

Institutional Review Report 2021

Waterford Institute of Technology



QAI REVIEW

CINNTE 

Foreword

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training in Ireland. One of QQI's most important statutory functions is to ensure that the quality assurance procedures that institutions have in place have been implemented and are effective. To this end, QQI carries out external reviews of institutes of technology on a cyclical basis. This current QQI cycle of reviews is called the CINNTE cycle. CINNTE reviews are an element of the broader quality framework for institutes of technology composed of: Quality Assurance Guidelines; Quality Assurance approval; Annual Institutional Quality Reports; Dialogue Meetings; the National Framework of Qualifications; Delegation of Authority; and, most crucially, the Quality Assurance (QA) systems that each institution establishes. The CINNTE review cycle runs from 2017-2023. During this period, QQI will organise and oversee independent reviews of each of the universities, the institutes of technology and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI).

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

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

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

This institutional review of the Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) was conducted by an independent review team in line with the terms of reference in Appendix A. This is the report of the findings and evaluation of the review team. In this report, the review team has not only considered the technicalities of QA but has also conducted the review from the perspective of viewing QA as a total management system of the quality of the entirety of the institute's provision. Thus, it has considered the institutional governance and management of HR and finances, among other areas.

The Review Team

Each CINNTE review is carried out by an international team of independent experts and peers. The 2020 institutional review of Waterford Institute of Technology was conducted by a team of six reviewers selected by QQI.

As a result of public health restrictions put in place in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, a site visit was not possible, and the team briefing and initial meetings, planning and main review visits were rescheduled as virtual visits.

The review team received advice and background information from QQI on 7 October 2020 and the planning visit to Waterford Institute of Technology took place virtually on 29 October 2020.

A full schedule of stakeholder meetings with the review team was held between 17 and 26 November 2020, during which the full review team met students, staff and external stakeholders. The timetable for the visit is appended to this report (see Appendix B).

The efficacy of the virtual review process was confirmed by the review team chair on behalf of the review team in the oral feedback report provided to Waterford IT on the final day of the virtual visit. The President of Waterford IT, on behalf of the institution, confirmed the institution's satisfaction and confidence in the robustness of the process.

QQI acknowledges the engagement, commitment and work of the review team and of Waterford IT in planning, preparing for and implementing the virtual review process.

CHAIR – DR. STEPHEN JACKSON

Dr Stephen Jackson is an international consultant in quality assurance in higher education. He has now retired from the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in the UK where he was the Director of Quality Assurance and a member of the Agency's executive management team. He had overall responsibility for the management and delivery of QAA's review activity in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This included universities and other higher education providers, the review of higher education in further education colleges and the review of private higher education colleges.

He joined QAA in October 2002 from Liverpool John Moores University, where he was Director for Partnership and Widening Participation. Previously, Stephen held the post of Assistant Provost with responsibility for learning and teaching development across the university. Before joining QAA, Stephen worked for both the Higher Education Quality Council and QAA as auditor and review coordinator.

He is a trustee of the University College of Estate Management and has joined the University Quality Assurance International Board, the advisory body for

the Knowledge and Human Development Authority in Dubai. He is also treasurer of the British Accreditation Council and a reviewer for the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

COORDINATING REVIEWER – LUCIEN BOLLAERT

Lucien Bollaert is an international independent QA expert. He is the author of "A Manual for International Quality Assurance in Higher Education – Looking for a new quality in HE in a new world" (Brussels, EURASHE, 2019, 2nd edition). He is a keynote speaker at international conferences and author of various peer-reviewed articles on QA. After his membership of the daily and general board of the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO, 2009-2015) and of the board of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), he became invited professor in New York, Brussels and Antwerp. At the moment he is a board member of the quality assurance agencies AEQES and EQ-Arts and was a member of the Policy and Strategy Committee of QQI (2016-2019). In 2017 he was a member of the QQI panel reviewing the Luxembourg Institution for LLL and, in 2018, of the HEA panel for the establishment of TU Dublin. He has just co-written guidelines in

the European project on Stakeholders' Involvement (ESQA). He has been selected as a member of the Education Quality Board of Ghent University, where he was external coach in reshaping the IQA system. He is lead IQA expert in the World Bank project to redesign the QA system in Uzbekistan.

At European level he was member of the E4 group, developing the first ESG on QA (2005) and establishing the annual European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), of whose register committee he was vice-chair from its foundation in 2008 to June 2017. He was also a founding member of the steering committee of the annual European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF) for 6 years. The European Commission asked him to be a member of the first experts' groups on the European Qualifications Frameworks (EQF).

He has worked as lecturer of English, director of a business studies programme, international officer, departmental and institutional quality assurance manager, institutional education & research officer and finally acting vice-chancellor of the University College of West Flanders. When the college associated with Ghent University in 2003, he became chairman of the experts' commission on QA, a member of the commissions on education and on research, and a member of the board and the general assembly.

INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE – DORIS HERRMANN

Doris Herrmann (M.A.) is managing director of the German accreditation agency AQAS.

Her professional work experience encompasses about 140 validations of programmes in higher education in Germany; expertise in the accreditation of joint programmes; and experience with programme and institutional-level accreditation procedures and projects on QA in Egypt, China, the Sultanate of Oman, Moldova, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Lesotho and Turkey. She has also been involved in consultancy projects for the reorganisation of accreditation agencies abroad.

Doris is a member of expert committees on Joint Programmes (German Accreditation Council), Dual Programmes (Chamber of Commerce), Cooperation in HE with China (Federal Ministry of Education), and E-learning/MOOCs (German Rectors Conference). She is an expert on training for DAAD, the German Rectors Conference, and UNESCO.

LEARNER REPRESENTATIVE – MARIA MAGUIRE

Maria Maguire returned to education as an adult learner. After being an active class representative and society chairperson, Maria was elected in 2018 as the first female Dundalk IT Students' Union President for almost 15 years. During her term Maria completely overhauled the Union's Constitution, increasing transparency and creating a new full-time officer role with a focus on student engagement.

She represented students on DkIT's Academic Council and was a student member on DkIT's Governing Body for two years. Whilst in the students' union Maria partnered with DkIT on the first student/staff partnership initiative, looking at student engagement and the employable skills obtained through it. She remains an active partner on the project.

While a student Maria was a member of the working group looking at the student voice as part of an institutional review. She has also presented to students and staff on quality assurance policies such as assessment and feedback, as well as presenting in the UK at a symposium on working towards meaningful partnership.

Currently Maria is completing the final year of her undergraduate study in the BB(Hons) in Digital and International Business.

QUALITY ASSURANCE REPRESENTATIVE – PROFESSOR PAUL GILLER

Professor Paul Giller is a zoologist and ecologist (Queen Mary and Imperial College, University of London) and a Member of the Royal Irish Academy. He taught and researched in UCC for over 30 years,

and has also taught for periods in China, UK, USA, and France and has supervised 30 PhD and 10 MSc students to completion.

In addition to academic roles, he held senior university management positions at University College Cork including Executive Dean of Science (2000-2005), with executive responsibility for strategy, staffing and budgets and Registrar and Senior Vice-President Academic/Deputy President (2005-2015) with overall responsibility for the academic affairs of the university including academic strategy, curriculum and programme development and standards, internationalisation, student affairs and discipline, admissions, examinations and records.

Paul has significant experience of Research and Quality Reviews, having chaired and participated in review panels for the EU and National Research Agencies and Councils in Norway, Sweden, Finland, UK, France, and Portugal over many years. From a broader academic and administrative quality assessment perspective he has acted as a member of quality review panels in UCC and several universities in Europe (including Helsinki, TCD, Maynooth, Copenhagen, Paris) and led UCC's own QQI institutional review and UCC's independent research reviews. He has also held positions as Senior and Executive Editor and has been a member of Editorial Boards of a number of international journals as well as an external examiner in the UK, Ireland, Sweden, The Netherlands, France and Canada at all university degree levels.

INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVE – LORRAINE WRAFTER

Lorraine Wrafter is a Global Human Resource Director who has worked in large multinational organisations, including Cargill Inc., one the largest privately owned companies in the world, with a turnover of \$120bn and 140,000 employees in 65 countries and Holcim (now LafargeHolcim), a Swiss building materials company with a turnover of 30bn CHF and 90,000 employees in 50 countries.

She has had a broad range of global human resource roles, including Director of Human Resources for the first global acquisition in Cargill; Communications & Change Director for the reorganisation of multi-business units; Internal Consultant working across 88 diverse business units from agriculture to financial

markets, and Talent & Leadership Development in the food and building materials sector.

Her area of expertise is organisation effectiveness, particularly in the areas of organisation culture, organisation structure, workforce and succession planning. Currently she has her own business, 'The Problem', and works on varied projects such as organisation transformation, culture, team dynamics, business planning and coaching. She is also a board advisor to the US start-up company Katalyst Groups.

Lorraine studied Business at University of Limerick and completed an MSc in Human Resource Management & Training at Leicester University, UK, and an EMCC in Consulting & Coaching for Change at Insead France Business School. She has lived and worked in Belgium, Ireland, Switzerland, the UK and the US and her work has taken her to over 50 countries.



Section

1

Introduction and Context



Introduction and Context

Brief profile of Waterford Institute of Technology

Waterford Regional Technical College (WRTC) was established in 1970 and initially provided technical and vocational education with a focus on short-cycle, sub-degree programmes of study. In response to regional demand, WRTC moved to offering honours bachelor's programmes and expanded the breadth of disciplines to include the humanities and social sciences. In the late 1990s the name of the institution was changed to Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT).

In recent years student enrolment (undergraduate and postgraduate) has grown to approximately 9283 (2019-2020), of which approximately 1886 students were part-time. Humanities remains the largest academic area, accounting for 25%¹ of the student population, followed by science (21%). The smallest schools are the School of Engineering (13%) and the School of Education and Life-long Learning (3%). Notwithstanding the pandemic, there was a decrease of only 13 in the number of students recruited in 2020-21 as compared to 2019-20. The trend of falling numbers of students enrolled on Level 6/7 programmes (-130) and rising numbers enrolled on Level 8 programmes (+117) continued. According to HEA's 2019 *Spatial & Socio-Economic Profile of Higher Education Institutions*¹, WIT has a higher proportion of students with low Deprivation Index Scores than any other HEI and a higher number of students that could be classified as 'disadvantaged'. The institute has 519 core academic staff, of whom 216 (42%) have a PhD and 256 (49%) a master's degree.

There was an omnibus delegation of authority up to NFQ Level 9 to all institutes of technology (IoTs) in 2001. QQI has also delegated authority to make awards at level 10 to some IoTs in certain discipline areas and since January 2020 the institutes of technology have been designated awarding bodies for awards up to NFQ Level 9.

WIT has also built a research base. In 2019, 278 academic staff (c. 53%) submitted reports to the institute's Research Support Unit, declaring themselves research active. This includes staff who have peer-reviewed publications to their name, are currently supervising graduate research students, have secured competitive research funding, or align with other recognised research performance measures. The disciplinary field in which most research was reported was in ICT and mathematics (45%), followed by biology and the environment (20%).

Since its creation, the institute's primary focus has been on supporting community, culture, enterprise and business in Waterford and the wider south-east region of Ireland. It does this through offering accessible programmes of study that address regional needs, through the provision of research that contributes to regional innovation, and through knowledge transfer that informs regional decision-making and planning.

In addition to this critical regional role, WIT, as one of Ireland's largest IoTs, plays a significant role nationally and contributes to achieving national-level targets. The institute is also connected internationally

¹ Available at <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2019/10/Higher-Education-Spatial-Socio-Economic-Profile-Oct-2019.pdf>.



through research and other agreements, staff and student exchanges, and through its population of international students. Full-time international student registrations, excluding Erasmus exchange programme students, numbered over 200 per year in the years 2014-18. The two largest cohorts were from China and Malaysia.

The changing and challenging landscape of Irish higher education (HE), coupled with WIT's stakeholders' demands and needs, provides the

backdrop to the strategic plan published in 2018. The plan established the values of the institute and sets out how they are to be applied to strategic effect in the region. Strategic Plan 2018-2021 clearly formulates WIT's aim to grow into an internationally recognised technological university while firmly keeping to its regional mission as a driver of change embedded in an entrepreneurial culture. The strategic plan addresses all the activities of the institute, including those associated with quality assurance.

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

This review was conducted in the context of major changes in the Irish educational landscape since the last institutional review of WIT in 2010. Changing expectations of WIT from learners, stakeholders, and the Irish Government have required flexibility and agility on the part of the institute in the development and delivery of its educational portfolio, its research effort, its third pillar engagement and knowledge transfer activities, and its governance, management, and operations. This review took place at a time during which WIT was in an important transition.

In response to the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, WIT has been engaged in planning with IT Carlow (ITC) towards an application for re-designation as a technological university (TU) under the Technological Universities Act 2018. This engagement towards a TU for South-East Ireland (TUSEI) is clearly addressed in Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

Another major contextual factor was the unexpected, immense challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. WIT decided to provide online resources and lessons for students, while other operations such as management, research, tutoring and internships, needed to be organised in a socially distanced environment. WIT was forced to cease face-to-face provision to complete academic year 2019-20 and also needed to engage in detailed planning to prepare for delivery of its academic portfolio in 2020-21.

