineering, ATU Donegal Business Development Lead, ATU Sligo Head of ATU Transcend Project, ATU Galway-Mayo Higher Ed 4.0 Project Director	Discuss University External Engagement, Strategic Management and QA
17.25 – 17.35	Private Review Team Meeting		

DAY 4, THURSDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2024

INTERNATIONALISATION, COLLABORATION AND EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

Time	Group	Roles	Purpose
09.00 – 09.20	Institutional Coordinator	Institutional Coordinator	Clarify issues from previous day and review
09.20 – 10.05	ATU Global and EU Green International Staff	ATU EU Green Lead Vice-President, Systems and Internationalisation Director of Global Engagement, ATU Sligo IEM Project Manager Head of Department of Computing, ATU Donegal Head of Galway International Hotel School, ATU Galway-Mayo Programme Director, MSc in International Medical Technologies, ATU Galway-Mayo International Officer, ATU Global Programme Director, Joint Masters in International Marine Biological Resources, ATU Galway-Mayo	Discuss involvement in QA and Quality Enhancement in International Education ATU is a member of EU Green Alliance, a significant grouping of universities working on sustainable development and innovations to address Climate Change, SDG's and developing joint programmes of study and shared research projects.
10.05 – 10.15	Team Preparation		

12.15 – 13.00	Employers, Industry, Regional, Community Partners	Director, RPS Consulting Galway Partner, Gilroy Gannon Sligo HR Director, PGIM Ireland Executive Director, FinTru Head of Enterprise, Donegal County Council Chief Executive Officer, AHEAD EPIC North-West Vice-President Research and Innovation, University of Galway Economist, Northern and Western Regional Assembly CEO, SCCUL Enterprises Regional Director, Enterprise Ireland	Discussion with external stakeholders on engagement in strategic management and QA structures including student placement, and graduate employment.
13.00 – 13.45	Lunch		
13.45 – 14.00	Demo of Student Stats on Power BI		
14.00 – 17.00	Private Review Team Meeting/ ATU Sligo Campus Tour		

DAY 5, FRIDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2024

FEEDBACK

Time	Group	Roles	Purpose
09.00 – 11.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
10.30 – 11.00	QQI meets with Institutional Coordinator and Executive Lead	Institutional Coordinator Cinnté Executive Lead	Gather Feedback
11.00 – 11.30	QQI meets with Review Team		Discuss Review Team key findings
11.30 – 12.00	Private Review Team Meeting, Tea/Coffee		
12.00 – 12.3	Meeting with President	ATU President	Oral Report to President
12.30 – 13.00	Review Team QQI Staff ATU Staff	President, ATU, Vice-President, Academic Affairs, Cinnté Executive Lead, Institutional Coordinator, Members of ISER Team Members of ATU CINNTE and invited ATU representatives	Presentation of Oral Reports to ATU Staff
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch		
14.00 – 17.00	Private Review Team Meeting	Report drafting	

Glossary

Acronym/ Term	Definition/meaning
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AMM	Academic Module Manager
APS	Approved Programme Schedule
AQAE	Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement
AQR	Annual Quality Report
ATP	Access, Transfer and Progression
ATU	Atlantic Technological University
CAO	Central Application Office (processes applications for undergraduate courses in Irish HEIs)
CINNTE	Name/branding for QQI's first external HEI review cycle
COIL	Collaborative Online International Learning
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CRM	Customer Relation Management
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
EdTech	Educational Technologies
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
Erasmus	EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe
ESG (2015)	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
ETB	Education and Training Board
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EU GREEN	European University Alliance for Sustainability: Responsible Growth, Inclusive Education and Environment
FET	Further Education and Training
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations
GURU	ATU's examination paper processing system
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HigherEd4.0	Uses innovation and technology to provide pathways into and through higher education and employment
HR	Human Resources
IBEC	Irish Business Employers Confederation
ICO	Information Compliance Office
iNOTE	A powerful note-taking application
ISER	Institutional Self-Evaluation Report
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
MISs	Management Information Systems
MOCHAS	Modelling and Computation for Health and Society
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
OFPD	Online, Flexible and Professional Development
Optum.ie	Technological offering to improve the Irish health care system
OSA	Online Student Advisors
OSCAR	Operations and Supply Chain Research

PASS	Peer Assisted Study Sessions
PATH	Programme for Access to Higher Education
PBAR	Programme Board Annual Report
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PowerBI	Microsoft tool that generates weekly reports of student numbers and registration status, trends and comparisons etc.
PRTB	Post-Graduate Research Training Programme
PSRBs	Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies
QA1	End of module evaluation form
QAET	The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team
QAG	(QQI Core) Quality Assurance Guidelines
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
R&I	Research and Innovation
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
Springboard+	Government funded initiative offering free and heavily subsidised courses leading to qualifications in areas with employment opportunities
SRMS	Student Records Management System
SU	Students' Union
TLA	Teaching, Learning & Assessment
TU	Technological University
TU RISE	TU Research and Innovation Supporting Enterprise Scheme
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UIIN	University Industry Innovation Network
UPT	University Planning Team
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment
VPAAR	Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar
VPRI	Vice President for Research and Innovation
WorkVivo	An online platform adopted by ATU to address communication challenges

