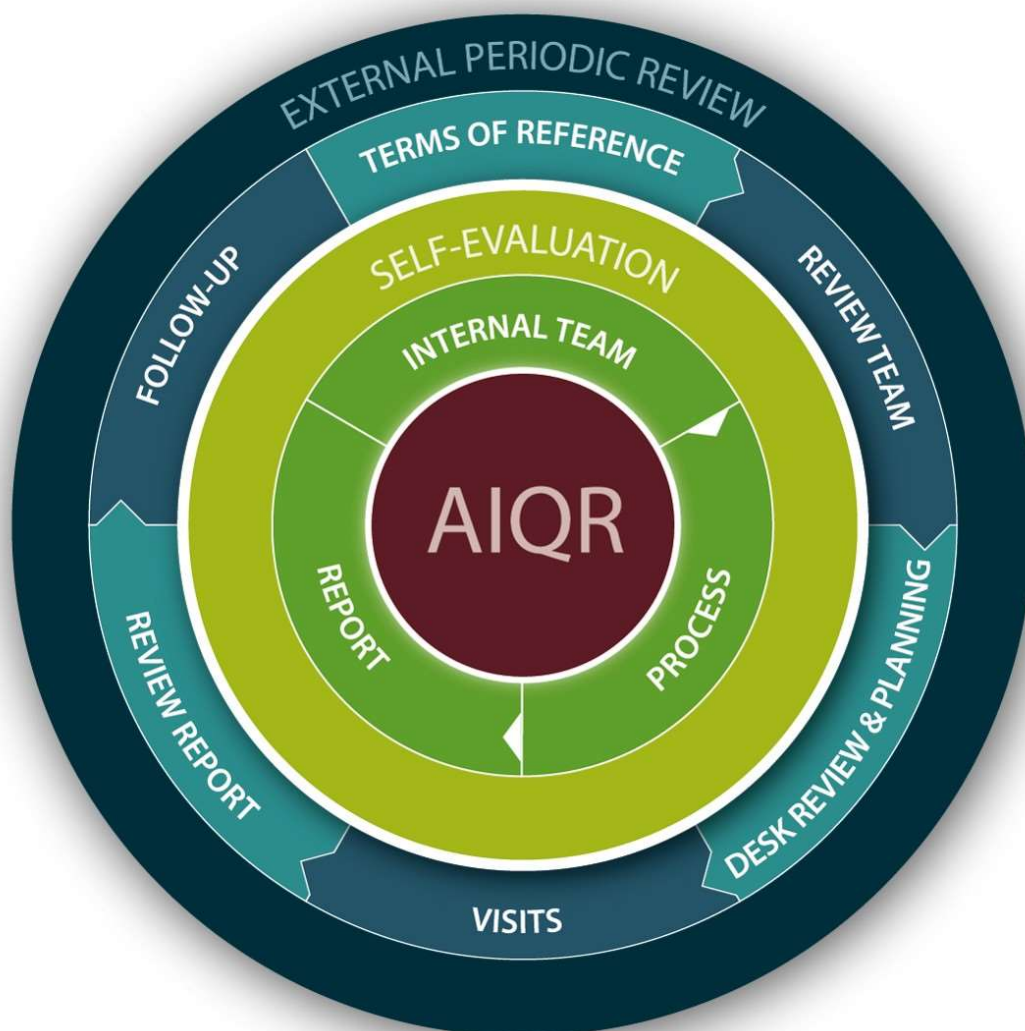


Cork Institute of Technology

Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report 2020

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



The Cyclical Review Process

Part 1

Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures

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

1. Overarching Institution Quality Policy

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

CIT Strategic Plan 2018 – 2023

Cork Institute of Technology has recently adopted a [new Strategic Plan for the 2018 – 2023 period](#).

This Strategic Plan – the Institute’s third – spans and anticipates one of the most important periods in CIT’s institutional history to date, that of its transformation, jointly with Institute of Technology Tralee, into a leading international Technological University. The Strategic Plan thus sets out and offers a Strategic Vision and a set of institutional Values and Strategic Priorities intended to guide not just the continued growth of Cork Institute of Technology, but also the initial stages in the development of a new and even more diverse technological university, which will be focused on making a positive impact and enriching the social, cultural and economic life of the region and nationally.

To achieve this impact, the new Munster Technological University will continue to provide education, research and other services which are strongly linked to the needs of the university’s stakeholders while also enabling and fostering ambition and innovation within the institution and in the extended region it supports. The technological university will provide offerings across a broad discipline mix encompassing STEM and maritime studies, business studies, humanities, health and welfare, and the creative and performing arts, spanning a broad range of NQF levels from 6 to 10. This breadth of provision will enable the university to balance the needs of society and enterprise with the ambitions of prospective students and its institutional strategic priorities.

Building an organisational culture which is focused on responsiveness and inclusivity, the new university will provide educational and advancement opportunities to the broadest possible cohort of individuals. Knowledge, and in particular the use of knowledge (which describes the broad range of institutional activities from education and training to research and knowledge exchange/transfer) will remain the principal means by which the technological university fulfils its enduring mission and achieves its strategic goals and priorities.

As the Strategic Plan is being implemented, a set of institutional Values, which articulate the ethos, principles and ideals at the core of CIT’s and the MTU’s organisational culture, will underpin and guide all institutional actions and decisions. These values are Inclusivity, Collaboration, Creativity & Innovation, Integrity, and Excellence.

CIT Strategic Priorities Within the Wider Policy Context

The 2015 *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education* (ESG) emphasise that “[t]he role of quality assurance is crucial in supporting higher education [...] institutions” in responding to the need for a more student-centred approach, with flexible learning paths and mechanisms for recognising competences gained outside of formal education, and to the increasing diversification of institutional missions and modes of education provision “while ensuring the qualifications achieved by students and their experience of higher education remain at the forefront of institutional missions”. ([Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(ESG\), Brussels, Belgium, 2015, p. 6](#)).

At the global level, the developmental trajectory for higher education outlined in the ESG is embedded and feeds into the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), adopted by the United Nations Member States in September 2015. At the core of this agenda lie 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which the world community has challenged itself to reach within a fifteen-year period, as measured by the achievement of a series of associated targets. [Sustainable Development Goal 4](#) is to “[e]nsure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. The targets relevant to tertiary education in general concern parity of access to affordable and quality education at all levels for women and men and for the vulnerable; the need to increase the number of people with relevant skills, including technical and vocational, for decent employment and entrepreneurship; and the need to ensure learners gain the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development.

The Strategic Priorities set out in CIT’s institutional strategy for 2018 – 2023 and their associated objectives support the SDG 4 targets for tertiary education and fully resonate with the developmental trends in the European higher education landscape summarised in the ESG:

- Social, cultural and economic impact, regionally and nationally;
- Excellent student experience and high quality education;
- Research, engagement and knowledge transfer which is innovative, relevant and impactful;
- Inclusive access to education opportunities and a diverse student-body.

Academic Strategy

The Strategic Plan for 2018 – 2023 is complemented by an [Academic Strategy 2019 – 2023](#).

The Academic Strategy aligns with the vision statement of CIT’s Strategic Plan, which is to “empower individuals and enrich society through the innovative use of knowledge”, while also aiming to deliver on the system objectives of the Mission-based Performance Compact 2018 – 2021 with the Higher Education Authority (HEA). It is built on three mutually supportive academic pillars which echo and further unfold the Institute’s strategic priorities across its spectrum of activities:

- Ambitious and visionary student scholarship and teaching;
- Impactful research and creative scholarship;
- Expanding and deepening engagement with our broader community.

Strategic Role of Quality Assurance

Cork Institute of Technology’s approach to quality assurance throughout has been to balance a need for institutional agility and responsiveness to learner and stakeholder needs with the absolute requirement to maintain and protect institutional award standards which consistently meet, if not

exceed, all relevant national and international benchmark standards, starting with the National and European Qualifications Frameworks. In line with the understanding of quality assurance and its role which informs the ESG, the quality policies and procedures in place at CIT thus fully support the achievement of the strategic institutional priorities of the Institute – and its successor institution, the Munster Technological University – while ensuring that CIT continues to make a significant and positive contribution to the system of higher education qualifications nationally and within the European higher education area.

CIT's key academic quality processes, overseen by the Institute's Governing Body and Academic Council and governed by its core [academic regulations and policies](#), focus on the twin aims of ensuring and enhancing the relevance and quality of the academic provision and the student experience, while also safeguarding the high standard and reputation of CIT awards at all levels. Quality assurance is therefore a key enabler for the achievement of sustainable quality education at CIT.

Complementing its policies and procedures, CIT has established and resourced a number of dedicated units to drive and support the achievement of institutional aims, compact targets and national and global policy objectives in relation to widening access, regional and national engagement, diversification, internationalisation, and the provision of inclusive educational opportunities.

In addition to the Institute-level strategies, increasingly, the relevant offices and service units are able to derive strategic direction for their day-to-day work from one of the recently adopted service or activity area strategies, including for instance the [Technology-Enhanced Learning Strategy](#) or the [CIT External Engagement Strategy](#). At the same time, the compliance of the work of the different service units with relevant internal and external quality requirements and strategic priorities is subject to intermittent audit as per a schedule determined by the Internal Audit & Risk Committee of Governing Body in line with identified institutional priorities.

2. Quality assurance decision-making fora

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

1. Legislative Context and Statutory Functions

The Irish Institutes of Technology (IoTs) are statutory entities established by act of government. Their functions are governed by the *Institutes of Technology Acts 1992 – 2006* and include provision of courses of study as well as research, consultancy and development work “for the [...] development of the State with particular reference to the region served by the College”. Their institutional mission is professionally orientated, with a strong focus on technology, science and applied research.

Up to the end of 2019, Institutes of Technology made awards at specified levels of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) under delegated authority from Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), the statutory qualifications and quality assurance authority for the further and higher education sectors in Ireland, and from its predecessor, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council.

The coming into effect of Section 36 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019 in January 2020 established the Institutes of Technology as designated awarding bodies with full ownership of all awards to Masters’ level.

Awarding powers for any doctoral awards conferred by the Institutes (at NFQ Level 10) remain under delegated authority for the time being, and are granted by QQI on a per-discipline basis. Cork Institute of Technology currently holds delegated authority to make doctoral awards in Electronic, Manufacturing and Mechanical Engineering, Computing and Physical and Life Sciences. PhD research programmes offered by CIT in other fields of study lead to QQI awards. Full awarding powers to doctoral level across all discipline areas will accrue to the Institute on successful designation, jointly with Institute of Technology Tralee, as a Technological University.

Maintenance of designated awarding body status – respectively continued exercise of any delegated PhD awarding powers – will be contingent on the successful completion of comprehensive, cyclical, external reviews of CIT’s institutional governance, management and quality assurance mechanisms. These cyclical (‘CINNTE’) reviews, organised and overseen by QQI, require a thorough institutional self-evaluation, followed by external peer review by an independent panel of national and international experts. All CINNTE review reports are published on QQI’s public website.

2. Institutional Governance and Academic Management Structures

Statutory responsibility for the management of Cork Institute of Technology lies with the President and the Governing Body.

The Governing Body in conjunction with the President manages the affairs and the property of the Institute, with some functions specifically reserved for each. The members of Governing Body are appointed by the Minister for Education & Skills for a period of five years. Membership includes representation from significant external stakeholder constituencies of the Institute, as well as three members elected by CIT academic and administrative staff and two officers of the CIT Students’ Union. Governing Body carries out its work through a number of committees dedicated to particular functions, including long-standing Audit & Risk and Finance Committees and a more recently formed MTU Committee, and has adopted the amended 2012 Code of Governance for Institutes of Technology to govern its business practices. The membership of Governing Body, as well as meeting agendas and digests, are [published on the CIT website](#).

Academic Council, the second statutory board of the Institute, advises Governing Body on academic matters and is responsible for the protection, maintenance and development of the academic standards and programmes. With over 100 members, the Institute has one of the largest and most

representative Academic Councils in the sector. This ensures that all significant academic issues are widely consulted on and debated across the Institute.

The President is the Institute's chief officer, supported in the execution of his functions by three Vice-Presidents and the Institute Executive Board (IEB).

The Registrar & Vice-President for Academic Affairs, the Vice-President for External Affairs and the Vice-President for Finance & Administration are responsible for managing the key central functions of CIT. The day-to-day administration of these functions is carried out by a number of Central Services Units attached to the office of each Vice-President and headed by a Central Services Manager.

The Institute Executive Board is a non-statutory committee set up in March 2004 with the introduction of a stratified management structure. The IEB is composed of the President, Vice-Presidents, Heads of Faculty, Head of Strategic Development, recently amplified by two Heads of School, the Chair of the Heads of Department Group, and the CIT MTU Project Director. It assists the President in the management of the Institute and formulates strategy and policy on academic and external matters, significant operational issues, and programmes & budgets for approval by the Governing Body.

The academic management structure of CIT is faculty-based, and after some consolidation now comprises two large faculties distributed over four campuses. The Faculty of Business & Humanities encompasses two cognate schools and CIT's constituent music and art & design colleges, CIT Cork School of Music and the CIT Crawford College of Art & Design. The Faculty of Engineering & Science includes three schools and the National Maritime College of Ireland.

Each school and constituent college is made up of 2 – 4 cognate academic departments each, except for the National Maritime College of Ireland (NMCI). The latter incorporates one academic department, the Department of Maritime Studies, and a Commercial Services division which manages all NMCI commercial activities and training courses. The programmes offered by the Department of Maritime Studies also provide for the non-military academic requirements of the Irish Naval Service.

The management of central Institute functions, such as admissions and entry of examination results, is predominantly handled by the central Institute administration, supported by a comprehensive and information technology infrastructure which is continually enhanced and adapted to developing requirements. Individual faculties and colleges have executive responsibilities in matters related to faculty-level strategic planning, academic management and quality control.

As a publicly funded body, Cork Institute of Technology is accountable to the Higher Education Authority of Ireland (HEA) and is subject to external audit of its Annual Statutory Accounts by the Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG). In addition, PricewaterhouseCoopers has been engaged by the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA) on behalf of the Institutes of Technology to carry out internal audits at national and individual Institute level. These reviews cover the full array of Institute activities, with internal support provided by the Vice-President for Finance & Administration.

3. Quality Assurance of Academic Provision

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

For new taught programmes, validation is predicated on successful completion of both internal and independent external quality reviews. These include a review of the content and structure of the

proposed programme and of the staffing, resourcing levels and supports envisaged. The final decision on validation is taken by the Governing Body of CIT on the advice of the Institute's Academic Council.

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

Research degree provision is governed by comprehensive regulations for postgraduate research study. These cover all quality-relevant aspects of postgraduate education, with no distinctions as to process between programmes leading to CIT and QQI awards. Complementary policy documents covering, inter alia, ethical research practice, IP issues and conflict of interest establish a secure legal and ethical framework within which postgraduate education can take place, while strategic development of the institutional research environment falls within the remit of the CIT Research Office. Executive responsibility for maintenance of the research register and for decisions on admission, progression, transfer and submission lies with the Dean of Graduate Studies, who may draw on the advice of a Postgraduate Research Study Board (PRB). Within academic units, the monitoring and development of Structured PhD and Professional Doctorate programmes falls to doctoral programme panels established by the unit head on the advice of the unit's Research Studies Committee. Any taught modules offered as part of a structured research programme are validated and reviewed under the quality assurance process for taught programmes. Recommendations of the Postgraduate Examination Board on attainment are ratified by Academic Council and, for non-delegated authority awards, QQI.

A formal register of all current valid taught and research awards made by Cork Institute of Technology is maintained by the Office of the Registrar & VP for Academic Affairs. This listing, which in 2013/14 replaced the so-called 'Order in Council' previously submitted to QQI for approval, is formally adopted by the Institute's Academic Council.

4. Professional Regulation and Accreditation

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

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

5. Quality Assurance of Collaborative Programmes

Validation/accreditation of collaborative provision is governed by national legislation and national and Institute policy regarding the quality assurance of collaborative programmes and joint awards.

Prior to the coming into force of the Act of 2019, which established CIT as a designated awarding body, CIT's procedures for making joint awards aligned with the 2014 *Sectoral Protocol for the Delegation of Authority (DA) by Quality and Qualifications Ireland [...] to make Joint Awards*. However, CIT had previously already gained delegated authority for joint awards with University College Cork (2011) and for named joint media awards with Hochschule Darmstadt, Germany (2013) following stringent external review.

Formal Joint Awarding Agreements are in place for all joint awards made by CIT, with appropriate provisions covering continuing delegated authority conditions for doctoral programmes where applicable. All collaborative programmes, irrespective of whether they lead to a CIT award or a joint award, are subject to detailed agreements governing the arrangements for provision and quality assurance of the programme, including assessment standards, learner protection, and the making of the award. Each agreement requires prior approval of the CIT Academic Council and Governing Body before the collaborative programme can be validated.

With regard to the long-standing joint awarding arrangement with UCC (as well as, in the recent past, with Hochschule Darmstadt), the institutions operate well-established joint mechanisms for the validation, operation, ongoing monitoring and periodic review of the relevant programmes. These include Joint Management Boards and, in the case of UCC, a Joint Board which makes recommendations to the CIT Academic Council and UCC Academic Board.

In the case of transnational awards, some quality assurance processes have required the involvement of external quality assurance agencies or statutory bodies. Thus, validation/accreditation and revalidation/re-accreditation of the joint awards with Hochschule Darmstadt involved both HETAC/QQI and the Agentur für Qualitätssicherung durch Akkreditierung von Studiengängen (AQAS), one of several quality assurance agencies accredited by the German Accreditation Council nationally to carry out programme and system accreditations.

Confirmation of QA Policy and Procedures

1. Programme Design and Approval (ESG 1.2)

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

The core policy document regulating the design and approval of new programmes at Cork Institute of Technology is the CIT [Handbook for Module and Programme Approval](#), with a supplementary [procedure for the design and approval of Special Purpose, Minor and Supplementary Awards](#) specifically.

An 'omnibus' [policy governing the curricular structure and credit profile of CIT programmes](#) under CIT's modular framework sets out the parameters and guiding principles for curriculum design and review.

Amendments to existing modules and programme are also subject to approval, following a defined [procedure for module and programme changes](#). Any major or critical changes to programmes give rise to a differential validation process, which is treated as a new validation of a programme element or elements and – like all new validations – requires Academic Council approval.

The selection of independent internal and external experts for the review of new modules and programmes is also subject to the [CIT Policy on Conflict of Interest](#) (relating to the academic activities of CIT).

All key policies and procedures relating to the design and approval of new CIT programmes are published in the [Academic Regulations and Policies page](#) of the Institute website.

2. Programme Delivery and Assessment (ESG 1.3)

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

CIT's regulations relating to assessment are rooted in the long-established general sectorial framework for determination of assessment grades and award standards set out in [QQI's Assessment and Standards](#), and should be understood before that backdrop.

The regulations and procedures for the assessment of CIT programmes and the making of CIT awards are set out in the CIT [Regulations for Modules and Programmes \(Marks and Standards\)](#). These regulations apply to all programmes of Cork Institute of Technology. Supplementary regulations pertaining to the assessment of postgraduate research degree programmes specifically are included in the [Regulations for Postgraduate Study](#) (see also Section 3, Research Quality below).

With regard to the operation of examinations and continuous assessment, CIT has published policies, procedures and guidelines which

- Set out the principles for the selection and appointment of [external examiners](#) and set out the rights and duties of externs (with work on revising the external examiner system underway);
- Regulate the [conduct of candidates during examinations](#);
- Set out the [Institute's overall policy on academic honesty](#), defining different types of academic dishonesty and misconduct and outlining the follow-up process for potential instances of misconduct;
- Set out the [process for a formal inquiry into allegations of misconduct related to examinations and assessment](#); and
- Set out a process for submission of [extenuating circumstances](#) related to non-completion of examinations and assessment tasks.

Candidates are furthermore furnished with a published [process for notifying observed correction errors and appealing the outcomes of examinations and assessment](#).

Delivery of standard full-time undergraduate programmes takes place over two semesters of 13 weeks each, as per the [CIT framework for modularisation and semesterisation](#). Delivery modalities for postgraduate and part-time programmes are described in the relevant programme literature.

In addition, CIT delivers a number of fully online programmes. Delivery information for these is available on the webpages of the [Department of Technology-Enhanced Learning](#).

The [academic calendar of Cork Institute of Technology](#) is determined annually by a working party of Academic Council, taking into account feedback from the different internal stakeholder groups, and is published on the CIT website.

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

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

The key document for the quality assurance of research programmes offered by CIT are the Institute's [Regulations for Postgraduate Research Study](#). The postgraduate regulations govern the different stages of the postgraduate research student lifecycle, monitoring and supervision, submission and examination, and award classification. They also set out appeals and grievance procedures for postgraduate research students. The CIT frameworks for structured PhDs and for professional doctorates are included in appendices.

Guidelines for ethical research conduct are set out in the CIT [Code of Good Practice in Research](#). Ethical issues arising in the course of research which cannot be resolved with reference to the Code must be referred to the CIT Research Ethics Committee.

The [Policy on Conflict of Interest \(Relating to the Academic Activities of the Institute\)](#) is pertinent to the research context also and includes an appendix on avoidance of conflict specifically in the recruitment of external examiners for postgraduate research programmes.

With regard to research outputs, an [Intellectual Property Policy](#) is in place. Taking into account GDPR and applicable copyright legislation as well as conflict of interest issues, this is made available to researchers together with a number of supporting operational documents.

The quality assurance policies and procedures for postgraduate research study are embedded into the wider [CIT research infrastructure](#).

The strategic development of research is supported and steered by the CIT Research Office, led by the Head of Research. The Research Office has a leading role in developing the CIT Research & Innovation Strategy and also facilitates the implementation of the [CIT Researcher Career Framework](#). Innovation and knowledge transfer activities arising from the research activity are coordinated and supported by the Innovation & Enterprise Office.

Provision and quality assurance of postgraduate research education lie within the remit of the School of Graduate Studies, headed by the Dean of Graduate Studies. Comprehensive information about postgraduate study opportunities, available supports (including the CIT Rísam PhD Scholarships) and key policies and supporting documents can be accessed via the [web pages of the CIT Graduate School](#).

4. Student Lifecycle (ESG 1.4)

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

Access and Admission

Application for admission into Year 1 of CIT full-time programmes is made through the Central Applications Office (CAO), the agency responsible for processing undergraduate applications on behalf of Irish higher education institutions. The decision on admissions is taken by the Institute, which instructs the CAO to make offers to successful candidates. Application for entry into full-time post-Year 1 programmes is made directly to CIT.

Admissions criteria and information on admission, registration and commencement of studies can be found in the [Student Admissions and Registration](#) area of the CIT website. Procedures for application and admission as well as general and programme-specific entry requirements are also detailed in the [CIT prospectus](#). Admissions requirements and procedures for international students are outlined in the [International Students](#) section of the website.

Procedures and guidelines for mature applicants are provided in the prospectus and on the [Mature Students](#) section of the CIT website.

Extensive information on the Institute's access procedures and supports for learners from under-represented groups, including members of ethnic minorities and learners presenting with disabilities or learning differences, can be accessed through the web pages of [CIT's Access & Disability Service](#). CIT also operates schemes for supported progression to higher education from designated DEIS schools ([Linked Schools Programme](#)) and further education colleges (Cork Colleges Progression Scheme).

Student induction is organised by the [AnSEO Student Engagement Office](#) as part of the Institute-wide [Good Start](#) programme. The [New Students](#) section on the MyCIT student portal also provides clear and detailed information on CIT specifically tailored to new students.

Progression

Eligible full-time continuing students are automatically enrolled for each new academic year. Eligible full-time students with programme options and graduates progressing to follow-on programmes at the next-higher NFQ level (e.g. from Level 7 to Level 8) are sent a registration form by the Admissions Office in early August.

General regulations for the progression between programme stages are contained in the [CIT Regulations for Modules and Programmes \(Marks and Standards\)](#).

The general requirements and procedures for transfer and progression between programmes at undergraduate level (in the 'ladder') system are contained in the [CIT prospectus](#). In addition, the Institute has published [Guidelines for Admission to NFQ Level 8 Degrees \(Post-NFQ Level 7 Award\)](#).

Suitability for Study and Student Welfare

CIT has achieved national and international recognition for its work in the area of student engagement and communication, led by its AnSEO Student Engagement Office in partnership with academic departments and the CIT Students' Union. One focal area of this work is the First Year Experience. Initiatives such as the [Good Start](#) programme and [Academic Success Coaching](#) aim to build engagement and proactively identify and support learners in need of early-stage intervention during their crucial first few weeks in college. New students challenged by the academic environment or the competing demands of study, work and/or their personal life are supported in acquiring tailored personal and academic success strategies. Unsure or wavering students are supported to systematically explore all available avenues, including alternative programme choices or viable alternatives to academic study, before they continue on a programme to which they are not well suited, limiting their chances of academic success, or else drop out without knowing what to do next.

In relation to learners experiencing other life issues, or creating such issues for others, which may fundamentally impede or negate their ability to continue in study or to safely and effectively practice their intended profession, [Fitness to Study](#) and [Fitness to Practice](#) policies have been implemented in Cork Institute of Technology. These policies are available from the main Institute website and the [MyCIT student portal](#).

Learners with grievances have recourse to a series of steps to resolve these through the Institute's formal [Student Grievance Procedure](#).

A critical element of the Student Grievance Procedure is the annual appointment of a [Student Ombudsman](#). The post holder will be an experienced member (or retired member) of academic staff. The Ombudsman's main functions relate to Stage 1 (informal grievance) and Stage 3 (grievance review) of the process. Throughout the different stages of the process, the Ombudsman acts in a mediatory or advisory capacity, rather than as an arbitrator. The vast majority of grievances are satisfactorily resolved the informal stage, but occasionally a grievance escalates to Stage 2, and a resolution is formally determined and recorded. If this resolution is subsequently appealed, the Ombudsman will convene a Grievance Review Panel to conduct a final hearing. In such a case, the Ombudsman (or her/his nominee) will act as Secretary to the panel meeting.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

In the two decades since CIT first established a dedicated RPL resource and began to develop processes to support the recognition of prior learning, a significant body of research and scholarship on RPL has been created at the Institute. Recent areas of investigation include EU-funded projects on the recognition of learning through volunteering and recognition of skills of migrants and refugees to support their integration into learning and work.

Candidates wishing to apply for entry, advanced entry, exemptions, module credit or indeed full awards on the basis of prior learning – be that formal or non-formal/informal learning – can do so in accordance with of CIT's [Policy Governing Recognition of Prior Learning](#).

RPL can be applied for in any valid CIT programme or module. Recognition of prior learning claims are made against complete modules, and applicants must demonstrate that all learning outcomes have been satisfactorily met to gain exemptions (in the case of prior certified learning) or module credit.

The extensive range of well-established RPL supports available to candidates and academic assessors through the Institute's [RPL Service](#) positions Cork Institute of Technology at the forefront of RPL

practice and policy nationally. A postgraduate-level module on RPL Practice and Pedagogy is available to staff and has also been offered successfully to staff of a number of ETBs.

Making and Conferring of Awards

Prior to attaining designated awarding body status, Cork Institute of Technology made awards at NFQ Levels 6 – 10, and conferred these awards upon successful graduates, in line with national [Policy and Criteria for Making Awards](#) as determined by QQI.

Following enactment of the remaining sections of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019 on 1 January 2020, the Institute may now determine its own awards and award standards up to NFQ Level 9 (Masters' level). However, it remains a [statutory requirement under the Amendment Act](#) – and equally as much an imperative of student-centred provision – that CIT awards continue to be “included within” the National Framework of Qualifications. Requisite new procedures to formally confirm NFQ alignment of awards to QQI are under consideration sectorally. With regard to specific award standards, the CIT Academic Council has adopted the existing [active QQI standards for higher education awards](#) as CIT standards for the sake of continuity. The discussion on awards and award standards will need to be resumed on establishment of the MTU.

In addition to the target award, many degree programmes offer a – generally embedded – exit award or awards. These may be applied for by learners who are not in a position to complete their studies towards the target award due to life circumstances. The majority of current exit awards are at Higher Certificate level, with some Ordinary Bachelors and Postgraduate Diplomas also offered as appropriate.

The principles governing the provision, validation and making of embedded and exit awards are set out in the [Policy on Exit and Embedded Awards in CIT Taught Programmes](#). Information on the exit awards available to deserving learners on specific programmes is provided in the [CIT prospectus](#).

To safeguard the good standing of CIT and the excellent reputation of its graduates now and in future, the Institute has adopted a [Policy on the Revocation of CIT Awards](#).

5. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

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

CIT has in place a comprehensive framework for the recruitment, induction, progression and professional development of its academic staff. This is supported by a set of policies, procedures and guidelines made available to staff by the [CIT Human Resources Office](#) on the CIT Staff Gateway.

The ongoing development of the professional and pedagogical competence of academic staff is furthermore an important part of the activities of the [CIT Teaching & Learning Unit \(TLU\)](#). CPD offerings of the Teaching & Learning Unit range from the provision of a modular [MA in Teaching & Learning in Higher Education](#) and a wide range of short staff development seminars to seed funding for teaching & learning initiatives, facilitation of learning communities (e.g. for lecturing staff delivering the Institute-wide *CIT* module, see [Section 6](#) below), and networking events, all offered in formats designed to maximise ease of access. In addition, the TLU is engaged in ongoing pedagogical research and in piloting new development projects, such as a recently devised early career staff mentoring scheme.

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

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

CIT's strategic mission is to provide student-centred, career-focused education and research for the personal, professional and intellectual development of the student and for the benefit of the broader society in the region and beyond. The Institute's approach to teaching and learning is designed to enable and foster the most efficient attainment of its mission, both through the overall structural framework for delivery and the individual methodologies and supports for teaching, enabling learning and assessment.

Flexible Learning Opportunities

Given CIT's sectorally unique breadth of disciplines and programme offerings and its diverse intake of learners, inclusive access to higher education is, and will remain, one of CIT's key commitments and strategic priorities.

One means by which CIT has delivered on this commitment is the strategic expansion of flexible learning opportunities, in particular the Institute's distance learning portfolio. Building on a state-of-the-art e-learning infrastructure and the dedicated pedagogical and technological supports of the [Department of Technology-Enhanced Learning](#), CIT offers a significant [portfolio of flexible online programmes](#), both degrees (at Higher Diploma and Masters level) and shorter certificate courses.

The online provision complements and extends the reach of the Institute's traditionally strong suite of [Continuing Education courses](#), with access and delivery mechanisms that are tailored to the needs of learners unable to participate in standard full-time programmes. A range of short courses developed in consultation with employers and delivered both online and in more traditional formats are furthermore [offered by CIT under Springboard+](#) or in conjunction with local development projects such as [WREN](#).

Last but not least, CIT [Extended Campus](#) works with numerous regional and national organisations interested in developing their workforce and adding to their employees' skills sets. CIT Extended Campus services include Learning Clinics where Extended Campus staff and industry partners together identify organisational learning needs and the programme offerings and delivery strategies best suited to meeting these. Solutions identified may include existing, 'off-the-shelf' programmes as well as collaborative development of customised learning pathways which utilizing modular 'building blocks'; workplace or e-supported delivery; and the integration of learning gained at the workplace through CIT's well-established [RPL and WPL](#) (work-based learning) mechanisms.