This review took place against the backdrop of the complex higher education context in Ireland with (effectively) reduced public funding. Further, HEIs are required to respond to a broad government agenda embodied in the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape (2012)*, *Supporting a Better Transition from Second Level to Higher Education: Key Directions and Next Steps (2013)* and the aforementioned *National Action Plan for Education (2018)*. These national strategies and policies require that HEIs demonstrate greater accountability, place an emphasis on efficiency, and – in relation to the IoT sector – engage in an increased amount of research. In addition, WIT and the whole IoT sector have continued to operate under the strictures of national and sectoral regulations dating from the 1990s.

It is worth noting that, one month before the online site visit of the review team, the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science announced that HEIs required an appropriate level of autonomy to act with agility and flexibility, combined with stronger governance and accountability mechanisms at institutional level.

APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT

The institute updates its Quality Assurance Framework annually. This sets out the institute's overarching philosophy and the framework that guides academic quality assurance and quality improvement activities at WIT. It also establishes the following values in the development and implementation of its policies and procedures.

1. **Subsidiarity:** Quality is the responsibility of all staff in the institute and the institute will locate responsibility at the closest point to actual delivery of the service.
2. **Learner Driven:** The involvement of learners is central to the design, implementation and review of activities and the institute actively engages with learners to enhance their opportunities.
3. **Data-informed:** Decisions made by the institute will be based on robust data analysis and debate.
4. **Communication:** The importance of understanding how quality assurance processes connect to the daily activities of the institute is critical to achieving ownership of quality. The institute strives to engage all staff through communication channels, training processes and involvement in the design of effective procedures to build a sustainable commitment to delivering the quality assurance framework.
5. **Openness, transparency, and ease of engagement:** The design and implementation of procedures should result in public, easily understood, and easily accessed processes that enable the user to readily engage. Procedures should be based on clearly defined policies and be supported by appropriate training and support structures. All policies and procedures should be published and readily available.

6. **Strategic:** The operation of the quality assurance and improvement systems should be informed by and support the strategic plans of the institute and be aligned to the strategic risks and risk appetite of the institute.

The institute's Quality Assurance Framework states that the operation of quality assurance and enhancement consists of three interrelated activities:

1. The operation of cycles of development, implementation and review of policies and procedures that inform activity and initiate new policy, procedures and practices;
2. A defined structure that clearly articulates the responsibility of key individuals or bodies with respect to the quality assurance activities; and
3. Publishing policies and procedures across the range of institute activities that have been approved by the appropriate instructional body.

The institute states that it engages in a continuous cycle of self-improvement targeted at the student experience by enhancing teaching, learning and research, and improving the quality assurance systems designed for this purpose. This cycle of self-improvement makes use of the following reviews: annual quality reports (AQRs), quality dialogue meetings with QQI (QDMs), WIT internal cyclical reviews, and the WIT institutional reviews.

The structure of the Annual Quality Report (AQR), four of which have been completed, covering the academic years 2015-2019, is based on the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG, 2015) and examines compliance practice within the institute. WIT considers this an integral process and publishes these reports on its website.

QDMs between WIT and QQI follow the submission of the AQR with the purpose of discussing the development of QA within WIT. They occurred annually from 2016 to 2018; from 2020 onwards, they will take place once every two years (the most recent dialogue meeting between QQI and WIT took place in June 2020).

Each school must complete a periodic review (currently on a five-year cycle), ending in the submission of a self-assessment report (SAR), and formally facilitate review panel discussions. The review processes are supported by policy documents

and data included in a document repository. The completion of the review consists of a final response to the report and an enhancement plan, both of which are assessed by the Academic Council Quality Committee on behalf of Academic Council prior to the approval of a new curriculum.

The last institutional review at WIT was conducted by the former Higher Education Training and Awards Council in 2010. The report was positively received by the institute, which accepted a total of 27 commendations and 39 recommendations. In October 2011, WIT produced a follow-up report to its implementation plan to address each of the recommendations. The Academic Council's Planning Committee oversees the execution of the implementation plan and reviews the status of each action periodically. In summary, WIT states that it has implemented 35 of the recommendations in full, and that one has been addressed in principle. It believes that three of the stated actions have become redundant, or that landscape changes have required that they be reconsidered.



Section 2

Institutional Self-Evaluation
Report (ISER)



Institutional Self-Evaluation Report

Methodology used to prepare for the ISER

WIT attended the launch of the CINNTE quality review cycle on 26 September 2017 and discussed the ISER at the subsequent Academic Council Planning Committee ('Academic Planning Committee') meeting in October 2017. The ISER has been on the Academic Planning Committee's agenda since February 2017. However, the institute's ambition to become a technological university has been a long-term strategic goal and this always suggested that the ISER timeframe could postdate the potential establishment of a TU. Following discussions with QQI the Academic Planning Committee decided to proceed with the review.

WIT viewed the ISER as a component of the ongoing QA processes that contribute to the overall QA

framework within the institute. The ISER was developed by WIT's ISER team and approved by its Academic Council and Governing Body. The centrality of the Academic Planning Committee to this process, and the committee's history of engaging with and approving the annual quality reports submitted to QQI, positioned it as the starting point for the conversations about the ISER. The committee took the leading role in the process, with the aim of forming an extended committee with a view to having wide institutional involvement. The initial objective to establish a broad committee meant that membership was sought from the Academic Council, Executive Board, Office of the Registrar, VP of Strategy, WIT Students' Union (WITSU), and a representative of heads of function/heads of department. The ISER



also devolved activities to other bodies, such as a dedicated Governing Body sub-committee (made up exclusively of external, independent governors) for the institutional review, the Registry management team, including all student services managers, and the Heads of Function MCF group. The final ISER Committee itself appeared to the review team to lack full representation from the institution, being comprised predominantly of academic and academic affairs staff and students with few, if any, members from, for example, student services, support staff, information offices, and external stakeholders.

The ISER committee was formed in 2017 and extended in May 2019 once it was formally decided that the institutional review would go ahead. While there would be many contributors to the ISER throughout the drafting process, the Head of Quality Promotion was given responsibility for the main drafting exercise, and for collating contributions from the WIT community.

WIT stated that, through its ISER, it aimed to evaluate whether and how institutional operations have been true to its values. WIT's President declared that he was also looking forward to recommendations on the WIT structures in order to facilitate the establishment of a technological university. The institute also stated that a further purpose of the self-evaluation process

was to reflect on the success that WIT had achieved, while recognising areas requiring improvement or enhancement.

The institute considered the 2020 ISER an integral part of the improvement process and established the following objectives as valued outputs from the process:

1. Reflect on the institutional actions since the 2010 ISER in the context of the review, the development of WIT's strategic plan and its achievements;
2. Benchmark the institute's QA framework against both the ESG and national guidelines;
3. Articulate and validate WIT's quality enhancement proposals for the future; and
4. Assess the extent to which WIT engages with its students and other stakeholders and supports its staff and researchers with a view to constant improvement.

WIT's ISER was submitted to QQI on 20 February 2020. Subsequently, due to the public health restrictions imposed in response to COVID-19, the original site visit, which had been scheduled for April/May 2020, was postponed for several months. WIT produced an Institutional Self-Evaluation Supplemental Report which was accompanied by some further information requested by the review team. The supplemental ISER



was developed by the same ISER team and approved by WIT's Academic Council and Governing Body in October 2020. This supplemental document allowed WIT to capture its response to the COVID-19 situation.

There were some gaps in the information provided in the initial draft of the ISER. The review team was very appreciative of the responsiveness of key personnel in WIT to requests for additional information and of WIT's willingness to provide information to the team on key developments that had occurred since the original ISER was submitted to QQI. This helped provide the team with a comprehensive picture of the institution and its structures and gave the team a clear understanding of how the institution operates, as well as how it responded to the extraordinary challenges posed by COVID-19 during 2020.

CONSULTATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ISER

Members of the WIT community were invited to contribute to the original draft ISER document. These included the ISER committee, WIT Governing Body, the Office of the President, the WIT Students Union, the Offices of the Vice-Presidents for Corporate Affairs and Finance, for Strategy, and for Research, the Academic Council and its sub-committees, the school boards, WIT staff and students. There was a relatively short timeframe for the discussion and drafting of the ISER, which suggests that there was limited opportunity for wider consultation and feedback on the ISER especially by external peers and stakeholders. However, the ISER was also informed by the on-going consultation process for the institute's TU application. The review team was informed that there were indeed very few feedback comments made on the ISER.

COMMENDATION

The review team commends WIT for its fruitful integration of the ISER process with its strategic aim of becoming a technological university and the linking of the two processes by the institute's formulation of bridging objectives.

RECOMMENDATION

The review team recommends that, for future institutional reviews, a more representative ISER committee be established, and that more time be

afforded to the self-evaluation process to allow for full engagement across the institution and – just as importantly – with external stakeholders, given their crucial role in the regional and research missions of WIT.

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ISER

Both the original ISER and the supplemental document were comprehensive in their provision of information on the institute's current policies, practices, and the regulations associated with the quality assurance and enhancement of teaching and research within the institute. The documents were generally well written and described some areas of good practice which were flexible and robust enough to allow the institution to respond rapidly and effectively to the evolving COVID-19 situation. Indeed, the original ISER refers to the many procedures in place within the institute that cover most processes; however, the impact of these procedures was not afforded much attention in the ISER. Apart from their links with the strategic objectives and the methodology of cyclical QA (see section 2), the integration of the various policies was not sufficiently clear within the internal QA system. The supplemental ISER was more integrated in its approach and description thanks to its focus on the impact of COVID-19.

Both ISERs display a great degree of self-affirmation and confidence in the institute's procedures, although the ISER rightly identifies risks, such as lack of consistency and high level of oversight, in respect of its desire to have devolved responsibility and ownership of quality assurance. However, the review team did not discern sufficient self-reflection and self-criticism within the documents, although these were stated to be objectives of the review. The ISER and its development process would have benefited from greater self-reflection through, for example, the conducting of a SWOT analysis and identification of areas for improvement, greater stakeholder input and review, dedicated internal surveys of students, staff and stakeholders, and a summary/conclusion section highlighting specific issues arising and planned actions as a result of the process.

The limited self-reflection evident in the self-evaluation process also meant that the ISER process was used more to document the actions taken by

the institute to deliver its strategic objectives than to evaluate how it had performed against those objectives. The review team noted that there was limited critical self-reflection on the institute's internal QA system in the ISER.

Further, there was no explicit description of, and no reference to, an established quality culture at an institutional or school level. The WIT Annual Quality Reports (AQRs) were more revealing as far as the cyclical elements of quality assurance were concerned.

RECOMMENDATION

The review team recommends that WIT continue to strengthen its self-reflective approach to its evaluation of the quality assurance and enhancement overarching framework, its lifecycles based on underlying indicators and its links with the overall strategy through key performance indicators (KPIs).

RECOMMENDATION

The review team recommends that the institute engage in further appropriate benchmarking against other national and international institutions as an ongoing part of its QA and QE processes.



Section 3

Quality Assurance/Accountability

Objective 1 – Current Quality Assurance Procedures

Objective 2 – Procedures for Awarding

Objective 3 – Quality Enhancement

Objective 4 – Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression

Objective 5 – Provision of Programmes to International Learners

Quality Assurance/ Accountability

Objective 1 – Current Quality Assurance Procedures

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM AND PROCEDURES

Following the recommendations arising from the previous institutional review, the review team welcomes the development of the Quality Assurance Framework, which sets out the overarching philosophy and framework that guides academic quality assurance and quality improvement activities at WIT and supports the implementation of the policies and procedures underpinning academic quality assurance and standards.

The WIT Quality Assurance and Enhancement System, as described in the institute's Quality Assurance Framework, is very comprehensive and covers all organisational processes from strategic and other policies to the quality of teaching, learning and

research. It thus represents an example of Total Quality Management (TQM). The framework supports various elements of the ESG including ESG part 1 from its policy and link to strategy (ESG 1.1), through the design of study programmes with learning outcomes (ESG 1.2), as well as the teaching, learning and assessment processes (ESG 1.3) and their on-going monitoring and periodic reviews (ESG 1.9), the whole student lifecycle and its resources and student support (ESG 1.4, 1.6), engagement with teaching staff (ESG 1.5) to its underlying information management (ESG 1.7) and the provision of transparent and public information (ESG 1.8).

The Quality Assurance Framework approach is effective, focused on cyclical review and performance data and its evaluation. WIT states that it has made the QA culture as flat as possible. External examiners



play a critical role in academic quality assurance at WIT and the process of external appointments through the AC Quality Committee is appropriate.

The institute publishes an updated Quality Framework annually, electronically and in hard copy. The Moodle repository also contains several resource files and guidance notes in key areas. The Office for Quality Promotion and Academic Policy Development has a specific remit to provide training in respect of key QA processes and to provide individualised responses to quality questions.

The Quality Manual, which covers academic regulations, is a wide-ranging, integrated document, covering all aspects of regulations for undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes. The programme approval process is clear, comprehensive and works well, with an appropriate balance of internal and external quality controls. The establishment of programme boards with a clear set of responsibilities is positive, although efforts need to be made to ensure the timing of board meetings is such that it allows the membership to attend – there is evidence that often only the school/department head, programme lead and one or two other members are in attendance. The role and participation of student representatives on the boards also needs clarification (see under Objective 1).

WIT states in the ISER that the quality assurance cycle ensures that all policies and procedures have performance indicators and a review process to keep them up to date and responsive to changing environments. Performance data used to underpin quality assurance and enhancement include:

1. External reports, such as external examiner and programme validation reports;
2. Committee reports from Academic Council activities, standing committees, or ad hoc committees operating both at institutional and at school level;
3. Strategic planning and Executive Board reports, such as the HEA compact;
4. Performance reports, such as programme-level completion rates;
5. Data collected from students, such as data arising from StudentSurvey.ie, student feedback

QA3s, direct feedback from students on programme boards and the representation of students on key institutional committees such as the Academic Council and Governing Body.

The operational evaluation of these data is reported to be included in external audits, the AQRs, in many internal reports and responses to these, as well as in the outputs of professional statutory and regulatory bodies' reviews of relevant WIT programmes. All review panel reports are published on the WIT website. There is, however, an opportunity to increase the levels of self-evaluation and reflection outside of statutory requirements. As the stated number of completed recommendations (36 of 39) of the last institutional review (2010) and the AQRs show, WIT is able to detect weaknesses and take actions to enhance and improve. There exists an informal quality culture that recognises the continuous need to provide quality, but the formal steps of seeking reflections and issues for consideration from all stakeholders are not always clear in WIT's QA cycle, which is mainly built around factual reporting.

The quality assurance of collaborative programmes is supported by an appropriate set of regulations and the approval process through relevant school boards, Executive Board and Academic Council is robust.

Research degree regulations and procedures are also well structured and comprehensive. The academic reporting process appears well defined, although WIT would benefit from further consideration of how it sets targets and goals against which the data are compared. Several profession-oriented programmes undergo professional accreditation, which provides another element of external QA.

The assessment of the quality of teaching and student support is dependent on a robust set of feedback mechanisms that have been established within the Irish HE sector. Currently there is scope for more systematic collection of focused and specific feedback from WIT students and other stakeholders.

Whilst it is evident that there is a robust external examiner approval process, there is insufficient clarity on how systematically external reports are dealt with between schools and in the institution as a whole. External examiners play a critical role in academic quality assurance at WIT and the process of external appointments through the AC Quality Committee

is appropriate. The focus of reviewing such reports appears to be at the school level with only limited institution-wide oversight of potentially common or systemic issues.

The review team concludes that there is evidence that WIT's current QA procedures are in compliance with the various QQI policies, criteria and guidelines as well as section 28 of the 2012 Act and the ESG.

COMMENDATION

The review team commends the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of WIT's overall quality assurance systems, which have been clearly demonstrated by the institute's robust and rapid actions to overcome obstacles during the critical incident period under COVID-19 in 2020. This has enabled the institution to continue to deliver programmes and maintain

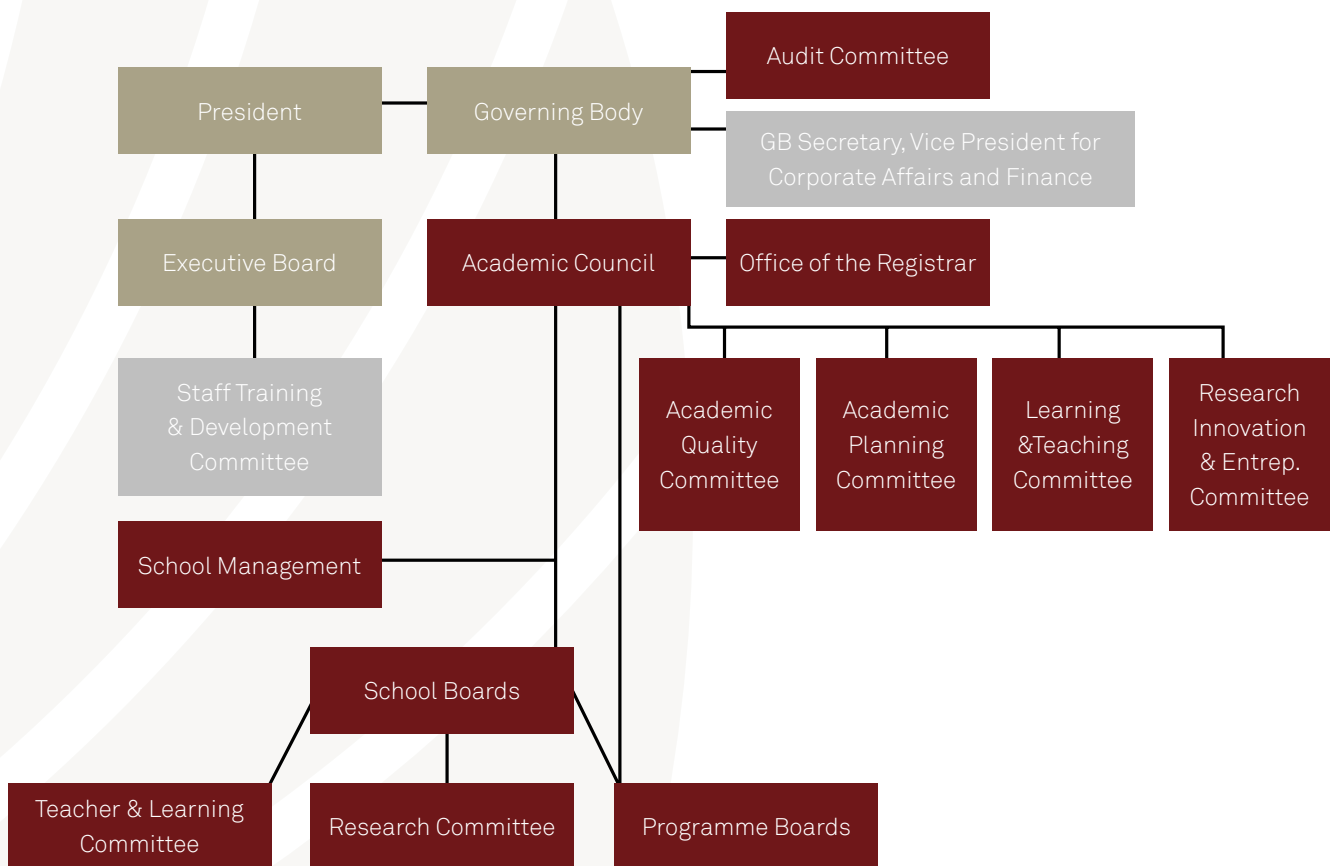
standards. The enhanced engagement and consultation between the executive and the students' union have clearly been particularly helpful in this regard.

RECOMMENDATION

The review team recommends that a systematic examination of the quality assurance and enhancement systems be undertaken to identify opportunities for clearer links and synergy between the different layers of the QA system, reports, procedures, tools, WIT specific targets and actions.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The structures for governance and management of the institute are set out in the Institutional Profile document, as in the figure below.



The institute is led by the President and the President’s Executive Board, which consists of the Registrar, the vice-presidents, and the heads (deans) of the 6 WIT schools.

The Governing Body has been established in accordance with legislation and is responsible for the oversight of the organisation and the approval and monitoring of its strategy. The review team recognises that the overall governance arrangements were in a state of transition at the time of this institutional review in light of the newly appointed Governing Body (GB) in September 2020.

WIT’s Strategic Plan 2018-2021 has been linked to the reporting demands of the HEA Compact and is treated as a live document which is subject to regular reviews by the Governing Body. Some of the Governing Body’s responsibilities have been delegated to sub-committees including the Audit & Risk Committee and the Strategy Subcommittee. However, there is no quality committee or finance committee, with institutional quality oversight falling under the remit of the Academic Council and financial management oversight undertaken by the entire Governing Body. Reports are received on QA and QE through the Registrar’s Office’s reporting mechanisms, which include ensuring that quality is a standing item on the Governing Body’s agenda, latest updates, development reporting and requests for information. Governing Body also receives a copy of the AQR and of annual Academic Council reports on the AQR.

As defined by legislation, academic matters are the primary responsibility of the Academic Council. The council, chaired by the President, consists of elected staff representatives, senior academic staff and students. The leading responsibility for governing and managing the QA system lies with the Academic Council and its various committees, such as the Academic Quality Committee and the Academic Planning Committee. The Academic Council reviews the totality of the academic-related quality assurance policies and procedures at two points annually through its review of the Quality Manual and through review of the AQR that is submitted to QQI. Any amendments proposed by the appropriate committees of Academic Council are also considered. However, it is less clear how the quality assurance and enhancement of academic administrative and non-academic central service and support offices and

activities are monitored, and outcomes actioned.

The responsibilities for QA matters are allocated as set out in the table below.

QA OPERATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Regulation and Policy Formation	Governing Body, Academic Council & Committees, Office of the Registrar, Executive Board
Communication, Training and Engagement	Academic Council, Office of the Registrar, school management, school boards, programme boards
Implementation	Office of the Registrar, Executive Board, management in general, programme boards
Reporting & Evaluation of Compliance	Academic Council, Office of the Registrar, school management, school boards, programme boards
Review	Governing Body, Academic Council & its committees, school boards, programme boards
Academic Governance	Governing Body, Audit Committee, Academic Council, President, Office of the Registrar, Executive Board, school boards

Reporting lines in WIT are designed both to ensure the flow of information and to allow governance oversight. For instance, reports from each Academic Council committee are presented to Academic Council for approval and data on key processes are reported as part of a regular academic affairs report to the Governing Body.

Based on the information the review team received, the Graduate Studies Office appears to be separated from the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Registrar (VPAAR). Whilst linkage to VP Research might be appropriate for PhD students, WIT might

consider the advantage of placing the academic administrative management of all postgraduates (and especially those pursuing a taught master’s degree) under the Registry.

The institute has adopted the **THEA Code of Governance for Institutes of Technology**, which includes a regular review of the functioning of the Governing Body and the Academic Council. An effectiveness review of Governing Body is undertaken every three years. The effectiveness review of Academic Council is a positive development. One of the main findings of that review relates to a perception that Academic Council lacks sufficient impact on the operation of WIT – a focused and time-limited plan on how AC might address this issue would be beneficial.

All school management units have engaged in governance style review processes and, according to the ISER, it is intended that central functions will also engage in similar quality improvement processes.

The review team understands that the Academic Council Quality Committee has primary responsibility for QA and QE. It is, however, clearly focused on specific academic issues, such as reviewing, and recommending awards, overseeing marks and standards, QA reports from programmes in schools, student selection, progression, retention and external examiner matters. There appears to be a deficit in the oversight and evaluation of the QA of administrative, support and service departments. Assignment of responsibility for QA framework operations is described to some extent in the ISER, but it is not sufficiently clear which body or member of staff has ultimate responsibility for each of the elements of QA. The review team recommends that WIT give further consideration to the structuring and the management of its review processes, data collection, analyses of the review outcomes, reports and support as well as the monitoring of improvement and enhancement.

WIT has an institutional risk register which operates in a devolved manner, with issues escalating up or cascading down from the main institutional risk register that sits with the Executive Board. A risk officer has been established in the Office of the VP for Corporate Affairs and Finance. The nature of the register is kept under review and further developments are recommended by the review team. In addition, whilst Governing Body has established an

Audit and Risk Committee, this has a specific remit to engage in high-level and independent oversight of a wide range of processes, regulations, and activities at WIT. The institute might consider a more specific focus on the oversight of day-to-day risks across the institution and the dissemination of good practice.

The current resource allocation model to academic and administrative and service units is challenged by the assessment of continuing needs and changing strategic priorities. The recent financial situation at WIT, further exacerbated by sectoral deficits in funding, has also led to infrastructural deficits affecting the quality of the WIT estate. It is clear, however, that the WIT executive is intent on addressing the limitations of the sectoral financial and allocation model and a number of recommendations are raised below to support these developments.

COMMENDATION

The review team commends WIT for adopting the **THEA Code of Governance for Institutes of Technology**, which entails the conduct of regular reviews of the functioning of the institute’s various governance bodies and boards, such as Governing Body and Academic Council.

RECOMMENDATION

The review team recommends that WIT give further consideration to the structuring and the management of its review processes, data collection, analyses of the review outcomes, reports and support, as well as the monitoring of improvement and enhancement.

PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The quality of programmes is monitored on an ongoing basis. Programme boards, which include student members, report annually to WIT’s Academic Council. The Academic Council has responsibility for managing the academic quality of the institute’s programmes. The functions of the Academic Council in QA include:

- Maintain the standards of the institute’s awards and promote quality;
- Annual monitoring of performance in relation to strategic plan priorities, including school plans, and review at the end of the planning and implementation period;

- Ensure that external examiners' reports are received and formally considered, and that appropriate action is taken;
- Encourage innovation in programme development and design, approve the design of new programmes, develop programmes in the light of regional and national need and demand, and make recommendations to the Governing Body for the establishment of appropriate structures to implement such programmes, and to monitor their implementation;
- Ensure that programmes are designed and operated in accordance with the institute's regulations;
- Make recommendations to the Governing Body on the selection, admission, retention, and exclusion of students;
- Make recommendations to the Governing Body for the award of scholarships, prizes, or other awards;
- Make general arrangements for tutorials or other academic counselling.

The VPAAR has overall responsibility for co-ordinating these processes and reporting to the Academic Council and institute on progress and implementation.

The Academic Council has various committees; of these, the Academic Quality Committee, the Academic Planning Committee, the Learning and Teaching Committee, and the Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Committee have functions and responsibilities related to the quality of programmes.

The programme and school boards are also working committees of the Academic Council, each with distinct and fundamental responsibilities to the council for aspects of academic quality assurance and enhancement. Programme boards are established for each approved programme. Each programme board comprises all academic staff assigned to teach on the course, a representative number of students (usually the class representatives for each year), and, optionally, co-opted individuals from outside of the institute, as well as the head of the relevant department as an ex-officio member. The programme board monitors the design and delivery of the programme, the academic performance of

learners, and the programme's overall academic standards. It assesses the programme's development on an annual basis through the analysis of such indicators as learner feedback, external examiner and professional body feedback, retention and attrition rates, and assessment results.