Teaching and Learning Strategy Embedded in Programme Design

The Institute's [principles for modular programme design](#) embed certain teaching and learning precepts which are fundamental to the mission and pedagogy of CIT. The attendant design features appear most pronouncedly in full-time undergraduate programmes, where they are aimed at supporting learners new to higher education in transitioning to third-level study and taking responsibility for charting and developing their own learning.

Each ab-initio undergraduate degree programme offered by CIT must include the Institute-wide common [CIT – Creativity, Innovation & Teamwork](#) module in its first semester. The *CIT* Module aims to equip learners with the skills and knowledge for a successful engagement in third-level education and subsequent life-long learning opportunities. Delivery of *Creativity, Innovation & Teamwork* is adapted by each department to the particular context of the discipline, so that no two instances will be exactly alike. Common to all deliveries however is the focus on developing independent learning, thinking and reasoning skills, team-working abilities, and of basic academic writing and referencing skills as appropriate to the field of study. Learners also develop a vision of their ideal career path to set them on the road towards taking ownership of their learning journey.

Most advanced programme stages include both a cognate elective or electives and a Free Choice option. The inclusion of Free Choice in the majority of undergraduate programme stages is designed to further encourage learners to take responsibility for their own learning and their personal and professional development. While many learners avail of cognate modules related to their own specialism as their Free Choice, others opt to broaden their educational experience by taking a module from outside their own field, be it in the form of a language or entrepreneurship module or in pursuit of a ‘niche’ interest, such as the choice of certain engineering modules on the part of music students. Though logistical or resource constraints will often limit the accessibility of modules offered by other Institute areas, the maintenance of the principle of choice as an enabler of competence development is an important one in the pedagogy underpinning the Institute’s modular model.

Learning through Engagement

In keeping with CIT’s mission and ethos, the Institute offers learners numerous opportunities to develop their personal and leadership skills through engagement and participation in activities and initiatives outside of their academic programme, be it through sport, the arts, societies, the CIT Students’ Union, Institute-wide [entrepreneurship competitions](#) such as the annual [CIT Prize for Innovation](#), the recently launched [CIT Innovation Challenge](#) or the [CIT APPrentice](#), or participation in governance through membership of programme boards or boards of study.

In connection with the activities coordinated by AnSEO – the Student Engagement Office, CIT has also validated a number of modules which formally capture, assess and certify the learning of students acting as [peer leaders](#) and [peer mentors](#) in the context of the PALS programme.

Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning in Modules and Programmes

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

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

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

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

In addition to external peer review, the Institute's quality assurance processes also require that each programme and module undergoes a detailed internal moderation process before it is proposed for (re-) validation. Internal moderation amongst others aims to establish that the teaching, learning and assessment strategies, both at module level and cumulatively at programme level, are sound and suited to the intended module and programme outcomes, programme stage and delivery mode; that the content, teaching & learning methodology and (re-)assessment strategy of each module are well aligned, mutually supportive and appropriate to the module credit weighting; and that learners receive appropriate formative feedback allowing them to improve their academic performance.

Finally, teaching, learning and assessment strategies are frequently the subject of professional accreditation or recognition processes which aim to ascertain that learners are exposed to strategies best suited to enabling their future professional success in the field.

A brief discussion of CIT's strategies and mechanisms for the development of its teaching staff with related links is provided in [Section 5](#) above.

7. Resources and Support (ESG 1.5)

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

Sources of Income and Budget Allocation

As a statutory entity under the *Institutes of Technology Acts 1992 – 2006*, Cork Institute of Technology is primarily dependent on funding received from the Higher Education Authority (HEA), the statutory planning and development body for higher education in Ireland.

The Institute's two main sources of income, a core grant from the HEA and student fees, are both linked to student numbers. The HEA core grant is based on the student number returns to the authority as part of CIT's annual submission of its Programmes & Budgets. This submission encompasses the previous year's draft accounts, the current year's forecast and the projected income and expenditure for the following four years. The annual budget is reviewed and approved by Institute Executive Board and the Finance Committee of Governing Body prior to submission to the authority.

CIT is statutorily obliged to return a balanced budget, with clear stipulations in the *IoT Acts* for a course of action to be taken in subsequent budgets in the event of a deficit.

Pay allocation is based on requirement and need. The non-pay budget for the academic faculties is allocated on the basis of the HEA-weighted projected student numbers in each discipline area. CIT has however adapted the allocation model to give faculties scope, within certain limits, to balance shortfalls in some areas with surpluses in others, in order to mitigate divergences of actual need from the needs projections inherent in the weightings. The annual budget for the central learning and career development resources and supports, including the CIT Libraries, the Academic Learning Centre and the Access & Disabilities Office, is allocated centrally as a portion of the HEA core grant, while the budget for the other student services, including the Careers & Counselling Service, is allocated on a per-head basis dependent on HEA student number returns.

CIT's financial statements are subject to annual audit by the Comptroller & Auditor General, internal financial controls are reviewed annually by the Institute's internal auditors, and tax may be the subject of a Revenue Commissioner audit. Various aspects of the financial management and governance of the Institute are also included in a schedule of internal audits determined by the Audit and Risk Committee of the Governing Body. A summary Finance Report is included in the [Annual Reports](#) published for each academic year.

Research Funding

All research income is competitively generated, through funding applications to national and international funding agencies for specific research projects under relevant funding calls. The CIT Research Office and the Innovation & Enterprise Office provide support for the research community with regard to the dissemination of funding opportunities and the completion of funding applications.

Quality Assurance of Programme Resources

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

Given the budgetary constraints within which Irish higher education institutions have been operating, a judicious use of efficiencies has been a crucial success factor in new programme development. This has been made possible by CIT's [modularised and semesterised delivery model](#) which allows suitable modules to be delivered across a number of programmes. The Institute has thus been able to remain sufficiently agile in response to market demand for new programme offerings, particularly in the area of new postgraduate and CPD offerings, despite many years of contracting public funding.

The sufficiency of the programme resources and supports also forms part of the criteria of [programmatic review](#). During the site visit peer review panels will discuss the adequacy of the resources and supports in the meetings with programme staff, students/graduates and other stakeholders, and will usually also tour the relevant facilities.

Quality Assurance of Central Learning Resources and Student Supports

The ongoing review and development of the quality, suitability and performance of the academic learning resources and supports of the Institute, including the CIT libraries, virtual learning environment, and the services of the Academic Learning Centre, fall within the remit of the Learning Resources Committee of Academic Council.

The academic review and development work of the committee is complemented by audits determined by the Audit and Risk Committee of Governing Body as part of its annual Internal Audit Scheme, and by periodic service quality reviews variously initiated by the individual units themselves.

8. Information Management (ESG 1.7)

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

Operational Information

From a governance perspective, a set of key performance data and summary statements on developments in the areas of academic provision and supports, engagement activities, finance (including audited accounts), administration and staffing for Cork Institute of Technology are collated and published by the Office of the President on behalf of Governing Body as part of its Annual Reports to the HEA. Annual Reports for foregoing years are published in the [Reports, Plans and Policies](#) section of the CIT Website.

In the context of programme quality assurance, the presentation and analysis of relevant statistical data as well as qualitative information from internal and external sources (such as surveys, focus groups, industry advisory boards, literature etc.) is a key component of the self-evaluation phase within each of the core QA processes ([Validation Review](#); [Annual Programme Status Review](#) – see esp. [Policy Appendix B](#); [Programmatic Review](#)).

Core learner, graduate and staff data are collated centrally in the Institute's Banner Student and CORE HR Staff Records Systems. Relevant Banner and CORE data are made available to authorised users in the faculties and the central administration for purposes of managing and quality assuring the provision and related supports as necessary. Examination records are kept and processed securely on a separate server. The recent introduction of CIT's bespoke MAXe exam paper management system has also enabled ease of tracking and analysis of exam paper submission and review statistics. Facilities usage is managed and monitored and managed through different systems for a variety of purposes, including timetabling, energy management, etc. The central Institute data repositories are supplemented by 'special purpose' CRM databases maintained by particular Institute functions, e.g. the CIT Alumni Office.

Increasingly, as systems capacity is improving, the preparation and provision of statistical data which had to be carried out manually previously is being automated. Thus, programme performance data considered as part of the Annual Programme Status Review is pre-loaded into the APSR report templates, which can be accessed by authorised users via the Institute's Enterprise Reporting Portal.

Data Protection and Information Management

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force on May 25, 2018, in all countries of the European Union, replacing the existing data protection framework under the EU Data Protection Directive. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has increased the obligations and responsibilities for the Institute in how it collects, uses and protects personal data.

At present, the Institute is progressing towards achieving and confirming full compliance with GDPR, in accordance with an institutional implementation plan which covers governance; CIT's documentation framework; personal data management processes, training and awareness; and technological capability. New procedures such as Data Protection Impact Assessments have been introduced, but will take a certain amount of time to embed as routine institutional processes.

A suite of recently approved, GDPR-compliant data protection policies, developed in the context of a THEA (Technological Higher Education Association) sectoral project, has been published in the [Reports, Plans and Policies section](#) of the CIT website. Work on ensuring that the institutional requirements under GDPR are adequately reflected in other CIT policies and procedures is ongoing. Implementation of GDPR across the Institute is overseen by the CIT Data Protection Officer.

In addition to the GDPR-related duties, the Data Protection Officer also processes any freedom of information requests made to CIT. A log of FOI requests and FOI Model Publication Scheme are accessible on the [Freedom of Information section](#) on the Institute website.

9. Self-evaluation and Monitoring (ESG 1.9)

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

Ongoing monitoring and regular review of the programme provision are central elements of the internal quality assurance system of higher education providers in the European Higher Education Area.

[Periodic Review of Programmes](#)

Periodic review of programmes at Cork Institute of Technology – called ‘Programmatic Review’ following long-standing sectoral usage – encompasses, as a minimum, a thorough self-evaluation of the academic unit hosting the complement of programmes under review, followed by a site visit from a panel of independent external experts with representation from the CIT Registrar’s Office. Each review stage generates a detailed report. A positive overall recommendation in the report of the peer review panel forms the basis for revalidation of the programmes by the CIT Academic Council.

The periodic review of programmes at Cork Institute of Technology is governed by CIT’s [Academic Policy on Programmatic Review](#).

[Annual Programme Status Review](#)

Continuous monitoring of the academic programmes is carried out by the individual programme boards. The boards report annually on programme development and enhancement measures, guided by the CIT [Policy and Procedure for the Annual Programme Status Review \(APSR\)](#). To support and guide programme boards, the Institute’s Enterprise Reporting Portal provides authorised users with a standardised report template for each programme. Each template is pre-populated with key performance data for the relevant programme drawn down automatically from the Banner student record system (see the Sample Template for Programme Review Report (CAO) in [Policy Appendix B](#)). In their analysis, the boards consider qualitative feedback from different sources – such as external examiner reports – as well as a range of quantitative performance indicators (applications and acceptances, enrolment and retention, student and graduate performance).

Evaluation of the Student Experience

The key instrument for the evaluation of the student experience is the annual [Irish Survey of Student Engagement \(ISSE\)](#), in which all public higher education providers in Ireland have been participating since its inception in 2013. The outcomes of the ISSE are analysed by the Institute and discussed by the Academic Council and other relevant units. This comprehensive national learner survey is complemented by various local instruments, such as focus groups organised by AnSEO – the Student Engagement Office in connection with student engagement initiatives. The HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey is also carried out by the Institute, and the results are made available to the faculties for analysis.

Internal Audit and Other Quality Reviews

At the level of institutional governance, the evaluation of the programme provision is complemented by an annual schedule of Internal Audits commissioned by the Audit and Risk Committee of Governing Body. Internal audits look at all areas, functions and services of the Institute and are carried out by external consultants appointed on a sectorial basis.

In addition to the Internal Audit cycles and sectoral reviews commissioned by the HEA, specific Institute areas and functions also undergo voluntary external review and ongoing self-monitoring to benchmark the quality of institutional structures and processes against internationally recognised standards such as the ISO.

Thus, CIT maintains ISO 50001 certification for its Energy Management Systems.

In addition, the management and quality system of CIT's constituent National Maritime College of Ireland (NMCI), which due to its private-public partnership structure and the combined effects of different regulatory and academic quality obligations faces challenges of unusual breadth, depth and complexity, are certified under the ISO 9001-2015 standard, making NMCI the only third-level institution on the island of Ireland to hold this quality management certification.

10. Stakeholder Engagement (ESG 1.1)

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

Frequent and intensive liaison with external stakeholders is a constant feature of CIT's activities and programme provision, be it through institution-level participation in national and regional fora such as the [South West Regional Skills Forum](#), the formal engagements of relevant central Institute functions and offices, such as the Office of the Vice-President for External Affairs, the [Extended Campus](#) or the [CIT Alumni Office](#), the stakeholder engagement activities of the faculties, or informally through the extensive network of regional, national or international contacts built up by CIT's academic and research community.

With regard to academic programme quality assurance, externality is a central element in all core processes.

Every programme validation panel, be it for programmes leading to [non-major](#) or [major awards](#), must include independent external experts. In keeping with the career-focused mission of CIT, an appropriate balance between academic and professional expertise is to be sought in the selection. Input from external experts must also be obtained on the content and structure of [new modules to be submitted for approval](#).

In the first, strategic phase of programmatic review, [programme review panels](#) must include a minimum of three external experts with appropriate strategic and management experience. For larger schools, this number will often be greater to achieve adequate coverage of the discipline areas represented and their specific strategic concerns. Phase 2 panels, which are tasked with conducting the detailed programme reviews, include at least two external members, one academic and one representative of industry or the professions. Normally, several Phase 2 panels will be formed to review the programme portfolio of each academic department within a school to ensure that each programme or group of cognate programmes benefits from in-depth academic and professional expertise in its own field.

Schools and departments are asked to provide information on stakeholder feedback in submission documents for new validations and in the self-evaluation reports collated at unit and programme level for periodic review. Programme boards are prompted to report on stakeholder engagements, feedback and any proposed actions arising from these as part of the Annual Programme Status Review. Templates and guidelines outlining the types of stakeholder inputs relevant or required are made available to departments via the staff Gateway server.

Some departments respectively schools have also established formal professional/industry advisory boards or focus groups which enable an ongoing formal exchange with external stakeholders on the quality and operation of programmes.

The involvement of external examiners is regulated under the Institute's regulations for the assessment and examination of [undergraduate](#) and [postgraduate](#) programmes. Each document sets out detailed procedures for the selection and appointment of the externs and for their role and responsibilities in the examination process. The undergraduate regulations are complemented by published guidelines for the [selection and appointment of external examiners](#) and supplementary policies such as the [Policy on Conflict of Interest](#).

11. Engagement with Other Bodies (ESG 1.1)

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

Engagements with Higher Education Agencies

The engagement of Cork Institute of Technology with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), the two statutory agencies with legal and regulatory responsibilities for the Irish higher education sector, is governed by the statutes, national strategies and government policies which determine the remit of each authority vis-à-vis the Irish higher education providers.

CIT maintains an ongoing formal and semi-formal engagement with the HEA which includes an annual programmes and budgets process (see [Section 7](#) above) and an annual strategic dialogue as well as other HEA-sponsored programmes, initiatives and functional audits.

Engagements with QQI range from formal, cyclical external reviews of the whole Institute to semi-formal interactions of the agency with particular CIT functions or individual Institute members in the context of specific quality initiatives or expertise requirements. QQI is the agency with statutory responsibility for the 'CINNTE' review (as it is termed in its present format), a seven-yearly review of the effectiveness and implementation of the institutional quality assurance mechanisms. The CINNTE review will draw on the quality information collated through the annual institutional quality reporting process, accompanied by cyclical dialogue meetings between the authority and Institute senior management with a responsibility for quality.

Even before CIT became a designated awarding body in January 2020, formal interactions in the context of QQI's role as an awarding body had become less and less frequent, due to CIT's extensive delegation of authority to make awards at all NFQ levels. The enactment of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019, and even more so future MTU designation, will change the relationship in respect of QQI's quality assurance functions, too, with increasingly broader primary responsibilities for quality assurance and enhancement functions resting upon the institution itself.

Engagement with Professional Regulators or Representative Bodies

Given CIT's career-oriented mission, CIT departments across a wide range of disciplines engage with one or more professional, statutory and regulatory bodies to secure and maintain programme recognition or accreditation, thus permitting graduates to apply for professional membership, enter into or obtain exemptions from certain professional examinations, or apply for inclusion on a professional register, depending on the specific field and professional or regulatory body.

Institute Participation in Professional Quality Assurance Mechanisms

For the most part, professional bodies, including Engineers Ireland, the Royal Institute of Architects in Ireland, the Chartered Institute of Building, the Academy of Clinical Science and Laboratory Medicine and accountancy bodies such as Chartered Accountants Ireland, CIMA, ACCA and CPA, to name but a

few, operate stringent professional quality criteria and QA processes with regard to the recognition of academic institutions and programmes. CIT engages with these processes to the furthest extent possible in order to maintain the highest professional standards in its programme provision and to maximise the future professional opportunities of its learners. The Institute regularly hosts site visits from professional body delegations and endeavours to enable and ensure adequate Institute representation, both from academic staff involved in programme delivery and central Institute functions as relevant, at all relevant professional accreditation events.

Involvement of Professional Bodies in CIT Quality Assurance Mechanisms

Information on the professional recognition or accreditation status of a programme and a summary presentation of the history of professional accreditation events forms part of the programme information required from departments for and considered in [programmatic review](#).

Particularly in the case of statutory organisations such as TÚSLA, or regulatory bodies such as the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, which through its Marine Survey Office regulates entry into the marine professions, CIT seeks to involve the regulator, as far as is feasible, at the programme design stage as well as in the academic quality review of the programme and its operation. With regard to the latter, the Academic Quality Enhancement Office normally invites the relevant statutory or regulatory body to nominate an appropriate person to act as a professional member of the peer review panel. Participation of a member of the regulatory body in programme review ensures both that the regulator develops a detailed awareness of CIT's academic regulations and quality procedures, and that CIT in turn is made aware of any potential regulatory issues arising from the proposed programme specification and has the opportunity to address these prior to the academic (re-)validation of the programme.

Public Information on Professional Accreditation and Exemptions

Information on professional accreditation, exemptions and follow-on professional examinations available for each programme features prominently in the [CIT prospectuses](#) and the public website, and for many potential applicants is a decisive factor in programme choice. Where Continuing Education courses lead to a professional qualification given either in addition to the academic award, or, in some cases, as the only certification requested by and made to graduates, the awarding body and certification offered are clearly indicated, as are any relevant application mechanisms and deadlines for exemptions or subsequent professional examinations.

Staff Engagement

Most academic staff members of the Institute are also active members of one or more relevant professional, statutory or regulatory bodies within their field. Institute staff or departments are also engaged in driving forward the professionalization of their respective sectors and contributing to the development of professional or academic standards within their field on behalf of different professional and statutory bodies and also QQI.

QA arrangements for engagements with other awarding bodies, as well as academic quality assurance agencies other than QQI, in the context and for the purpose of collaborative programme provision are outlined in [Section 15](#) below.

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

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

The main repository for public information about Cork Institute of Technology is the [CIT website](#). Amongst others, this offers a [Find a Course](#) section allowing prospective students to obtain the current approved specifications for CIT programmes and modules, as well a section detailing the procedures and current deadlines for [admissions and registration](#). CIT also makes available a range of policies and reports related to the governance, management and quality assurance activities of the Institute, including [Governing Body meeting agendas and digests](#); [academic regulations and policies](#); [general policies, plans and reports](#); and reports on [validations](#) and [programme reviews](#).

These online resources are complemented by information provided through a variety of printed or downloadable programme literature, including the [CIT Prospectus of Full-Time Programmes](#) and the [Continuing Education Prospectus](#).

Information on the Institute and its portfolio of programmes is also disseminated via different social media outlets (including for instance [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) or [YouTube](#)) and regular information events held both on campus and in an outreach format, such as the [CIT Open Day](#), [Postgraduate Fair](#), [Mature Student Evenings](#) or the [CIT STEM roadshows](#).

The responsible office for collating the CIT prospectuses, managing the CIT website and overseeing the provision of public information on the Institute's social media channels is the [CIT Marketing Unit](#).

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

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



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

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

With the coming into force of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019, the Irish Institutes of Technology became designated awarding bodies for all awards to Masters' level (NFQ Level 9). With regard to CIT's programme provision up to this level, DA procedures thus no longer apply.

DA procedures continue to apply to doctoral awards made by the Institutes, however, which remain under delegated authority. CIT has delegated authority to make doctoral awards in the fields of Electronic, Manufacturing and Mechanical Engineering, Computing, and Physical and Life Sciences.

Continued delegation of authority for PhD awards in specific fields of study remains predicated on the initial achievement and maintenance of general delegation of authority to make awards. This is the backdrop before which the following overview of CIT's DA history and status is presented.

The most recent re-affirmation of CIT's delegated authority status by QQI, prior to becoming a DAB, occurred in July 2017, when QQI formally confirmed its approval of CIT's quality assurance procedures, including its procedures for programme approval and review and their alignment with QQI's [Core Validation Policy](#) and [Sector-Specific Quality Guidelines for Institutes of Technology](#) (July 2016). This concluded a process of 're-engagement' of the authority with its obligatory providers set in train after the commencement of the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012*.

Delegation of authority pertained to cohort-based taught programmes in the first place. Approval to offer research degree programmes, and subsequently delegation of authority to make research awards, initially needed to be applied for on a per-level, per-discipline basis for both Masters by Research and PhDs, and this still applies to doctoral research degree programmes offered by the IoT sector.

In late 2013/14, on the strength of its track record in research degree provision under delegated authority, underpinned by a coherent institutional research infrastructure and intentionally developed research strategy, CIT applied to be reviewed for general delegation of authority for Masters by Research awards, as foreseen in saved (HETAC) research degree programme policy and criteria. At the time, QQI was redeveloping its DA policy and procedures for research awards, but was amenable to CIT's preference for completing a full external review under saved policy, enabling the Institute to avail of a devolved review process. An independent panel of national and international experts found that CIT met respectively showed the capacity to meet, as applicable, the conditions for delegation of authority to make Masters by Research awards in all disciplines.

Shortly thereafter, QQI agreed a new Sectoral Protocol for the Awarding of Research Master's Degrees [...] under delegated authority with the Technological Higher Education Association (then IoTI), which was based on institutional self-evaluation against the criteria listed in the protocol rather than independent external review. Despite having already achieved delegated of authority for all Level 9 research awards under saved policy, on adoption of the sectoral protocol CIT confirmed that its

processes for the development and quality assurance of Level 9 research degree provision were fully compatible with the protocol also.

Also in 2014, CIT's procedures for the quality assurance of collaborative provision were confirmed to be in keeping with the 2014 Sectoral Protocol on Joint Awards.

Prior to adoption of the Joint Awards protocol, CIT had already adopted a [Policy on Collaborative Provision and Joint Awards](#). Approval of this policy by QQI's predecessor, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), enabled CIT to gain delegated authority for joint awards within the scope of its existing DA with University College Cork in December 2011, and for joint awards in the area of media with Hochschule Darmstadt, Germany, effective February 2013.

Irrespective of the source of the awarding authority, each joint award made by CIT is established via a formal Joint Awarding Agreement with the relevant partner institution, as well as any national awarding authorities whose involvement is required. Consortium Agreements covering the detailed programme quality assurance arrangements are in place for all collaborative programmes, whether leading to joint or a single awards (see also [Section 15](#) below).

For collaborative programmes leading to joint awards, appropriate joint mechanisms for programme validation, operation, ongoing monitoring and periodic review are in operation, including Joint Management Boards and, in the case of UCC, an overarching Joint Board. All of these mechanisms exist in the context of a wider approved QA infrastructure which encompasses published quality assurance provisions for the purposes of establishing, ascertaining, maintaining and improving the quality of education, training, research and related services and provisions for access, transfer and progression in accordance with relevant legislation.

15. Collaborative Provision (ESG 1.1)

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

The [CIT Policy and Procedures for Collaborative Provision and Joint Awards](#) is published on the CIT website.

Arrangements take a variety of forms, ranging from provision and assessment of CIT modules and short courses by CIT staff members in off-campus industry locations to fully-formed joint national or transnational awards.

Collaborative programmes with higher education providers are governed by Consortium Agreements which specify, in detail, the award, award standards and awarding body; programme specification; arrangements for programme delivery, assessment, quality assurance and, where appropriate, making of the award; available student supports, and the arrangements for learner protection and discontinuation of the agreement.

Arrangements wherein professional or industry partners contribute in some way to the provision of a CIT programme, be it through recruitment of a work-based learner cohort, provision of facilities or input into programme design or delivery, are equally governed by detailed agreements. Templates for these are made available by the Institute's legal function through the Extended Campus. In such a case, CIT is identified as the programme provider, and the quality assurance arrangements are those of Cork Institute of Technology.

In addition to the above, collaborative programmes leading to joint awards require that an overarching Institute-level Memorandum of Agreement establishing the joint award is in place before the detailed operational arrangements can be entered into. CIT currently offers several joint awards at Honours Bachelor and Masters level with University College Cork, and for many years offered a suite of transnational joint awards in the area of media design with Hochschule (University of Applied Sciences) Darmstadt, Germany.

16. Additional Notes

Any additional notes can be entered here.

17. Internal Review Schedule

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

Year	2018/19
Areas/Units	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. National Maritime College of Ireland, Phase 1 (Strategic Review) - * <i>postponed</i> 2. School of Building & Civil Engineering, Phase 1 (Strategic Review) 3. School of Building & Civil Engineering, Phase 2 (Programme Review) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Department of Architecture (Architectural Technology / Interior Architecture programmes); b. Department of Construction; c. Department of Civil, Structural & Environmental Engineering 4. Finalisation of Phase 2 (Programme Review) of the Department of Physical Sciences (desk-based)
Number	4
Link(s) to Publications	Phase 2 Panel and Implementation Report for Chemistry Programmes; Phase 2 Panel and Implementation Report for Physics Programmes; Phase 1 Panel Report for the School of Building & Civil Engineering and School Response; Phase 2 Panel and Implementation Report for Architectural Technology & Interior Architecture; Phase 2 Panel and Implementation Report for Civil, Structural & Environmental Engineering.

Year	2019/20
Areas/Units	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. National Maritime College of Ireland, Phase 1 (Strategic Review) 2. National Maritime College of Ireland, Phase 2 (Programme Review)

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. School of Mechanical, Electrical & Process Engineering, Phase 1 (Strategic Review) 4. School of Mechanical, Electrical & Process Engineering, Phase 2 (Programme Review) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Department of Electrical & Electronic Engineering
Number	4
Link(s) to Publications	

Year	2020/21
Areas/Units	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School of Mechanical, Electrical & Process Engineering, Phase 2 (Programme Review) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Department of Mechanical, Biomedical & Manufacturing Engineering; b. Department of Process, Energy & Transport Engineering; c. Centre of Craft Studies 2. School of Business, Phase 1 (Strategic Review) 3. School of Humanities, Phase 1 (Strategic Review) 4. CIT Crawford College of Art & Design, Phase 1 (Strategic Review) 5. CIT Cork School of Music, Phase 1 (Strategic Review) 6. School of Business, Phase 2 (Programme Review) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Department of Accounting & Information Systems; b. Department of Management & Enterprise; c. Department of Marketing & International Business; d. Department of Organisation & Professional Development 7. School of Humanities, Phase 2 (Programme Review) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Department of Applied Social Studies; b. Department of Sport, Leisure & Childhood Studies; c. Department of Tourism & Hospitality 8. CIT Crawford College of Art & Design, Phase 2 (Programme Review) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Department of Arts in Health & Education; b. Department of Fine Art & Applied Art; c. Department of Media Communications (incl. programmes operated by the Dep't of Technology-Enhanced Learning)

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	9. CIT Cork School of Music, Phase 2 (Programme Review) (2 panels)
Number	19
Link(s) to Publications	

Year	2021/22
Areas/Units	CINNTE Review No current visibility of programme review schedule due to MTU process
Number	
Link(s) to Publications	

Year	2022/23
Areas/Units	No current visibility of programme review schedule due to MTU process
Number	
Link(s) to Publications	

18. Engagement with Third Parties Section

Details of engagement with third parties, including:

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

1. Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of Arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	30
Awarding Bodies	6
QA Bodies	

First Type of Arrangement (PRSB/Awarding Body/QA Body):	PRSB
Name of Body:	Engineers Ireland
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p><i>Programme Titles</i></p> <p>Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Mechanical Engineering;</p> <p>Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Biomedical Engineering.</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p>https://www.cit.ie/course/cr108;</p> <p>https://www.cit.ie/course/CR520;</p> <p>http://www.engineersireland.ie/services/accredited-courses/charteredengineer.aspx</p>
Date of Accreditation or Last Review	02-06-2017
Next Review Year	2020

Second Type of Arrangement (PRSB/Awarding Body/QA Body):	PRSB
Name of Body:	Engineers Ireland
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p><i>Programme Titles</i></p> <p>Bachelor of Engineering in Mechanical Engineering;</p> <p>Bachelor of Engineering in Biomedical Engineering.</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p>https://www.cit.ie/course/CR071;</p> <p>https://www.cit.ie/course/CR075;</p> <p>http://www.engineersireland.ie/services/accredited-courses/associateengineer.aspx.</p>
Date of Accreditation or Last Review	14-11-2014
Next Review Year	2020

Third Type of Arrangement (PRSB/Awarding Body/QA Body):	PRSB
Name of Body:	Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p><i>Programme Titles</i></p> <p>Higher Certificate in Science in Nautical Studies;</p> <p>Bachelor of Science in Nautical Studies;</p> <p>Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Nautical Science;</p> <p>Bachelor of Engineering in Marine Engineering;</p> <p>Bachelor of Engineering in Marine Electrotechnology.</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p>https://www.nmci.ie/undergraduatecourses;</p>

	<p>https://www.gov.ie/pdf/19838/?page=1 (Marine Notice No. 19 of 2019 / Schedule of Examinations for Certificate of Competency for Deck Officers, Marine Engineer Officers, Skippers and Second Hands in the year commencing 2nd September 2019);</p> <p>https://www.gov.ie/pdf/21700/?page=1 (Marine Notice No. 32 of 2018 / Schedule of Examinations for Certificate of Competency for Deck Officers, Marine Engineer Officers, Skippers and Second Hands in the year commencing 1st September 2018).</p>
Date of Accreditation or Last Review	n/a
Next Review Year	n/a

Fourth Type of Arrangement (PRSB/Awarding Body/QA Body):	PRSB
Name of Body:	Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland (RIAI)
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p><i>Programme Titles</i></p> <p>Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Architecture [joint award with University College Cork];</p> <p>Master of Architecture [joint award with University College Cork].</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p>https://www.ucc.ie/en/architecture/;</p> <p>https://www.cit.ie/course/CK606;</p> <p>https://www.cit.ie/course/CRCARCH9;</p> <p>https://www.riai.ie/careers-in-architecture/education/accredited-programmes.</p>
Date of Accreditation or Last Review	07-09-2018
Next Review Year	2023