School boards are responsible for the development of the academic strategy of individual academic schools as well as monitoring at school level the implementation of the institute's quality assurance procedures. The school board has authority over certain aspects of the programme development processes, module approval processes, student admission processes and other matters as agreed with the Academic Council.

The review team understands that the heads of department may spend varying amounts of time on QA matters. This might lead to different practices in relation to QA across the schools.

The reports of the external examiners are fundamental to assuring and enhancing academic quality and standards. All external examiners are required to submit a standardised report setting out their professional qualitative judgement on the appropriateness of the curriculum and of the assessment carried out, the standard of student work, the fairness and consistency of assessment practice and any feedback or recommendations on issues that they consider that the programme board, the school or department or the institute, need to address.

In addition to the annual QA programme cycles, there is also a periodic quality review of academic units. The review typically occurs at school level and includes a programmatic review. Proposals to update programmes or curricula, to discontinue programmes or components thereof, or to replace programmes, are presented as part of this review. However, no new programmes may be approved through this review process.

The periodic review process includes a self-assessment report (SAR), a site visit by a peer review group including external experts whose report is made public, and finally a quality enhancement plan to be agreed on.

It is the responsibility of the Office of the Registrar, acting on behalf of the Academic Council, to schedule all quality reviews within an appropriate timeframe.

Although WIT monitors its programmes via school reviews and implements new programmes, it is apparent that the wide range of programmes has evolved organically over the years. Due to the limited resources of staff and finances and the plan to become a technological university in the near future, it could be helpful to align the programmes offered with the future profile of the institution. According to the ISER it is quite clear that some of the new programmes offered have an interdisciplinary and/or international profile. In the area of teaching and learning it is important to consider and formulate transversal skills or competences that each graduate should achieve. In the area of research and societal service, interdisciplinary research projects and services are also necessary and should be future oriented. Such institutional and interdisciplinary projects could be shared as good practice.

How WIT pays attention to the students' experience and their feedback and participation in QA is dealt with under Student Engagement and Assessment of Experience below.

COMMENDATION

The review team commends WIT on its initiatives to increase the engagement of students and staff in QA matters and processes based on the existing student-centred quality culture.

RECOMMENDATION

While the review team appreciates the interlinked review cycle mechanisms from programme level through schools to institutional level, it recommends that WIT take further steps to promote institution-wide and multi- and/or interdisciplinary projects that deal with the quality of education, research, and the institute's societal engagement at the higher institutional level.

STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT

The review team appreciates that WIT, as is the case across the whole IoT sector, is affected by strict regulations with regard to HR. In relation to those sectoral regulations WIT does not have a current institution-wide workforce planning and succession strategy. This has been identified within the institution's risk register as a risk. The review team considers workforce planning to be an important

process to determine future skill needs, and to identify and develop institutional critical roles and preparing plans to address these.

There is evidence to suggest that recruitment of staff has improved over the years. There is a clear structure and defined HR process: posts proposed by schools or administrative offices are approved or otherwise considered by the Executive Board, a job is advertised internally and externally, shortlisted candidates are interviewed, and the final decision is made by the interview panel.

A clear and functional probation process would enhance the quality of academic and support staff within the institution. Within the HR policy portfolio, there appears to be a probation policy but there is lack of evidence of any board or committee reviewing progress or deciding on outcomes. Currently, the process of engagement between staff members and managers is described, but there appears to be no WIT-specific procedure used by the Executive Board sub-committee to oversee the progression of a newly appointed staff member to a permanent post.

The 2010 institutional review raised an issue in respect of the need to establish mechanisms for regular review of academic staff and to provide opportunities for ongoing staff development. Whilst there is evidence that some well-conceived opportunities for staff development have been introduced, particularly in relation to research activity, supervisor training and pedagogy, it was not evident to the review team that the national context sufficiently supports systematic performance management and development taking place in academic departments within WIT, although the team was made aware of a fully functioning performance management and development system (PMDS) process amongst research staff with the Telecommunications, Software and Systems Group (TSSG).

There are many strategic KPIs in the various institutional plans; however, it is not clear if there are individual KPIs that align staff work to overall strategic goals. This approach is usually linked to a performance feedback mechanism.

Currently, within WIT, staff feedback mechanisms seem to be somewhat disjointed and to lack consistency across the institution. The review team understands that some departments seek feedback informally and, during meetings, staff

indicated they would welcome feedback on what they are doing well and what they need to improve. It is understood that the IoT academic contract may place some constraints on this, but staff performance management and development mechanisms are considered by the review panel to be vitally important elements in the further development of WIT towards meeting its strategic goals of being a more research-intensive and research-led institution and its aspirations towards technological university status.

The team recognises the significant recent enhancement of research activity within WIT but notes that further development of flexible HR management is essential to progress further.

Based on discussions with academic staff, heads of unit and the ISER team, the review team was informed that WIT is well advanced in the development of the sector workload allocation, e.g. with longstanding buy-outs of lecturing hours, plus the internal Research Connexions scheme and that the head of department has responsibility, with appropriate authority, to fully manage staff. Whilst the review team recognises the constraints under which IoTs must work in relation to the current academic contract, delivery of the institute's strategic aspirations will undoubtedly be hindered unless this issue can be resolved. The particular issue of research backfills and workload allocation is dealt with under the 'Research' subsection below.

WIT's strategic plan states that the resources available to support learning and development will be increased. The academic calendar includes a week dedicated to staff training and development. Dedicated short training activities, such as training for interview and unconscious bias training, are offered and individual focus groups and surveys have been used to try to identify perceived gaps in the training of academic staff. The institute's School of Lifelong Learning and Education centre offers individual modules from its Master of Education in Teaching and Learning. However, it is not compulsory for WIT staff to attend or to pass these modules. The ISER shows that the institute invests an average of €660,000 in staff training per year, yet its breakdown per section makes clear that most of this is generated from and kept within self-financing research projects. In order to achieve the ambitious objectives set out in the strategic plan the review team suggests that a more

focused and enhanced staff training budget and programme be considered.

The financial constraints within the Irish HE sector in general and the particular financial issues arising within WIT have led to recruitment in respect of a number of key posts being delayed or deferred. Risk and opportunity loss assessment would help the institution to prioritise such posts in both academic and administrative areas.

During the main review visit, the review team was informed that some department managers have an excessive number of direct reports. One manager was heard to have 90 direct reports, and another 62. The current structure is not conducive to ensuring that there are regular discussions in relation to priorities, coaching, feedback, development, and career trajectories.

COMMENDATION

The review team commends WIT on the ongoing staff development initiatives introduced within the institute, particularly in the areas of supervisor training, course leadership, pedagogy, and research process support; the team also acknowledges the very strong and diverse management and support structures being introduced within the newly established Walton research institute.

RECOMMENDATION

The review team recommends that the institute further develop flexible HR management in order to recruit, develop and assess the skills and capabilities necessary to realise WIT's strategy and to optimise the quality of its provision.

TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

WIT is committed to providing high quality educational experiences that are student centred and responsive to learner needs. A focus on knowledge and insight is combined with the development of skills and competencies. Students are encouraged to be self-reflective and to consider the applications of their learning. A range of different assessment activities focus on evaluating students' fulfilment of prescribed learning outcomes.

The WIT Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy is part of the institute's strategic plan. It aims to promote student capabilities and achievement

through the development of good practice, the provision of an appropriate physical, social, and technological environment for learning, and enhancement of student experience through staff development. Stakeholders are actively engaged in learning design, delivery, and enhancement.

Assessment of the quality of teaching is the responsibility of schools and is monitored by programme boards and through module evaluation feedback from students. Students are members of programme boards, although they are not always deemed full members and are not usually present for all agenda items and particularly (and appropriately) those related to student performance or assessment. During the site visit the review team was informed that, on some boards, students were seen as 'invitees', present only to discuss items that were directly student related.

The arrangements for module evaluation vary between schools and programmes. The main purpose is to inform staff about students' perception of individual modules and to contribute to future improvements. There does not appear to be any systematic or institution-wide process for collecting and analysing module evaluation data, or for linking the information gathered to staff development or wider quality enhancement activities.

The institute responded to the constraints arising from the national COVID-19 'lockdown' from March 2020 by further developing an emergency remote teaching mode of delivery, which involved the transfer of the majority of face-to-face teaching to online provision. Guidance was provided for academic staff in respect of the design of teaching materials, and additional technical support was offered by Computer Services and the Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning (CTEL).

The evidence included in the Institutional Review Supplemental Report and the positive comments from both staff and students indicate that this process was handled effectively, and students were able to continue with their studies without major interruption. Responses to the QA3 survey in May/June 2020 showed that students evaluated their programmes more positively than in previous years. Efforts were made to ensure that no students were

left without appropriate access to course materials and that students remained in contact with staff for advice and support. The rapid move to online provision accelerated a process that was already in train and involved the development of an approach to the delivery of programmes with a greater volume of blended learning.

During the site visit students, alumni, and external stakeholders indicated that the teaching and learning formats employed within the institute were varied and student-centred. They were also oriented toward achieving knowledge, skills and competences identified as being necessary for the world of work. Students and external stakeholders noted that programmes and modules use assessment methods that are largely aligned with the intended learning outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION

The review team recommends that the institute adopt a more comprehensive approach to the collection and analysis of information from alumni, students and staff about the delivery of programmes and the student experience and that it use the evidence to promote strategies for the continuing improvement of the quality of teaching.

SUPPORTS FOR LEARNERS

Embedded in a student-focused culture, WIT also provides an infrastructure of support and supporting services tailored to the needs of the student body. The institute has a Student Life and Learning (SLL) unit that provides help with the transition to third level and the ongoing assistance for the needs of learners. SLL develops and provides direct support and services to students to assist in ensuring programme completion and preparation for the future. The International Office also provides pastoral support to international undergraduate and taught master's students.

The SLL office includes the Student Engagement and Retention Office and the Access Office (Objective 4, The implementation of access, transfer and progression), Student Health Promotion and Wellbeing, Disability Support Service, Student Counselling Service, Careers Service, Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care, Institute Nurse and Health Promotion, and a Student Assistance Fund (SAF). All of these SLL

units continued working throughout the COVID-19 period, during which they also organised online and adapted events and activities.

In considering the student experience both in teaching and in research, WIT reflects on the constituent parts of services that support students, notably:

- The demographic profile of the learners and their needs;
- The processes of teaching and learning, and of research, and
- The services the institute provides to create a holistic and supportive environment that maximises the learner’s potential to achieve a purposeful outcome.

In realising its progressive mission and strategic plan to make the institute more accessible to those who traditionally may not have considered third-level education, SLL engages with external agencies, community groups and primary and secondary schools in the context of a widening participation agenda and develops and implements a myriad of projects in this regard. National data show WIT as the institution attracting the second-highest disadvantaged student population (17%) and the third-highest student population marginally below average income (41%)².

The review team was informed during the site visit by taught master’s, research and international students that particular support services were not as accessible for them as they are for Irish undergraduate students. StudentSurvey.ie data analysis for 2019 shows WIT students rating the institute’s ‘supportive environment’ as slightly below the national average, but significantly ahead in the sectoral (THEA) average. During the review site visit it became clear through various interviews that the support services should develop further the AskWIT one-hub service point for all students, which has been in place since 2019.

As far as QA is concerned, students are represented from class level up to the Governing Body. Students are also represented on appeal panels, evaluation panels for new awards, and on school review panels. WIT’s administration – and in particular the VPAAR – work closely together with WITSU.

COMMENDATION

The review team commends WIT’s support services on how they have coped with COVID-19, both in maintaining and adapting their activities and events for students, as well as in QA activities.

RECOMMENDATION

The review team recommends an overall greater coordination among WIT’s support services, particularly by exploring the implementation mechanisms that can be introduced to enhance the support services’ accessibility to postgraduate and international students.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND ASSESSMENT OF EXPERIENCE

In its mission and strategic plan, WIT stresses student centrality in the operation of the institute. Indeed, the review team witnessed a student-focused culture and many student-focused practices in WIT’s activities. The institute’s collaboration with the students’ union has generated a student charter in which the student body is regarded as the co-creator of the learning environment as well as the primary focus of the institute’s teaching, learning and research activities.

This student charter enshrines the institute’s goals to be a collaborative, inclusive, ethical, and innovative community with a focus on forming responsible global citizens, creating new knowledge and actively leading social and economic change. Through the student charter, WIT articulates a formal statement of the commitment that it makes to its learners and codifies both parts in its community. The charter is designed to set out the behaviours expected of WIT and of the learner in creating a mutually supportive and values-driven environment.

During the COVID-19 period, WIT and WITSU have collaborated even more closely and developed a COVID-19 Student Charter.

WIT emphasises the importance of capturing the student voice to confirm that the institute is meeting students’ expectations. This is currently achieved largely through use of the national student surveys and by engaging with student representatives on programme boards, school boards, the Academic Council, and the Governing Body. Students are also

2 HEA (2019), Spatial and Socio-Economic Profile of Higher Education in Institutions in Ireland, p. 8

represented on appeal panels, evaluation panels for new awards and on school review panels.

As far as student input into quality assurance and enhancement is concerned, the dialogue with teachers, mentors and tutors and administrative staff on an individual level is generally good and fruitful. The feedback loop of the QA cycle appears to be working at this level. At the level of governance and management, where enhancement measures and action plans take longer to develop and implement, the review team heard that student representatives may reach the end of their term before the outcome of the actions in which they are involved can be realised.