Fifth Type of Arrangement (PRSB/Awarding Body/QA Body):	Awarding Body
Name of Body:	Accounting Technicians Ireland
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p><i>Programme Titles</i></p> <p>Accounting Technicians Ireland, Years 1 and 2.</p> <p>This is a tuition-only arrangement. The Accounting Technicians Ireland examinations are conducted by the professional body, which is also the awarding body for all ATI qualifications.</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p>https://www.cit.ie/course/CRBIATI6;</p> <p>http://www.numbersindna.ie/locations/.</p>
Date of Accreditation or Last Review	n/a
Next Review Year	n/a

2. Collaborative Provision

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

Type of Arrangement	Total Number
Joint Research Degrees	1
Joint/double/multiple awards	5
Collaborative Programmes	20
Franchise Programmes	0
Linked providers (DABs only)	0

First Collaborative Provision (Joint Research Degree or Joint/double/multiple awards or Collaborative Programmes or Franchise Programmes or Linked providers [DABs only]):	Joint/double/multiple awards
Name of Body (bodies):	University College Cork (Joint Centre: Cork Centre for Architectural Education)
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p><i>Programme Titles</i></p> <p>Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Architecture; Master of Architecture.</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p>https://www.ucc.ie/en/architecture/; https://www.ucc.ie/en/architecture/programme/overview/; https://www.cit.ie/course/CK606; https://www.cit.ie/course/CRCARCH9.</p>

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Date of Last Review	07-09-2018
Next Review Year	2023

Second Collaborative Provision:	Joint/double/multiple awards
Name of Body (bodies):	University College Cork
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p><i>Programme Title</i></p> <p>Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Biomedical Science</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p>https://www.cit.ie/course/CR320;</p> <p>https://www.ucc.ie/en/cr320/.</p>
Date of Last Review	29-03-2017
Next Review Year	2022

Third Collaborative Provision:	Joint/double/multiple awards
Name of Body (bodies):	University College Cork
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p><i>Programme Title</i></p> <p>Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Industrial Physics</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p>https://www.cit.ie/course/CK409;</p> <p>https://www.ucc.ie/en/ck409/.</p>
Date of Last Review	26-05-2017
Next Review Year	2022

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Fourth Collaborative Provision:	Joint/double/multiple awards
Name of Body (bodies):	University College Cork
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p><i>Programme Title</i></p> <p>Professional Master of Education (Art & Design)</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p>https://www.ucc.ie/en/ckd25/</p>
Date of Last Review	31-07-2013
Next Review Year	2020

Fifth Collaborative Provision:	Joint Research Degrees
Name of Body (bodies):	University College Cork
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p>Doctor of Philosophy</p> <p>There are currently 3 postgraduate students pursuing joint doctoral studies in the area of Biological Sciences. Each programme is governed by a separate research collaboration agreement signed by the collaborating institutions on joint review and agreement of the research proposal and the proposed specific arrangements for the doctoral research programme.</p> <p>The agreements are dated 7 Nov. 2018.</p> <p>The overarching Memorandum of Agreement governing joint awards between Cork Institute of Technology and University College Cork is dated 1 Nov. 2010.</p>
Date of Last Review	
Next Review Year	

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Sixth Collaborative Provision:	Collaborative Programmes
Name of Body (bodies):	The Bessborough Centre, Cork, and the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, UK
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p><i>Programme Title</i></p> <p>Certificate in Advanced Clinical Practice with Children and Families (Special Purpose Award, NFQ Level 9, 30 ECTS credits)</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p>https://www.cit.ie/course/CRHCPCF9</p>
Date of Last Review	09-06-2016
Next Review Year	2021

Seventh Collaborative Provision:	Collaborative Programmes
Name of Body (bodies):	Children’s Therapy Centre, Ballymore, Mullingar
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p><i>Programme Title</i></p> <p>Certificate in Principles and Theory of Art Therapy</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p>https://www.cit.ie/course/CRAATPY8Y1; http://childrenstherapycentre.ie/principles-of-art-therapy-certificate/.</p>
Date of Last Review	28-04-2016
Next Review Year	2021

Eighth Collaborative Provision:	Collaborative Programmes
Name of Body (bodies):	Teagasc
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p><i>Programme Title</i></p> <p>Higher Certificate in Science in Agriculture;</p>

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	<p>Bachelor of Science in Agriculture; Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Agriculture.</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p>https://www.cit.ie/course/CR010; https://www.cit.ie/course/CRBAGRI8.</p>
Date of Last Review	13-04-2016
Next Review Year	2021

Ninth Collaborative Provision:	Collaborative Programmes
Name of Body (bodies):	IoT Consortium in collaboration with the Irish MedTech Association (Lead Provider: GMIT)
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p><i>Programme Title</i></p> <p>Higher Certificate in Engineering in Manufacturing Engineering [Apprentice Mode]; Bachelor of Engineering in Manufacturing Engineering [Apprentice Mode].</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p>https://courses.cit.ie/index.cfm/page/course/courseId/1112; http://www.apprenticeship.ie/en/apprentice/Pages/Manufacturing-Engineering.aspx</p>
Date of Last Review	17-02-2017
Next Review Year	2022

Tenth Collaborative Provision:	Collaborative Programmes
Name of Body (bodies):	IoT Consortium (Lead Provider: IT Tralee)

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Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p><i>Programme Title</i></p> <p>Bachelor of Arts in Culinary Arts (with embedded Higher Certificate exit award) [Apprentice Mode]; Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Culinary Arts [Apprentice Mode].</p> <p><i>Links to Publications</i></p> <p>https://courses.cit.ie/index.cfm/page/course/courseId/2057; http://www.apprenticeship.ie/en/apprentice/Pages/ChefDePartie.aspx.</p>
Date of Last Review	19-05-2018
Next Review Year	2023

Parts 2-6

Institution-led QA – Annual Information for 2018/19

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

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Part 2: Institution-led QA – Annual

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

Section 2.1: Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Developments

2.1.1 Evolution of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Systems

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

Cork Institute of Technology continually develops and refines its quality systems to ensure that its taught and research degree programme offerings, research and engagement activities and student and stakeholder services and supports are of the highest possible quality and meet or exceed national and international benchmark standards, underpinned and supported by a robust and sustainable institutional infrastructure.

Many developments to CIT's policies and systems in the reporting period were developmental and built on earlier stages of ongoing multi-year change processes, such as the continuing 'digitisation' of systems and procedures across all Institute areas. Major new developments included achievement of Athena SWAN Bronze Award status and the replacement of the Blackboard learning management system, on termination of the existing licencing period, by the Canvas Virtual Learning Environment.

Summary of Key Developments in 2018/19

- **Achievement of Athena SWAN Bronze Award**

In November 2018, following a lengthy period of self-study, CIT submitted an application for the Athena SWAN Bronze Award. The Athena SWAN process commits the Institute to the systematic identification and removal of barriers which contribute to gender under-representation. Achievement of a Bronze Award is a prerequisite for continued institutional eligibility for research funding from 2019 onwards, so a successful outcome to this application was mission-critical with regard to any of CIT's strategic goals related to research and innovation. In May 2019, Cork Institute of Technology was proud to be awarded the Bronze award on first application.

- **Approval of CIT Academic Strategy 2018 – 2023**

An [Academic Strategy for Cork Institute of Technology](#) for the period 2018 – 2023 was approved by the CIT Academic Council in March 2019 and formally launched by An Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Simon Coveney in April 2019. Development of the Academic Strategy – initially

conceptualised as an Academic Plan – had commenced in 2017/18, and was reported on in the Annual Institutional Quality Report for that reporting period.

- **Introduction of “Canvas” Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)**

Following a comprehensive tendering and user experience testing process and an ‘Early Adopter’ pilot phase in Semester 1, Canvas replaced the Blackboard LMS as the Institute’s new Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) in January 2019. The introduction and roll-out of Canvas was managed by the Department of Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL). In collaboration with IT Services, TEL supported staff and students in transiting from Blackboard through an extensive, pro-active campaign of face-to-face and online training, and continues to provide comprehensive Canvas resources and supports for lecturers and students [on the TEL website](#).

Athena SWAN Bronze Award

Background

The Athena SWAN Charter, launched in United Kingdom in 2005 and managed by Advance HE, an independent non-profit agency dedicated to the enhancement of higher education, aims to encourage and recognise commitment in and by higher education and research institutions to advancing the careers of women and trans people. Initially focused on STEM (science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine) areas, the charter has since expanded to include many other fields. The Athena SWAN process commits institutions to removing barriers that contribute to underrepresentation and to taking a targeted approach to issues of both internal and external origin. Successful applications require a thorough analysis of institutional data, identification of key issues, and the creation and implementation of a three-year action plan to address the issues identified.

Athena SWAN Process in CIT

Following extensive work by the Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Team from January 2017 to November 2018, a submission was prepared for the Advance HE Bronze Award in November 2018. This work included a staff survey and multiple focus groups, as well as a series of information sessions. The work was divided across a number of working groups, focusing on (i) Data; (ii) Recruitment to Promotion & Career Development; (iii) Leave & Flexible Working; and (iv) Organisational Culture.

A core aspect of the CIT Athena SWAN submission was the Gender Action Plan, with specific, timebound, measurable actions identified in order to address shortcomings and gaps identified during the data analysis phase.

Quantitative and qualitative data were both important aspects of the gap analysis, with gender-disaggregated statistical analysis available for, inter alia, staff and student numbers, interview boards, shortlisting and recruitment processes, pay levels, maternity return rates and flexible working.

In addition to the comprehensive institutional research required, the Athena SWAN submission process itself is not without its challenges, as there is a strict word-count in each section of the application, combined with a strong directive to ensure various items are referenced sufficiently.

CIT received the news in May 2019 that it had been awarded the Athena SWAN Bronze institutional award. Feedback from the assessment panel pointed to the Action Plan as being the strongest part of the application, with survey data linked to the actions. This linkage was not as evident or robust in the narrative. The panel recommended that the Institute consider how to improve the survey response rates (29%) and provide further information on staff focus groups in a future application. The use of an external facilitator to look at negative survey results was seen as useful, as was the qualitative survey response data included in the application. The costing of the action plan and the commitment to resource provision were also commended. Last but not least, the Athena SWAN assessment panel commended CIT's ongoing 'outreach actions' aimed at increasing female representation in STEM (see below for some examples), but urged the Institute to capture the gender breakdown of staff involved in such activities in future years.

Even before the news of the Bronze Award, CIT had begun to implement a number of the actions in the Gender Action Plan. One such action was the roll-out of unconscious bias taster sessions to a wide group of staff, followed by a commitment in June 2019 to offering "Train the Trainer" sessions for unconscious bias training to enable Institute staff to provide this training in-house in the future.

While having achieved the Athena SWAN Bronze Award on first application is a source of great pride to CIT, undergoing the application process also left the Institute in no doubt that there will be significant work and resources involved in implementing the Gender Action Plan for CIT and getting ready for the next application, whether as Munster Technological University, or to renew the award for CIT.

Further Institute Activities to Increase Female Representation in STEM

Independently of, but complementing the Athena SWAN process, CIT continued its ongoing work aimed at attracting more women into STEM programmes and careers (e.g. the IWISH CIT campus week, McKesson female-only computer science scholarships), supported and led by many strong female role models among the Institute's staff and alumni communities. Some new initiatives from different areas for 2018/19 to support and celebrate the work of women in STEM were:

- *Women in STEM Exhibition*: In January 2019, the CIT Library, in collaboration with the Faculty of Engineering & Science, created a special showcase highlighting the published work of women in STEM, and also including published work about women in STEM. By hosting the launch of the CIT IWISH Campus Week 2019, the Library provided an opportunity for visiting TY IWISH programme participants to also take advantage of the *Women in STEM* exhibition.
- *CIT Advance*: In February 2019, DellEMC, VMware, IBM, McKesson, Poppulo and Apple collaborated with Cork Institute of Technology for a unique new event in the Irish context, "CIT Advance", designed to encourage and further young women's progress along their chosen technology career path. Forty of CIT's best female students on technology programmes at both undergraduate and Masters' level attended this two-day seminar at CIT, where they were provided with expert mentorship by experienced technology professionals based in industry. The idea for the event was born the previous year, when Dr Ramona Marfievici of the CIT NIMBUS Research Centre was invited to San Francisco to participate in the Computing Research Association's Committee on the Status

of Women in Computing Research (CRA-W) multi-day mentorship “Grad Cohort” workshop for female graduate students.

- *Empowering Women to Lead Festival*: A further new initiative, held to coincide with International Women’s Day, was the inaugural “Empowering Women to Lead” Festival in March 2019, organised by a group of female staff who themselves had previously completed Aurora Leadership training. The day-long event involved high-profile female leaders from different industries in the region who spoke to a large audience of female and male students about their career journeys.

Academic Strategy 2018 – 2023

In 2017/18, drafting of a new Academic Plan 2018 – 2023 for CIT was commenced by an Academic Plan Working Group (APWG) of Academic Council with representation from across the faculties, academic support units, research, engagement and strategic development functions, and the research and student communities. This new Academic Plan was to complement the new CIT Strategic Plan 2018 – 2023, which was also being developed and was approved by Governing Body in July 2018, with the understanding that work on both plans could feed into MTU planning as appropriate once established.

Drafting of the new Academic Plan was carried out by the Chair of the Academic Planning & Review Committee (APRC) and of the APWG, and was based on the compiled outputs of a series of externally facilitated workshops held with the APWG in early 2018.

During Semester 1 of 2018/19 and early 2019, several iterations of the Academic Plan were presented to the APRC, the full Academic Council, the Strategic Development Sub-Committee of Governing Body and the Institute Executive for consideration and review respectively. Discussions revolved amongst others around ensuring full alignment of the Academic Plan and the Strategic Plan, and through this the onwards alignment of both with the HEA Compact and other dependencies such as the CIT Masterplan, to ensure all Institute plans would work in harmony to maximise their contribution to the overall strategic development of CIT.

In the course of discussions, it was agreed by several fora that the Academic Plan as it had taken shape was a high-level strategic, rather than an operational document. Academic Council therefore concurred with the recommendation of its Academic Planning & Review Committee to revise the title of the document to Academic Strategy, and approved the finalised CIT Academic Strategy in March 2019.

Following this, the new CIT Academic Strategy 2018 – 2023 was presented to Governing Body in April 2019, and was formally launched by An Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Simon Coveney in the National Maritime College of Ireland on 15 April 2019, with subsequent publication of the [Academic Strategy](#) on the CIT Website.

Introduction of the Canvas Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

Tendering Process and Migration from Blackboard

With the licence for CIT’s previous learning management system, Blackboard, due to run out during the reporting period, in 2017 the Department of Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL), supported by an 18-strong VLE project group, embarked on an extensive market review and procurement process to

identify the most suitable successor system. Informed by significant levels of internal consultation on requirements, as well as desk research and discussion with other higher education institutions in Ireland and abroad, a detailed 'Request for Tenders' was subsequently issued to all VLE vendors in the national HEANet tender framework.

Following a review of vendor submissions by a VLE evaluation panel, the Canvas system emerged as the winning solution for CIT in May 2018. Key factors in the decision were:

- Ease of Use – usability testing of 'white label' installations of the candidate systems with Institute staff indicated that Canvas was an intuitive system to use, with low error frequency and severity and high overall subjective satisfaction.
- Support for Mobile – results of a survey of VLE use in CIT (with some 1,831 total student responses) indicated that 'support for mobile' was the most requested VLE feature. The new system was chosen in part because of its excellent mobile support via two separate student and teacher apps.
- Openness and Extendibility – Canvas's open Application Programmer Interface (API) and Learning Tools Interoperability (LTI) support makes it easier than in other systems to add or integrate new tools and platforms to create an e-learning technical infrastructure that is feature-rich but also well-integrated and elegant.
- Learning Analytics – Canvas learning analytics collect log-in information, rates of participation in specific activities, amount of time students spend interacting with online resources or with other students, and, where available, student assessment marks and grades.

The system, inter alia, can compare a student's activity with that of other students in the class, with students who previously took the class, and/or against specific rubrics to create a model for student performance. This information can be displayed in a visual, concise and engaging way and, furthermore, used to inform targeted communications to or interventions for particular cohorts.

- Company Reputation and Support – Instructure, the company behind Canvas, provide around-the-clock tier-1 support for all users via phone, webchat or email. Such support allows for a constant and consistent level of services unaffected by location or the availability or capacity of TEL or IT services staff. This leaves staff in these units free to focus on more strategic priorities and actions relating to the ongoing roll-out and expansion of the new system.

The decision to switch to Canvas came with aggressive timelines, as migration to the new VLE needed to be completed by the end of 2018. Transitioning between systems and achieving broad buy-in from staff and student users was a substantial and highly complex task, requiring extensive and detailed planning, careful implementation, and provision of comprehensive user training and support both in the initial phase and over the full lifetime of the project. Thus, the lead-in phase was initiated by the VLE implementation team as soon as Canvas was formally announced as CIT's new virtual learning environment from 2019 onwards. Running from May to September 2018, the lead-in phase focused on activities such as project planning and scoping, instance creation, SIS integration, migration, LTI integration, branding, training, and setting up customer support.

Following the lead-in phase, an initial pilot roll-out phase in September 2018 trialed the system with a group of 200 academic staff volunteers and their students. All other staff were provided with 'sandbox'

access and training in various modalities (live online, face-to-face, asynchronous online, etc.) during the first semester of the reporting period. Migration of all content from the old system, Blackboard, continued throughout. Canvas became the Institute VLE in February 2019 with full roll-out across all departments, schools and colleges.

Usage data collected to date suggest that the introduction of Canvas has been very successful. Since February 2019, usage rates have far exceeded that of the previous system, a testament to both the intuitiveness of Canvas, but also the hybrid support model and a well-planned roll-out. Over Semester 2 of 2018/19 and Semester 1 of 2019/20, there were an average of 708 active teaching staff using the system, as well as a total of just over 9,000 students across almost 4,000 modules.

System Features Supporting Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Since the introduction of the Canvas VLE, the extendibility of the system has allowed the Department of Technology-Enhanced Learning to integrate a number of other systems, placing Canvas at the centre of a rich and seamless e-learning technical infrastructure which now also includes a tightly integrated live e-learning system, a plagiarism detection system, an e-learning authoring system and a digital badging platform which can all be launched and accessed from the Canvas interface. The ability to selectively release new tools and content has also allowed TEL to pilot and, as appropriate, mainstream new integrations in a systematic and evidence-based way. Ongoing pilots at present include an integrated attendance tool, an e-portfolio system and a survey and forms solution.

CIT's range of successful online programmes has benefited significantly by the move to a new VLE. The new system has allowed the Department of Technology-Enhanced Learning to reframe Canvas as the central hub and access point for all components of the Institute's system and model of online learning. This means that everything is now accessed seamlessly from inside Canvas, including, for example, live e-learning sessions and live class recordings, improving the student-as-user experience.

The learning analytics capabilities of the new system are rendered especially powerful in this new context where – by contrast to conventional face-to-face delivery where much activity is not logged, and to the older Blackboard system which was not as flexible or extensible – the significant portion of student activity takes place and is logged in the VLE, giving lecturers and programme co-ordinators valid, reliable and actionable insight into online learner engagement and performance.

The Canvas system, finally, is seeing increasing use as a complement to online CPD and staff training. This has worked in a number of ways, which have included the porting over of third-party CPD content and the use of the system by non-academic staff to, inter alia, provide online content and resources, tracking and a range of integrated communication and collaboration tools. In areas like Careers, Access & Disability, Student Engagement, Teaching & Learning, and for specific initiatives focussing on international students, students with disability and students in need of additional academic supports, the system has been used in a bespoke way outside of standard modular structures to provide a variety of online supports and learning pathways.

Funding was also received from the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (NFTEL) by staff in the CIT Library, the Departments of Biological Sciences, and the Department of Management & Enterprise to develop Canvas-based resources and experiences for staff and students.

General Data Protection Regulation

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force on 25 May 2018, replacing the existing data protection framework under the EU Data Protection Directive. GDPR increases the obligations and responsibilities for CIT in how it collects, uses and protects personal data. It requires full transparency about how the Institute is using and safeguarding personal data, and the ability to demonstrate accountability for data processing activities everywhere they occur.

Building on an institutional implementation plan, and in conjunction with a sectoral project led by the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA), CIT developed and approved a suite of six data protection policies in time for the 2018/19 academic year. The two core policies, the Data Protection Policy and the Records Management Policy, are available from the [CIT website](#), with supplemental policies governing more specialised activities published the internal Gateway server. During the year, the Institute also started a GDPR alignment review of its policies relating to information technology, which is ongoing.

Complementing the policy work, an online training module was developed and rolled out to all CIT staff to ensure that all staff members are aware of their responsibilities and obligations with regard to data protection, privacy and the reporting of data breaches.

Achieving compliance with GDPR does not have a 'deadline for completion', but is an ongoing, iterative process which involves regular engagement with all Institute areas. GDPR introduced a number of critical new procedures, such as the Data Protection Impact Assessments, which heads of function are obliged to carry out where data processing activities bring a heightened risk to the rights and freedoms of data subjects, but it will take time to embed these across the institution as routine activities. The Institute must comply with GDPR, but the challenge will be to achieve this within the resources available – human, technological, physical and financial.

By way of just one, very simple example, process analysis indicated that within the current office configuration, privacy issues may arise for students seeking to discuss sensitive aspects of examination appeals within the Registrar's area. This will necessitate a reconfiguration of the relevant office space to set up a dedicated, private counter. That, in turn, will mean the displacement of some staff members unconnected to the appeals process, for whom no suitable alternative space has yet been identified. Comparable issues are likely to arise, for instance, for meetings between students and academic staff working in multi-lecturer offices. Given the paucity of dedicated meeting rooms in the academic departments, many lecturing staff do not currently have many viable alternative options.

Institute Data Governance Initiative

In May 2019, the Institute Executive Board (IEB) gave approval in principle for a proposal of the IT Services IT Department to set up an Institute-wide Data Governance Group. The draft terms of reference of this group as submitted to the IEB were to

- Foster, promote and nurture the effective management of Institute information through its lifecycle;
- Promote and foster the adoption of a data driven culture which facilitates the use of data as an aid to decision making;

- Assist with the operational and strategic requirements of CIT where information is concerned;
- Support the Institute in identifying, prioritising and managing its information needs, risks and responsibilities;
- Promote and lead on the governance of data across all key business processes;
- Promote and lead on the implementation of data quality measures where required;
- Review and propose amendments to relevant policies such as the Institute’s Data Governance and Information Security Policies.

Since the IEB already includes appropriate high-level cross-functional representation, the Board itself decided to take on the role of the Data Governance Group for the present. Discussions on finalisation and implementation of the Terms of Reference are ongoing. In the interim, the IT Services Manager and Data Analyst have consulted with all members of the IEB on their respective information requirements, under a number of categories.

Evolution of Annual Institutional Quality Report, Part 1

In addition to the annual developments as described in Parts 2 – 6, Part 1 of this report has undergone some further development in order to reflect the evolution of the CIT quality assurance and enhancement framework in 2018/19, including, for instance, achievement of the Athena SWAN Bronze Award and the introduction of Canvas. Other minor revisions mostly concern the updating of links and data and the referencing of new policies adopted since publication of the last AIQR.

2.1.2 Specific Changes to Quality Assurance

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

Appointments

Senior Staff Appointments

- Head of School of Business, September 2018
- Head of Department of Management & Enterprise, September 2018
- Head of Department of Applied Social Studies, November 2018
- Head of NIMBUS Research Centre (Acting), December 2018
- Head of School of Science & Informatics (Acting), April 2019
- Head of Department of Computer Science (Acting), June 2019
- Head of Department of Accounting & Information Systems, August 2019

New appointments to senior administrative staff roles included the Senior Architect in the Buildings & Estates Office, November 2018; the Regional Skills Forum Manager, Office of External Affairs, April 2019; and the Acting Finance Manager, August 2019.

Other Appointments

- Regional Manager for Higher Education Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Enterprise Office, April 2019
- CIT Research Integrity Officer (Interim)

The role of CIT Research Integrity Officer was created and filled to support implementation of the amplified CIT *Code of Good Practice in Research* adopted by CIT during the reporting period following review by the Academic Council Research & Innovation Committee (R&IC) and the CIT Research Office (cf. next section).

Academic Policies and Procedures

Given the projected timelines for the MTU, Cork Institute of Technology was that no significant changes to the academic quality framework should be commenced during the reporting period without reference to the extant structures, policies or operating procedures of IT Tralee. Nor would it have been reasonable to initiate any major new departures from existing processes which, following the transition to a different kind of institution, might swiftly be superseded by further changes.

Nevertheless, a number of necessary projects already in train were completed, and the following academic policies and procedures approved in 2018/19:

- Policy and Procedure for the Annual Programme Status Review (updated version integrated into the CIT policy template; reapproved AC November 2018)
- Policy and Procedure for Exit and Embedded Awards in CIT Taught Degree Programmes (GB, December 2018)
- Policy on Revocation of CIT Awards (GB, December 2018)
- Handbook for the Operation of the CIT Programme Approval Process (updated version; reapproved GB December 2018)
- Policy Governing Assessment Appeals and Correction of Errors and Omissions in Respect of Assessment (updated version; reapproved by GB, December 2018)
- Procedure for Formal Inquiry by Assessment Infringements Board (updated version; reapproved by GB, December 2018)
- Code of Good Practice in Research, Version 2 (AC Executive, June 2019)

Other Policies and Procedures

In addition to academic policies approved by Academic Council, several other Institute policies and procedures were approved by Governing Body during the reporting period which significantly intersect with the academic processes of the Institute. These were:

- Garda Vetting Policy, April 2019
- Child Protection Policy and Code of Behaviour for Working with Children, Version 2.7 (GB, April 2019)
- Policy on Conflicts and External Work (GB, May 2019)

This policy is based on and incorporates the Policy on Conflicts of Interest (Relating to the Academic Activities of CIT) approved by Governing Body in March 2015, which was updated and amplified to achieve a coherent approach to conflict of interest across all activity areas.

- Intellectual Property Policy (GB, October 2019)

Conditional Extension of the Term of Academic Council

In February 2019, Governing Body granted a conditional extension of the term of the sitting Academic Council until December 2020 in anticipation of MTU developments.

The term of the sitting Academic Council was due to end after its May 2019 meeting. Since the CIT Academic Council is one of the largest in the sector, with a total membership of 108 and 57 seats for elected members from the academic and research staff, the time and administrative workload required to form and appoint a new Council and to establish new AC Committees is considerable. However, best available timelines for the progress of the MTU application in the first half of the reporting period suggested that, all going well, TU designation might be achieved as early as September 2019, or more realistically January 2020.

Even with a new Academic Council appointed in time for June, the new Council and its Committees were unlikely to be fully operational until the October meeting, with November more likely for completion of Committee formation. Even without any procedural complications, there was therefore a chance that the new Council had barely commenced its programme of work before it ceased. Furthermore, if rapid progress on the MTU was foreseeable by the time elections commenced, interest in standing for election might be extremely low to begin with.

Based on these considerations, the AC Standing Orders Committee (SOC) looked into the possibility of extending the term of the sitting Council. This was to ensure that an experienced Academic Council with a sufficient number of elected members was in place to ease the transition to a technological university and to support the Institute in academic decision-making during the important transitional period before and after designation.

Extension is not explicitly foreseen by the IoT Acts, but is equally not prohibited. Legal advice indicated there would be no legal obstacle if Council wished to make an application to Governing Body for an extension of its term. Mindful of the need to safeguard core precepts of good academic governance, however, the SOC considered that Council should only seek extension if an early dissolution of the CIT Academic Council remained likely by early 2019. Extension should furthermore be time-limited, with no possibility for further extension if MTU designation took longer than estimated.

To make sufficient allowance for elections if Council so preferred, the Standing Orders Committee brought a proposal for a conditional, time-limited extension of the Academic Council term to that body for its consideration in February 2019. Academic Council favoured the proposal and, through the Registrar & VP for Academic Affairs, applied for an extension of its term within the agreed parameters

to Governing Body. Extension was granted by GB at its next meeting, also in February 2019, predicated on extending the Council term until 31 December 2020 at the latest, conditional on achievement of MTU designation by January 2020.

Strategic Development of the Research Quality Framework

CIT Researcher Career Framework

Much has been written about the need to expand Ireland's research base in order to help develop resilient companies and communities in the face of a rapidly changing world. Innovation 2020, for example, sets a target for Ireland to double the number of PhDs in the period 2015 – 2020 to ensure a talent pipeline that can face new and unforeseen challenges and opportunities. The new career paradigms which face our researchers require us to be innovative in the way we support their career progression, including encouraging and recognising achievements in non-traditional ways.

In CIT the establishment of a comprehensive Researcher Career Framework (RCF) has been an ongoing process for some years. In line with the 2019 National Researcher Careers Framework, it covers the period from early-stage (PhD) research through to senior-stage researcher. The first elements of the RCF were introduced formally in 2012 with an optional pilot Structured PhD programme for life sciences students, funded by the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTL), Cycle 5. Based on experiences gained, this was later extended in 2015, becoming mandatory for all PhD students in CIT irrespective of their discipline area – structured PhDs are now commonplace across the Higher Education sector. In parallel, the RCF for contract researchers was established, in which career development training is now provided through a combination of in-house mentoring, research achievement assessment and VITAE's Researcher Development Framework (RDF).

One of the benefits of the VITAE RDF planning tool is that it recognises that contract researchers gain expertise and improve their ability to generate impact from their research through actions which take place outside of the laboratory setting. Critically, researchers need to be confident that activities they undertake which are outside of the 'normal' research activities (for example, generating publications) can be recognised as valuable contributions to their career development.

Over the reporting period, development of the CIT Researcher Career Framework was focused on the development and implementation of novel mechanisms to encourage higher research impact without compromising on quality. As an example of such mechanisms, CIT is piloting the use of a 'microcredentials' platform for non-credit-bearing learning for PhD students, which may be enhanced over time to include the award of credits through a generic external learning module recognised by multiple HE institutions. Investigation of an appropriate mechanism for module certification commenced in the context of the establishment of SFI's ADVANCE Centre for Researcher Training (CRT) in which CIT is the academic lead institution. For further details on ADVANCE CRT, see [Section 4.1, Improvements and Enhancements for the Reporting Period](#), below.

Publication of Research and Innovation Outputs (Open Access)

Innovation 2020 also underpinned efforts, at national level, to achieve a coordinated approach for the entire Irish research system towards the development of an open research environment in key areas

including Open Access to publications, FAIR research data, and underpinning infrastructures for access to and preservation of research, skills and competencies, and for incentives and rewards. A key policy document for achieving the national objectives will be the [National Framework on the Transition to an Open Research Environment](#), which was launched in July 2019.

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

In its response, CIT confirmed a commitment to establishing a suitable infrastructure, in line with best international practice, which would allow the Institute to advance its Open Access approach to the dissemination of research outputs. A working group which included the Registrar & VP for Academic Affairs, the VP for External Affairs, the Head of Research and the CIT Librarian set about identifying and evaluating the resources necessary to develop and embed Open Access policies and practices into the research culture of the Institute as it moves towards Technological University status. The group concluded that for implementation of Open Access to be successful, the Institute would need to invest in both software and staff resources. However, there can be no doubt that achieving compliance with Open Access will be critical to the strategic development of research and research quality in CIT, as the Institute's (and thereafter the MTU's) continued ability to win competitive research funding from key funding agencies such as SFI, Horizon 2020, the Irish Research Council and the EU Commission would be conditional on meeting OA requirements in the grant agreements.