Regarding student surveys, currently, WIT only uses the national StudentSurvey.ie and QA3, the

nationally agreed survey of students. The evaluation of StudentSurvey.ie and QA3 data is conducted by the Office of the Head of Quality Promotion and offered to each school for school-wide use. ISSE data analysis for 2019 shows WIT students rating 'Student-Activity Interaction' and 'Effective Teaching Practices' as slightly above the average for an Irish HEI, whereas they felt 'Learning Strategies' and 'Supportive Environment' were slightly below the sectoral average. With a response rate of less than 20%, participation rates in student surveys remain a problem within WIT, although WIT in its strategic plan has set a target of 40% for future surveys.

WIT pays attention to the students' experience and their feedback and participation in QA. It is a partner



in the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP), a project that aims to foster partnership interfaces between the various structures in the institute and the learner body. WIT also supports the national Irish Survey of Student Engagement (StudentSurvey.ie).

COMMENDATION

The review team commends WIT on the living student-focused culture within the institute, which generates a good dialogue between students and staff, and is evident in the regulations relating to student representation on committees at most levels, as well as in the Student Charter. The review team also commends the special COVID-19 Student Charter as a successful collaborative effort between the students' union and the institute.

RECOMMENDATION

The review team recommends that WIT review the effectiveness of student participation in governance and particularly their representation on the boards and committees. The review team urges WIT to re-examine the terms of reference, membership, representative quotas of all stakeholders. The frequency and timing of programme board meetings should be such that it allows the board membership to attend. Consideration should be given to establishing a regulation on suitable and representative quotas of all stakeholders. Students should be encouraged to take a more active part in deliberations.

INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

WIT recognises the importance of collecting and analysing data to support its internal quality assurance procedures and to manage the experience of students. Information is processed by programme boards and school boards and reported through the committee structure to the Academic Council and the Governing Body. The principal procedures include annual and periodic monitoring, school reviews, programme reviews and programme annual reporting. Information is also systematically collected in relation to student recruitment, academic performance, student feedback and external examining.

The data collected is used to produce management reports on quality and standards issues and to

identify progress against some key institutional performance indicators. Principal topics include the analysis of student retention and progression, patterns of student recruitment, performance data at programme level and internal audit reports on the QA framework.

The review team notes the progress that has been made by the institute in this area since the previous institutional review. The report arising from that review process included a recommendation that WIT should develop the existing institutional capacity for internal, institutional reporting. The enhanced collection and use of statistical information and the monitoring of institutional performance has contributed to a better understanding of operational effectiveness and improved strategic planning. The development of metrics will be most valuable when set against targets and goals for achievement.

In progressing these issues WIT might benefit from adopting a more critical self-reflective approach to the further development of its research. It might consider extending the range of statistical information collected to include additional indicative metrics and more extensive data in respect of institutional activity. In particular, as set out above, there is scope to gather and evaluate information about the student experience, rather than relying on information from national surveys.

A more systematic approach to the evaluation of modules and the recording of student satisfaction with their learning experiences and support services would provide a valuable data set for policy development. The institute might also consider collecting information from its alumni and from staff on the learning experience and on the capabilities of students. Further attention should be paid to the procedures for evaluating the information collected and to disseminating outcomes for both staff and students to close the feedback loop.

The institute has invested in the development of data analysis capability by appointing a strategic information manager and analyst and in the implementation of a strategic planning office, led at vice-president level, since 2017/8. The purpose of data analytics is to inform decision-making across the institute. Data management policies and processes are in place and regular updates and patches on

servers and firewalls are instigated. The Information Technology Manager reports annual updates to the Audit and Risk Committee on actions to prevent data breach or data loss. Data recovery plans are in place. It is noted on the risk register that the last action update was in either late 2017 or early 2018. GDPR came into effect 28 May 2018.

WIT has a student administration system called Banner, which maintains a record on each student from arrival to completion of studies. It also uses Banextra software to manage the Student Record System (SRS). The data is used to improve programmes and quality assurance. Reports are produced for the Academic Council, programme boards and management. Examples of reports are outputs of teaching and learning strategies, examination performance, award distribution, retention and taking or recommending remedial action when required.

COMMENDATION

The review team commends WIT on the improvements it has undertaken in respect of academic data collection and reporting processes, which have enhanced the monitoring of performance and supported the continuing strategic development of the institution. These improvements are also acknowledged by the appointment of a strategic information manager and analyst to give focus and priority to data analytics for the enhancement programme and teaching quality.

RECOMMENDATION

The review team recommends that the institute regularly review and communicate with its risk committees on management and governing-level data security and the prevention of data loss.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

WIT acknowledges the importance of addressing the public interest in the quality and standards of its academic provision and has adopted an open and transparent policy towards access to information and to communicating its activities to stakeholders and to the general public. The institute's website provides a wide range of information on schools, courses, news, events, and student experience together with details of the structure and organisation of the institute.

There is a specific section on quality assurance which includes all the key academic regulations, policies, and procedures. The Quality Assurance Framework reports of school and programme reviews and the Annual Quality Report are also made available on the website. External communications are handled centrally by a dedicated member of staff and by the Marketing Department, which has responsibility for promotional publications.

The institute also acknowledges the importance of effective internal communication to ensure that all internal and external stakeholders are aware of current developments and have access to relevant documents. WIT has several internal communication mechanisms, such as a quality newsletter and executive and HR monthly updates. The purpose of these communications is to inform staff and students about relevant announcements and to provide reports on institute initiatives. They may also cover the results of feedback/surveys and resulting actions. In this way, information is communicated institute-wide and flows down into schools.

During the course of the review, the team heard frequent references to the institute's community of staff and students and to the importance of informal contacts in ensuring all are engaged and able to comment on their experiences. Whilst this informal communication is strong, the institute could benefit from the development of more formalised and consistent channels of communication to ensure all staff and students are involved. The students' union plays an important role in informing students, but it does not have an explicit responsibility in the area of internal communication. There is no centralised unit or person dedicated to internal communication to ensure coordination and the upward flow of information. The institute has an opportunity to increase communication between schools on academic projects, research, and resource allocation to ensure that good practice is shared.

RECOMMENDATION

The review team recommends that WIT establish and deliver a more systemised and formalised method of two-way communication between staff and students, particularly with those students who are not involved in mainstream daily activities; this could contribute to a greater integration of information, consistent responses and actions, and sharing of best practice.

OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

WIT has several mechanisms for involving other parties (both national and international) in education and training. In summary these include: the widespread practice of incorporating internships and apprenticeship in study programmes supported by local and regional industry; the involvement of external guest lecturers and speakers, particularly from the local region; formal collaboration with regional providers of study programmes to deliver specific training; and international collaboration.

True to its regional focus and profession-oriented mission, WIT has incorporated the practice of supervised internships in the majority of its undergraduate programmes. Specific apprenticeship programmes also involve collaborative provision with local trade and industries. The quality of internships and apprenticeships is assured through the identification of intended learning outcomes and the co-ownership of their assessment by the institute and the mentor in the workplace. This collaboration with other parties is incorporated into the IQA framework, regulations in respect of modules/courses, and the reporting of programmes to the school boards and Academic Council.

WIT has also developed strong external links with a variety of local community stakeholders leading to the delivery of specialist, often unique, programmes validated by the institute. During the main review visit, external stakeholders commended WIT as being flexible and responsive to the needs of industry and willing to modify targeted programmes as needed. Examples of good practice are bespoke programmes co-developed with the Prison Service, Teagasc (the Irish agriculture and food development authority), and Dawn Foods. As a result of these close links, individuals who were students at WIT or on stakeholders' WIT programmes report that they return and teach or lecture at the institute.

External and part-time guest lecturers are engaged, where appropriate, to provide support for teaching staff engaged in research, as exemplified by the approach taken by the TSSG Research Institute. At the same time, applied research projects linked to industrial and business problem solving provide project opportunities for 3rd and 4th year students, usually jointly supervised by a WIT academic and

an employee of the host organisation. Such co-supervision can extend to PhD programmes within the relevant regulations of WIT. The establishment of a science and industry board, which meets three times per year, supports these collaborative developments and operations.

One of the recommendations in the 2010 institutional review report was that WIT should reconsider the strategic rationale for transnational collaborative activities and put in place robust procedures to assure standards of awards and the quality of the learner experience in collaborative arrangements. Whilst collaborative provision was evidently relatively limited at the time of this review, with a single collaborative relationship leading to a joint award with a university in China, the quality assurance of collaborative programmes has been significantly enhanced and is supported by a comprehensive set of regulations and robust approval processes managed through relevant school boards, Executive Board and Academic Council. Programme boards include collaborative partners, which helps engender a community of trust between WIT and the external provider.

COMMENDATION

The review team commends WIT on the establishment of close, responsive and mutually beneficial collaboration with local stakeholders, and on its flexibility in responding to the needs of industry.

RECOMMENDATION

The review team recommends that WIT's valuable collaboration with external providers in education and training be more extensively utilised to develop synergy with other WIT activities, such as QA and QE, through regular targeted external surveys and structural involvement in focus groups.

SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

WIT's cycles of self-evaluation, monitoring and review are much oriented towards improving practice and quality procedures annually. Thus, it is not always clear where and by whom enhancement and improvement measures and action plans are developed and decided within the cycles of the IQA system. The annual amendments to the framework demonstrate that WIT engages in continuous

and systematic self-monitoring, evaluation, and organisational learning. However, the integration of the lifecycles from strategy to student and staff experience, as well as amongst the various levels, is not clear. The standards, targets, indicators, and data emanate from internal initiatives as well as international and national authorities, such as from subsidised projects and regulatory bodies. The strong emphasis on the use of AQRs submitted to, and QDMs with, QQI are used as means of recording these initiatives as they assist in the formulation and review of action plans. This is also demonstrated by the fact that, as mentioned in section 1 and Objective 1, the institute reports it has completed 35 of the 39 recommendations in the last institutional review, while one has been addressed in principle and three are believed to have become redundant or need to be rethought.

The WIT internal cyclical review focuses on school reviews and combines consideration of the school's strategy with the validation of updated programmes and modules. However, these review processes, starting with a school's SER, vary dramatically between the various schools and thus there can be difficulty integrating them into other QA cycles.

As for the shorter cycle, based on formal student feedback on the quality of academic programmes, as the review team has noted earlier, WIT uses only the national StudentSurvey.ie and the standard QA3 programme survey. Students declared during the site visit that the time needed for implementation of suggested enhancements and improvements differs depending on the perceived importance of these actions. While, according to the students, lecturers and tutors are very responsive – certainly when it comes to dealing with informal face-to-face feedback – programme amendments may take some years. Although standard reports are provided to the Academic Council annually, they are presented in the next academic year, which delays the implementation of improvements to one year after they have been identified as necessary. The issue of the variable nature of student membership on programme boards raised previously is also pertinent here.

Since a number of QA cycles run concurrently and data/indicators are often changed, the review team is of the opinion that the programmes and schools should be further assisted by the enhancement of the quality promotion function, which would also be responsible for data collection and analysis and would be service-oriented in its monitoring functions.



COMMENDATION

The review team commends the WIT on its collegiate and student-focused quality culture, which enables the realisation of strategic goals as well as the existence of a short and mostly effective feedback loop of enhancement and improvement on an individual basis.

RESEARCH

WIT has a strong and well-deserved reputation as one of the most research-active institutes of technology. Strategic Plan 2018-2021 reformulates WIT's aim to execute international-standard cutting-edge research activity centred on innovation in key industries and to become "a research-led organisation with a demonstrably impactful, innovative, and dynamic research community". WIT is conscious of the fact that the engine for innovation within the institute and within the region remains its research activities. The bulk of these activities are supported by competitive funding, and WIT is one of the most successful IoTs at attracting external funding both nationally and internationally.

The clear links to industry through, for example, Gateway projects (see next paragraph), support regional development across a range of industries and are strongly supported by stakeholders. A key part of WIT's research ecosystem is the ArcLabs Incubation Centre, which, since its establishment in 2002, has supported more than 300 companies to start or scale-up in south-east Ireland between two sites in Waterford and Kilkenny. The centre currently houses more than 20 early-start companies, both spin-outs and spin-ins.

Three of the institute's main research centres are designated as Enterprise Ireland Technology Gateways:

- SEAM (South-East Applied Materials) provides innovative materials and engineering solutions for a wide range of sectors;
- TSSG (Telecommunications Software System Group, which has recently been approved as WIT's first full research institute) is an internationally recognised centre of excellence for ICT research and innovation with core expertise in telecom networks, security, and mobile services;
- PMBRC (Pharmaceutical and Molecular

Biotechnology Research Centre, 2009) is an applied research centre, which consolidates research in the chemical, pharmaceutical, and biotechnological sciences.

Other research centres and groups at WIT include: EIRC (Eco-Innovation Research Centre), NRCI (Nutrition Research Centre Ireland), RIKON, and CEDRE (Centre for Enterprise Development and Regional Economy).

The organisation of postgraduate research studies has provided another avenue for increasing research activity. Based on the data presented in the ISER, from 2013 to 2019, WIT increased the number of PhD scholarships it makes available from 14 to 19 (15 WIT-funded and 4 co-funded) and the total number of PhD students has risen from 112 to 150, with a peak in 2017-18 of 158. In contrast, in the period from 2014-15 to 2018-19 there has been a decline in registered research master's students from 67 to 35, a trend that has been consistent across the Irish HE sector.