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

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

Academic Council Working Parties

New AC working parties set up during 2018/19 were:

- Examination Results Processing WP (AC Oct. 2018)
- Working Party on Failed Elements (AC Feb. 2019)

2.1.3 Schedule of QA Governance Meetings

Governing Body Meetings

Thursday 4 October 2018
Thursday 6 December 2018
Thursday 13 December 2018
Thursday 7 February 2019
Thursday 7 March 2019
Thursday 4 April 2019
Thursday 2 May 2019
Thursday 6 June 2019
Thursday 4 July 2019
Thursday 8 August 2019 (Special Meeting)

Academic Council Meetings

Friday 6th October 2017
Wednesday 8th November 2017
Wednesday 13th December 2017
Friday 9th February 2018
Wednesday 14th March 2018
Friday 20th April 2018
Wednesday 16th May 2018
Friday 15th June 2018

Section 2.2: Reviews in the reporting period

2.2.1 Internal Reviews

Internal reviews that were completed in the reporting period.

Programmatic Reviews

Programmatic Review of the School of Building & Civil Engineering

- a. [Phase 1 \(Strategic Review\), March 2019](#)
- b. [Phase 2 \(Review of Programmes\), Department of Architecture, May 2019](#)
- c. [Phase 2 \(Review of Programmes\), Department of Civil, Structural & Environmental Engineering, May 2019](#)
- d. [Phase 2 \(Review of Programmes\), Department of Construction, May 2019](#) [programmes to be finalised]

Programmatic Review of the School of Science & Informatics

- e. Finalisation of programmes of the Department of Physical Sciences [Phase 2 review April 2018]
 - [Phase 2 Panel Report for Chemistry programmes](#)
 - [Phase 2 Panel Report for Physics programmes](#)

Differential / Other Revalidations

- f. [Master of Arts in Play Therapy with embedded Postgraduate Diploma exit award](#) (panel review)

Validation of an altered delivery structure for the programme. This entailed amalgamation of six 5-credit modules into three 10-credit modules. In addition, in deviation from the standard CIT delivery model, the two new modules requiring students to work with children in a professional setting will now be delivered over two semesters to better suit the training needs of the profession.
- g. [Master of Science \(with embedded Postgraduate Diploma in Science\) in Cybersecurity](#)

Validation of revised award titles for existing programmes on foot of a recommendation made in the Programmatic Review of the School of Science & Informatics 2017/18.
- h. [Bachelor of Arts / Bachelor of Arts \(Honours\) in Social Care Work](#)

Revalidation of programmes following the Programmatic Review of Business & Humanities 2015/6 finalised. This encompassed revalidation of revised award titles in connection with impending CORU registration requirements.

Commentary on Revalidations

In 2018/2019 the CIT Academic Council revalidated 30 Major Awards and 7 Non-Major Awards.

These numbers include 3 award title changes (one MSc and embedded PGDip; one SPA) resulting from earlier programme reviews. Also included are 18 Major Awards and 5 Non-Major Awards for which the Phase 2 programme review had been conducted in previous academic years, but whose revised programme specification could only be finalised during the reporting period.

Validation Reviews

Major Awards

- [Higher Certificate in Science / Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science and Sustainable Technology](#)

New embedded exit award of the existing BSc (Honours) in Environmental Science and Sustainable Technology at NFQ Levels 6 and 7 respectively. Outcomes and specification reviewed in the context of the review of programmes (PR Phase 2) of the Department of Physical Sciences in 2017/18.
- Higher Certificate in Science – Laboratory Technician

Consortium apprenticeship programme led by TU Dublin (Tallaght Campus) in conjunction with BioPharmaChem Ireland. Programme specification previously reviewed and validated by IT Tallaght. To be assessed under TU Dublin (Tallaght Campus) marks & standards, leading to an award of CIT. Learners will be registered with SOLAS as apprentices.
- Higher Certificate [in Science] in Logistics

Consortium programme led by TU Dublin (City Campus) in conjunction with Freight Transport Association Ireland. Programme specification previously reviewed and validated by TU Dublin. To be delivered under CIT marks & standards leading to a CIT award. Finalisation of Memorandum of Agreement with regards to delivery arrangements (as required by CIT QA policy as a condition for validation) in 2019/20.
- [Bachelor of Science in Engineering Services Management](#)

Add-on NFQ Level 7 programme offered in apprenticeship mode and delivered on a blended learning basis over two years. The initial proposal for this apprenticeship programme, which was designed to enable consortium delivery in line with QQI's statutory QA guidelines for apprentice programmes, was submitted by the Construction Industry Federation (CIF) as the coordinating body, with CIT as the coordinating provider. While the programme will be offered in CIT only initially, delivery can be expanded to multiple providers across the Institutes of Technology sector subject to demand.
- [Bachelor of Arts \(Honours\) in Musical Theatre](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts \(Honours\) in Photography with New Media](#)
- [Bachelor of Science \(Honours\) in Automotive Business Management and Technology](#)
- [Bachelor of Science \(Honours\) in Building Information Modelling and Management](#)

Incorporates the previously validated *Certificate in Building Information Modelling Techniques*, NFQ L7, 15 ECTS credits. An award type change from SPA to Minor Award was approved for the certificate in the context of the validation of the Honours Bachelor.
- [Master of Business Administration](#) [undenominated]

The second of two new 90-ECTS credit MBA programmes developed in response to a programmatic review panel requirement in respect of the now superseded 60-credit

Master of Business programmes. These programmes were deemed to merit ‘upgrading’ to an MBA qualification with a larger credit volume, both in terms of the learner workload involved and the consistently high quality of the graduates and the outputs, which was found to be comparable to MBAs offered by any other Irish HEI.

- [Master of Engineering in Biomedical Engineering](#) [integrated 5-year programme]
- [Master of Engineering in Mechanical Engineering](#) [integrated 5-year programme]

Validation of these two integrated Engineering Masters programmes followed approval of a structural framework for integrated 5-year Masters in 2017/18. The framework had been developed in response to raised Engineers Ireland requirements for Chartered Engineer status, with comparable programmes already on offer in Irish universities. On successful completion of Stages 1 – 3 of the relevant Honours Bachelor programme, learners with a Stage 3 result of H2.2 or higher may progress onto the ‘Masters track’ in order to attain the MEng after two further years of postgraduate-level study. Alternatively, learners may continue onto the award stage of the L8 undergraduate degree. Of the 300 ECTS module credits gained over the five years of the integrated Masters programme, a minimum of 60 credits will be at Expert (i.e. postgraduate) level.

- [Master of Science in Applied Accounting](#)

Developed and delivered in collaboration with CPA Ireland. Incorporates four modules (40 ECTS credits in total) leading to CPA Professional 2 Exams assessed by CPA.

Non-Major Awards

- [Certificate in Professional Pastry Techniques, Special Purpose Award, NFQ Level 6](#)
- [Certificate in Fundamentals of Operational Excellence, Special Purpose Award, NFQ Level 6](#)
- Certificate in Supervisory Management, Special Purpose Award, NFQ Level 6

Collaborative programme developed by CIT (Department of Organisation & Professional Development and CAMMS) and IT Tralee. Previously reviewed and validated by IT Tralee, with two deliveries at IT Tralee to date. CIT delivery to come under CIT Regulations for Modules & Programmes (Marks & Standards), leading to a CIT award.

- [Diploma in International Business & Culture, Special Purpose Award, NFQ Level 7](#)

For interested students on approved Study Abroad programmes from colleges or universities outside of Ireland, this programme offers the opportunity to combine a period of study in Ireland with an internship in an Irish company, while maintaining a focus on internationalisation and international issues.

- [Certificate in Intelligent Manufacturing Systems, Special Purpose Award, NFQ Level 9](#)

Commentary on New Programme Validations

- a. Total Validations in 2018/2019

12 new Major Awards and 5 new Non-Major Awards were validated by the CIT Academic Council in the reporting period.

b. Professional Skills Development

Regional skills needs continue to be a strong driver for programme development, particularly of CPD programmes leading to non-major awards.

During the reporting period, the *Certificate in Intelligent Manufacturing Systems* and the collaborative *Certificate in Supervisory Management* were developed and launched in response to skills needs identified by the South-West Regional Skills Forum. In addition, two of the new collaborative programmes also have significant direct inputs from professional organisations, the Freight Transport Association Ireland and CPA Ireland.

c. Collaborative Programmes

Four of the new validations completed or set in train – 3 major awards and 1 non-major award – related to consortium respectively collaborative programmes. Three of these were developed in conjunction with other Irish HEIs, while the fourth, the *MSc in Applied Accounting*, is a novel collaboration between CIT and the Institute of Certified Public Accountants in Ireland (CPA Ireland).

With regard to HEI collaborations where one provider leads development and validation of a single-award programme subsequently delivered by several partner institutions, each in their own name, the observations in last year's quality report on potential equity and logistical issues arising from divergent programme regulations between and within institutions still stand (cf. Section 2.1).

The growing need to develop a coherent policy around the standards and logistics of sectoral consortium programmes was raised in relevant internal fora. It was observed however that the noted issues can only be properly resolved at the sectoral level.

A subgroup of the THEA Council of Registrars was set up to explore these issues during the reporting period. Following a meeting with QQI, work commenced on the development of a set of principles and guidelines for the Quality Assurance of post-2016 apprenticeship programmes by and between technological higher education institutions.

Other Reviews

MTU International Advisory Panel Visit, May 2019

A summary on progress in the MTU application process, which included a site visit by the International Advisory Panel convened by the HEA in May 2019, is [presented in Section 2.3.2, Factors Impacting on Quality and Quality Assurance](#) below.

Irish Survey on Student Engagement (ISSE) 2019

The annual Irish Survey on Student Engagement (ISSE) 2019 was administered in CIT in February 2019. Compared to 2018 there was a slight drop in response rate to 36.8% (2,345 responses), but participation

still clearly exceeded that of all other years since the 2013 pilot. As the overall ISSE population size also contracted slightly to 6,373, the margin of error remained unchanged from 2018.

A summary of the findings of a detailed statistical analysis of responses to ISSE 2019, as well as of the use of qualitative data to feed into SParQ@CIT work, is provided in [Section 3.1 on Data Usage](#) below.

Regulation of Health and Social Care Professions (CORU)

Professional Register of Social Care Workers

Engagement with CORU in the context of preparations for the statutory regulation of social care work intensified during the reporting period, with a CORU pre-review visit to CIT in June 2019.

CORU was established in 2005 as the Irish health and social care professional regulator. Its remit is to protect the public by promoting high standards of professional conduct, education, training and competence through statutory registration of health and social care professionals. CORU's work initially focused on the health professions, but a Social Care Workers Registration Board (SCWRB) was appointed in March 2017 to work toward the regulation of the social care profession. In May 2017, the SCWRB issued providers with *Criteria for Education and Training Programmes and Standards of Proficiency for Social Care Workers*, which together constitute the education and training standards for entry onto the professional register. These standards operate at the level of the programme, meaning that only graduates of degree programmes listed in the Approved Qualification By-Law for Social Care Workers will be eligible for registration.

The SCW standards relate to the curriculum and modalities for delivery, including of placement, of the relevant programme and to the qualifications, knowledge and experience of programme staff. In addition, they take into account the comprehensiveness and robustness of the overall institutional QA structures and mechanisms. Following a two-year lead-in period, the CORU programme approval process based on these standards formally commenced in 2019, with a deadline of May 2019 for the receipt of first-batch applications.

Staff from the School of Humanities and Registrar's Office attended a series of preparatory training sessions and meetings with CORU throughout the year. At the same time, the Department of Applied Social Studies began an internal review of the BA in Social Care (NFQ Level 7) against the SCW standards, with a view to identifying any issues requiring attention before making an application to CORU.

Since the Social Care Work standards were issued not long after the Social Care programmes had undergone programmatic review, with the revised programme specification not yet finalised at that point, it was decided to suspend finalisation until any further amendments necessary under the SCW standards could be identified. As a result, the programmes were revalidated by Academic Council with further changes in May 2019, encompassing amongst others a revision of the award titles to Bachelor of Arts / Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social Care Work. This was to avoid issues for the registration status of graduates which might otherwise have arisen from the establishment of the MTU, as IT Tralee also offers a BA in Social Care, but with a different programme profile.

Professional Register of Medical Scientists

Discussions also commenced with CORU on CIT's programme offerings in the field of Biomedical Science, ahead of the opening of the national register for medical scientists.

The Institute currently offers two programmes in this area, the BSc (Honours) in Biomedical Science, which is a joint award with University College Cork, and the follow-on Diploma in Clinical Laboratory Practice. The Diploma is a 60-credit, Special Purpose Award programme at NFQ Level 8 composed of two semester-long clinical placement modules, which on successful completion lead to a CIT award.

In late 2018, CORU wrote to the Institute on behalf of the Medical Scientists Registration Board (MSRB), advising that the Board had recently developed its education and training standards in preparation for the opening of the register for medical scientists.

Representatives of the programme team and the CIT Registrar's Office met with CORU in December 2018 for a briefing on the process and initial discussions. During these, they also consulted with the regulator on a parchment query raised by the CIT-UCC Joint Management Board. This arose from the fact that the two institutions differ with regard to the elements included on their parchments. The joint parchment for the BSc (Honours) in Biomedical Science currently follows the UCC convention and does not include the programme specialisation. In the context of the statutory listing of approved programmes on the Approved Qualifications Bye-Law, CORU expressed the view that it would be in the interests of students and graduates to include the full title of the qualification on the parchment. This was particularly useful where a student did not provide consent for the direct transfer of their results from the provider to CORU and would then be required to provide both the parchment and the transcript to CORU in order to meet the registration application requirements. The final decision on parchment will rest with the joint providers, however.

HEA Audits and Follow-on Reviews

HEA Audit of ERASMUS Programme

During November 2018, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) carried out a monitoring/audit visit in relation to CIT's Erasmus+ KA103 mobility project of 2017/18. The scope of the audit process encompassed an overview of CIT's Erasmus mobility programme, its promotion and impact on the institution, and its place within the Institute's internationalisation strategy and overall institutional strategy. In its follow-up report, the HEA audit team noted that the audit visit had been very positive overall, highlighting in particular the "enormous amount" goodwill within the Institute (HEA Report, Audit and Monitoring Visits 2018, Cork Institute of Technology: 9 November 2018, p. 5).

With regard to enhancement opportunities, the audit report noted that more engagement with management and a sense of each department's role in the overall institutional internationalisation strategy would strengthen the positive environment even more.

The report confirmed however that "evidence on the ground" showed ERASMUS+ to be a core activity of the Institute. It also referred examples of best practice, including the "strategic move" of the Faculty of Business & Humanities to engage internationally – both within and beyond the ERASMUS programme – "so that all students will gain an international experience at some level" (ibid., p. 1).

With regard to the desirability of embedding departmental ERASMUS activities into the overall CIT strategy and framework for internationalisation, one issue which has to date hampered greater integration is the fact that a number of long-standing bilateral agreements at department level were renewed prior to the start of the current phase of ERASMUS in 2014. This has been frustrating for the International Office and the Institute Executive, as it has created a legacy of imbalance between incoming and outgoing student numbers. More recently, the Institute has taken a more considered and integrated approach to signing new bilateral agreements, resulting in partnerships which have helped

increase outgoing student mobility. However, certain inactive agreements or agreements which offer no benefit to CIT remain in place at this point.

The International Office has therefore commenced systematic engagement with departments to brief them on various aspects of ERASMUS, including opportunities for ERASMUS-funded staff mobility and the need for a comprehensive review of each department's existing bilateral agreements in connection with Brexit and the new phase of ERASMUS+ after 2021. The feedback following these briefings will help inform the future development of an integrated international strategy.

Topics discussed during the audit and highlighted in the feedback report were utilised to inform ERASMUS priorities for the remainder of 2018/19 and for future ERASMUS projects. Identified priorities include continuing to grow the numbers of students and staff participating in outward mobility, ensuring a high-quality mobility experience, consolidating international partnerships through inward and outward mobility, and encouraging wider participation in student exchange through the use of additional social inclusion funding (SISSI) for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Two specific projects planned for 2019/20 based on the audit's findings are [summarised in Part 5](#).

Review of Intellectual Property Policy (following on from HEA Review of Intellectual Property Policies and Procedures in Higher Education)

In 2017 the Higher Education Authority (HEA), in partnership with Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI), had commissioned a review of the management of intellectual property and conflicts of interest in the 22 public Irish Higher Education institutions. Occasioned amongst others by the introduction of a National IP Protocol in 2016, the study looked at the governance processes and implementation of IP policy within the HEIs to ensure that appropriate systems and good practice were adopted across the sector. The methodology included analysis of relevant institutional policies, in some cases supplemented by questionnaires and in-depth interviews.

The resulting HEA/KTI report, published in early 2018, found that all HEIs studied had IP management policies in place and employed dedicated professionals to carry out commercialisation activities. The majority of policies were found to be comprehensive, defining responsibilities and explaining IP management and dispute resolution processes. On a practical level, sound IP policy and robust IP management systems had enabled institutions to avoid many potential conflicts of interests.

Five areas of weakness were also identified across the sector. These related to fragmentation and poor accessibility of policy documentation; articulation of decision-making, particularly relating to spin-out formation; the locus of responsibility for the management and monitoring of conflict of interest; the determination of equity stakes in spin-outs; and broad-based senior management ownership and accountability with regard to IP policy, IP management and potential commercialisation conflicts.

On foot of the strengths and weaknesses identified, the report included ten key recommendations to support institutions in strengthening their IP policies, management procedures and management of conflicts of interest relating to the commercialisation of IP.

While CIT came out of the HEA review very well, and the Institute's spinout process was highlighted as best practice in the report, the findings also indicated to CIT that some work would be required to fully align the existing IP-related policies with the HEA recommendations.

In 2018, the (then) CIT Industry Liaison Officer therefore agreed to participate in a national stakeholder group convened by the HEA to develop a series of detailed recommendations for implementation in institutional IP policies. Based on these, CIT through its Innovation & Enterprise Office revised and amalgamated the existing, older IP Policy and a comparatively recent Spinout Policy into a new, integrated [Intellectual Property Policy](#), adopted by the CIT Governing Body in October 2019.

Amongst others, the revised policy includes a new dispute resolution clause for IP (already contained in the Spinout Policy); streamlines the process for low-risk decisions, while making explicit reference to signing authority for IP management, with links to relevant documents; and more clearly specifies the income distribution for equity income.

Last but not least, the revised IP Policy 2019 incorporates a detailed section on conflict of interest, referenced back to CIT's expanded Policy on Conflicts and External Work (GB May 2019), which had been updated and amplified at the same time to also reference non-academic activities, in order to ensure a coherent treatment of conflict of interest across the full range of Institute activities.

HEA Audit of Graduate Outcomes Survey

Commissioned by the HEA, Deloitte carried out a national audit of the implementation of the Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) in April 2019. The Careers and Alumni Offices were involved in preparing materials for this audit for CIT. The report of findings and recommendations from the HEA GOS audit has not yet been released. A discussion of the 2019 CIT Graduate Outcomes Survey and its outcomes can be found [in Section 3.2 Impact](#).

Internal Audits (Governing Body) – Review of Student Admissions and Registration

As part of the annual internal audit schedule of the Governing Body's Audit & Risk Committee, an internal audit of student admission and registration processes was commissioned from PWC from May to August 2019. The objective of the Student Admissions and Registration Audit was to provide assurance to the GB Audit & Risk Committee that agreed and documented student admissions and registration processes are operating as intended.

The work completed included:

- A review of admission processes;
- A review of processes for registration and reporting of students;
- A review of the impact of repeat and appeal students on the registration process;
- A review of processes for deferrals, transfers and withdrawals; and
- Sample testing of the operating effectiveness of the identified key controls.

The audit focused on the various categories of students, including new, continuing, mature, ACCS, postgraduate (with a particular focus on postgraduate by research), non-EU, part-time and online students. It entailed a desktop review of policies and procedures in place in the Institute in respect of student admissions and registration, as well as interviews and walkthroughs with key individuals.

The audit report was made available to the Student Affairs Administration in Semester 1 of 2019/20.

Review of Apprenticeship Assessment Security Protocols

In February 2018, SOLAS requested Deloitte to conduct a review of the assessment security protocols in place across SOLAS and its collaborating partners. The aim of this review was to examine and evaluate the general assessment security protocols applied across the various assessment processes.

In order to fulfil the requirements of this review, Deloitte visited a sample of eight Institutes of Technology and three ETBs. The Memorandum of Findings was made available in December 2018. Following this, the Institute commenced work on addressing the findings made in relation to CIT, only one of which was significant. The Institute response noted however that the parameters and constraints of the SOLAS assessment process limited the extent to which the findings could be successfully addressed from the institutional side alone, and that there were certain aspects for SOLAS to resolve also.

Renewal of ISO 50001 (International Energy Management Standard) Certification

Following ISO 50001 certification of CIT's energy management systems in August 2017, CIT underwent a successful first Surveillance Audit for this standard in January 2019. Maintenance of ISO 50001 demonstrates CIT's long-term commitment to managing and improving energy performance throughout the Institute through a structured process, resulting in reduced energy consumption and a reduction in CIT's operational impact on the environment.

The audit report lists good energy analysis and very good energy performance awareness as strengths of the Institute, and notes the demonstrable senior management commitment in all locations. No weaknesses were observed. In terms of improvement potential, CIT was simply encouraged to continue raise energy awareness on all campuses.

Enhancing energy awareness continues to be a key work strand for CIT's dedicated Energy Team. Both the CIT Students Union and a variety of Institute staff are represented on the Energy Team, with some having taken on the role of energy champions for their particular areas, ensuring that the 'energy message' is heard by all members of the Institute.

Confirmation that the team's efforts are bearing fruit, apart from renewal of ISO 50001 certification, also comes from other sources, such as the Annual Energy Report of the Sustainable Energy Association of Ireland (SEAI). In the recently published SEAI report for the calendar year 2018, CIT came fifth out of 29 third-level education and training colleges nationally (encompassing all public HE providers, several large private HE providers, and teacher training colleges), with TU Dublin's new Grangegorman campus development – unsurprisingly – in first place.

CIS 20 Controls Audit of the IT Services Department for Cyber Security Maturity

An external audit of the cyber security processes and arrangements of the CIT IT Services Department resulted in a number of actions to both improve the security of mission-critical systems and to raise cyber security awareness among CIT staff. These are detailed in [Part 3.2 Impacts](#) below.

Sports Review

In connection with planning for the CIT Arena, start of construction for which is imminent, a strategic internal review of sports provision and facilities in CIT was conducted during the reporting period. The review also focused on the future development of sport, in the context of the various constituencies it serves, including students and staff of all campuses as well as external interest groups and the local/national sporting communities. The Sports Review was initiated in December 2017, with the report of the working groups currently awaiting finalisation.

Design and implementation of the review was overseen by a Governance Committee which included academic and administrative staff representing the major sports interests in the Institute as well as representatives of the CIT Students' Union. The committee was chaired by external sports expert Gary Keegan, CEO at Uppercut, a High Performance Sports Consultancy, and member of the IRFU National Professional Games Board and the High Performance Advisory Group of Cricket Ireland.

The Governance Committee established four working groups to investigate the aspects of Facilities and Business Plan; Operational Vision and Staffing; Sports Bursaries, and Sports Clubs and Recreational Sporting Activities respectively. The groups drew on institutional data collated as part of the cyclical institutional information and reporting activities, data collated by the Sports Office, and data and insights gained through postgraduate research of working group members into the attitudes and behaviours of staff and students with regard to sport and physical activity. In addition, student surveys were organised across a range of departments.

On conclusion of the investigative phase, a number of findings and recommendations were collated into a draft report which is due to be finalised and promulgated during 2019/20.

2.2.2 Profile of Internal QA Reviews

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

Number of new Programme Validations/Programme Approvals completed in the reporting year	12
Number of Programme Reviews completed in the reporting year	5
Number of Research Reviews completed in the reporting year	0
Number of School/Department/Faculty Reviews completed in the reporting year	1
Number of Service Unit Reviews completed in the reporting year	0
Number of Reviews of Arrangements with partner organisations completed in the reporting year	0

2.2.3 Profile of QA Reviewers and Chairs

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

Composition of Panels	%
Internal	22%
National	73%
UK	5%
EU	0%
Student	0%
Other	0%

NB: With regard to gender distribution, the percentage of female panel members in 2018/19 was 29%.

Chair Profile	%
Internal	21%
Similar Institution	26%
Different Institution	53%
International	11%

NB: The percentage of international panel members is separately correct only, as the International category has been treated as not mutually exclusive of two of the three other categories (similar/different institution).

By contrast, the categories “Internal”, “Similar Institution” and “Different Institution” have been considered to be mutually exclusive, and add up to 100%.

The percentage of female panel chairs in 2018/19 was 42%.

Section 2.3: Other Implementation Factors

2.3.1 Data Usage in Support of QA and Student Experience Management

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

Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) 2019

Statistical Analysis of ISSE Outputs

Methodology

For the last five years, a statistical analysis of CIT students' responses to the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) has been presented to Academic Council and Governing Body. CIT students' responses were removed from the overall Institute of Technology response data set, allowing comparison between CIT responses and students' responses from other Institutes and from the university sector.

In relation to ISSE 2019, the reports to Academic Council and Governing Body contained three analyses:

- a) A meta-analysis of results to show whether any differences between responses for CIT versus other Institutes and ISSE universities were increasing or decreasing over time;
- b) Arising from a Governing Body request, a benchmarking exercise for internal purposes against selected HEIs, using both overall indicator scores and individual question responses from the ISSE website;
- c) The development of a Work-Based Learning Index, based on a series of ISSE questions aligned broadly to work-based learning. CIT results for this developed index were compared to those of a selected university.

The detailed comparative meta-analysis contained sections relating to a summary of student participation (2013 – 2019), institutional comparisons across the nine indices (2016 – 2019), and changes across indices within CIT (2016 – 2019).

All statistical analyses were carried out using RStudio. Results were presented in terms of p-value (significant/insignificant) and effect size (strength of a statistically significant result). In particular, results were highlighted where the difference between CIT and other HEIs was significant.

Institutional Comparisons – Key Findings

- a) In a number of indices, CIT scored lower than other IoTs and ISSE universities, or lower than other IoTs but the same as or higher than universities.
 - o Indices in which CIT scored lower than other IoTs and ISSE universities included *Quantitative Reasoning* and *Supportive Environment*. For these two indices, the standardised mean

differences were small and medium compared to other IoTs and universities, and little or no change was apparent over 3 years.

- For *Higher Order Learning, Reflective and Integrative Learning* and *Learning Strategies*, CIT also scored lower than other IoTs and universities, but the standardised mean differences were getting smaller year on year.
 - In relation to *Effective Teaching Practices* and *Quality of Interactions*, CIT scored lower than other IoTs but was on par with the ISSE universities. The standardised mean differences compared to other IoTs were small respectively trivial.
 - With regard to *Student-Faculty Interaction*, CIT scored lower than other IoTs, but scored higher than the ISSE universities. The standardised mean difference was small and medium when compared to other IoTs and ISSE Universities.
- b) For one index, *Collaborative Learning*, CIT's score was in line with other IoTs over 3 years, and was higher than that of ISSE universities. The standardised mean difference to universities was small, with a narrowing gap.
- c) Irrespective of the results under many individual indices, however, CIT students rated their overall educational experience higher than students from other Institutes of Technology.

CIT students also indicated that they were more likely to enrol in CIT again if starting than students from other IoTs were to enrol in their respective Institute.

Work-Based Learning Index

The majority of ISSE questions are grouped under nine independent indices. For each index, an indicator score may be calculated. Indicator scores provide greatest benefit when used as signposts to explore the experiences of different groups of students – for example, final year full-time students and final year part-time students. In particular, indicator scores provide an insight into the experiences of comparable cohorts over multiple datasets, e.g. the experiences of 2017 first year students relative to 2016 first year students.

However, it is possible to explore an aspect of the student learning experience by developing a bespoke index encompassing questions relating to the aspect that is to be explored. Institutes of Technology and Technological Universities believe that a key differentiator between the graduates they produce and those from traditional universities is that their programmes of study are more closely aligned with industry, and hence produce work-ready graduates who are able to 'hit the ground running'. Therefore, a selection of ISSE questions surveying perceptions around work-based learning was reviewed and used to make a comparison between CIT and a traditional university.

The following ISSE questions were selected to create the *Work-Based Learning* index:

- Improved knowledge and skills that will contribute to your employability
- Explored how to apply your learning in the workplace
- Blended academic learning with workplace experience
- Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills
- Solving complex real-world problems

When compared with CIT, all student cohorts from the traditional university reported, in their current academic year:

- Significantly higher improvement of their employability knowledge and skills;
- Significantly higher opportunities to apply their learning in the workplace;
- Significantly higher opportunities to blend their academic learning with workplace experience;
- A significantly higher effect of their experience in the institution on their acquiring work-related knowledge and skills;
- Except for first year undergraduates, a significantly higher effect of their institution on their developing skills for solving complex real-world problems.

Overall, the ISSE 2019 survey data do not provide evidence to support the hypothesis that CIT students perceive that the CIT curriculum provides them with more opportunities to develop work-ready skills and competences.

The learner perceptions captured through ISSE will require, and will undoubtedly repay further attention. This is all the more so since in relation to the Work-Based Learning Index, as for other indices, data available from other information-gathering mechanisms would seem to permit contrasting conclusions with regard to the effectiveness of institutional measures and strategies and to the extent of the learning gained as it presents itself looking ‘from the outside in’.

With regard to the graduate attributes of employability and work-readiness, data obtained through the Graduate Outcomes Survey, for example, seem to indicate that CIT’s strategies and initiatives to strengthen these attributes, both directly through programme delivery and indirectly through wider institutional initiatives and supports, do in fact pay measurable dividends – see the relevant section on the [Graduate Outcomes Survey 2018](#) in Part 3.2 Impact.

However, based on student perceptions as recorded through ISSE, the Institute may benefit from re-examining how it aims to further embed employability skills in the programme curricula and delivery, how it can make more explicit the connection between the Institute and industry, and how it can better manage learner expectations on educational outcomes and make more visible where, when and how the relevant learning occurs.

Use of Qualitative ISSE Outputs to Support Quality Enhancement

In addition to quantitative analyses of ISSE responses, qualitative ISSE outputs were utilised by the Student Engagement Office, AnSEO, to drive discussions as part of SParQ@CIT (Student Partnership in Quality) sessions during the reporting period. Further detail is provided [in Part 3.2, Impact](#) below.

Outlook

The potential for synthesising the learning from the Irish Survey of Student Engagement, the SParQs@CIT initiative and the Annual Programme Status Reports to inform the work of Academic Council was being discussed by the Executive Committee of Academic Council, but with given resources could not be followed up on during the reporting period.

2.3.2 Factors Impacting on Quality and Quality Assurance

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

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Munster Technological University (MTU) Application

Timeline of the MTU Developments

In February 2019, the MTU Consortium – Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) and the Institute of Technology Tralee (ITT) – submitted an application to the Minister for Education & Skills to become Ireland’s second technological university.

The drafting of the submission document had begun in Summer 2018. This work was managed by the MTU Project Office, operating across both CIT and IT Tralee, with input from senior staff of both institutions. In August 2018, the number of Project Leaders – each charged with managing all aspects of a specific project – increased from three to five, with two academic staff (one from CIT) being seconded to it. Drafts of the submission were made available to Governing Bodies, Academic Councils, and executive teams of both institutions for feedback. This period was also marked by a series of meetings of the MTU Staff Fora – one for academic staff, with TUI represented, and the other for PMSS staff, with FÓRSA, UNITE, and SIPTU all represented. The engagement with TUI led to the development of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Consortium Partners and the union.

The HEA duly informed the Consortium that it intended to convene the International Advisory Panel to visit both Institutes in the periods 22 – 24 May and 27 – 29 May 2019, to review the application under Section 32 of the Technological Universities Act 2018.

The interim period focused on intensive preparations for the visit of the International Advisory Panel to both Institutes, preparatory meetings of the Project Oversight Board, and the continuation of project planning in relation to the merger, across all projects. In March 2019, Deloitte, on behalf of the HEA, undertook an independent audit of the MTU metrics and data as per the submission.

The Project Leader for Academic Affairs commenced work on project planning, consideration of the programme portfolio, and policy development. The two Registrars, relevant colleagues of their respective offices, and the Academic Affairs Project Leader developed a mapping of the QA Policy & Procedures Frameworks of both institutions and a prioritized list items to be advanced prior to designation. Similarly, in the area of Research, Innovation & Engagement, work and consultation commenced on the development of project plans. The Project Office also completed some work on the development of a policy and procedure framework.

Preparations for the international panel included a 'mock' panel visit in late March/early April. The purpose of this was to enable staff to gain experience in engaging with the panel and to obtain feedback on both the submission and overall the performance of the Consortium. The Panel was chaired by Professor Edward J. Esche, Emeritus Professor, Middlesex University.

Work also progressed on the preparation for the merger in terms of the alignment of HR, Finance (including payroll and expenses) and IT systems. Engagement with EduCampus and CoreHR also continued, having commenced in 2018, as did work in relation to the preparation of new joint finance and HR policies. Good progress was made in the integration of IT systems in particular, resulting in the agreement of an MTU digital strategy, Digital by Default 2030, which aims to design and deliver the best digital self-service supports to staff, students and alumni of MTU. All systems in both Institutes have been reviewed and a prioritised plan of premerger and post-merger systems projects has been agreed for MTU.

Following the submission of the MTU application to the Minister, QQI advised both institutions of the timelines for the first institutional review of MTU (entitled CINNTE Review), should the application be successful. The Registrars and their teams welcomed the opportunity to engage with QQI in relation to draft amended CINNTE Terms of Reference, as amended for new technological universities.

The International Advisory Panel convened in various campuses in both CIT and IT Tralee, meeting the two Governing Body Chairs and the two Presidents, both executive teams, members of senior staff, academic and administrative staff and their union representatives, student representatives, student societies and external stakeholders.

The HEA Board considered the report of the international panel on 2 July 2019. Thereafter the Panel Chair forwarded the report, along with advisory comments, to the Minister for Education & Skills on 9 July 2019. The [Report of the International Advisory Panel](#) can be accessed on the MTU web pages.

On 22 July, the Minister wrote to the Consortium Partners, informing them that he was proposing to postpone the decision on the establishment of the Munster Technological University to early 2020, and that a positive decision at that point would be subject to the Consortium addressing the important issues set out by the Panel and in light of views of the HEA on the Panel's report.

The Minister acknowledged the substantial progress made by the MTU consortium in meeting the detailed quantitative criteria set out in the TU Act 2018 for eligibility to become a technological university, as evidenced in the Report of the International Advisory Panel. The Minister noted the Panel's findings and recommendations as well as the views advised by the HEA.

During July and August 2019, the Consortium drafted an initial response to the Minister, in which it set out its initial observations on the letter and report. This it submitted to the Minister in August, in line with legislative requirement. Discussion also took place with the Department of Education & Skills in relation to the future roadmap.

Quality Impacts

Given the work and time involved in the development of the submission, the preparation of and participation in the panel visit, and the ongoing preparations for the merger across all workstreams, the MTU activities did of course have quality impacts of varying severity over the reporting period.

With regard to the development of new academic policies or major changes to others, work was either delayed or paused in anticipation of the merger, except where development was already well in train.

Engagement between staff of both HEIs noticeably increased, but also entailed further loss of time in terms of travel, notwithstanding the use of digital technology for some meetings. However, there were also positive outputs from the intensified collaboration, in terms of delivery of a number of joint programmes and cluster activities, e.g. in the context of the South West Regional Cluster. It is also necessary to acknowledge the less tangible impact of the gradual development of working relationships among staff of the two Institutes. The pace of this did accelerate somewhat during 2018/19, with senior management meetings, briefings for staff members who met the panels, and participation in the panel sessions being catalysts for bringing academic staff members of the two Institutes closer together also.

UN Sustainable Development Goals

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the General Assembly of United Nations in 2015, were gathering momentum in terms of their impact in shaping and driving Institute activities across all areas during the reporting period. At the level of the programme provision, SDG-relevant aspects and topics were amplified or newly included in module and programme curricula across many areas, and programmatic review panels in different disciplines began to interrogate programmes in relation to the SDGs. At the same time, a wide variety of research and community/industry engagement projects and activities began to specifically engage with one or more of the goals. While the SDGs in many cases ‘bundled’ and restated previously formulated global or national goals and objectives, adoption of the 2030 Agenda appears to have given a fresh impetus to renew the engagement with particular objectives.

“Fake News” Workshop for DEIS Schools (CIT Library Service)

One example where the SDGs provided the impulse for a specific enhancement activity with significant positive impacts within the community came from the CIT Library Service. In an effort to contribute to the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal 4 – “to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” – , the CIT Library piloted a programme to enhance the critical thinking skills of students in a DEIS secondary school on the north side of the city.

Library staff sought to teach teenagers how to evaluate, sort, and effectively use the overabundance of information available online by running a “Fake News” Workshop in January 2019. Feedback from both the staff and students at the school was so positive that the CIT Library has been invited back in January 2020 to run the information literacy workshop for a new cohort of teenagers. Library staff are also considering the possibility of rolling out this initiative to other DEIS schools in locality.

National Gender Equality Initiatives

A number of national gender equality initiatives were launched during 2018/19, in part with dedicated funding streams attached, which will influence and support Institute activities towards the achievement of its strategic objectives with regard to gender equality, diversity and inclusion.

Gender Action Plan 2018 – 2020

When the *Gender Action Plan 2018 – 2020: Accelerating Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions* was launched in November 2018, work was already ongoing in terms of addressing its recommendations and requirements in the context of the application for the Athena SWAN Bronze Award, [see the relevant section in Part 2, Section 1.1 above](#). The Gender Action Plan is the output of the Gender Equality Taskforce established in November 2017 to build on the work of the HEA's *National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions* (2016). The Gender Equality Taskforce identified significant measures that will further accelerate progress in achieving gender equality in Irish Higher Education, following on from the recommendations of the HEA Expert Group (2016).

The Institute was represented on the HEA National Committee for Gender Equality, and has also continued to return [Annual Staff Statistical Returns by Gender](#) to the HEA.

Information on new and ongoing initiatives of different CIT units to increase and showcase female participation in STEM in particular is also provided [in Part 2, Section 1.1 above](#).

Senior Academic Leadership Initiative (SALI)

Work also commenced on the development of a proposed response to the call for applications under the Senior Academic Leadership Initiative (SALI), coordinated by the VP for External Affairs and Chair of the Athena SWAN initiative. Under this initiative new and additional female-specific senior academic positions will be created in the Higher Education sector, in the form of professorial posts in the traditional university sector and SL3 posts in the technological higher education (THE) sector. The fact that the posts were pitched at SL3 grade in the THE sector caused certain additional complexities for CIT, as the SL3 grade in the Institute usually entails a line management role.

Framework for Consent in Irish Higher Education

The reporting period also saw the launch, by the very first Minister of State for Higher Education, of the Framework for Consent in Higher Education Institutions, under the title of *Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive – Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions*. The Framework for Consent was developed by an expert advisory group to the Department of Education and Skills which comprised academics, students and leaders in the area of student sexual health. It aims to ensure the creation of an institutional campus culture which is safe, respectful and supportive.

To assist institutions in implementing the framework over the academic year 2019/20, funding of €400,000 was made available to each institution.

Work towards the development of an Institute response to this framework in 2018/19 included making contact with the leads of initiatives such as the SMART Consent Initiative (NUIG) and UCC's Bystander Programme. Internally, there was engagement with the Students' Union, which, independently of the framework, had already begun work to enhance its awareness raising activities.

Eventually, a significant portion of the €400,000 was reserved for provision of consent classes developed by NUIG and UCC. CIT agreed to collaborate with other Institutes, through the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA), in a bid for funding to resource the development of a sectoral

policy framework. By the end of the reporting period, work was ongoing on the preparation of this bid, in time for the deadline in the autumn of 2019.

Technological Universities Research Network (TURN)

The Technological Universities Research Network (TURN) was established in February 2019 by the Department of Education and Skills to examine and report on how emerging TUs could achieve their sectoral and national strategic objectives and the supports that would be required for them to do so most effectively and efficiently. The TURN Working Group's membership comprised the President of TU Dublin and the Presidents of each Institute of Technology (IoT) participating in development consortia working towards TU designation, together with senior representatives from the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA), the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the Department. The Working Group's independent chairperson was a leading academic and international expert in higher education transformation processes, Professor Philip Gummert from the UK.

The CIT President, Dr Barry O'Connor, was a member of the Working Group, and also chaired one of its four subgroups. The work of this sub-group was dedicated to "Defining the essence of a TU in the context of the Irish education landscape", while the remaining working parties investigated the issues surrounding TU staffing and grading norms and capacity development including research; TU costs and funding issues including for research; and systems integration and multi-campus management.

Monthly meetings took place between February and June 2019. An initial draft of the report was made available to group members in July 2019, with a view to finalisation and publication by the autumn. The finalised report of the [TU Research Network \(TURN\)](#), "[Connectedness & Collaboration enabled by Connectivity](#)", went to print in October 2019 and was launched by the then Minister of State with responsibility for Higher Education on 6 November 2019.

2.3.3 Other Implementation Issues

A description of other implementation issues.

Accelerated Timeline for CAO Offers

Following the High Court Judgement in the [Rebecca Carter case](#) in September 2018, which had significant ramifications for admissions timelines across Irish higher education, the CIT Admissions Officer engaged with the CAO Operations Group in relation to possibilities for facilitating an accelerated timeline for CAO offers. On 1 November 2018, it was announced that fundamental changes would be made in time for CAO 2019, and that CAO Round One offers would be made four days earlier than in previous years.

The new schedule will undoubtedly improve the entry process for the benefit of students by ensuring that (in most cases) students who successfully appeal an assessment result do not run the risk of subsequently having their offer of a place deferred by a year simply due to the length of the appeals process. However, from the institutional vantage point certain sectoral industrial relations constraints may make it challenging to realise the benefits fully.

Academic Calendar

These abovementioned IR constraints are also one of the factors which impact on the annual academic calendar. The academic year 2018/19 saw the commencement of a two-year pilot arrangement for the CIT academic calendar, the main change being the introduction of a reading week in the middle of the first semester. The reading week was welcomed by many academic staff and students, but opinions were somewhat mixed on its ideal purpose and value. The Semester 1 examination timetable did become more compressed, as the strong preference of the Students' Union was to have all examinations before Christmas. However, there was consensus that the timelines at the end of the year were pressurised.

Part 3: Effectiveness and Impact

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

3.1 Effectiveness

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

Student Ombudsman and Grievance Procedure

The post of CIT Student Ombudsman was established upon adoption of the Institute's current Student Grievance Procedure in July 2010, and has been held by four retired members of CIT staff (formerly at senior lecturer or head of department level) to date. An annual Ombudsman report goes to the Academic Council for its information and, where necessary, follow-up of quality issues identified.

A recent review of the Student Ombudsman role undertaken by Council in early 2018 found that the role was "working well, with the Student Ombudsman seen as an honest broker who has the trust of all parties" (CIT Student Ombudsman's Report for 2018/19, p. 5). No changes to the role were therefore proposed. The findings of the review, coupled with data from the Ombudsman's reports, may be taken to suggest that the role of Student Ombudsman is an effective mechanism to achieve an early, efficient and amicable resolution of the vast majority of grievances. The intervention of the Ombudsman thus helps prevent a permanent deterioration of the individual student experience, and at the institutional level reduces the reputational risk which could result from the escalation of even a single grievance.

Since 2014/15, the Ombudsman reports have followed a set template, allowing for some comparative analysis of the figures and conclusions recorded. Over the five years considered, an average of 24 cases arose each year, within a range of 19 to 31 cases. As the incumbents repeatedly pointed out, these numbers represent a tiny fraction of the overall learner population (16,022 in 2018/19). There was no observable concentration of cases in any one school or department, indicating that there are unlikely to be any student experience 'hotspot' areas. This aligns with repeated observations collated e.g. in programmatic review that staff-student relations are generally very good across the Institute.

The bulk of new cases arising each year, 91% on average (within a range of 87% – 95%), were resolved informally in Stage 1. The Ombudsmen also reported on the complexity, number and overall duration of the interactions necessary to arrive at an informal solution. Cases were classified as minor (prompt resolution after one or two interactions), relatively straightforward (involving various contacts with several parties in a reasonable time period) or complex (multiple interactions with multiple parties over many weeks). The figures show a clear trend towards a faster, more straightforward resolution of Stage 1 cases over the five years. Caution needs to be exercised when interpreting this finding, since the small

number of cases and multiple factors which might have played a part makes it difficult to attribute this observation to any one cause, or indeed to ascribe a predictive value to it for the future.

The Ombudsman report for 2018/19 did note, however, that eight minor cases involved giving advice or lending “a sympathetic ear” (ibid.). The Ombudsman saw value in carrying out what might be described as a ‘counselling function’, as it helped forestall escalation, but felt that such interactions were better recorded as advisory rather than as cases.

At the other end of the spectrum, two reports made mention of grievances which were not, or might not have been, pursued beyond Stage 1 because the complainant – rightly or wrongly – feared repercussions for her or his academic career. This observation gave rise to a recommendation to Academic Council to initiate creation and implementation of an overarching Dignity and Respect policy, to explicitly affirm CIT’s commitment to a culture of mutual respect, further enhance trust in the institutional processes, and support Institute members in identifying and challenging unacceptable behaviour, whether shown by staff or students. Development of this policy is currently underway.

Unsurprisingly given the scope of the grievance procedure, the largest number of cases centred on the quality of interactions between learners and academic staff or management. Fees-related issues also came up repeatedly, as did expectations and processes for assessment, particularly with regard to coursework and projects. In this context, several onward referrals to the assessment appeals process were made by the Ombudsmen following revision of that procedure in 2016/17.

The great majority of complainants were individual students, but grievances were also raised by the Students’ Union, by Heads of Department, and once each by a parent, CIT Customer Care and a Citizens’ Advice Bureau. The last instance clearly illustrates the risk inherent in every single student experience issue which arises, and the value of the Ombudsman mechanism in ensuring, in the majority of cases, that there is a positive outcome at the least possible cost for all parties involved.

While grievance cases often resist easy generalisation, the Ombudsmen did make a number of recommendations to Academic Council, based on emergent commonalities over the years. In addition to proposals for the creation of a Dignity and Respect Policy and a reclassification of grievance cases for reporting purposes, as summarised above, Ombudsman recommendations concerned the avoidance of ‘dead drop’ mechanisms for assignment submission and, in relation to the grievance process itself, the timelines for provision of Stage 1 guidance.

3.2 Impact

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

Qualitative ISSE Responses and Student Partnership in Quality

As part of its work under the Student Partnership in Quality (SParQ@CIT) strand of activity (see Part 4 below), AnSEO, the CIT Student Engagement Office, began to use ISSE data to drive discussions within academic departments as part of SParQ sessions.

Whilst ISSE response rates were not of an order of magnitude to draw reliable conclusions for specific programmes from the quantitative data, AnSEO used responses to the qualitative/free-text questions as part of programme and curriculum review workshops. This approach was successfully employed with 11 groups of undergraduate students from across Marketing, Chemical Engineering and Business Administration programmes, enabling constructive discussions between department staff and students on teaching and learning quality. The use of ISSE responses to draw on the experiences of previous years proved valuable in opening up conversations, as students often found it easier to build on ISSE comments and expand into their own experiences than to initiate discussion of particular issues.

Using the findings from ISSE also demonstrated an approach of continuous dialogue with students in the quality space, by actively ‘closing the feedback loop’ in relation to student voice mechanisms. This should, in the longer term, impact engagement with ISSE and other Student Voice mechanisms as there is a clear line from feedback, to discussion, to action.

Quality Impacts of Cyber Security Audit

During 2018/19, the IT Services Department was externally audited for Cyber Security Maturity against the CIS 20 Controls Framework. This was an extensive audit, the first of its kind in HE in Ireland, which provided IT Services and the Institute with a very clear measure of those areas where CIT is mature and those areas where further maturity is required. The key output of this audit is a roadmap of initiatives that will form the basis of the Cyber Security input to CIT’s (and MTU’s) Digital Strategy 2030.

Arising out of the audit, the IT Department set up a new layer of cyber security for the ‘crown jewels’, i.e. mission-critical information assets which, if compromised, would have an extremely damaging impact on the quality of CIT’s processes and provision and the Institute’s reputation. One example of a ‘crown jewel’ is the new MAX^e Exam Paper Management system (see also [Section 4.2 below](#)), which has been put behind an additional layer of security alongside other sensitive services.

Furthermore, to raise awareness about cyber security risks within CIT, the IT Services Department aligned with worldwide cyber awareness initiatives by adopting October as its Cyber Security Month. During October 2019, IT Services sponsored a Cyber Awareness Campaign for all CIT staff and students.

All staff were offered the opportunity to complete Cyber Security Training in two modules, and prizes were offered weekly for those who had completed the training. Over 1600 training units were completed by 825 staff during October, making this a very successful campaign.

Quality Impacts of Technological and Staff Resources on the CIT Library Service

Impacts of New Library Management System (KOHA)

In December 2017, CIT Library migrated to a new Library Management System, KOHA, as part of an overall roll-out for THEA libraries, where the procurement process had been managed by Educampus.

CIT Library actively engaged with EduCampus on a Consultancy Feedback Review process that commenced in the summer of 2018. At the end of August 2019, there were 27 outstanding issues, of which 16 related to lack of basic functionality in the Acquisitions module (particularly with regard to lack of auditing functions) that were available in the previous LMS.

KOHA was upgraded to version 18.11 in August 2019. The underlying infrastructure was upgraded and a marked improvement in latency performance was noted. The 18.11 upgrade coincided with the Index Reconfiguration Project to improve upon search capacity. However, CIT Library has seen no discernible improvement on search, particularly keyword searching in the catalogue, since this work was completed. As a result, the system is unable to surface the correct information to learners, academic staff, researchers, and library staff alike. Elastic Search was raised as a possible solution, but implementing Elastic Search would still be predicated on index weightings for the relevancy ranking to function which the supplier has confirmed as not being feasible.

The upgrade focused on improvements to Inter-Library Loans, which is a core module in Library Management Systems. However, since the upgrade it is not possible to use KOHA-to-KOHA requests so an email is simply generated to send to a partner library. The CIT Library also found that searching partner library material is inconsistent using z39.50. As the ILL Module was developed with a dependency on the Union Catalogue, which the CIT Library opted out of, the library did not gain from this development and is still using spreadsheets in order to fulfil ILL requests.

Overall, the CIT Library views these issues as serious regressions in terms of its ability to serve CIT's academic community, and considers the system as it is currently configured does not reflect best practice in this area. KOHA functionality is not fit for purpose for larger academic libraries in areas such as Inter-Library Loans or Acquisitions (where auditing is key). This point is particularly vital when considering the upcoming work on the MTU Project, especially with regards to scale.

Impact of New Library Appointments

By contrast, the Library Service also provided examples of the immediate, positive impact of strategic staffing increases on service levels and take-up. Thus, two new additional Grade V Senior Library Assistant posts filled in December 2018 contributed noticeably to the levels of service offered in the areas of information literacy instruction, outreach and engagement. There was significant growth in these areas, with 2018/2019 statistics reflecting a 54% increase in attendance at library workshops & induction sessions by undergraduate, postgraduate, staff and external stakeholders.

In addition, two new Grade VI Assistant Librarian posts were filled in June 2019 to lead in the establishment, implementation, and assessment of digital scholarship services and metadata services that support research efforts at CIT in the context of Open Science initiatives and ongoing developments in scholarly communication. The new assignments will enable the CIT Library to achieve its aim to connect scholars with the tools, resources, and knowledge in order to support CIT's Research, Innovation & Knowledge Transfer mission.

2018 Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS)

Process Change and GOS Returns

As in previous years, the HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) features in the discussion of impacts, as the fluctuation in returns – and thus the completeness and reliability of the data obtained – illustrate the impact on quality-relevant outcomes that fairly simple procedural changes may have.

The annual Graduate Outcome Survey collects data from recent graduates of participating HEIs to determine details of their current situation, giving an estimate of numbers in employment or seeking employment, as well as of those participating in further study or training. In CIT the survey is jointly coordinated by the [CIT Careers Service](#) and [CIT Alumni Office](#), with support from a number of other central CIT units and the Department of Mathematics, in late spring (March to May) of each year.

Starting in 2016/17, the organising CIT services observed a continuing downward trend in the number of returns from recent graduates, after achieving rising figures in the – then – First Destinations Surveys for some years previously. Analysis suggested a number of contributing factors, chief among which was the new survey format introduced by the HEA. The new survey was longer than before, included more questions requiring free text answers, and contained questions which could be perceived as difficult or repetitive, as indicated by the break-off pattern.

In a reversal of this, the 2018 Graduate Outcomes Survey was completed by 63% of the graduating class, a strong increase from 51.5% the previous year. This coincides with, and is likely due in no small measure to, the survey having been revised and shortened again by the HEA in response to feedback from participating providers. In addition, the CIT GOS project team conducted a promotional campaign to the target group, which resulted in increased engagement with the survey.

Graduate Outcomes and Institutional Mission

Achieving maximal GOS returns matters as the outcomes recorded are important strategic and quality indicators for the Institute, particularly with regard to the employability and academic capability of its graduates and the fulfilment of core elements of the Institute's mission.

To highlight just some of the relevant findings of the 2018 Graduate Outcomes Survey:

- CIT graduate employment and progression rates continue very strong, with 96% of 2018 graduates overall working, due to start work, or engaged in further studies (54% paid employment and 42% in further study). Returns from graduates of NFQ Level 8 (Honours degree) programmes showed that 82% were in paid employment. Solid average and peak starting salaries furthermore indicated that graduates are employed in appropriately qualified positions.

- In addition, only 3% of 2018 graduates were seeking employment, showing a decrease from 6% in 2015. While of course this also speaks of an economy slowly regaining its buoyancy, it again corroborates the employability of CIT graduates.
- 19% of 2018 graduate positions were secured through an internship or placement, increasing from 16% for 2017 graduates. This supports recent strategic decisions within the faculties to extend work placement in the programme curricula and make this a mandatory element of all programmes where it is pedagogically sensible and logistically feasible.
- 93% of CIT graduates remained working in Ireland and 79% are working in Cork. This matches intake figures well and shows that CIT continues to strongly fulfil its regional mission.

Cork City Service Charter

Overview

An interesting case study on the successful integration of educational provision with regional engagement, leading to significant, sustained positive impacts both for learners and the wider community, came from the Department of Organisation & Professional Development.

In a collaborative, multi-year project led by Dr Angela Wright, with the support of an Enterprise Ireland Innovation Voucher and the CIT Innovation & Enterprise Office and in collaboration with the Cork City Forum, Cork City Council and the Local Enterprise Office (LEO), students on the Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme successfully delivered a ‘Customer Service Charter’ for the City of Cork, which was launched in 2017, with continuous further development and implementation of its component elements throughout the reporting period and beyond.

Initially intended as a collaborative investigation between CIT and regional stakeholder groups into possibilities for improving the service experience in the City of Cork while promoting student engagement, improving the student experience and aiding learning, the success of this exercise exceeded all expectations in terms of engagement and collaboration outcomes. The value and impact of this collaborative, cyclical project derives as much from the dual aspect to learning, which occurs in parallel for the MBA students and for the business operatives in Cork City, as it does from its novel outcome, a city service charter with a set of developmental principles which are being collaboratively unfolded in the context of follow-on projects.

A new concept, and the first of its kind, the purpose of the [Cork City Service Charter](#) is to detail the standards a customer or client can expect when engaging with service providers in the city. The charter is a collective commitment by all those engaged in the daily service life of the city to focus on the needs and preferences of their customers, motivated by values such as respect, integrity and excellence. Ongoing training and collaboration with CIT have continued the momentum of this initiative to date.

Project Development, Initial Outcomes and Feedback

The City Service Charter project built on previous, successful smaller-scale projects which saw students work towards re-imagining particular Cork ‘quarters’, one of which led to “The Plunkett Quarter” around the Oliver Plunkett street pedestrian zone winning the 2016 Great Street Award in London, a first for an Irish city.

In 2017, another project was commissioned from a new cohort of MBA students, with the brief to examine the city centre in its entirety. Utilising a mixed methods research methodology, primary data gathering fed into development of a new model for retail practice, resulting in the service charter. This was followed by a review of how the development process had been experienced by the students and the city stakeholders, in order to evaluate the benefits of the collaborative, problem-based learning approach employed. This work was designed by the MBA students and carried out in collaboration with 20 city businesses involved in the Cork City Centre Forum (CORE), a group of key stakeholders including the Cork Chamber, Cork Business Association, the Gardaí, Bus Éireann, and representatives of the retail and hospitality sectors dedicated to taking a strategic approach to management and promotion of all aspects of city life. For the students involved, successful completion of the different component parts of the project brief entitles them to 5 ECTS module credits at Expert (postgraduate) level.

From the point of view of Cork retailers, with an online spending forecast of €16 billion for the end of 2019 and significant percentages of this (40%, according to *Consumer Market Monitor* 2019) going on online retailing, it was never more pertinent to have a differentiating factor. The new Cork City Service Charter thus aimed to address the threat of online shopping through a universal commitment to excellent customer service in-store and the adoption of a ‘co-opetition’ approach, which describes synchronised efforts to grow commercial activity through cooperation towards the achievement of shared goals in a competitive space.

The development of the charter involved a series of meetings with small groups of businesses; a ‘town hall’ meeting to which all city stakeholders were invited; a number of surveys; and 10 structured interviews with key businesses to triangulate the survey data. A representative from Visit Kent, the Kent Tourism Board, provided insights into strategies for branding and the enhancement of the visitor experience for the town hall meeting and also led an idea generation workshop for the MBA students (albeit Visit Kent did not have a visitor experience charter).

From the collated results of the research, the core concepts and guidelines for the Cork City Service Charter were developed, together with two new taglines: “Open to Explore” and “We Are Glad You’re Here”. The guidelines were developed along three main sets of principles for city businesses to sign up and adhere to: Service Principles, Customer Principles and City Principles.

Follow-up research showed that the regional stakeholders were extremely satisfied with the co-creative collaborative process and overwhelmingly positive about its outcomes. The traders liked working with the students on developing the service charter and valued the institutional support from CIT. Many comments indicated that the retailers immensely enjoyed the training on implementing the

charter to which they had committed as part of this project, and felt they learned much about service delivery and competitive strategies. The feedback also indicated that as a result of this project business owners had an improved understanding of the need to work together to be competitive “as a City”, rather than narrowly focus on competition with each other. The opportunity of gaining first-hand insights into how “younger people” viewed Cork city and its service delivery was also valued. One stakeholder noted that “[t]he three new principles of the City Charter devised by CIT MBA students [...] are something that we can now strive to achieve as businesses and in a wider context as a City”.

Local Impact and Follow-On Developments

While it would prove difficult to assign a specific economic value to the Cork City Service Charter, there are indicators that the charter has value for the city’s business community and has already had a positive impact on the region. Since the launch of the charter, a growing number of city businesses have signed up to its principles. Following initial training of participating business owners, cyclical ‘Train the Trainer’ workshops for city retailers led by Cork City Hall have been introduced as a key element of the charter’s implementation, with a small budget allocated to this by the city. Now in Phase 3, with more than 50 businesses participating, the training process is being continued on an ongoing basis, so that all businesses have a chance to be included, with further training devised when and as needed.

Last but not least, a further indicator of the project’s success was the recognition achieved by Cork as ‘Friendliest City in Ireland’ at the 2020 Retail Excellence Awards in November 2019. In his acceptance speech on behalf of the city, the Lord Mayor of Cork explicitly paid tribute to the role of the Charter in winning this accolade (see e.g. The Irish Times, Nov 12th, 2019).

Following delivery of the Cork City Service Charter, the next phase of this ongoing collaboration is dedicated to the expansion of the *City Principles* element of the charter. This focuses on the responsibility of the city itself in terms of its promises to citizens, with a particular focus on Cork’s contribution to ‘Saving our Planet’ in the context of climate change and sustainability. The main deliverable for this phase will be a strategic plan for the development of Cork as a Green City, which will incorporate new and improved green spaces and areas. It is anticipated that this will be developed through the ongoing collaboration with the community stakeholders through 2020.

3.3 Themes

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

Key Themes Arising from Annual Programme Status Review Reports

The following represents a summary of key trends and themes from the 2019 analyses of programme status review reports produced for Academic Council by the Faculty of Business & Humanities (for 2017/18) and the Faculty of Engineering & Science (for the time period 2012/13 – 2017/18). The different timeframes of the Business & Humanities (FBH) and the Engineering & Science (FES) reports should be kept in mind when considering the referred observations on trends and themes.

Demand and Enrolment Trends

1. Enrolments in full-time, major award programmes continued on a general growth trajectory through 2017/18, with CAO applications in the main tracking enrolment levels. CAO applications for Level 8 degrees in particular increased further across both faculties, even if there was a drop in CAO 1st preferences for some FBH programmes.
2. In the Faculty of Engineering & Science, the rise in enrolments was most pronounced in the Centre for Craft Studies, the School of Science & Informatics and the School of Building & Civil Engineering. As well as the continuing recovery of construction-related areas, these findings reflect the growing popularity of 'new' apprenticeships in particular. As in previous years, over 50% of FES students were enrolled in Biological Sciences, Computer Science or Mechanical, Biomedical & Manufacturing Engineering programmes. Biological Sciences remained the most popular enrolment destination for female students by a wide margin. Common Entry engineering also continued to grow.

In the Faculty of Business & Humanities, demand for the programmes of the School of Business was particularly strong, except for falling applications for Agriculture in line with national developments.

3. Against the general faculty trend, CAO applications also slowed further for programmes of the Department of Tourism & Hospitality and the CIT Crawford College of Art & Design (CCAD). Some contributory factors had previously been identified by the faculty. These include the withdrawal of Fáilte Ireland funding, which despite numerous recruitment initiatives continued to be a challenge for attracting students to the culinary suite of programmes. The continuing decline in CAO applications for Art & Design programmes appeared to be a problem across the sector as a whole, exacerbated in CCAD's case by infrastructural challenges related to historic building stock. FBH reported that the national emphasis on STEM, accompanied by a general sense of economic uncertainty, made prospective students wary of subjects which did not seem to offer prospects of lucrative employment. This aligned with feedback from secondary school art teachers that ever fewer pupils were taking Art as a Leaving Cert subject.