The review team recognises the significant strides that WIT has made in recent years to embrace a research culture and enhance research activity, and notes that some evident successes have emerged in specific areas, with, as described, high-level pockets of activity, the most obvious of which relates to the nationally and internationally recognised TSSG. These are supported by a number of innovative activities and processes, such as a research connection programme, a PhD scholarship programme, an EU ambassador scheme and the TSSG affiliate programme.

The review team also recognises the significant developments in the management of research within WIT through the introduction of guidance policies, processes and supports to manage projects and a dedicated research support unit. In addition, a strong approval process has been established for the introduction of research centres and institutes that require approval by AC and GB. This includes external international panel oversight.

The WIT Research Support Unit records information on funded research, including the following research performance indicators:

- Publications and citations;
- Conference presentations;
- Patents, licenses, spin-outs, and invention disclosures;

- Research contracts;
- Research income;
- Institutional external collaborators.

Whilst the review team welcomes the initiation of this kind of data collection, the way in which the data is to be used in furthering WIT's research strategy would benefit from further consideration.

According to the documentation made available to the team, the institute has identified priority research areas and pathways, which are designed to enable the development of individual researchers to facilitate their achievement of research expertise via access to peers, research groups, research centres, and external collaboration opportunities. Following the recent round of reviews, individual schools were required to develop or amend their individual research strategies and research implementation plans. These strategies and plans were to set school-wide priorities and goals for research, with an emphasis on the focus and quality of research and to identify clear metrics for their evaluation.

Research has however grown organically, linked largely to the increasing and opportunistic success of particular groups and individuals in competitive funding programmes. At the time of this review, research was undertaken by over 50% of the academic staff and concentrated in a limited number of schools and departments; over 40% of academic staff possessed a PhD. As research activity grows further, WIT would benefit from concentrating on the quality of research outcomes, the nature and extent of activity across the academic disciplines, and on the extent and quality of research infrastructure. This would be enhanced through appropriate external and international benchmarking being undertaken and a full and comprehensive research quality review.

The review team acknowledges WIT's commitment to overcoming the challenge of recruiting and allocating staff time for research and a number of processes have been established. The institute recognises that, as these avenues are becoming saturated, additional mechanisms will be needed in the future. This is clearly an issue across the IoT sector that requires a national approach.

The growth of research in WIT has brought with it challenges in relation to quality assurance and enhancement. At present WIT is reliant on the external

peer review process associated with formal research project applications and the publication peer review process, for the evaluation of research outputs. Each proposed research programme is peer reviewed at the design stage and then once per year by each school's research programme board.

WIT has introduced a comprehensive set of processes and regulations governing PhD programmes, approval of PhD projects, and supervision. All of these are to be commended. The taught modules offered to research students have undergone the standard approval process and are delivered and assessed according to the Academic Council's policies. QA is achieved through diverse means, including internally through self-assessment in the annual research student review process, and in programme and school board reports. Research students who wish to complete a PhD must successfully complete a mid-research assessment to confirm their candidature or transfer from the master's to the PhD register. Candidates wishing to transfer make a formal application to the Academic Council.

These developments have helped to establish a strong quality assurance process for PhD education and training from project initiation through progression to final awards. The benefits of a critical mass of PhD students for peer support and provision of infrastructure in the TSSG Institute provides a model that should be explored in other areas of the institution. WIT might consider embedding research in its study programmes not only through the committed individuals who succeed in combining teaching and research, but also managing and resourcing it in a professionally structured way with enhanced internal communication to disseminate best practice.

External evaluation of student research programmes is conducted through external examiners at the transfer stage, at the final assessment and through school reviews, where the panel examines the processes and interviews a group of research students. The student's supervisory team also reports each year on the student's progress. The report, including the current research plan and research training plan, must both be approved by the departmental/school research programme board. This report is then subsequently reviewed by a research examination board held within the relevant department/school.



Academic Council plays an active role in the QA of the research process through the acceptance of enrolments, the confirmation of external examiners, the approval of examination results and in discussing annual school board reports, which include a synthesis of research across the school. After the recent round of reviews a number of schools were asked to put robust systems in place for evaluating the progress and progression of postgraduate students.

One issue that arose during discussions concerns support for international PhD students. At present this appears to fall between the Research Office and International Office. According to the PhD students, they rely heavily on their supervisor for advice and guidance. They do not feel well informed about the central services of WIT and how to find support. WIT might consider exploring opportunities and structures to enhance supports as well as infrastructure for PhD students across the institution through the establishment of broad research clusters outside of the established research centres and institutes.

COMMENDATION

The review team commends WIT on the way it is developing and supporting an active research community, underpinned by a number of well-developed and innovative policies, processes and procedures for the management and quality assurance of research and PhD education and training from project initiation through progression to awards, the establishment of research centres and institutes, all of which are enhanced by successful applications for funding. It regards the working of excellence centres such as TSSG as good practice.

RECOMMENDATION

The review team recommends that WIT concentrate on the quality of research outcomes, the nature and extent of activity across the academic disciplines and on the sufficiency and quality of research infrastructure. This would be enhanced through appropriate external and international benchmarking as well as a full and comprehensive institution-wide research quality review.

Objective 2 – Procedures for Awarding

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF PROCEDURES FOR AWARDING

The institutes of technology have benefited over the last few years from enhanced autonomy and delegated authority to make awards. Since January 2020, the institutes of technology have been designated awarding bodies for awards up to level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications; many IoTs also have delegated authority to make awards at level 10 in certain disciplines. Quality assurance of standards for awards has consequently taken on a more significant role.

The review team confirms that WIT is compliant with all relevant ESG elements and QQI policies and criteria for delegation of authority to make awards as formulated in its QA Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies. The award level is, in the first instance, ensured by mapping all standards to the National Framework of Qualifications. Further confirmation of the maintenance of the awards standards is achieved through school board reports to the Academic Council, which must include confirmation that award standards are being met.

The 2010 institutional review highlighted the need to monitor more effectively implementation of institutional policies and procedures to reduce the significant level of variation across the institute. Based on the evidence available to the review team, the recently established Academic Quality Assurance Framework and published manual has provided a comprehensive and robust set of policies, procedures, and regulations to provide academic quality assurance and govern the standards of awards across all levels of the National Framework of Qualifications from level 6 to level 10 within WIT. The annual monitoring and collection of academic data related to pass and progression rates provides an effective tool to oversee the maintenance of standards in respect of awards and to identify anomalies.

External examiners form a critical component of academic quality assurance and are asked to confirm in their annual reports that the awards being examined meet the appropriate standards. The 2010 institutional review report recommended that “procedures for inducting and reviewing reports of

extern examiners and for acting on [these] reports” be reviewed. This recommendation has been addressed by WIT; however, it is unclear to the team whether external examiner reports are widely shared outside of the schools.

The robustness of the academic regulation, policy and award structure at WIT was evident in the rapid response to the COVID-19 restrictions imposed on the HE sector from March 2020, which covered part of the final semester of the 2019-20 academic year and the 2020-21 academic year. Appropriate changes were made to programme delivery and structure of assessment, and enhancement of progression opportunities were rapidly introduced, whilst still maintaining external oversight of standards and awards.

Equally comprehensive and robust policies and regulations, related to the quality assurance of awards, have been introduced and embedded into the WIT academic quality assurance system in respect of collaborative provision (See under Objective 1).

As referred to above, a number of level 8 programmes undergo professional accreditation which provides another external layer of quality assurance and confirmation of the standards of awards. Other external stakeholders also contribute through their participation as members of review panels during programme design and in school reviews. External stakeholders who are also employers provide a valuable source of feedback on the quality of WIT graduates. Some schools also have industry boards specifically for gathering input on an ongoing basis from stakeholders.

Based on the evidence in the ISER and the associated documentation, and following discussions during the review visit, it is clear that robust quality assurance processes are in place from project initiation through progression to final award of level 10 PhD programmes.

Overall, the review team can conclude that WIT’s IQA system for awards is comprehensive, robust yet flexible, multi-layered, and inspired by the ESG. It is progressively being underpinned by a systematic collection of academic data and by the institutional

strategy, as well as by the schools' and programmes' missions.

The review team confirms the effectiveness of the procedures established for the overall operation and management of the institution as an awarding and designated awarding body in compliance with the ESG and the various QQI policies and criteria for delegation.

COMMENDATION

The review team commends WIT on its Academic Quality Assurance Framework and QA manual, which provide a comprehensive and robust set of policies, procedures, and regulations to govern the standards of awards of the institution across all levels of the National Framework of Qualifications from level 6 to level 10 within WIT.

THE GOVERNANCE SYSTEM FOR AWARDING

A clear governance system has been established by WIT in relation to the making of awards at all NFQ levels. Since the previous institutional review, programme boards have been given greater responsibility in relation to the approval of programmes and assessment, and with regard to the assurance of standards. Programme boards report to school boards, which in turn report to the Academic Council Quality Committee. The Academic Council Quality Committee has devolved responsibility from the Academic Council for marks, standards and recommendations on awards. The Academic Council in turn reports regularly to the Governing Body.



Objective 3 – Quality Enhancement

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

The institute incorporates its strategy for quality enhancement within its overall framework for quality assurance. It takes a holistic view of quality with assurance and enhancement seen as equally important aspects within the broad ambition to cultivate and sustain an all-pervasive culture of quality and excellence in all of its activities. The progress of quality enhancement activities is included in reports to the Academic Council and in WITs Annual Quality Report (AQR) to QQI.

Whilst it is expected that all schools and programme teams are committed to a policy of continuous quality improvement in the delivery of academic programmes and in the support of the student experience, the institute specifically focuses on quality development as a series of strategic objectives. These include priorities such as the introduction of new courses and awards, developing opportunities for lifelong learners and international students, and an increased industry focus on the provision of professional development opportunities and applied research. The institute has also instigated a number of initiatives that address the needs of particular groups of students or seek to improve the operation of specific processes. Key institute initiatives include the development of IT-based support materials, strategies for enhancing student retention and success and schemes for extending access to higher education groups for non-traditional and under-represented groups.

WIT's strategic focus ensures a commitment to achieving goals and ambitions and raising the overall quality of the work of the institute. However, enhancement might also include a myriad of specific improvements to individual programmes and activities. There would be value in developing a more explicit approach to enhancement not only for improvement within schools, but also for encouraging the wider dissemination of good practice across the institute. The introduction of institution-specific student and staff experience surveys and more structured use of self-reflection activities that have been highlighted elsewhere in this report are

pertinent here. Quality enhancement could be more explicitly addressed by actions plans reviewed by programme and school boards and reported as part of the institute's annual monitoring processes.

The review team concludes that WIT's quality assurance procedures and enhancements are congruent with the institute's own mission, strategic goals, and targets for quality.

COMMENDATION

The review team commends WIT's development of key initiatives that demonstrate a commitment to widening access, student retention and the provision of more flexible learning opportunities for students.

ALIGNMENT OF INSTITUTION'S MISSION AND TARGETS FOR QUALITY

WIT's mission is guided by its values and vision. The mission states that WIT is collaborative and cooperative, supportive of equality and diversity, inclusive and accessible. It also states that the institute is active in its support of equitable social, economic, and cultural development, as well as progressive and innovative, generating new knowledge and new ways of doing things. The mission aims to ensure that the institute is demonstrably excellent, leading among peer institutions, and ambitious.

The review team found evidence of these aspects of WIT's mission in its ISER, other documentation and during the site visit, particularly insofar as the institute's aims to ensure accessibility and progression for under-represented groups of students and its collaboration in the region through applied and collaborative research are concerned.

The institute's vision and mission are translated into WIT's Strategic Plan 2018-2021, which includes its goal of attaining TU status, along with a number of other goals which help to define how QA and enhancement have developed over the years. The plan formulates seven strategic goals and 51 underlying actions, which contain quantitative and qualitative KPIs. The plan is also tightly connected to the performance compact agreed with the HEA. The latest information provided by the HEA shows that WIT is



well-focused on and moving towards meeting the objectives and targets set out in the compact.

WIT has formulated targets with the HEA in the following domains, expressed as quantitative indicators that relate to the national key system objectives:

- Enrolment of flexible learners;
- Preparation for employment;
- International student recruitment;
- Technology transfer;
- Graduate student enrolment;
- Research activity;
- Evidence base on access;
- Access for under-represented groups;
- Non-progression;
- Digital and online learning;
- The Athena SWAN bronze award;
- Building a strategic capacity.

Each high-level target identified is also accompanied by supportive actions.

A mid-term review was completed in 2018-19, which showed progress and enhancements among other national key system objectives, such as creating a community of practice for online learning, approving a framework for the creation of research institutes, publishing the student charter, increasing the numbers of flexible learners, maintaining research activities by EU competitive funding sources, and submission of an application for the Athena SWAN bronze award.

The Offices of the Registrar have published a strategic plan to guide QA and quality enhancement activities and to support the development and implementation of the current strategic plan. This strategy has set the following five thematic strands:

- To increase the type and variety of awards and to enhance the process by which awards can be created as a means of being more flexible and responsive;
- To meet the QA performance criteria, across teaching and learning, research, and the student experience, of the proposed technological university;
- To enhance learning opportunities across access and lifelong learners and international student markets;
- To enhance industry focus by offering greater pathways for continuous professional development and up-skilling in industrial and commercial settings;
- To improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of administration and quality assurance governance.