Apart from promotional initiatives, actions planned by the Faculty of Business & Humanities to address demand-related issues (linked to pressures arising from growing numbers as well as from declining ones) include infrastructural measures to achieve physical co-location and enable fuller integration of currently dispersed Business and Art & Design departments, as well as a programme of investment in equipment and facilities essential for a contemporary School of Art & Design.

In the Faculty of Engineering & Science, enrolments fell somewhat in the National Maritime College of Ireland in 2017/18. Particular attention will consequently be given to recruitment of learners into NMCI in coming years. In addition, the faculty will focus heavily on encouraging both female and male students to enrol in STEM programmes in order to address noted gender imbalances.

Retention (including Attrition and Progression)

1. As in previous years, the Faculty of Business & Humanities reported generally high retention levels, with an average of 87.9%, well above the 85% compact target set with the HEA, and reflecting an improvement by at least 2% in every area. Equivalent figures were not supplied by the Faculty of Engineering & Science, but the faculty noted that attrition and progression rates continued to vary significantly by stage, NFQ level, disciplinary area and prior academic achievement (as expressed in CAO points and LC grades in Mathematics and English).
2. Progression from Stage 1 remained the greatest challenge for incoming students in all areas, and modules requiring strong numeric or analytical competence consistently presented the most significant Stage 1 progression barrier. Post-Stage 1, numerical subjects remained difficult but no longer posed the same hurdles for progression. In FBH, fluctuating results were furthermore reported for language modules. Both faculties again commented on the correlation between CAO entry points and retention rates, an issue which caused considerable discussion at some Business programme boards, for instance. As in previous reports, clear links between attendance and pass rates were also reported for particular programmes.
3. Both faculties highlighted the continuing partnership with AnSEO, the Student Engagement Office, as a critical support of their work in settling in students and maximising learner success opportunities. The Faculty of Business and Humanities also referenced the supports of the Academic Learning Centre and the inclusion of small-group tutorials, a standard feature in programmes of the School of Humanities, as mechanisms which aided retention.
4. In addition to its ongoing measures, FBH intends to review language modules together with their delivery and pathway options, and also plans to investigate an attendance monitoring solution through the Institute's new VLE, Canvas. In FES, programme design changes that encourage high levels of attendance have been identified as an option for some discipline areas. However, as a general observation, establishment of a valid and robust formal link between attendance and academic success remains problematic in a HE system which bases academic achievement and certification solely on outcomes, not effort (including that of being present).

Operation of QA Mechanisms

Both faculties reported that programme boards were active and engaged in identifying programme challenges and opportunities during the reporting period. Issues discussed by FBH programme boards included assessment load and timing, the teaching and learning environment, work placement, programme promotion and the clarity of marking schemes and group work.

Programme board suggestions for the enhancement of the QA mechanisms themselves related to the need for formal training of programme board student representatives (FBH) and the deadlines for amendment of existing modules and programmes.

The Faculty of Business & Humanities also commented separately on external examiner reports. Much of the commentary of course replicated (or rather, in terms of due process was replicated in) the comments of the programme boards. Some observations also echoed findings of other QA processes such as programmatic review, for example on the need for investment in equipment (especially digital technologies) and facilities in areas such as digital media. One specific comment related to the need for a downward adjustment of the marks for work placement in its first year of implementation. By contrast, there was a recommendation to utilise the top of the grading scale (75% - 100 %) to reward excellent performance in certain other modules / subject areas.

FBH also noted that ongoing positive interactions with the Students' Union and AnSEO had paid dividends by 2017/18, in the form of a number of 'Lunches' where student feedback was received by the faculty in a formal and collaborative way.

The Faculty of Engineering & Science noted that some programmatic review work scheduled for 2017/18 had been unavoidably delayed as a consequence of the need to devote significant management attention to crucial major health & safety works. In this context FES pointed out that the faculty itself and the Institute would need to review the nature and type of work allocated to Head of School and Head of Faculty grades, particularly in context of the development of the MTU.

Part 4: Quality Enhancement

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

4.1 Improvements and Enhancements for the Reporting Period

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

Strategic Priority Area: Social, Cultural and Economic Impact

Workvivo Staff Communication Platform – IT Services Department

In addition to activities to enhance cyber security and the Institute Data Governance initiative captured elsewhere in this report (see [Part 3.2 Impact](#) and [Part 2.1.1 QA and Enhancement System Developments](#) respectively), the IT Services Department also rolled out a new initiative to foster, facilitate and improve staff communication and engagement through a new internal communication platform called Workvivo. This new platform was to replace the existing Gateway staff server, which had not reached satisfactory usage levels during its lifespan.

The new Workvivo platform is built around an intuitive and familiar design enabling social communication within a staff intranet context. It aims to promote cultural alignment and amplification through easy association with institutional goals and values and also makes it easy for individuals to share updates on the activities and achievements of their area and recognise the contributions of others in one central location, contributing to increased staff engagement and a sense of community.

In addition, Workvivo also has strong capabilities for data analytics and surveys, allowing IT Services to review and analyse usage trends and platform engagement, thus support the department in maximising the utility of the new platform.

Extending Regional Outreach and Collaboration – Department of Organisation & Professional Development

One CIT Department for which regional collaboration and engagement are ‘woven into the fabric’ of its educational mission is the Department of Organisation & Professional Development. Some of the new collaborative and outreach ventures of the Department initiated during the reporting period exemplify and illustrate the depth and breadth of CIT’s links with the region, both with industry and the professions and civic groups and structures.

Thus, the Department commenced an outreach, part-time, evening delivery of its successful BBus in Business Administration in Skibbereen, Co. Cork, with an initial enrolment of 17 learners from diverse backgrounds. Supported by the Cork College of Commerce, retention from first year to second year on the outreach delivery was 100%. An existing Special Purpose Award, the Certificate in Leadership Development (NFQ Level 8, 15 ECTS credits), was also rolled out to organisations across the region including SMEs and MNCs with support from Cork Chamber Skillnet and Cork Pharma Skillnet. Initially developed as a customised programme for Boston Scientific Ireland, the expansion of the scope of delivery enabled learners from a wide range of industries to benefit.

In addition, the Department also commenced delivery of a new collaborative NFQ Level 6 Special Purpose Award, the Certificate in Supervisory Management (20 ECTS credits). Designed and developed in collaboration with CIT’s Centre for Advanced Manufacturing and Management Systems (CAMMS) and IT Tralee, the first intake drew 20 learners employed by SMEs and MNCs in a variety of industries and organisations across the region. The new Certificate in Supervisory Management is likewise supported by Cork Chamber and Cork Pharma Skillnets, and also has support from the South West Regional Skills Forum, which had initially identified the skills needs met by the programme.

A specific case study on the Cork City Service Charter delivered by students on the department’s Master of Business Administration which showcases the successful integration of curriculum delivery with regional engagement, leading to positive impacts both for learners and the wider community, is [provided in Part 3, Section 2, Impact](#).

Project SPRAOI – Department of Sport, Leisure & Childhood Studies

In September 2018, CIT’s Department of Sport, Leisure and Childhood Studies (SLCS) hosted the Project Spraoi Research Forum: Key Findings and Future Directions, which presented the outcomes of a successful five-year regional health promotion initiative aimed at primary-level school children.

Project Spraoi, which was modelled on the successful New Zealand “Project Energize” and commenced in 2013, was funded and evaluated by the Department of SLCS and coordinated by a team of researchers in CIT. The project aimed to positively influence the overall health of primary school children by promoting physical activity and healthy eating. Over the duration of the project, Spraoi staff worked with 10 primary schools in the Cork area. Qualified staff, known as ‘Energizers’, visited participating schools over the school year to provide resources and support to implement initiatives tailored specifically to each school. The Energizers worked with over 3,000 children and 200 teachers, parents and the wider school community to increase levels of physical activity amongst children and

promote healthy eating. Teachers were provided with professional development sessions as well as hands-on assistance in delivering ‘Huff and Puff’ sessions and nutritional interventions.

The Project Spraoi Research Forum gave the research team an opportunity to share their findings with representatives of the Cork city and county councils and their Community Development Committees, the HSE health promotion section, Healthy Ireland, a range of sporting organisations (Athletics Ireland, Cork GAA, IRFU), the Cork Sports Partnership as well as University College Cork and the Cork Education and Training Board. While the initial scope of Project Spraoi foresaw a delivery within the Cork region only, the Lord Mayor of Cork described Project Spraoi as a ‘blueprint strategy’ for replication at the national level, calling on the relevant ministers to examine the data gathered from the project with a view to working with others to further nationwide dissemination.

Strategic Priority Area: High-Quality Education

Development of Teaching & Learning – Activities of the Teaching & Learning Unit (TLU)

The aims of the Teaching & Learning Unit (TLU) are to encourage and facilitate excellence in teaching and learning by providing a range of relevant, accessible professional development opportunities and supports; to enhance the learning and development experience for CIT staff and students; and to encourage scholarship, research and innovation in teaching and learning. The different strands of enhancement activities offered by the TLU in 2018/19 are summarised below.

Master of Arts in Teaching & Learning in Higher Education (MATLHE)

In the context of its most recent programmatic review in 2016/17, the *MA in Teaching & Learning in HE (MATHLE)* underwent significant restructuring to make it easier for participants – all of whom are current academic staff of CIT – to complete the entire programme and gain the award. The key change was the introduction of 10-credit modules, accompanied by a streamlining of module learning outcomes (chiefly through amalgamation of related smaller modules) and a lightening of the assessment load. This resulted in a noticeable reduction in learner workload while preserving existing programme strengths, such as the deep approach to learning and quality and the integration of theory with reflective practice.

Initial enrolment figures seem to indicate that the roll-out of the revised programme has had the desired effect, with new staff enrolments rising from 19 in 2017/18 to 24 in 2018/19.

In addition to increased uptake of the full programme, the MATHLE modules offered continued to attract participants who only wished to obtain module credit or to ‘sit in’ for the learning without completing assignments and gaining credit. Certified module completions in 2018/19 came to 75, an increase of 38% on the previous year, with 42 different staff members completing one or more modules (45% more than 2017/18).

In view of this, the TLU team continued to advocate, at Institute-level, for ways to recognise staff engagement in CPD in the face of heavy workloads, particularly as this challenge pertains to MATLHE participants who may not be in a position, or feel the need, to work towards the award. To this end, as part of the Munster Technological University (MTU) application, there is a commitment to affording

staff of the technological university the opportunity to develop professionally through a Teaching & Learning Unit with the remit of enhancing pedagogical development.

CPD Seminars and Workshops

Many short CPD seminars and workshops are offered by the TLU throughout the academic year. The topics are chosen to reflect the needs of staff, and are determined by ongoing consultation of the TLU team with staff from across CIT, both academic and non-academic.

In 2018/19, this resulted in the organisation of 35 seminars and workshops, a 21% increase on 2017/18, and included the following series:

- *Tús Maith (Good Start) Seminar Series* – a series of seminars/workshops run at the start of each new academic year to support staff, both new and more experienced, in getting their academic year off to a good start. This series involved 8 sessions and attracted an attendance of 123 staff members over the duration of the series.
- *Breakfast Seminar Series* – a series of short, early-morning breakfast CPD workshops on different annual themes associated with teaching and learning. For 2018/19, the theme was [Research-Based Teaching Strategies](#), with 7 sessions attracting 68 staff members overall.
- *Conversations on Teaching & Learning (Winter / Summer Programmes)* – a series of short seminars and workshops addressing the needs of staff and students based on feedback and demand. This series frequently includes seminars funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (NFTEL) as part of its National Seminar Series.

In 2018/2019, the TLU delivered two series of Conversations in Teaching & Learning seminars and workshops – one in [January](#) and one in [May](#) – with 13 sessions overall attracting an attendance of 304 staff members over the two series. Presenters included both CIT staff and well-known international experts in the relevant field. Five of these seminars were funded by NFTEL.

The topics varied widely, covering aspects of assessment, teaching and learning, universal design, RPL, and student engagement and well-being, as well as self-care, peer mentoring and professional development strategies. Subsequent to each seminar or workshop, all relevant resources were made available to CIT staff through the [TLU website](#).

Staff Induction Workshop and “Staff Induction – Starting Off Essentials” Guide

During the reporting period, the TLU commenced delivery of its Staff Induction Workshop for new staff initially developed in 2017/18 in conjunction with the Human Resources team.

Adapted annually to reflect key institutional developments, the workshop introduces new staff members to CIT and its organisational structure, key staff and core policies, as well as suggesting possibilities for settling into the Institute community. One Staff Induction Workshop was delivered to 23 new staff in 2018/19, with the intention of increasing the number of deliveries in subsequent years.

The accompanying “Staff Induction – Starting Off Essentials” guide is currently being revised due to a number of key institutional changes in 2018/19, such as the introduction of Canvas as the Institute’s new virtual learning environment (VLE) and Workvivo as its new internal staff communication platform.

On completion, the guide will be widely distributed throughout the Institute to ease the transition of new staff members into their role through provision of essential information about CIT.

Teaching & Learning Development Fund

The Teaching & Learning Development Fund, launched by the TLU in 2015/16, has proven a very successful mechanism for staff and/or students to access small scale funding, up to a maximum of €2000, for semester-long projects aiming to develop new and enhanced teaching, learning and assessment practices in CIT. The mechanism has funded quite diverse projects which are testament to the innovation and initiative shown by CIT staff, with a wide variety of outputs such as new teaching & learning data, videos, seminars, conference proceedings, publications, websites, new assessment practices and inter-institutional collaborations.

In time for the start of 2018/19, the TLU compiled the outputs of the 25 projects funded in the initial three years into a single publication, “Teaching & Learning Development Fund Project Ambassadors – the Story So Far ...”, an [online copy of which](#) was made available on the TLU website. The purpose of this compilation was two-fold – firstly to document and showcase the type of work that had been carried out to date, and secondly to encourage future participation and engagement with this funding stream amongst staff and students. Without a doubt, the production and dissemination of this compilation was highly impactful: in 2018/19 alone, the TLU received and supported 24 viable proposals for staff-led projects from 16 departments across both faculties, representing 96% of the overall projects supported in the first three years following inception of the fund.

Based on the success of this initiative, the TLU will continue to invest in the Teaching & Learning Development Fund and encourage staff to apply for such funding by showcasing the outputs of these projects through its website, print publications and seminars/workshops.

Staff Mentoring and Coaching Initiatives

- *Mentoring Champions*: In 2016/17, the TLU had piloted its Staff Mentoring Project, aimed at providing an immediate source of advice and support for staff wishing to enhance their teaching methodologies or classroom management techniques in a safe and unpressurised environment. The following year, much work was done in identifying and training CIT staff volunteers to provide mentoring support to new lecturers.

In 2018/19, the TLU took this initiative further by identifying 21 departmental Mentoring Champions across CIT. The intention was to provide participating departments with their own local mentoring advocate, promote mentoring as a positive development tool ‘on the ground’, and establish a local first point of contact for mentors and mentees. While the full support of the TLU continues to be available at all times, adoption of this approach has made it possible to expand the reach of the mentoring project considerably. Through the champions, mentoring is now being trialled in many more areas, and new lecturing staff who express an interest in being mentored are being successfully matched with suitable induction mentors at the local level.

- *EMCC Foundation Level Course in Coaching in HE*: In 2018/19, the TLU consulted with the European Coaching and Mentoring Council (EMCC) to provide all CIT staff with an opportunity to attend an accredited EMCC Foundation Level Course in Coaching in HE and potentially achieve individual

EMCC Foundation Level Coaching Accreditation through this programme. The course comprises four 2.5-hour modules offered over 4 weeks; information can be found [on the TLU website](#).

The course generated strong interest and was delivered on three separate occasions in 2018/19, resulting in a total of 46 staff enrolling, 26 staff members completing all four modules, and 3 staff members to date opting to apply for individual accreditation as EMCC Foundation Level Coaches.

Learning Communities and Networks

Fostering learning communities was another growth area among the activities of the TLU in 2018/19. Recognising the potential of collaborative learning to both initiate and sustain professional development, the TLU provides small amounts of seed funding to encourage the formation of learning communities among CIT lecturing staff, and continues to support communities post-establishment – financially, logistically or developmentally – as needed.

In Semester 2 of 2018/19, the TLU issued a funding call with the aim of funding 5 communities. Such was the level of interest among staff, however, that 13 new learning communities were established as a result of this call, involving 15 departments and 84 staff members.

National Digital Badge – Teaching Strategies for (New) Lecturers

In the previous reporting period, CIT's TLU was funded to work with NFTEL on creating a 25-hour short CPD programme on [Teaching Strategies for \(New\) Lecturers](#). Led by Dr Eileen O'Leary, TLU / Department of Physical Sciences and a NFTEL 'Teaching Hero', the programme was to be offered as part of [NFTEL's Open Access Professional Development Digital Badge Programme](#). In 2018/19, the TLU piloted this programme with the newly established Learning Community for New and Early Career Lecturers, with 2 staff members completing the four 'badge assignments' to earn the digital badge. Following this, the digital badge programme was rolled out nationally, with CCT College Dublin incorporating the programme into its Certificate in Teaching & Learning for CCT academic staff.

Teaching & Learning Resources / TLU Website

In addition to the different activity strands, sustained effort also went into further developing the TLU Website, with several new resources for CIT teaching staff made available during the reporting period.

These include "[In at the Deep End - Starting to Teach in CIT](#)", a resource for new and early career lecturers to manage the first few critical elements of teaching in higher education based on the work of Prof Phil Race, and the "[Teaching and Assessment at CIT \(TACIT\) Guides](#)", a series of short guides (available both online and in print versions) that provide hints, tips and practical guidance on key aspects of learning and teaching practice to help refresh thinking or spark ideas about possible approaches to take in teaching. The new resources are available as part of the Teaching Toolkit in the [Resources](#) section of the [CIT TLU Website](#).

External Funding

Lastly, in 2018/19 CIT's TLU was allocated €294,000 as part of the new €5.57m once-off non-competitive fund for the Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education announced by the Higher

Education Authority (HEA), in partnership with NFTEL. The funding was distributed to each of the 22 eligible institutions based on its percentage share of the HEA core grant and an equal share of the Teaching & Learning Enhancement Fund 2019. This investment represents a significant national commitment to the enhancement of teaching & learning in Irish higher education and will enable CIT to build on the already strong foundation it has in place in this space, evidenced through its existing impactful initiatives including professional development activities, internal funding opportunities and learning communities. An outline of planned developments is provided in [Part 5, Objectives for the coming year, Section 5.3](#), below. The funding secured will be administered by the Office of the Registrar & VP for Academic Affairs through the TLU.

Strategic Priority Area: Excellent Student Experience

AnSEO – The Student Engagement Office

Core Programmes of AnSEO

AnSEO adopts a whole-institution approach to student engagement practices, ensuring all students and staff can partner and engage in the enhancement of their experiences, with the intention to improve student outcomes, resulting in more confident and employable graduates. The volume and impact of AnSEO's work in its six core strands of activity improved measurably in the reporting period, with positive developments in the strategic priority areas of skills and employability, equality of opportunity, learning and teaching, and student progression.

Six complementary programme strands formed the backbone of AnSEO's activity in 2018/19:

- The Good Start First-Year Induction Programme;
- Academic Success Coaching;
- Academic Learning Centre (ALC);
- SPaRQ@CIT (Student Partnership in Quality) / NStEP;
- Transitions to CIT (department-led projects supported by AnSEO that impact 'Critical Moments' / transition stages across the lifecycle); and
- Maths Positive (a new initiative for 2018/19).

Across all strands, the AnSEO team builds intentional relationships and collaborations with all academic departments and central student support services to ensure equality of opportunity for all CIT students. For the Academic Success Coaching programme, two Academic Success Coaches were recruited and commenced work in October 2018. This allowed for one dedicated ASC coach to be attached to each of CIT's two faculties to build stable relationships with departments (management, teaching staff and students), thus enabling clear channels of communication and facilitating collective and individual engagement opportunities with students.

A seventh strand, Peer-Assisted Learning and Support (PALS), which provides for more advanced students supporting the learning and well-being of students in earlier programme stages, could not run for unforeseeable staffing reasons, but will be re-launched when feasible.

AnSEO's suite of activities both complement each other and work independently to improve the quality of education. Examples of activities and their impacts in the reporting period include:

The Good Start First-Year Induction Programme

Recognising that successful transition to Higher Education is a process and takes time, AnSEO offered an extended programme of welcome messages and events before and during registration, together with a themed programme of information and events during the first four weeks of Semester 1, to develop belonging and confidence across academic, social and pastoral spheres. The programme was co-designed by an increased and more diversified team of 17 experienced CIT students who had responded to an open call to be trained as Good Start Ambassadors. A lively social media campaign, help desks and "Get Connected" social induction events aimed to help students settle in and get to grips with the new and exciting (sometimes daunting) experience of getting started successfully in CIT. In Semester 2, Good Start focused on re-induction after the lengthy Christmas break, as well as on exam support under a tailored "Just Ask! About Exams" programme which made available student-facing online resources designed to reduce stress when receiving exam results.

Altogether, Good Start registered ca. 10,400 direct interactions (face-to-face and via social media) with students, of which more than 90% occurred in the First Semester. This represents a 43% increase of direct interactions from the previous year. The Get Connected events were particularly successful, with 20 sessions delivered jointly with academic departments across 11 programmes to 652 participating students and staff. One measure of the success of "Just Ask! About Exams" was in fact a decrease – specifically, a 67% drop in email enquiries, coupled with 3639 student / 142 staff clicks into the online resources, as students and staff were enabled to answer their questions directly using the resources.

Academic Success Coaching (ASC)

The AnSEO Academic Success Coaches paid early visits to First-Year class groups to talk about CIT expectations and to listen to students as they thought and talked about their expectations of college and of themselves. Students were introduced to coaching techniques and methods designed to support their integration into college and provide them with tools to manage themselves as they adapt to a new learning environment. Repeat interactions with academic departments, students and staff later on in First Year offered students an opportunity to link in with AnSEO's success coaching programme. An online profiling tool, completed in class, helped students to reflect on their actions to date and to flag any immediate concerns that they might have, which were followed up on after the class visit.

Attaching an Academic Success Coach to each faculty to enable stronger relationships with students and staff paid clear dividends for the success of the ASC programme. While 195 sessions took place in 2017/18, 495 sessions – both one-to-one appointments and group coaching/skills workshops – were held in the reporting period, representing a 200%+ increase within one academic year.

Academic Learning Centre (ALC)

The Academic Learning Centre continued to offer discipline-specific extra tuition in eight subjects which students experience as challenging, based amongst others on performance data. Targeted Maths & Statistics support was available for 29 different modules, with 179 attendances. The ALC also contributed to the delivery of the pilot Maths Positive workshops (see below) to challenge students'

behaviour and mindset with regards to Maths. The Academic Success Coaches worked with the ALC to offer workshops/events on study skills and academic writing.

All in all, over 1,200 individual students attended the ALC for more than 1,000 hours of academic-led delivery during the academic year 2018/19. The 2019 ALC Summer Programme for students taking resit examinations had more than 400 attendances, and over 70% of students attending the programme went on to pass their repeats.

SPaRQ@CIT (Student Partnership in Quality)

The partnership methodologies developed through the SPaRQ and PALS (Peer-assisted Learning and Support) programmes underpinned ways of working with students across all engagement activities.

The SPaRQ@CIT programme continued and was further extended in 2018/19. SPaRQ sessions facilitate student-staff dialogues in order to deepen understanding and support growth around academic issues of concern for students and/or staff. These issues are identified through various QA, engagement and support mechanisms, for instance ASC profiling, ISSE or Annual Programme Status Review reports.

13 SPaRQ events were held during the reporting period, attended by 300 students and staff. Recurrent topics included the placement experience, preparing students for study abroad, and engagement and attendance across programme stages.

Two new areas were also explored in SPaRQ sessions during the reporting period. These were engaging students in institutional development 'beyond the curriculum', with more than 20 students contributing to the design and function of CIT's planned Learning Resource Centre, and engaging staff in SPaRQ discussions as learners, as part of the MA in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. The latter activity afforded participating staff members a different insight into the SPaRQ methodology and encouraged them to explore the use of SPaRQ in their own classroom settings.

Learner comments about SPaRQ were very positive, indicating that participation in SPaRQ sessions had increased the students' sense of ownership of their academic programme, that students had felt listened to, and that their issues had been taken seriously.

Transitions to CIT

AnSEO partnered with over 40 department-led 'Transitions to CIT' events at programme level and at key transition points across the student lifecycle, including Transition into First Year, Reorientation to 2nd Year, Transition to Placement, Transition to Post-Graduate Study and 'Outduction'. Projects were designed to help students settle in at the different stages to graduation and to make connections with peers and staff. 'Transitions' activities were based on the research finding that students who engage academically and socially with class co-ordinators, lecturers and other students build better support for themselves and are better able to ask for help, navigate challenges, and involve themselves in their own learning and development. As part of the reporting process required of all Transitions projects, staff involved in leading out on these activities were able to present their work at the poster session for the European First-Year Experience Conference, held at CIT in June 2019 (see [Section 4.2, Quality Enhancement Highlights](#), below).

Maths Positive

Starting in June 2019, 'Maths Positive' is AnSEO's newest area of work. This new programme is designed to address internationally well-documented challenges around student confidence in numeracy skills, whilst framing these in a positive way. The project, which represents a collaboration between the Academic Success Coaches, Academic Learning Centre and Department of Mathematics, investigates the experience of students who take mathematics modules (over 80% of all CIT First Years have at least one), identifies trends and pilots initiatives to increase confidence and success rates. Although the Maths Positive project has been in operation for only 6 months, the project partners have run generic and module specific 'Maths Coaching' workshops designed to challenge students' behaviour and mindset around mathematics, established a reading group for staff teaching maths, and trialled a 'Maths PALS' programme as part of an existing 'bridging course' between Semester 1 and 2.

Contributions to the National and International Quality Assurance and Enhancement Agenda

AnSEO's two key contributions to the national and international QAE agenda during the reporting period (leadership of a sectoral resource project in the context of NSteP, the National Student Engagement Programme, and organisation of the European First-Year Experience Conference 2019 at CIT) are summarised in [Section 4.2](#) (see below).

Other international linkages included an information visit from Østfold University College, Norway, which had identified CIT as a model of good practice and requested a visit to explore AnSEO's student-staff coaching model in preparation for its own institutional expansion.

AnSEO's existing partnership with Birmingham City University (see [Section 5.3](#)) to establish the online platform for graduate formation continued during the reporting period with a key visit of the EDGE3 project team to Birmingham to see BCU's Graduate+ initiative in action and to learn from the management team in advance of CIT's integration and adaptation of the platform.

Lastly, AnSEO received funding under ERASMUS+ DELTA to facilitate an invited visit from the Utrecht Medical School, Utrecht University in March 2020. This will share and inform the 'Study Counselling' model of practice in Utrecht University and University of Applied Sciences, Utrecht.

Student Affairs Administration – Improving the Responsiveness of Systems and Processes through Digitisation and Workflow Re-design

The digitisation of the systems and processes for Admission and Examinations continued apace during the reporting period, with a number of hitherto paper-based processes replaced by online systems, leading to improved turnaround times. The major project in this context was the full Institute-wide roll-out of the new exam paper management system, MAX^e, which had been piloted in 2017/18. Other student lifecycle support systems were also enhanced through the deployment of additional digital functionalities or workflow re-design.

Roll-out and Expansion of MAX^e Exam Paper Management System

After its successful pilot in 2017/18, CIT's bespoke Exam Paper Management System MAX^e was rolled out to all academic staff and external examiners of the Institute during Semester 1 of the reporting

period, bringing Phase 1 of this project to completion. In parallel to this, sufficient funding and resources could be secured to commence work on Phase 2, in which several further functionalities will be incorporated into MAX^e. New functions will include a facility for nominating external examiners (currently still a paper-based process) and for the integration of final external examiner reports. Completion of these functionalities is expected for Semester 2 of the next reporting period.

Though it is too early to assess the full impacts of MAX^e, the Examinations Office reported that some benefits of the new system became obvious very quickly during its inaugural year of operation. MAX^e dramatically changed the exam paper management process, making it far more efficient while also enhancing the oversight and reporting capabilities of the Office. MAX^e's 'dashboard' provides a complete 'real-time' overview over the exam paper submission statistics, but also permits immediate follow-up on any individual areas of concern. Intuitive summary reports on the overall number and percentage of exam papers at various stages of processing can be pulled down on demand, e.g. for the information of the Academic Council. At the same time, Examinations Office staff can easily identify any outstanding papers or papers which have not yet been seen by an external examiner, for instance, enabling faster and more efficient liaison with module coordinators and departments. Lastly, MAX^e has also made the distribution of exam papers more time- and cost-effective, by enabling internal and external examiners to communicate with each other directly and doing away with the need for postal distribution of thousands of physical papers.

Mature Student Admissions – CAO Connect

During the reporting period the CAO Connect Advanced Entry functionality, used by the CIT Admissions Office for the first time in 2017/2018 for the 2018/2019 cycle, was extended to allow for the assessment of mature students within the CAO system itself. CIT had assisted the CAO with the gathering of requirements for the finalisation of this functionality, and as a result was one of the first colleges nationally to pilot it. Thus, for the first time in 2018/19 the relevant academic staff assessed all undergraduate mature student CAO applications in the CAO system, a process which had been handled largely manually before. The Admissions Office found that the move to the CAO Connect system not only increased the efficiency of the process and its turnaround timeframes, to the immediate benefit of the Institute's mature applicants, but also ensured greater GDPR compliance, since all files with pertinent applicant details remain secure within the system itself.

Further Enhancements to Admissions Processes

Further enhancements in the CIT Admissions Office concerned process redesigns and the introduction of new digital tools to improve timelines and information flows between relevant offices.

The introduction of MS Office OneDrive aided the International and Admissions Offices in re-engineering their mode of collaboration with regard to the admission of international learners, improving workflow and information sharing between the two offices. This digitally supported process change has enabled CIT to considerably reduce the response times to queries of potential international applicants. Design work also commenced for a new online application tool for non-EU international students (OASIS), projected to come on stream in early 2020 (see also the [section on Internationalisation](#) below).

For progressing students and graduates, paper application forms were replaced with an on-line application process allowing them to select the relevant add-on degree or a choice of other programmes based on their end-of-stage results. This was achieved by leveraging an existing online application tool, and again students benefited greatly from a much faster turnaround as their acceptances were registered on CIT's Banner student record system instantly.

Another significant improvement was made for the Springboard+ administration process. The administrative burden of Springboard+ programmes on colleges is ever increasing, not least due to changes in the funding mechanism. All applicants must submit not only their academic credentials, but also their financial and other documentation. By streamlining the process and creating a workflow and manuals for all users, CIT was able to handle the volume of applications in an acceptable time frame.

Library Service – User Service and Accessibility Enhancements

In December 2018 the Library, in conjunction with the Students' Union, Student Services, Building and Estates and the Registrar's Office, piloted late-night library opening (Bishopstown Campus) during the run up to Semester One exams. The library remained open as a study space (library services ceased at the regular time of 9:30 pm as agreed with the relevant trade union) until 11:45 pm Monday to Friday, leading to a 41% increase in footfall compared to the same period in December 2017. The pilot was deemed a success and was rolled out for Semester two exams in May 2019. While figures revealed a modest 2.6% decrease in footfall compared to the same period the previous year, overall library usage remained high with a footfall of 50,380 during May 2019. Extended opening hours have been made available again for the 2019/2020 Semester One exams.