As a consequence of its strategic preparation and development of online learning, WIT succeeded in coping with national COVID-19 constraints and regulations in a satisfactory, creative, and flexible way. Other targets, such as the enrolment of international students and staff, have been adversely affected. The review team welcomed the Supplemental Self-Evaluation Report 2020, which focuses in



particular on the impact of COVID-19 on the institute and acknowledges the management of operations during COVID-19 restrictions. QA has continued to be operational, particularly as far as reports and reviews are concerned. Policies were developed and academic evaluation, reporting and publication were also completed. The annual AQR and Quality Dialogue Meeting with QQI were progressed. In addition, important developments were made in remote learning and teaching.

COMMENDATION

The review team commends WIT on the alignment of its mission to its Strategic Plan 2018-2021 via strategic goals, actions, and targets for quality and the importance attached to strategic information management and analysis.

RECOMMENDATION

The review team recommends that WIT address the implementation of institutional strategic objectives, more specifically in analytical reports at programme level.

INNOVATIVE AND EFFECTIVE PRACTICES FOR QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

The review team found at WIT a strong collegiality and student focus throughout the institute. The quality culture that reigns at WIT can be described as spontaneously driven towards continuous improvement and enhancement with specific dimensions of entrepreneurship. This results in an excellent feedback loop at the individual student/ staff level and good cooperation between the VP for Academic Affairs and Registrar and the students' union.

The institute has developed a number of quality-led strategic initiatives, particularly in the areas of award range, online learning, research QA, lifelong learning and access, timetabling, international recruitment, and recruitment of under-represented groups of students and retention. Further, the institute's key initiatives are linked to its strategic goals, although they are also selected and driven by the degree of external funding that they attract.

Objective 4 – Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION (ATP)

WIT highlights its strength as being a student-centred organisation, and this is confirmed by the support that the institute provides to its student population. WIT engages strongly in student welfare and prides itself on maintaining a small college ethos as it has grown. Evidence provided to the review team indicated that WIT staff are clearly willing to help each other to deliver quality service and meet WIT commitments. Although the institution is characterised by a heterogeneous student population, it has developed ways to respond to this situation in a professional way.

Different access routes for different target groups are offered and students are consulted regarding all aspects of the student lifecycle. In discussions with the review team undergraduate students agreed with the statements in the ISER that they are well informed regarding the different access routes, that staff members in central services and lecturers are approachable, and that a wide range of information is given to them during the first stages of their studies. The students whom the review team met all felt well prepared for employment. As was explained in the sub-section on research above, the one clear area for improvement related to the provision of information and support to (international) PhD students, who are in a different situation to the undergraduate students.

The review team considers that WIT has the necessary processes and policies in place to ensure that ATP is well-managed. Moreover, WIT is well aware of the potential obstacles to student life and is keen to provide all services necessary to support its students. A number of initiatives have been undertaken to provide data on some of the most important phases of the student lifecycle to allow the institute to respond to it on a well-informed basis. Programmes have been adapted to the perceived needs of the labour market. WIT also participates in projects that conduct research into employability opportunities.

Measures have been taken to improve the retention rate, with the average non-progression rates falling by over 13% in 7 years. The institute should continue

to support these initiatives, focusing on underlying reasons for non-continuation. More detail on this aspect is presented in the following sub-section. The institute has recognised that 38% of the students attend less than 50% of their scheduled classes. WIT should continue to attempt to decrease this figure.

The review team concludes that WIT complies with the *QQI Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression*.

COMMENDATION

The review team commends WIT on its well-developed system for student support concerning access, transfer and progression at undergraduate level that covers all areas of the student lifecycle.

RECOMMENDATION

The review team recommends that WIT consider how it might benefit from closer engagement with its alumni to gain feedback on their time at the institute and on their experience of the transition into employment.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION

ACCESS AND INFORMATION ON ACCESS

In the ISER WIT notes that it has set as a target the provision of access, transfer and progression opportunities for all candidates. WIT has implemented admission policies and processes for students coming from various access points, for example:

- The largest cohort of students who enter the first year of full-time programmes do so through the Central Applications Office (CAO) route. Nevertheless, this cohort is not homogenous and comprises school leavers with the Leaving Certificate, school leavers with other EU/non-EU qualifications, QQI applicants, and mature applicants.
- In addition, for some new full-time students, direct application to WIT for entry is possible.
- Foreign non-EU students can apply to the institute's International Office. Processes to evaluate their school leaving qualifications are in place and the entry requirements for EU/

EFTA applicants and the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) Ireland and UK are consulted.

- Applications for entry to part-time programmes are co-ordinated by the School of Lifelong Learning and Education.
- Applications to taught and non-funded research programmes are facilitated via the Postgraduate Admissions Centre (PAC).

Due to the heterogeneous student population, and the high incidence of students with a non-traditional academic background, WIT has implemented some initiatives to increase participation among these cohort groups. One of these projects is the Buddy Programme, which trains volunteer WIT students to act as positive 'role models' to young primary-school pupils. As in all HEIs in Ireland, WIT's Access Office links with targeted secondary schools from the local region. WIT Libraries, in conjunction with the Access team, offers local schools the opportunity to nominate eligible pupils to participate in a homework club programme.

The WIT REACH programme aims to increase participation rates in third-level education by students who lack the necessary socio-economic and cultural support and encouragement and offers mentoring and educational support.

Moreover, WIT participates in the national Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) scheme, which offers an alternative admissions route for school leavers.

Besides the undergraduate and graduate programmes offered by WIT, the institute has increased access to education for non-traditional student groups, including part-time learners, and has developed programmes specifically for industry and professions such as Skillsnet and Springboard and a programme for post-primary teachers.

Due to the COVID-19-pandemic, special initiatives have been undertaken to support the new incoming student cohort in 2020-21. First-year students commenced their studies with an adapted online orientation, which included information imparted via podcasts, virtual tours, and videos. For integration into the WIT community online interactions, breakout (escape) rooms, quizzes and meetings with more advanced students were provided.

TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION

WIT offers a streamlined progression route from NFQ level to level and has integrated this aspect into its programme validation processes. Students are informed of pathway progression routes for all undergraduate full-time WIT programmes, which facilitate students in progressing from a level 6 through to a level 7 or a level 8 award in certain academic programmes. The institute also has a range of postgraduate programmes at levels 9 and 10.

In its ISER, WIT states that student retention is an area of concern, especially in short-cycle level 6 and level 7 programmes, where students often enter with a lower number of CAO points. The retention rate in these programmes is lower than in other programmes and WIT has adopted an integrated strategy across central support units and the academic areas to try to improve this situation, for example the 'Right-Student Right-Programme Initiative'. According to WIT the programme design was changed to a more generic format for the first-year and transfer options that provide more flexibility for the learner were included. Moreover, the Student Engagement and Retention Office is in charge of developing programmes and services that support student transition into higher education. A bundle of elements was implemented to consult and support students including: StartWIT, a first-year orientation programme, a peer mentoring programme, the Student Information Handbook, individual student appointments with the Student Engagement and Retention Office, the establishment of WIT's Financial Assistance Fund, and a workshop for students on various generic topics. Student Life and Learning (SLL) assists students by providing laptops and managing an increased Student Assistance Fund (SAF).

During this institutional review process WIT provided data on a range of aspects of the student lifecycle. Data on undergraduate students are collected and analysed by the institute, including background information on the student population. WIT also provided data on progression and retention rates. Due to COVID-19, the HEA has cancelled the Graduate Outcomes Survey (2020) – WIT was therefore unable to benchmark the employment rate of its graduates for the current year.

Feedback from graduates on their labour market experiences collected for 2019-20 indicates that

graduates' job perspectives were positive. The ISER also explains that representatives of selected pilot programmes from every department were asked to evaluate their curriculum, delivery and external engagement and then issue employability statements for their programmes to promote future employability opportunities for students.

Nevertheless, WIT anticipates that the graduating students of 2019-20 might face severe challenges because many companies may have implemented an employment freeze. According to predictions in the ISER, it is likely that the number of unemployed

students in 2020-21 will increase considerably. Due to the pandemic crisis, the WIT Careers Service has also adapted its approach and organised a virtual career and employability week in May and took part in the national Virtual Careers Fair in September 2020.

RECOMMENDATION

The review team recommends that WIT expand on core issues already identified underlying access, transfer and progression and open up cross-institutional debate around potential mechanisms and strategies to deal with them.

Objective 5 – Provision of Programmes to International Learners

In its strategy, WIT clearly aims to be internationally recognised as a high-quality institute that acts locally with an international mindset. In line with this goal, WIT aims to develop “an international and internationalised profile that finds expression in the approach of its students and staff and in its extensive partnerships”. To achieve this aim, six actions have been formulated to be realised institution-wide by each school. These actions aim to lead to the realisation of a comprehensive internationalisation strategy for the curricula including study abroad options, promotion of staff and student exchange, extension of international partners and joint agreements, optimisation of support structures for international students with distributed responsibilities between schools and the International Office. WIT has also committed to increasing its number of competitive EU research-funding applications by 20%.

The review team learned that, across the institution, there is limited benchmarking to support the building of sustainable, active, and fruitful international partnerships. The panel learned that most current partnerships were initiated through contacts in schools and departments and progressed through institution-wide (QA) procedures in order to be formally approved, in line with established procedures for other collaborative programmes, and to enter the strategic level of internationalisation.

In recent years WIT has realised a significant number

of international activities. It has indicated that it has been one of the leaders in international student recruitment within the IoT sector. Although the numbers were significantly lower at the time of this review, WIT reported around 200 non-EU students registered over the past number of years. The non-EU countries from which enrolled students originate in the greatest numbers are China, Malaysia, US, Brazil, and India. The EU countries from which enrolled students originate in the greatest numbers are France, Great Britain, Poland, Germany, and Spain.

Various schools and programmes have joint international networks and there is one joint programme, along with several double degrees, although the vast majority of these are not in line with the full European definition³. International collaboration between or within programmes is, however, the subject of robust (QA) procedures, whose institution-wide application is yet to be fully established.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, all Erasmus+ student and staff exchanges were cancelled for the academic year 2020-21. Understandably, the number of enrolments of international students has also fallen dramatically. In order to maintain the international linkages within various programmes WIT have been creative in, for instance, working with recorded classes, international case-studies, international online projects and/or work placements that will for the most part occur in Ireland, but in international

3 A joint programme is defined as ‘an integrated curriculum coordinated and offered jointly by different higher education institutions from EHEA countries, and leading to double/multiple degrees or a joint degree’ (www.eqar.eu).

companies or organisations.

Amongst a wide range of responsibilities and activities, the WIT International Office co-ordinates admission, administration, and support for international undergraduate and taught master's students throughout the course of their studies at WIT. Following the national lockdown in 2020 during the COVID pandemic, the office worked remotely and communicated with students and staff via email, Zoom, Moodle, agent networks, FAQs on the website, letters, and documentation. However, while working remotely, the office lacked a formal connection to the heads of department group, who are the primary set of managers responsible for international students enrolled on their programmes and Irish students going abroad.

Incoming and outgoing undergraduate students and staff are supported administratively by the International Office as well as provided with special induction programmes, language preparation, and (virtual) social events. The International Office is also responsible for all contractual, legal, financial and governance issues relating to the network of international partners.

The review team was made aware that communication and collaboration between the International Office and individual schools and departments could be improved; this assessment does not include the administrative preparation of incoming students and staff.

The review team concludes that WIT's provision of programmes to international learners is in compliance with the relevant Code of Practice.

COMMENDATION

The review team commends WIT on its clear international vision, strategy, and enthusiasm, which have enabled the establishment of international networks, student and staff exchanges as well as research funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The review team recommends that WIT further develop benchmarking as part of its international strategy to identify appropriate potential partners, build synergetic partnerships with the best-suited international HEIs and increase structural collaboration more broadly within

the institution in relevant aspects of teaching, learning and research.

2. The review team recommends that WIT ensure that cooperation and communication by the International Office with the schools and departments be improved, especially with research students and staff, in order to facilitate the sharing of good practice institution-wide.
3. The review team recommends that WIT introduce elements of the concept of 'Internationalisation at Home' into WIT's international strategy in order to maintain its international dimension and mindset in times of COVID-19 measures and beyond.
4. The review team recommends that the institute develop specific QA tools for international activities to ensure that it receives more formal feedback from its internationally involved partners, students, and staff.

Section 4

Conclusions

Findings



Conclusions

Overall Findings and Conclusions

The review team met with an institution that is in transition in many ways. Notwithstanding the backdrop of (effectively) reduced public funding, strict national and sectoral regulations, the governmental demand for greater accountability and an emphasis on efficiency, and, last but not least, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the institute has embarked through its Strategic Plan 2018-2021 towards its re-designation (along with IT Carlow) as Technological University for South-East Ireland (TUSEI). It has thus aligned itself with the various national strategies and action plans, in particular the *Technological Universities Act 2018*. WIT describes itself as, and aims to be, an entrepreneurial higher education institution with a mission to be a 'change driver' for the region, as well as to be internationally recognised.

The review team acknowledges WIT's mission and Strategic Plan 2018-2021, in which its strategic goals are underpinned by appropriate actions that take into consideration its visions and values as well as the key national objectives. The institute has developed a good network with local and regional partners, and, to a lesser extent, international partners, both for teaching and learning and applied research. Benchmarking would be an appropriate tool to identify future partners, compare structures and policies and develop these networks into strategic partnerships with synergies between teaching, learning and research.