Employability and Career Development – Enhancement Activities of the Careers Service

Service Development under the Careers Service Strategic Plan 2017 – 2020

The implementation and enhancement of all Careers Service activities in 2018/19 was guided by the service's six strategic priorities for 2017 – 2020, all of which feed into the overarching objective of developing work- and life-ready graduates. Across all activity areas, the Careers Service continued to focus on growing activity types which would allow it to increase service efficiency and reach.

Overall, the Careers Service had over 7,200 interactions with students through a variety of activities across the year, an increase of 13% on 2017/18. Significantly, this incorporates a 22% increase achieved in day-to-day student interactions and service activities (to 4,475 interactions) outside of the annual Careers & Employability Fair in September 2018, which was attended by ca. 2,750 students.

Apart from this large-scale employer engagement event, which exceeded previous years' fairs both in terms of attendance and the number of stands hosted (105), the Careers Service also co-hosted the "Connect with CIT" SME networking event with the Extended Campus (see the [Extended Campus section](#) below), contributed to the CIT Postgraduate Fair organized by the School of Graduate Studies, and engaged with employers and industry in numerous other ways.

Institute-facing service activities included smaller group events (careers education talks, employability workshops, employer presentations or meetings, focus groups) and individual interactions. The latter comprised one-to-one student appointments, drop-in sessions, department-based CV clinics (41),

weekly careers clinics, dedicated department interview sessions, and the Joint Mentorship Programme. In addition to these documented interactions, Careers Service staff members continued to deal with student queries by phone, through email and at the front desk on a regular basis.

An enhancement challenge which remained for both the Careers and Counselling Services was the fact that the services continue to share office space, even though the requirements of their users are very different and at times not well matched. Pending the planned relocation of the Careers Service, which is contingent on delivery of the Learning Resources Building, changes to existing office facilities and occupancy arrangements allowed the Services to better manage service provision and noise levels.

Enhancements to Careers Service Interaction Efficiency

Offering more drop-in sessions and group events brought about the most marked improvements in interaction efficiency for the Careers Service, understood as time savings accompanied by a significant growth in interactions, including high-impact individual interactions.

The increased availability of drop-in sessions (which last for 15 minutes) resulted in a further decrease in demand for 30-minute, one-to-one appointments. Student interactions through drop-in sessions thus grew by 57% from the previous year (from 277 to 435), while one-to-one appointments fell by 17% (from 735 to 609). The resulting time savings of 11 hours allowed the service to offer a greater number of more in-depth follow-on interactions, meaning that 1,045 students could be seen individually overall, compared to 1,012 in 2017/18.

Another focal point was the further development of events and activities addressed at groups of students. Group activities support an inverted pyramid model, enabling the Careers Service to engage with the maximum number of students in the least amount of time. 255 group activities were undertaken by the Careers Service in 2018/19, an increase of 56% on the previous year. Of particular note is the 106% increase in student interactions through Careers Education Talks and Employability Workshops, which were delivered to 2,010 students, compared to 974 participants in 2017/18.

Development of the CIT Employability 'Curriculum'

Significant progress was made towards the development of an employability 'curriculum' for the Institute in 2018/19, one of the Careers Service's strategic priorities. Two notable developments were:

- *Employability & Employment Guide for CIT*: In response to HEA requirements, the Careers Officer led an institutional working group, drawn from the academic and PMSS staff across CIT, to begin development of both Institute-level and discipline-specific Employability & Employment Guides. The first phase of this work focused on compiling the Institute-level guide, which was submitted to the HEA in September 2018.

The Employability & Employment Guide, along with a 'student friendly' summary version, is [published in the 'Employability' section of the Careers Service](#) web pages, accessible from both the main CIT website and the MyCIT student portal.

Development of a series of discipline-specific guides is due to be carried out through the academic departments throughout 2019/20 under the oversight of the Careers Officer and the CIT Registrar & VP for Academic Affairs, based on a centrally developed template.

- *Career Planning and Employability Workshops (incl. Early-Stage PhD Career Planning Workshop):* A series of new Career Planning and Employability Workshops were also delivered to Final Year undergraduate and Masters students on various programmes. In addition, a dedicated Career Planning and Employability Workshop for PhD candidates was held in December 2018.

On foot of the success of the latter, the Careers Service collaborated with the Dean of Graduate Studies to create a 10-credit module on Early-Stage PhD Career Planning, which is intended for delivery as part of the Graduate School's Structured PhD programme from Semester 2 of 2019/20 onwards. The module will be delivered by a number of CIT functions, including the Careers Service and the Research Office, employer representatives and other external specialists.

CIT Joint Mentorship Programme

The successful CIT Joint Mentorship Programme, jointly coordinated by the Careers Service and [Alumni Office](#) (see below), saw further growth in the reporting period. The services supported an initial matching of 33 student mentees with 33 employer mentors, with 28 matches completing the full programme. The programme generated 176 hours of volunteering from alumni and friends of CIT, with student mentees coming from areas ranging from Business and Engineering to Computer and Life Sciences. Four separate events were held as part of the programme in 2018/19, which included a dedicated mentee communication activity and a LinkedIn training session.

Development of Further Careers and Employability Activities

- *Developing Core Careers Services:* As in previous years, Career Service staff engaged in continuous professional development by participating in a wide variety internal and external training and networking events, attending conferences and undergoing monthly group and individual staff supervision. Training topics ranged from unconscious bias training and Applied Storytelling to foundational coaching, LGBTi issues and workplace dress codes.

In September 2018, Careers Service staff furthermore visited the University of San Francisco to gain insight into the operation of its Careers Service and the systems in use.

In order to increase awareness and accessibility of its service offerings within CIT, the Careers Service began to investigate options for incorporating e-learning technologies into service activities and also worked towards growing social media activity, achieving 86% growth on Instagram and 124% on LinkedIn in the reporting period.

- *Enhanced Engagement with Academic Departments and the Wider College:* The Careers Service works with departments and functions across all Institute areas to deliver specific careers events and activities, including careers education talks, interview training and fairs and information events.

New initiatives included staff information sessions on employability education and service offerings delivered at the beginning of each semester. A new initiative developed in collaboration with the School of Science & Informatics was the inaugural BioPharmaChem Showcase in February 2019, which saw Third-Year Analytical Chemistry students deliver poster presentations and network with invited employers. The Careers Service also supported several student-led events, including the

Tourism Careers Day in March 2019 and delivery of a careers workshop for the Enactus Society in April 2019 which is now scheduled to be repeated annually.

While much work was completed, uptake of Careers Service offerings remained varied across different departments and units, leaving scope for future development. The greatest number of individual engagements by far (39) were with the Department of Biological Sciences.

- *Employer Engagement and Labour Market/Workplace Monitoring Initiatives:* New activities of the Careers Service under this work strand included a collaboration with the CIT Alumni Office, UCC Careers Service, PepsiCo and the IBEC Cork office to develop and deliver a presentation and information session as part of the “Future of Work”-themed IBEC Regional Meeting in UCC in January 2019. As part of this event, the CIT Careers Service also supported a student-focused employability session entitled “Shine” which was attended by both CIT and UCC students.

Information on the HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) of 2018 graduates is provided [in Part 3.2, Impact](#) above. During Semester 2, the Careers Service and Alumni Office also engaged with Deloitte in the context of a HEA audit of the GOS process.

- *Careers Supports in Line with CIT’s Diversity & Inclusion Agenda:* The Careers Service also continued to support students under the Institute’s diversity and inclusion agenda, through delivery of dedicated career planning, CV and interview preparation workshops for Springboard programme participants, international students and students registered with the Disability Support Service. In May 2019, the Careers Service delivered a CV Building and Interview Preparation workshop to inmates of Cork Prison as part of the Access Office’s [Cork Prison Service Programme](#), see below. Exploratory meetings were also held with the newly appointed Traveller Education Coordinator in March 2019 to identify relevant supports.

Alumni Engagement and Employability Support Initiatives – Alumni Office

All ongoing alumni engagement and employability support initiatives of the Alumni Office continued in the reporting period, with steady growth in activities and reach across the board.

In addition to the Joint Mentorship programme, which is described [in the section on Career Development and Employability just above](#), another expanding initiative was the “Meet the Graduate” programme. This involves talks from CIT graduates to current students on life after graduation, career prospects in different industry sectors or specialist topics related to particular aspects of the curriculum. Nine “Meet the Graduate” events engaged more than 400 students from diverse areas from Hospitality through to Nautical Studies.

Increases were also recorded for the 2018 Alumni Conferring Campaign, in terms of resulting engagements and reach across CIT Alumni social media platforms, and for new engagements with the online alumni portal and new alumni library cards issued. The CIT Alumni E-News were circulated to 21,294 alumni in May 2019, an increase of over 1,700 deliveries.

One of the highlights for the Alumni Office was the significant increase in learner engagement with the Student Alumni Ambassador programme. Student Alumni Ambassadors are volunteers who act as a bridge between alumni and current members of CIT in order to develop positive relations between alumni, learners and staff. In the reporting period, there were 63 applicants for the programme from a

very broad range of discipline areas. Ambassadors gained experience at the regional “Future of Work” Conference in January 2019, hosted by IBEC in collaboration with UCC and CIT, and CIT’s Inaugural “Empowering Women to Lead” Conference in March 2019, along with a number of graduate events across campus. In their feedback, the Student Alumni Ambassadors noted that the programme afforded them the opportunity to make professional contacts, gain access to training sessions and increase their communication, leadership and employability skills.

Strategic Priority Area: Research & Knowledge Transfer, Postgraduate Studies, Enterprise Engagement

Research and Research Infrastructure Enhancements

The following section provides a short overview of achievements and enhancements of CIT research and research infrastructure over the reporting period.

- *Horizon 2020 (H2020) Funding:* CIT researchers won €7.9mio from H2020 by the end of the reporting period and had a 15.6% success rate, the third highest in the country amongst HEIs. CIT’s success in FP7, the predecessor to H2020, was €4.7mio, as per data prepared by Enterprise Ireland.

Particularly noteworthy was the Horizon2020 proposal success for the CAPPa research group, which secured €3.75mio in research funding for the OPTAPHI EU PhD training network. Led by CAPPa, the OPTAPHI project involves new collaborative agreements on the awarding of double degrees at PhD level with five European partner institutions in three countries (TU Wien, Austria; Université de Montpellier, France; Politecnico di Bari and Università di Bari, Italy).

OPTAPHI is the first H2020 project to bring over €1mio to CIT. The 14 PhD students linked to this project will develop optical sensors using photoacoustic and photothermal spectroscopy.

This award, and the success of H2020 applications amongst CIT researchers in general, is tempered by the need to provide additional supports, such as research leadership funding, enabling experienced research leaders to have the bandwidth to prepare new proposals – this is currently being provided on a pilot basis for selected research leaders in Nimbus and CAPPa.

- *Scopus Citation Index:* Publications by CIT researchers in the Scopus database have a field-weighted citation index of 1.6, which is 60% above the global average and one of the highest in the Irish HEI sector. The result is consistent with CIT’s publications being of excellent quality, although the total volume may be less than in the traditional university sector.
- *HR Excellence in Research:* In April the EU Commission reviewed CIT’s HR Excellence in Research Badge (HRS4R) and the assessors concluded that “the implementation of the Action Plan is ensured in a robust and systematic way. Your organisation is progressing with the implementation of appropriate and improved quality actions as described in its Action Plan”. CIT will be reviewed again in April 2022.
- *Research Centre and Group Training:* The Research Office has introduced three software platforms to support the research community. Research champions have been identified in each of the

Institute's formally designated Research Centres and Groups to support full deployment and ongoing maintenance to maximise the use of the platforms. The platforms are:

- Research Management System (Vidatum Academic), the objective of which is to capture research, teaching and learning and outreach activity on an individual, research centre/group or academic department/school level;
 - Funding and Research News Management System (Research Professional), the objective of which is to enable individuals or centres/groups or academic departments/schools to find the latest news updates relevant to their research and the latest funding opportunities;
 - Researcher Training Management System (VITAE), the objective of which is to provide internationally-recognised training and career development supports for postgraduates, contract researchers and academic staff. In particular, the Researcher Development Planner within Vitae provides one of the best career development support structures.
- *Research Integrity Training:* The Research Office led the Research Integrity (RI) Training efforts, with 294 researchers completing training on the Epigeum platform in the reporting period. This is important not only because of the significance of RI in general, but also because funding agencies are increasingly making the completion of recognised training to be an eligibility criterion within applications. CIT has completed more RI training than any other IoT at this time.
 - *Research Week:* Preparations were underway for the inaugural Research Week scheduled to be held in November 2019, with a programme covering a broad range of topics of relevance to CIT researchers, from research supervision and training, research management and funding opportunities to personal development plans for contract researchers and commercialisation.

Research Degree Education and Early Stage Researcher Training

Early Stage Researcher Training – the Case of Advance CRT

In March 2019, Cork Institute of Technology was awarded €13mio from Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) under the SFI Centres for Research Training (CRT) Programme to lead the establishment of the SFI Centre for Research Training in Advanced Telecommunications (ADVANCE CRT). ADVANCE CRT brings together five Irish higher education institutions (CIT, UCC, TU Dublin, Maynooth University and TCD) with a rich ecosystem of multinational and indigenous companies, local authorities, NGOs, and an international network of collaborators.

The CRT will train 120 doctoral graduates over the next seven years, focusing on a unique collaboration between the technology, humanities, and social sciences domains with the aim of delivering graduates who will ensure that new communications technologies are applied for maximum human benefit in a sustainable way that benefits society as whole. Companies in the ICT sector require both deep technical knowledge and leadership skills that can only be acquired through awareness of the context of their work, training in innovative thinking and experience in relationship-building.

ADVANCE CRT graduates will acquire these skills through their original research and their training programme. A significant element of the training will be delivered by non-HEI trainers on a cohort basis, as part of the structured element of research degree training delivered by each institution under its

own local regulations and procedures for structured PhD education. ADVANCE CRT is using the VITAE Researcher Development Framework (RDF), the same planner that is being used for the Institute's Researcher Career Framework. ADVANCE CRT will also take advantage of external courses, online courses, conference tutorials, visiting speaker seminars and so forth.

In conjunction with the CIT Teaching & Learning Unit, a pilot micro-credentials platform was put in place for ADVANCE CRT students to record all forms of non-credit-bearing learning, along with verified evidence of completion and assessment. This will allow students to accumulate a portfolio of such learning over time. In parallel, the five higher education institutions in ADVANCE are working together to ensure recognition of this portfolio of accumulated learning for the award of credits through a generic external learning module, similar to ones already available in CIT ("[Developing Research Expertise](#)", accruing 5 ECTS credits at Expert level), Maynooth University and University College Cork.

The research training framework put in place as part of ADVANCE CRT is thus a highly innovative example of a structured QA system for the recognition of non-credit-bearing, non-HEI-delivered learning within the formal credits system in each higher education institution.

Further Enhancements of the CIT Structured PhD Programme

A further new addition to the Institute's Structured PhD programme developed during 2018/19 is the 10-credit Advanced "[Wellness and Resilience](#)" module.

Approved for delivery from Semester 2 of 2019/20 onwards, development of this module was prompted by the well-documented rise in mental health issues particularly among postgraduate students. The module incorporates the use of a modified version of the PERMA profiler (Butler & Kern 2016) to obtain a baseline level of wellness in Week 1 and again in Week 14 following module delivery. Through a series of quantitative assessment techniques and the provision of structured and applied resources, the module aims to proactively improve and support the well-being of our post graduates. The module was assessed by a panel of six external experts as part of the approval process and will be delivered by a cross-departmental teaching team.

"Cyber Ireland" National Cyber Security Cluster

Backdrop and Cluster Initiation

In Ireland, the biggest challenge to the growth and competitiveness of Ireland's cyber security sector is the immediate skills shortage, evident from increasing salaries and a demand for cyber security graduates which currently can only be met by recruitment from outside of Ireland. Additionally, this skills shortage presents a critical national security challenge. Ireland's National Cyber Security Strategy spells out the urgency of addressing the shortage and emphasises the need for a ready supply of talent to ensure that Irish data centres – which house ca. 30% of all of Europe's data –, businesses and critical infrastructure are protected. Existing initiatives to address the skills shortage, such as Skillsnet's Cyber Security Skills Initiative and the pilot FIT Cyber Apprenticeship, have not been adequate to meeting the growing demand to date.

Before this backdrop, an Industry Forum hosted by CIT in April 2017 discussed the need for deep, specialised and experienced cyber security talent and graduates with up-to-date skills and

competencies of relevance to industry. This sparked the idea of a cyber security cluster. The initiative to establish 'Cyber Ireland', as the cluster was to be called, was announced by CIT and IDA Ireland in December 2018. Following this, three nationwide Cyber Ireland Cluster Initiation Workshops, organised by CIT with backing from the IDA, were held in Cork, Dublin and Galway in February 2019.

The Cluster Initiation Workshops saw over 110 companies, knowledge providers and government agencies come together to input into the development of the cluster and its objectives.

Feedback from industry surveys conducted at the workshops indicated that the top initiatives required by industry were: (1) measures to address the skills shortage; (2) establishment of a national cyber security R&D centre; (3) national co-ordination & promotion of the sector; and (4) support for indigenous cyber security companies and start-ups to grow and export. Industry feedback and the workshop outcomes fed into development of a cluster strategy with a set of distinct objectives.

Cyber Ireland Formation and Objectives

Following the workshops, Cyber Ireland was formally established as a national organisation in May 2019, with the twin goals of promoting cyber security in Ireland and making the country a global security centre. The cluster is hosted at CIT and supported by a number of leading cyber security and technology firms in Ireland, with funding from IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland.

The overarching aim of the Cyber Ireland Cluster is to make Ireland a global cybersecurity leader in terms of talent and skills, research and innovation, boosting SME exports, and attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). Objectives include:

- Building the Community - Stronger promotion & supporting cross-industry collaboration;
- Talents & Skills - Ensuring a sustainable pipeline of Cyber Security Talent;
- Research & Development - Enhancing collaborative R&D between industry and academia;
- Business Development - Supporting Irish SMEs & start-ups to grow and export globally.

A Cluster Board was set up, with responsibility to ensure the set-up of the cluster organisation and delivery of the objectives. The Board is made up of senior industry representatives from companies including McAfee, Forcepoint, IBM, JRI America, HPE, Ward Solutions and Qualcomm, representatives of higher education and research providers (CIT, University of Limerick and University College Dublin) and representatives of relevant government agencies (IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and the National Cyber Security Centre).

Cyber Ireland Membership is open to all companies and organisations (not individuals) which are considered to some extent to provide or consume cyber security products and/or services, or play an important role in Ireland's cyber security sector, including government agencies and education providers. Organisations must have operations, or be registered, in Ireland. Membership enables organisations to avail of an industry-led organisation connected with academia and government in order to address the needs and challenges of the sector and build the profile of Ireland's cyber security sector, national and internationally. Members gain significant opportunities for networking, sharing expertise and collaborative research & development within Ireland's cyber security ecosystem, as well as a strong collective voice to influence government and national policy on key cyber security issues.

Uptake and Achievements to Date

Since the launch of Cyber Ireland, over 170 organisations have signed up as members. These consist of ca. 150 companies, split evenly between indigenous companies and foreign multinationals, and 11 knowledge providers. The Cluster can, therefore, provide an effective collective voice for cyber security and co-ordinate the many organisations within the cyber security space in Ireland.

Cyber Ireland has also been showcased as a model for good practice in cluster development in Ireland as part of several national strategies and programmes, including:

- [Future Jobs Ireland 2019](#);
- [South West regional Enterprise Plan to 2020](#);
- [Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy \(RSES\) for the Southern Region](#);
- [ecoRIS3 Interreg Europe Project](#);
- [ERASMUS+ International Credit Mobility](#).

Furthermore, although Cyber Ireland is still in its first year, the Cluster has already delivered under some of its objectives. Achievements include:

- *Talent & Skills – Cyber Careers Dashboard*: The Cyber Careers Dashboard aims to promote cyber security careers and pathways to adults and young people. Its features include:
 - [Course Finder](#) - an interactive Map of the courses in Ireland that can lead to a career in Cyber, from the Higher Education Institutes, Education & Training Boards & Industry Certification;
 - [Cyber Careers](#) - an overview of the diverse range of cyber security jobs (from NIST); and
 - [Jobs Board](#) – so users can see what actual Jobs are available.
- *Research & Development*: Cyber Ireland has conducted a survey of industry and academia to map the cyber security R&D landscape in Ireland and has held several meetings with national R&D funders to advocate for cyber security funding and the establishment of a national research centre.
- *Building the Community – Regional Cyber Ireland Chapters*: Two Cyber Ireland Regional Chapters have been launched (West Chapter/South Chapter), with further Chapters in Dublin and the South-East under development. The purpose of the Cyber Ireland Regional Chapters is to provide fora for the cyber security community in the regions which link in with Cyber Ireland’s national activities.
- *Business Development*: Two internationalisation events were held to connect Irish cyber security companies with [Israel](#) and [Wales](#). In addition, Cyber Ireland has become a member of [Global EPIC](#), an international network of cyber security clusters and innovation ecosystems.

Cyber Ireland has also set up a successful communications structure. The [Cyber Ireland Website](#) functions as a central resource for all activities of the Cluster. A [Monthly Newsletter](#) has achieved reach of over 1,000 recipients. Cyber Ireland also has a social media presence on [Twitter](#) (currently 1500 followers) and [LinkedIn](#) (1900 followers).

Enhancement of Engagement Activity through the CIT Extended Campus

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

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

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

Regional Engagement Initiatives

Connect with CIT SME Networking Event

In February 2019, the CIT Extended Campus together with the CIT Careers Service welcomed over 40 SMEs for the return of the "Connect with CIT" SME networking event. This included a mini careers fair in the morning, followed by presentations from internal and external contributors on collaboration opportunities with CIT. Attending SMEs and CIT academic and research units were subsequently surveyed to better understand their requirements and motivation for attending.

92% of attending SMEs and 91% of CIT staff were either very satisfied or satisfied with the Connect event. Less than half (46%) of the SMEs present had previously worked with the Extended Campus, but all SMEs indicated they would attend the event again.

For SMEs, the predominant reason for attending was to discuss work placement/recruitment, which was given by 86% of respondents. 77% stated that they wanted to discover how to increase engagement with CIT. The main barrier to collaboration with higher education identified by the SMEs was limited resources (62%).

Of CIT staff in attendance, 50% sought to build connections with industry, with different reasons linked to curriculum delivery also featuring (43% wished to explore guest lecturers or site visits; 36% to discuss work placement opportunities; 29% to discuss student projects or live cases). For CIT staff, the main barrier to greater engagement with industry by far was insufficient work time allocation for external engagement activities; this was named by 78%.

Connections made at the Connect event led to several downstream interactions supporting graduate formation. Amongst others, these encompassed work placements and 'live' student projects, with one resulting marketing project ([Orthoxel](#)) selected for an Engagement in Practice case study.

European and National Quality Initiatives

European and national quality initiatives which the CIT Extended Campus led or was involved in during the reporting period included:

Fit4FoF – Factories of the Future

[Fit4FoF](#) is a three-year European project coordinated by the CIT Extended Campus and realised by a multi-sector, multi-country consortium of partners from the educational (vocational and higher education) and advanced manufacturing sectors, based in eight European countries.

The FIT4FoF project aims to address workers' needs by analysing technology trends across the industrial areas of robotics, additive manufacturing, mechatronics/machine automation, data analytics, cybersecurity and human machine interaction in order to define new job profiles, which will in turn inform education and training requirements.

The central objective of FIT4FoF is to identify new skills requirements and job profiles and to develop and pilot a unique, yet transferable education and training framework and tools. The application of educational approaches based on Communities of Practice will create a paradigm shift that will empower the existing workforce to be co-designers and drivers of key lifelong training and education solutions, allowing workers to adapt to the changing and new skills requirements that increased digitisation and automation will introduce into advanced manufacturing.

To broaden the approach across Europe, Fit4FoF will develop alliances of Communities of Practice in order to accelerate the spread of ideas, concepts and practices generated within the project and ensure a comprehensive knowledge transfer between regional communities.

In addition to coordination work, the Extended Campus contributed to the development of the Fit4FoF learning needs model and educational framework and launched skills initiatives for the Institute.

VISKA

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

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

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

EVAVOL

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

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

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

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

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

Future of Work

Lastly, the Extended Campus was involved in developing the NFETL Future of Work digital badge.

Further RPL and Engagement Initiatives and Presentations

During 2018/19 the RPL Service was engaged in the ongoing TOBAR project in conjunction with the Cork ETB (Education & Training Board) and the Irish Defence Forces. During the reporting period, the focus of the ongoing work lay on supporting the development of QA systems in ETBs. Some outputs from the project work were presented at the [“Embedding RPL: Practice and Policy” Knowledge Sharing Event](#) of the NFETL RPL Practitioners Network in Galway in May 2019.

Throughout the year the Extended Campus and RPL Service furthermore gave a variety of presentations and workshops on aspects of engagement and Recognition of Prior Learning at many national and international events. A small selection of invited talks or workshops is presented below to illustrate the depth and breadth of this work:

- November 2018, invited presentation at the Opening Panel: RPL Systems and Policies at the [CAPLA Recognizing Learning Conference 2018](#), Toronto, Canada;

- March 2018, invited [presentation](#) to the Public Services Reform Group of the Department of Education & Skills on Building Collaboration and RPL;
- April 2019, invited presentation of CIT's Extended Campus model for integrated engagement at a meeting of the THEA RDIE group;
- May 2019, delivery of a workshop on "Building sustainability for RPL through Organisational Arrangements" at the [Validation of Prior Learning Biennale](#), Berlin;
- May 2019, delivery of a workshop on "Good Practice in Work Placement" to staff in GMIT

Innovation and Student Entrepreneurship

"Student Inc." Accelerator Programme

A successful funding bid under the HEA Innovation & Transformation Call in December 2018, led by the CIT Innovation & Enterprise Office, allowed the Institute to significantly expand delivery of its long-running Student Inc. student accelerator programme in 2018/19, by rolling out the programme to two further HEIs in the region, IT Tralee and University College Cork.

Launched by CIT in 2011, Student Inc. is Ireland's first student accelerator programme, set up to encourage student entrepreneurs to develop and grow their ideas into fully-fledged businesses. Participating students receive €4,000 to fund their business (equipment, expenses and a wage). They also receive training and mentoring and have the use of a fully serviced office space on campus for the duration of the programme.

The HEA Innovation & Transformation funding of close on €1 mio allowed CIT to appoint, in the spring of 2019, a Regional Manager for Higher Education Entrepreneurship whose responsibilities include cross-institutional coordination of Student Inc. for a period of three years.

The first instance of the expanded Student Inc. programme ran over 13 weeks from June to August 2019, with CIT students joined by their counterparts from IT Tralee as well as UCC. In total, 30 student businesses were supported by the programme. These involved 13 CIT students across all discipline areas and programme stages, 10 UCC students, and 7 students from IT Tralee. The completion of Student Inc. 2019 was marked by a showcase event in Cork's Pairc Ui Chaoimh stadium on 30 August 2019, attended by ca. 160 regional stakeholders and partner representatives.

On successful completion of Student Inc., CIT students obtain 5 ECTS Intermediate level module credits ([MGMT7076 New Venture Learning](#)), with IT Tralee and UCC now working towards enabling module credit for successful participation for their students within their own home institution also.

Lastly, substantial additional funding also received under the Regional Economic Development Fund will be applied towards the design and implementation of an online platform for delivery of the programme across the three current partner institutions, with the potential for extension to other HEIs, following completion of the tendering process during the reporting period.

Innovation Week

In March 2019, CIT Innovation Week, another long-standing event on the Institute's annual calendar of innovation and entrepreneurship activities, was hosted on the CIT Bishopstown, Cork School of Music and Crawford College of Art & Design campuses. Innovation Week 2019 encompassed 40 events promoting and showcasing innovation and entrepreneurship at CIT, with an attendance of over 1,900 staff, students and enterprise representatives.

As every year, the main event of Innovation Week 2019 was the announcement of the annual winners of the CIT Prize for Innovation. The Prize for Innovation competition awards cash prizes to those whose inventions and business ideas are judged most creative, innovative, and likely to succeed in the marketplace, and is open to all CIT departments. Applications which are shortlisted by the Innovation & Enterprise Office undergo an adjudication process in the Rubicon Business Incubation Centre. The 2019 competition saw 47 applications involving over 185 students, with 16 applications making the shortlist. A total of €10,000 in cash prizes – including €4,000 for the main prize, the 'CIT Entrepreneur(s) of the Year' – was sponsored by the Cork City and County Local Enterprise Offices for the event.

Strategic Priority Area: Access, Diversity and Internationalisation

Enhancements to Access and Diversity – Access and Disability Support Service

Overall Development of Access and Disability Support Services

The Higher Education System Performance Framework 2018 – 2020 identifies Equity of Access to Higher Education as one of six core national objectives for system development and investment. This national commitment to improving equality of opportunity through education and to recruiting a student body that reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population is of greatest significance, not least because it has allowed for the release of necessary resources to ensure that students who are vulnerable and marginalised are adequately supported at the local level.

Before this backdrop, the Access and Disability Support Service in 2018/19 was able to increase both student numbers and the number of events and activities through roll-out of mainstream initiatives and new pilot programmes. Successful funding proposals resulted in close on €1mio being approved for CIT by a number of funding organisations (HEA, PATH, Tomar Trust, Offaly County Council). HEA PATH funding permitted the service to appoint two new staff members for the coordination of targeted initiatives in the areas of Traveller education and the transition of students with disabilities.

The reporting period also brought challenges which slowed progress on some initiatives. The new PATH funding, while beneficial in enabling the service to expand the team and develop new initiatives, also brought with it a hefty administrative workload to manage the individual strands, such as the 1916 Bursaries, and extra time commitments related to working at cluster level.

Gaining a dedicated Access voice at senior management and Academic Council level remained an aim in 2018/19. Finally, having grown from a one-person operation to a team of 17 staff since its establishment 2003, a full review of the Access and Disability Support Service would now be critical to move forward the institutional Access mission and vision and enable the service to continue to meet national targets and support vulnerable and marginalised students.

New Initiatives – Highlights

- *Tomar Trust Funding:* The Tomar Trust is a philanthropic trust that aims to contribute to strengthening Irish society over the 10-year period 2016 – 2026. Established in 1994, the Tomar Trust supports community and voluntary activity in rural Ireland, particularly North Cork, West Waterford, Clare and Donegal and disadvantaged communities in Cork City. The trust funds work under the themes of sustainable communities; integration; children and young people; and arts, culture and creativity. With a geographical bias in Munster, the trust invests in an organisation’s capacity to effect ongoing change and works in partnership with NGOs and other funders to increase impact and maximise synergies. Applications for trust funding are by invitation only.

Following discussions with the CEO of the Tomar Trust regarding CIT student needs and the aims of the trust early in the year, CIT received confirmation in December 2018 that the trust would commit €200,000 to the Institute over four years. This funding is intended to support bursaries for students who are academically strong but face financial barriers to studying. In particular, Tomar Trust funding is aimed at vulnerable students without other state supports who are also not eligible for student support funding. Eligible students will be identified through the CIT Access Service.

In 2018/19, one student in Direct Provision was identified for support through this fund, along with other students who were shortlisted as part of the 1916 Bursary process.

- *Sanctuary Scholarship Scheme:* On foot of contact from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit in UCC regarding an applicant for a UCC Sanctuary Scholarship who had received a CIT offer through the CAO, the CIT Access Service furthermore set up a Sanctuary Scholarship Scheme for asylum seekers or refugees wishing to pursue an undergraduate programme in CIT. Furthermore, the CIT Access Service engaged with the UCC EDI Unit to develop a joint Sanctuary Scholarship application scheme which would ensure that applicants would only need to complete one application form to be considered for a scholarship in CIT or UCC. Following agreement of the joint scheme, the two institutions collaborated on joint information sessions and application procedures.

CIT / UCC Sanctuary Scholarships are also supported by Tomar Trust funding, and form one element of the wider Cork City of Sanctuary Movement.

Other Enhancements and Developments

Access – the Student Voice

A new edition of “Access – the Student Voice” was launched in May 2019 with involvement of the HEA and Department of Education and Skills. In this publication, students who have interacted with the Access Service share their personal educational journeys, highlighting the supports they availed of along the way which have allowed them to reach academic milestones. By sharing the stories of these remarkable role models, the Service hopes to inspire other prospective students to make use of the supports available to overcome their own specific challenges and to reach their academic potential.

Cork Prison Service Programme

Collaboration with colleagues from the Cork Prison Service continued in 2018/19. Building on the success of the previous academic year, a new lecture series was delivered during Semester 2 on themes guided by input from the prisoners.

The series of ten lectures covered a wide range of subject areas, from Art and Culinary Studies to Engineering and Science. The lectures were provided on a voluntary basis by lecturing staff from both faculties, as well as support staff from central units such as the Careers Service, and were delivered to Cork Prison and the families supported by the Dillon's Cross Project. There was great interest from the prisoners, with 75 inmates attending some or all sessions. All participants received certificates from the CIT President, Dr Barry O'Connor. Feedback from CIT staff volunteers and prisoners was again very positive, and it is hoped that promoting opportunities and pathways for further learning may open up alternatives to unsuccessful life strategies for prisoners.

Based on these considerations, and on foot of the success of the two series of lectures, discussions are currently underway to design an NFQ Level 6 Special Purpose Award for Prisoners in 2019/20.

PATH Funding – 1916 Bursaries and SOAR Programme

The Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH), announced by the Department of Education and Skills and the HEA in 2018, is a targeted funding scheme established to support implementation of the *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015 – 2019*. This plan contains a number of targets to increase participation by students from under-represented socio-economic groups and communities, entrants with disabilities, mature entrants, members of the Irish Traveller community, students entering on the basis of a further education award, and part-time flexible learners.

CIT's Access and Disability Support Services were involved in the submission for PATH funding sought by the Regional Cluster South, which involves CIT, UCC, IT Tralee, WIT and IT Carlow, with UCC as lead institution. PATH 2 funding (1916 Bursaries) was secured by the cluster for 35 student bursaries (7 per institution) and PATH 3 funding to deliver the SOAR project.

- *PATH 2 – 1916 Bursary Fund*: The objective of the 1916 Bursary Fund, which complements existing supports, is to encourage participation and success by students from sections of society significantly underrepresented in HE. Considerable time and effort went into the administration of this fund, with seven students identified for support in 2018/19 following an assessment of applications.
- *PATH 3 – SOAR*: The SOAR project, which started in September 2018, has three key strands: Travellers in Education; Enabling Transitions; and Connecting Communities, Connecting Curriculum. SOAR aims to develop community-embedded and culturally sensitive models for increasing educational aspiration and achievement. A key outcome will be the development of cluster structures that will enable the sharing of best practice and the development of new initiatives. PATH funding allowed two new staff members to be appointed to work on SOAR initiatives in CIT.
- *Travellers in Education (SOAR)*: Through PATH 3 funding, CIT was in a position to appoint a part-time Traveller Education Coordinator in March 2019. Uniquely positioned to work on her brief as a member of the Travelling Community with an Honours degree in Fine Art and a postgraduate

teaching qualification, the new Coordinator has commenced projects involving developing Traveller student networks, inclusive art programmes and pre-entry initiatives.

In addition, a Traveller Assembly to explore “Supporting Travellers in Second-Level Education: Progress through Partnership” could be organised in March 2019. This event brought together a large group of Travellers, second-level professionals and third-level access practitioners for an open dialogue on Traveller needs in accessing education and the supports required for ensuring a positive educational experience for students from the Traveller Community.

- *Enabling Transitions*: PATH funding also allowed the Disability Support Service to establish and fill the part-time post of a Disability Transitions Project Coordinator, who commenced in May 2019 and will support the development and implementation of the Enabling Transitions project under SOAR. Enabling Transitions will respond to the growing need for pre- to post-entry supports for students with Asperger’s Syndrome, Autism and Mental Health difficulties, due to continued increases over several years in DSS students presenting with these conditions. The pre-entry programme is being developed in collaboration with the Access Linked Schools Programme. In line with a move towards a more inclusive service model, DEIS schools will also be invited to collaborate. One element of the programme will be one-to-one appointments for students with Asperger’s, Autism and/or Mental Health issues where the need presents. At post-entry level, targeted supports will be offered to more defined student cohorts.

Learning Cities

During the reporting period CIT was again strongly involved in the Learning Cities initiative through its Access Service, which led or contributed to many events including:

- *Learning Workplace Breakfast*: This breakfast meeting was organised by the Access Service in September 2018 to present case studies on the engagement of private companies in educational programmes and enable sharing of good practice and networking between the over 80 participants.
- *Lifelong Learning Festival 2019*: The 16th Cork Lifelong Learning Festival, held from 7 – 14 April 2019, offered more than 600 free learning events of all kinds across the week. The festival showcases the many opportunities for learning in Cork and promotes the idea that learning is fun and fulfilling for people of all ages, interests and abilities, whether or not it leads to a qualification. CIT contributes financially to the festival and is represented on the organising committee. Throughout the festival, CIT opens its doors to hundreds of prospective students and their families.

As part of the 2019 festival, a day-long *Learning City Conversation 2019 – International Ideas in Action Seminar* was held on 11 April. Building on the UNESCO Cork Call to Action for Learning Cities produced by the 2017 UNESCO International Conference on Learning Cities (hosted by CIT), the seminar considered how in 2019 cities around the globe had responded to the challenges to develop their city as green and healthy, equitable and inclusive, and supporting decent work and entrepreneurship through learning of all kinds. The seminar allowed attendees to be part of an exchange on best international practice with a panel of guest speakers from cities and academic institutions across Europe, the United States and Colombia.

Linked Schools Programme and HEAR Alternative Admission Scheme

The CIT Access Linked Schools Programme works in partnership with regional communities and 22 DEIS post-primary schools in Cork city and county to support greater participation in higher education by students who experience socio-economically disadvantage. In DEIS schools, strong transfer programmes and targeted engagement with parents from groups with a traditionally low level of engagement with education are key to achieving successful transitions.

- *Pre- and Post-Entry Activities and Supports:* Two Access Service project coordinators work with 11 Linked Schools each to provide the annual programme of Junior and Senior Cycle pre-entry activities. These ranged from information sessions for students and parents, study skills and ‘subject choice’ workshops – including a successful joint “Xperience” summer camp with UCC – and revision courses to Guidance Counsellor, home-school liaison and teacher support activities. Further events included the annual “My Education, My Future” art programme and competition for Junior and Senior Cycle students. In collaboration with the CIT Arts Office and the Department of Arts in Health & Education, a new teacher training event was added to this in 2018/19, with very good uptake from eight schools. Also delivered were “You Get What You Give” drama workshops run by Graffiti Educational Theatre Company for 90 Transition Year students from four schools, “Discover Science” exhibitions and “January Labs” for Senior Cycle students.

A new event for 2018/19 was a Mental Health Awareness Day for Transition Year students in Linked Schools in January 2019. Sponsored by many local businesses and organisations, the day included an “On the Couch Chat” on the personal mental health experiences of local sporting ‘heroes’ Stephen McDonnell (Hurling) and Briege Corkery (Camogie), delivered to over 200 TY students.

Post-entry, CIT students who entered through the Linked Schools Programme were again offered additional financial, academic and personal supports to help them navigate third level successfully.

- *“Access to Education, Bridge to Employment”:* The CIT Access Service also collaborates with private companies, mainly in the science and engineering sectors, on pre-entry programmes which promote transfer into third level. The most successful of these is “Access to Education, Bridge to Employment” (ATE BTE), which in 2018/19 entered its 4th Phase and 13th year. The programme works with three Cork city schools and aims to encourage and assist students to stay in school and progress to further and higher education, with a particular focus on STEM disciplines. The programme also provides bursaries to students who progress to third level. ATE BTE is supported by Johnson & Johnson and also involves several other Cork-based pharmaceutical companies, University College Cork, Cork ETB, Junior Achievement and Business in the Community.

Phase 4 of ATE BTE implemented the Mentoring element of the programme. The CIT Access Officer and colleagues from Business in the Community provided mentor training to J&J employees, who subsequently met student mentees for four mentoring sessions.

- *Switch to HEAR Admission Scheme:* In 2018/19, the route for alternative admission through the CIT Linked Schools Programme changed from the local Progression Scheme for Access Linked Schools to the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) scheme, of which CIT is now a member.

Each HEAR member institution operates the HEAR scheme somewhat differently. To be considered for reduced points entry to CIT, an applicant must apply through the CAO website, be deemed HEAR

eligible, meet the minimum entry requirements for the chosen CIT programme, and achieve at least 200 CAO points through the Leaving Certificate. The first intake of HEAR-eligible students took place in September 2019, with ca. 1,250 applicants to CIT for entry in 2019 also applying for HEAR.

In addition, the HEAR scheme will also apply to entry through the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE).

Science for Life

A long-running activity strand closely linked to the CIT Access Linked Schools Programme is “Science for Life”. Running since 2009, the main aim of Science for Life is to encourage, support and motivate the study of science subjects at second and third level. Science for Life offers Linked Schools a programme of initiatives to support science education, motivate students to consider STEM careers, and increase awareness of science opportunities in CIT. Some noteworthy initiatives during 2018/19 included:

- ***VEX Robotics Competition***: One of the most significant achievements of the year was the exponential growth of the VEX Robotics Competition, built on a successful 2017 Science Foundation Ireland funding application which brought just under €300,000 to expand the event. Launched by Dell EMC in collaboration with CIT with just 12 teams in 2012, SFI funding success enabled CIT to grow the competition to a national scale during the reporting period, with over 300 teams from schools in 18 counties competing in 2019.

Designed to promote students’ interest in STEM subjects, the competition requires primary and secondary students to design, build and programme a robot. Student teams compete in regional and national competitions, culminating in the VEX World Competition in Kentucky, USA. As well as programming, designing and building skills, participants acquire soft skills such as project management, presentation skills, teamwork, leadership and PR.

In addition to Dell Technologies in Cork and Limerick, CIT is now partnered with IT Tralee, Letterkenny IT, Dundalk IT, IT Carlow, Mary Immaculate College, Waterford IT. Each of these institutions hosted regional finals and sent teams to compete in the 2019 national finals in CIT. Through the CIT VEX Development Officer, the Institute also partnered with Offaly County Council to obtain funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development. This allowed the County Council to roll out the programme in schools and libraries in Co. Offaly.

The CIT VEX Development Officer is responsible for all teacher training nationally, as well as event partner liaison and training, procurement and liaison with other collaborators. The SFI grant enabled a significant scaling-up of activities within this remit for the reporting period.

The success of the VEX Robotics Competition has recently led the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment to pilot the programme in ten schools in Co. Monaghan, with a view to it becoming part of the national curriculum. However, to sustain the VEX Robotics Programme at this scale, securing sustainable funding streams will become critical. With kits costing €500 for primary and €1,000 for secondary schools, schools may require the support of local businesses and industry to purchase the equipment necessary to participate.

- ***MegaDojo 2019***: A free nation-wide coding event for children and young people aged 7 – 17, MegaDojo was simultaneously hosted by five Institutes of Technology and Maynooth University in

October 2019. The event had over 5,000 participants across the six institutions who learned to code games, website, electronic kits and more. In addition to coding sessions, MegaDojo included a programme of 'tech talks', technology demonstrations and technology showcases from cutting-edge tech companies in the region.

- *Science Buddies*: Science Buddies was initiated through collaboration between the Science for Life Programme and St Patrick's College, a CIT Access Linked School. As opposed to other, exclusively school-based Science for Life activities, Science Buddies links through to both parents and to primary feeder schools within the community.

The Science for Life Officer trains Junior Cycle students and their parents in the delivery of five mini science experiments. The following week, the experiments are delivered by the students and their parents to in Third Class at a local feeder primary school. The Science Buddies programme generates a great sense of accomplishment and an understanding of teaching among the Junior Cycle students. It also brings science into the home and allows both parents and students to consider science and school in a different, frequently more positive light.

Three rounds of Science Buddies were delivered to schools in Cork city and county in 2018/19, involving 51 First Year and 18 Second Year students and 52 Third Class students in total, with further bookings for the following year sought by parents.

Disability Service Enhancements

A number of new pilot programmes were introduced by the Disability Support Service (DSS) in 2018/19, including:

- *College Preparation Days*: On two days just prior to the start of Semester 1, DSS delivered three academic skills workshops (Notetaking; Starting an Assignment; Reading, Research & Referencing) to incoming First Year students. Students were given the option of booking into one or more of the workshops at times that suited them. All workshops were well attended and received positive feedback immediately after the workshops and in an April 2019 survey.
- *FindMyFlow and Sonocent Audio Notetaker*: The FindMyFlow programme is a study resource that combines study skills training and assistive technology, with features including note-taking, reading and research, essay writing, revisions and presentations. A total of 24 students signed up for the FindMyFlow pilot programme in Semester 1. Five of these used the Sonocent Audio Notetaker on a regular basis (with permission from their lecturers). The pilot will continue in the following reporting period, with a possible showcase during the College Preparation Days.
- *BalanCIT Wellness Programme*: Building on the experiences gathered in previous years, DSS piloted a 6-week programme of bite-size workshops covering basic but necessary life-study balance skills. Six 40-minute weekly workshops were delivered by team of internal and external specialists in Semester 2 of 2018/19. Initially open to DSS-registered students only, the programme was subsequently opened to the wider student population. Following an introductory session in Week 1, the workshops covered Physical Activity, Mindfulness & Stress-Managing Techniques, Nutrition and Striking a Balance, followed by a group discussion and evaluation in the final week. Students had the opportunity to achieve a digital badge for

attending and participating in all the workshops as well as completing the post-workshop actions. Due to the nature of the workshops, numbers were limited to 12, with 50 students being placed on a waiting list.

Student feedback indicated that a longer series of wellness workshops covering additional topics would be well received. Therefore, in the next reporting period the BalanCIT Wellness Programme will be re-delivered as an 8-week programme with additional topics including self-management, sleep quality, and taking control of exam worries.

- *Yellow Schedule Appointment System:* Lastly, the Disability Support Service investigated and arranged training in a new student appointment system, Yellow Schedule, with plans for introducing this system in the Access and Disability Support Service in 2019/20.

Internationalisation – Enhancement Activities of the International Office

Growth in International Agreements and Related Staff Resources

Overall, the volume of co-operation agreements between Cork Institute of Technology and higher education institutions within and outside of Europe has grown steadily over the years. Over 180 international agreements are now in place, comprising agreements with 140 ERASMUS partners and 40 non-EU institutions. These partnerships facilitate the bilateral exchange of students and staff to embark on study, placement or training opportunities.

New non-EU agreements signed over the 2018/19 academic year include Khon Kaen University, Thailand and Centennial College, Canada. Many of the agreements, particularly across the Colleges Ontario sector, include degree articulation pathways where CIT recognises credits achieved in international institutions and permits advanced entry to undergraduate programmes. This is facilitated through the THEA / Colleges Ontario sectoral agreement, and through individual Memoranda of Understanding with partner colleges.

To support the growing number of incomings and outgoings, three new staff members could be recruited in 2018/19 whose appointment has already led to noticeably improvements in the overall quality of services to key stakeholders (including prospective international students, current international students, education agents, academic approvers and intuitional partners). In particular, the new appointments have strengthened the International Office's capacity for relationship-building with the study abroad market, particularly in North America (with 50 students arriving from CIT's key study abroad partner Endicott College in 2018/19); the processing of international admissions; and 'front of house' support for the growing ERASMUS programmes.

OASIS – Development of Online Application System for International Students

The International Office and IT Services initiated a project in September 2018 to implement an Online Application System for International Students (OASIS) to manage the end-to-end process for international student applications/enrolment. The system was being developed throughout the reporting period in conjunction with an external provider, RunMyProcess, and on completion will move all non-EU full degree and postgraduate applications online. On roll-out, OASIS will be a secure and

efficient system for processing a high volume of applications and moving from the existing manual process which is handled through email. The expected go-live date is January 2020.

4.2 Quality Enhancement Highlights

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

Strategic Priority Area: Excellent Student Experience

AnSEO, the Student Engagement Office – Contributions to the National and International Student Engagement Agenda

European First-Year Experience Conference (EFYE) 2019, June 2019, CIT

As briefly touched upon in the last report, in late 2017 the AnSEO team successfully applied on behalf of CIT to host the European First-Year Conference 2019, with the Institute formally announced as the next host institution for this prestigious annual conference at EFYE 2018 in Utrecht.

EFYE 2019 took place in Cork Institute of Technology in June 2019, and drew together over 400 educators, students, policy makers, professional services staff and senior leaders from more than 100 HEIs and 22 countries. More than 160 keynote presentations, workshops, papers and 'Show & Tell' sessions challenged delegates with an international perspective on areas relating to:

- a) Excellent Foundations for First Year Success, with keynote presentations from Dr J.N. Gardner and Dr B.O. Barefoot (pioneers in First Year Experience research and creators of the international 'University 101' programme);
- b) From Purposeful Teaching to Independent Learning, with keynote speaker Prof Sally Kift (Chair of the Australian Learning and Teaching Fellows, developer of the 'Transitions Pedagogy' framework, a holistic and shared approach to curriculum development); and
- c) From Policy to Action, with keynote speaker Dr Gemma Irvine (formerly Head of Policy and Strategic Planning, HEA, supporting and navigating T&L change through strategy).

More than 60 staff and 20 students from CIT contributed to the conference, with the majority of these presenting their research, projects and activity as part of the formal conference programme. This experience had a significant impact on CIT staff, as their work was recognised and received numerous comments from international experts in T&L acknowledging CIT was delivering excellent activity in both breadth and depth. The Chair of the EFYE Network stated that "CIT's work supporting student transitions and developing teaching staff ha[d] impressed the EFYE Committee enormously", and that

AnSEO's "commitment to building strong relationships both with staff and students [was] a key element of how they work[ed], and enable[d] the team to achieve a substantial impact".

"Building Staff Capacity in Student Engagement" Suite of Sectoral Resources

Within the same timeframe, the Institute, as an identified leader in the student engagement space, had been invited to lead one of five national projects within the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP). A member of AnSEO acted as co-chair for this multi-institution project.

The project concluded with the publication of a suite of sector resources entitled "[Building Staff Capacity in Student Engagement](#)". These accessible guides are addressed at five different staff stakeholder groups, each of which can significantly influence student engagement activity: senior managers and governors, academic and L&T managers, academic staff, professional and support staff, and students' union and student engagement staff. Each guide provides an introduction to the literature, opportunities/benefits of student engagement, and best practices, tailored to the specific staff group. The guides were distributed at the National Seminar on Student Success (closing symposium at EFYE 2019, CIT, see above) and the NStEP Conference in Maynooth University in November 2019 and are available online for sector-wide dissemination.

Student Engagement & Communications Awards 2017 – 2019

Lastly, it might be noted that in 2019 Cork Institute of Technology was again successful in the [Student Engagement & Communications Award](#) category of the annual Irish Education Awards (IEA), continuing its three-year 'run' as an IEA winner or finalist. While the IEA awards, launched by Business River in 2017, are commercial awards, the number and quality of the entries from across the full spectrum of Irish higher education providers make them a useful yardstick of performance against national competitors in the chosen categories. The repeat success of CIT's IEA application is testament to the dynamic growth and overall breadth and depth of the student engagement and communication activities across the Institute, developed and coordinated by CIT's AnSEO Student Engagement Office.

Visible external successes such as the Irish Education Awards build on many years of incremental development of sound, trustful working relationships between the AnSEO team and CIT staff and students. These relationships are a critical success factor in growing an 'engagement' culture in which a concern and enthusiasm for fostering student success through engagement are shared equally by academic departments, central services units and the CIT Students' Union. At the 2019 Awards, evidence of this engagement culture and ongoing dissemination of best practice was evident through an increased number of CIT finalists and one overall category winner, all of which had engaged with or been supported by AnSEO activity. These included:

- Best Education Outreach Award (Finalist): Women in STEM Campus Week – I Wish & Faculty of Engineering & Science (project supported by the AnSEO Good Start programme through delivery of ice-breakers, team development activity and group work)
- Best Student Experience Award (Overall Winner): Project BeST – Department of Biological Sciences (project initiated and continually supported through AnSEO's "Transitions to CIT" funding programme)

Part 5: Objectives for the coming year

Part 5 provides information about plans for quality assurance in the institution for the academic year following the reporting period (in this instance 1 September 2019 – 31 August 2020).

5.1 Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Plans

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

No major developments are planned to the quality assurance and enhancement systems and processes of Cork Institute of Technology in 2019/20 due to the accelerating process for MTU designation together with IT Tralee, except where such developments may be required as a result of specific developments in the national or international higher education landscape and legislation.

5.2 Review Plans

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

Programmatic Review Plans

1. National Maritime College of Ireland
 - a. Phase 1 (Strategic Review)
 - b. Phase 2 (Review of Programmes)

2. School of Mechanical, Process & Electrical Engineering
 - a. Phase 1 (Strategic Review)
 - b. Phase 2 (Programme Reviews) – Department of Electrical & Electronic Engineering
 - c. Phase 2 (Programme Reviews) – Department of Mechanical, Biomedical & Manufacturing Engineering
 - d. Phase 2 (Programme Reviews) – Department of Process, Energy & Transport Engineering

3. PR Finalisation

Confirmation of the implementation of PR requirements, including from module moderation, for programmes of the Department of Construction.

5.3 Other Plans

Strategic Priority Area: High Quality Education

Teaching & Learning Unit (TLU)

Further Development of Existing Activity Strands

In 2019/20, the TLU intends to continue and build on all of its successful activity strands already running. New or intensified developments in the teaching and learning space will include:

- *TLU Academic Diary*: The TLU team plans develop a TLU Academic Diary that will include year and week planners aligned with CIT's semesters, along with information and inspiration adapted to the specific point within each semester's teaching & learning cycle.
- *Improved 'Branding'*: Branding of the TLU's hugely successful CPD workshops and seminar series will be further developed, as it was found that branding efforts have contributed strongly to the growth of staff and student development events overall.
- *Staff Mentoring*: In the mentoring and coaching space, an increasing focus of the work will lie on peer-to-peer coaching, coaching skills for lecturers working with diverse student groups, and coaching and mentoring skills for research supervisors.
- *National Digital Badge*: In 2019/20, with support from the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education (NFETL), TLU will convert the *Teaching Strategies for New Lecturers* CPD programme into a fully-online course for ease of accessibility nationally. On completion of the roll-out, the badge will be available in three different modes, Self-Study, F2F/Blended and Online.
- *TLU Development Fund Outputs*: Based on the success of its initial showcase compilation, the TLU intends to collate and publish the outputs from the departmental teaching & learning initiatives supported by the Teaching & Learning Development Fund in 2018/19 in order to inspire and encourage further engagement with innovation in teaching and learning.
- *Learning Communities*: The TLU funding initiative for Learning Communities will continue in 2019/20, with the aim of expanding its reach to ultimately encompass all academic departments.
- *TACIT Guides*: The TLU plans to supplement the existing Teaching and Assessment in CIT (TACIT) Guides with additional guides in a number of new areas, such module and curriculum design and placement assessment.

HEA "Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education" Funding

Project Streams

A significant amount of effort will be expended by the Teaching & Learning Unit on the development and administration of project streams under CIT's allocation of €294,000 under the HEA Strategic Alignment of Teaching & Learning in HE funding call.

To date, four project streams have been identified:

- Enabling Academic Transitions through Professional Development (New/Early Career Lecturers)
- Academic Leadership in Learning and Teaching (Teaching & Learning Masterclasses)
- Large-scale seed funding (€20,000 – €25,000) Learning Enhancement Projects
- Small-scale seed funding (\leq €5,000) Learning Enhancement Projects targeted specifically at those who have not previously engaged with the TLU

Under the latter two streams in particular, the focus of the TLU's work will lie on identifying and developing sustainable projects that both serve CIT's local needs as well as the national needs of the HEA and the National Forum.

Sample Project: Development of Graduate Attributes in the Department of Electrical & Electronic Engineering

As one example of a Learning Enhancement Project supported through the 2019 Strategic Alignment Fund, the CIT Department of Electrical & Electronic Engineering plans to implement a pilot project to develop graduate attributes and enhance the employability of graduates across a tranche of cognate programmes, funded through a combination of HEA Strategic Alignment and faculty funding.

The pilot will run from January to December 2020, targeting initially two graduate transferable skills across the curriculum from Stage 1 to Stage 4. The two honours degrees offered by the department, the BEng (Hons) in Electrical Engineering and the BEng (Hons) in Electronic Engineering, are to be redesigned to integrate writing skills and engineering ethics within a range of technical modules. To support this work, resources will be developed to reduce the burden on lecturers in both defining suitable attainment targets at each programme stage, providing support resources for learners, such as exemplars and case studies, and methodologies for engaging learners, for example peer review. The intention is to engage with a top-down approach to curriculum development, which could then be used to embed further skills (teamwork, critical thinking) over time. The project will record data on student engagement and performance, and will use this data to guide future development.

Strategic Priority Area: Excellent Student Experience

AnSEO – The Student Engagement Office

Having been successful in receiving HEA Performance Funding, AnSEO plans to sustain and enhance all current areas of work, and to widen the scope of its activities to add two further key areas in 2019/20.

- *Graduate Formation*: The first new focal area for 2019/20 will be enabling the concept of 'Graduate Formation' across the whole student lifecycle. Building on international best practice and an established partnership with Birmingham City University, AnSEO plans to develop a Graduate Attributes Development and Recognition Framework under the working title: 'EDGE³ – Engaging and Developing Graduates for Effective Citizenship, Entrepreneurship and Employability. This will build on the work of Birmingham City University as the first institution to receive 'Endorsed Status' from AdvanceHE for their Graduate+ programme, mapped against the Framework for Embedding Employability. AnSEO's programme of work in relation to graduate formation aligns with national

HE priorities related to 'Talent Pipeline' and 'Graduate Employability' and with the NFETL strategic pillars of 'Student Success' and 'T&L in a Digital World'.

- *Centre for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (CELT)*: It is of critical importance to CIT's student and institutional success agendas that the work of AnSEO and the work of CIT's Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU) are fully interlocked and complementary, enabling and supporting a globalised education within and beyond the curriculum. The planned establishment of a Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT) will facilitate the growing partnerships between students and staff to develop proactive and collaborative T&L activities.

Features of CELT to support the quality enhancement agenda will include: CELT Associates (students or staff) working with permanent CELT staff on specific projects (including Assessment and Feedback, Curriculum Design, Learning Spaces ...), collaborative funding streams open to staff and students, and intra-, inter- and extra-curricular Learning Communities. This aligns to the national HE priorities related to 'Improving the quality of the learning environment', 'Improvement in governance, leadership and operational excellence' and NFETL strategic pillars of 'Professional Development of those who teach', 'T&L enhancement across disciplines' and 'Student Success'.

Student Administration Process Enhancements

Further enhancements of the systems and processes related to admissions and examinations are planned for the 2019/20 period.

These include streamlining the information provision to incoming First Years and their parents/guardians, who often provide financial and other supports and thus need to reliably receive certain information. Further plans include the implementation of Phase 2 of the MAX^e exam paper management system, deployment of the OASIS online application system for international students, and changes in the CAO reporting mechanism informed by national best practice.

The CIT Admissions Office is furthermore planning to change the timing and methodology of CAO offers for students from Further Education and 'Cork Colleges Progression Scheme' colleges from Round 1 timing (mid-August) to Round 0 (start of August), and has been advocating a move to Round 0 offerings for QQI/FE applicants in national fora also to ensure fairness and transparency in offers to this cohort.

Lastly, CIT is actively engaged in the national tender for a new Student Record System for the IoT sector, due to be awarded to a winning provider in May 2020. While it will bring considerable logistical challenges, a new student record system will also bring exciting opportunities for process improvements and a more proactive and user-friendly approach to student recruitment, and consequently to the student journey at CIT in terms of academic administration.

International Office – ERASMUS+ Projects

On foot of the HEA audit of the ERASMUS+ programme conducted during the reporting period (cf. Part 2, Section 2.1), two specific projects will be commenced respectively implemented in 2019/20.

In collaboration with the Teaching & Learning Unit, the International Office has started to explore staff development recognition for Erasmus staff mobility participants. This project, which will include coordination of the Erasmus/DELTA digital badge, is scheduled for implementation in 2019/20.

In addition, the International Office will facilitate the attendance of relevant staff members at Erasmus Without Paper (EWP) training events, both abroad and at the national agency, with a view to trialling the Online Learning Agreement (OLA) during 2019/20.

Planned Library Service Enhancements

In January 2020, the CIT main library is planning to repurpose and refurbish the ground floor reference area to increase reader spaces by 4.2% and provide more inclusive (DSS) spaces (sit/stand workstations) in the interest of a holistic approach to learning. The overall aim will be to create an inviting, comfortable space in which students can learn and create.

Careers Service

Initial project work has commenced between the Careers Service and the Department of Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL) to establish the Careers Service on Canvas and engage with students through the platform. TEL will also investigate suitable self-assessment tools for the Careers Service which can be integrated with Canvas.

Part 6: Periodic Review

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

6.1 The Institution and External Review

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

Delete this message and insert text here. The box will expand. This is a paragraph describing the impacts of institutional review within the institution. This may include reference to: an overall evaluation of the impact of actions taken to date in response to recommendations of preceding external review; a description of plans and preparations undertaken for the next external review.

6.2 Self-Reflection on Quality Assurance

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

Delete this message and insert text here. The box will expand. This is a short evaluative and reflective summary of the overall impact of quality assurance in the reporting period or, over a more extensive period, in the review cycle. This may include highlighting good practice(s) and strengths in quality and quality assurance. It may also include information that the institution wishes to draw to the attention of QQI in relation to QA activities undertaken in this reporting period and/or priorities to be pursued in the next reporting period.

6.3 Themes

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

Delete this message and insert text here. The box will expand. This is a short paragraph outlining any developmental themes in quality and quality assurance which are of importance to the institution and relevant to periodic review. These may be linked to the strategic objectives of the institution.