The future challenge, then, is to develop further within this wide and ambitious scope of provision, notwithstanding the institute's limited resources and national as well as sectoral regulations. A more focussed consideration and strategic approach is recommended in marrying the strategic goal of being within the top 100 young universities by 2030 with a clear and strong local and regional focus and

the responsibility for provision of NFQ programmes at levels 6 and 7. In addition, focused strategic discussions on the future size (target student number) and shape (distribution of students across disciplines and QQI levels) of the institution would be beneficial.

The well-prepared, rapid, and flexible way in which WIT has responded to COVID-19 during 2020 bodes well for the future of the institute. By further developing its approach to risk management, governance and management, WIT could enhance the value of this instrument as a dynamic tool for predictive management. A better deployment of staff resources and the release of staff time based on the two-way feedback of strengths and weaknesses could be beneficial for the quality of WIT's teaching and learning as well as for the future enhancement of research.

The review team recognised the strong collegiate and student-focused culture throughout the institute. Embedded in this organisational quality culture, WIT engages actively with its diverse student population and its students' union to help provide quality across its range of activities. Since the last institutional review in 2010, WIT has been able to develop and operate a comprehensive Quality Assurance Framework and manual with many procedures covering almost all institutional processes and using underlying data and analysis. However, WIT's QA system is primarily a system of reporting cycles into which the phase of self-reflection could be more structurally and formally embedded. Notwithstanding the good practice of WIT's development and maintenance of a student charter and its regulations in respect of student representation, the formal feedback engagement from all students could be higher, more systematic and more WIT-specific,

so that the closing of the quality assurance and enhancement cycle could be quicker and more readily interpretable.

In order to ensure the achievement of its challenging ambitions WIT could benefit from a review of the effectiveness of its governance and services arrangements for the oversight of QA, together with resources and finances, so that good practice can be promoted and shared institution-wide as well as establishing appropriate institutional-level committees to ensure good governance.

The review team reviewed a wealth of documentation before, during and after the site visit and met with a wide range of faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders during the institutional review.

The review team appreciates the ambitious vision, mission and the institute's strategic plan, which is being realised in challenging and limiting times. The realisation of the institute's ambitions is underpinned by a positively engaged organisational culture and a student-focused quality culture within which is embedded a comprehensive QA system that is aligned with QQI's policies, guidelines and criteria as well as with ESG 2015.

This concluding section draws together the commendations and recommendations made throughout this report. They arose from the positive engagement the review team enjoyed with WIT and are intended to be constructive and supportive in helping WIT to continue with its transformational changes.

COMMENDATIONS

1. The review team commends WIT for its fruitful integration of the ISER process with its strategic aim of becoming a technological university and the linking of the two processes by the institute's formulation of bridging objectives.
2. The review team commends the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of WIT's overall QA systems, which has been clearly demonstrated by the institute's robust and rapid actions to overcome obstacles during the critical incident period under COVID-19 in 2020. This has enabled the institution to continue to deliver programmes and maintain standards. The enhanced engagement and consultation between the executive and the students' union have clearly been particularly helpful in this regard.
3. The review team commends WIT for adopting the THEA Code of Governance for Institutes of Technology, which entails the conduct of regular reviews of the functioning of the institute's various governance bodies and boards, such as Governing Body and Academic Council.
4. The review team commends WIT on its initiatives to increase the engagement of students and staff in QA matters and processes based on the existing student-centred quality culture.
5. The review team commends WIT on the ongoing staff development initiatives introduced within the institute, particularly in the areas of supervisor training, course leadership, pedagogy, and research process support; the team also acknowledges the very strong and diverse management and support structures being introduced within the newly established Walton research institute.
6. The review team commends WIT's support services on how they have coped with COVID-19, both in maintaining and adapting their activities and events for students, as well as in QA activities.
7. The review team commends WIT on the living student-focused culture within the institute, which generates a good dialogue between students and staff, and is evident in the regulations relating to student representation on committees at most levels, as well as in the Student Charter. The review team also commends WIT on the special COVID-19 Student Charter, which was a successful collaborative effort between the students' union and the institute.
8. The review team commends WIT on the improvements it has undertaken in respect of academic data collection and reporting processes, which have enhanced the monitoring of performance and supported the continuing strategic development of the institution. These improvements are also acknowledged by the appointment of a strategic information manager and analyst to give focus and priority to data analytics for the enhancement programme and teaching quality

9. The review team commends WIT on the establishment of close, responsive and mutually beneficial collaboration with local stakeholders, and on its flexibility in responding to the needs of industry.
10. The review team commends WIT on its collegiate and student-focused quality culture, which enables the realisation of strategic goals as well as the existence of a short and mostly effective feedback loop of enhancement and improvement on an individual basis.
11. The review team commends WIT for the way that it is developing and supporting an active research community, underpinned by a number of well-developed and innovative policies, processes and procedures for the management and quality assurance of research and PhD education and training from project initiation through progression to award, the establishment of research centres and institutes, all of which are enhanced by successful applications for funding. It regards the working of excellence centres such as TSSG as good practice.
12. The review team commends WIT on its Academic Quality Assurance Framework and QA manual, which provide a comprehensive and robust set of policies, procedures, and regulations to govern the standards of awards of the institution across all levels of the National Framework of Qualifications from level 6 to level 10 within WIT.
13. The review team commends WIT's development of key initiatives that demonstrate a commitment to widening access, student retention and the provision of more flexible learning opportunities for students.
14. The review team commends WIT on the alignment of its mission with its Strategic Plan 2018-2021 via strategic goals, actions, and targets for quality and the importance attached to strategic information management and analysis.
15. The review team commends WIT on its well-developed system for student support concerning access, transfer and progression at undergraduate level that covers all areas of the student lifecycle.
16. The review team commends WIT on its clear



international vision, strategy, and enthusiasm, which have enabled the establishment of international networks, student and staff exchanges as well as research funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The review team recommends that, for future institutional reviews, a more representative ISER committee be established, and that more time be afforded to the self-evaluation process to allow for full engagement across the institution and – just as importantly – with external stakeholders, given their crucial role in the regional and research missions of WIT.
2. The review team recommends that WIT continue to strengthen its self-reflective approach to its evaluation of the quality assurance and enhancement overarching framework, its lifecycles based on underlying indicators and its links with the overall strategy through the development of key performance indicators (KPIs).
3. The review team recommends that the institute engage in further appropriate benchmarking against other national and international institutions as an ongoing part of its QA and QE processes.
4. The review team recommends that a systematic examination of the quality assurance and enhancement systems be undertaken to identify opportunities for clearer links and synergy between the different layers of the QA system, reports, procedures, tools, WIT specific targets and actions.
5. The review team recommends that WIT give further consideration to the structuring and the management of its review processes, data collection, analyses of the review outcomes, reports and support, as well as the monitoring of improvement and enhancement.
6. While the review team appreciates the interlinked review cycle mechanisms from programme level through schools to institutional level, it recommends that WIT take further steps to promote institution-wide and multi- and/or interdisciplinary projects that deal with the quality of education, research, and the institute's societal engagement at the higher institutional level
7. The review team recommends that the institute further develop flexible HR management in order to recruit, develop and assess the skills and capabilities necessary to realise WIT's strategy and to optimise the quality of its provision.
8. The review team recommends that the institute adopt a more comprehensive approach to the collection and analysis of information from students, alumni and staff about the delivery of programmes and student experience and that it use the evidence to promote strategies for the continuing improvement of the quality of teaching.
9. The review team recommends an overall greater coordination among WIT's support services, particularly by exploring the implementation mechanisms that can be introduced to enhance the support services' accessibility to postgraduate and international students.
10. The review team recommends that WIT review the effectiveness of student participation in governance and particularly their representation on the boards and committees. The review team urges WIT to re-examine the terms of reference, membership, representative quotas of all stakeholders. The frequency and timing of programme board meetings should be such that it allows the board membership to attend. Consideration should be given to establishing a regulation on suitable and representative quotas of all stakeholders. Students should be encouraged to take a more active part in deliberations.
11. The review team recommends that the institute regularly review and communicate with its risk committees on management and governance-level data security and the prevention of data loss.
12. The review team recommends that WIT establish and deliver a more systemised and formalised method of two-way communication between staff and students, particularly with those students who are not involved in mainstream daily activities; this could contribute to greater integration of information, consistent responses and actions, and sharing of best practice.

13. The review team recommends that WIT's valuable collaboration with external providers in education and training be more extensively utilised to develop synergy with other WIT activities, such as QA and QE, through regular targeted external surveys and structural involvement in focus groups.
14. The review team recommends that WIT concentrate on the quality of research outcomes, the nature and extent of activity across the academic disciplines and on the sufficiency and quality of research infrastructure. This would be enhanced through appropriate external and international benchmarking as well as a full and comprehensive institution-wide research quality review.
15. The review team recommends that WIT address the implementation of institutional strategic objectives more specifically in analytical reports at programme level.
16. The review team recommends that WIT consider how it might benefit from closer engagement with its alumni to gain feedback on their time at the institute and on their experience of the transition into employment.
17. The review team recommends that WIT expand on the core issues already identified underlying access, transfer and progression and open up cross-institutional debate around potential mechanisms and strategies to deal with them.
18. The review team recommends that WIT further develop benchmarking as part of its international strategy to identify appropriate potential partners, build synergetic partnerships with the best-suited international HEIs and raise structural collaboration more broadly within the institution in relevant aspects of teaching, learning and research.
19. The review team recommends that WIT ensure that cooperation and communication by the International Office with the schools and departments be improved, especially with research students and staff, in order to facilitate the sharing of good practice institution-wide.
20. The review team recommends that WIT introduce elements of the concept of 'Internationalisation

at Home' into WIT's international strategy in order to maintain its international dimension and mindset in times of COVID-19 measures and beyond.

21. The review team recommends that the institute develop specific QA tools for international activities to ensure that it receives more formal feedback from its internationally involved partners, students, and staff.

TOP 5 COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The top 5 commendations and recommendations below integrate the most important and more detailed commendations and recommendations per section and were orally communicated at the of the site visit. The original recommendations 4 and 5 are integrated into a new recommendation 4 below.

COMMENDATIONS

1. The review team commends WIT for the clear evidence of collegiality and a strong student focus throughout the institute.
2. The review team commends WIT for its development of clear and comprehensive QA regulations and procedures, supported by data collection and analysis.
3. The review team commends WIT for its robust, rapid, and flexible response to COVID-19, which has enabled the institute to continue delivering programmes and maintaining standards.
4. The review team commends WIT on its success in developing and supporting a growing active research community.
5. The review team commends WIT for its provision of strong regional commitment and responsiveness to industry and its community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The review team recommends that WIT strengthen its self-reflection processes and develop a more systematic approach to feedback from students.
2. The review team recommends that WIT develop benchmarking to facilitate the implementation of its international strategy.

3. The review team recommends that WIT continue to review the effectiveness of its governance arrangements for the oversight of quality assurance, quality enhancement, risk, student participation, resources, and finance.
4. The review team recommends strengthening two-way feedback and staff development to optimise the deployment of staff resources and further develop internal communication to enhance the institution-wide promulgation of good practice.
5. The review team recommends that WIT further develop its research profile and enhanced mechanisms for the release of staff time based on a review of strengths and weaknesses.

OVERARCHING STATEMENTS ABOUT QA

The effectiveness of the QA procedures of the institution and the extent of their implementation

In conducting its review, the team read a wide range of documentation that was provided before the review and on the team's request while preparing for and attending the site visit. This documentation included the ISER and Institutional Profile, as well as a supplemental ISER that focused on providing missing and requested information and on the institute's response to COVID-19, the AQRs for 2018, 2019, and 2020, Strategic Plan 2018-2021, the latest Quality Assurance Framework, the HEA Mission-based Performance Compact and System Performance Framework 2018-2020, the Annual Report of the Audit & Risk Committee to the Governing Body 2018-2019, and documentation emanating from various programmatic and school reviews, and other supplementary documentation.

The review team met with a wide range of staff, students, members of the Governing Body, Academic Council, Executive Board, departments, schools, central services and offices, undergraduate, post-graduate, research and international students and staff, the students' union, alumni, external and collaborative stakeholders to verify the veracity of what the panel members had read and to cross-reference impressions and assertions.

Based on the information and data gathered through this review, the team has confidence in WIT's quality

assurance procedures and in the effectiveness and extent of their implementation. The review team commends the comprehensiveness of these procedures, as well the effective reporting system.

The extent to which the quality assurance procedures can be considered compliant with the ESG and having regard to QQI's statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines.

Following the extensive process described above, the review team is satisfied that WIT's QA policies, procedures and practices are effectively based on, and compliant with, the ESG 2015 and QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines.

The effectiveness of the procedures established for the overall operation and management of the institution as an awarding body.

Arising from the review team's review of documentation and meetings during the site visit, the review team concludes that WIT has effective procedures in place for the operation and management of the institution as an awarding and designated awarding body. These procedures are aligned with the designated awarding power that the institute has been granted up to level 9 and specific programmes at level 10. They are implemented and exercised in a satisfactory manner.

The enhancement of quality by the institution through governance, policy, and procedures.

The review team met with an institution whose governance, policies, and quality assurance system are embedded both informally and formally in a collegiate and student-focussed culture. The drive for enhancement was evidenced by extensive documentation and confirmed by a range of interviewees. The approach to quality enhancement, however, could be improved by developing more critical self-reflection based on WIT-specific feedback and data analysis.

The extent to which the procedures are in keeping with the QQI policy for Access, Transfer and Progression (ATP)

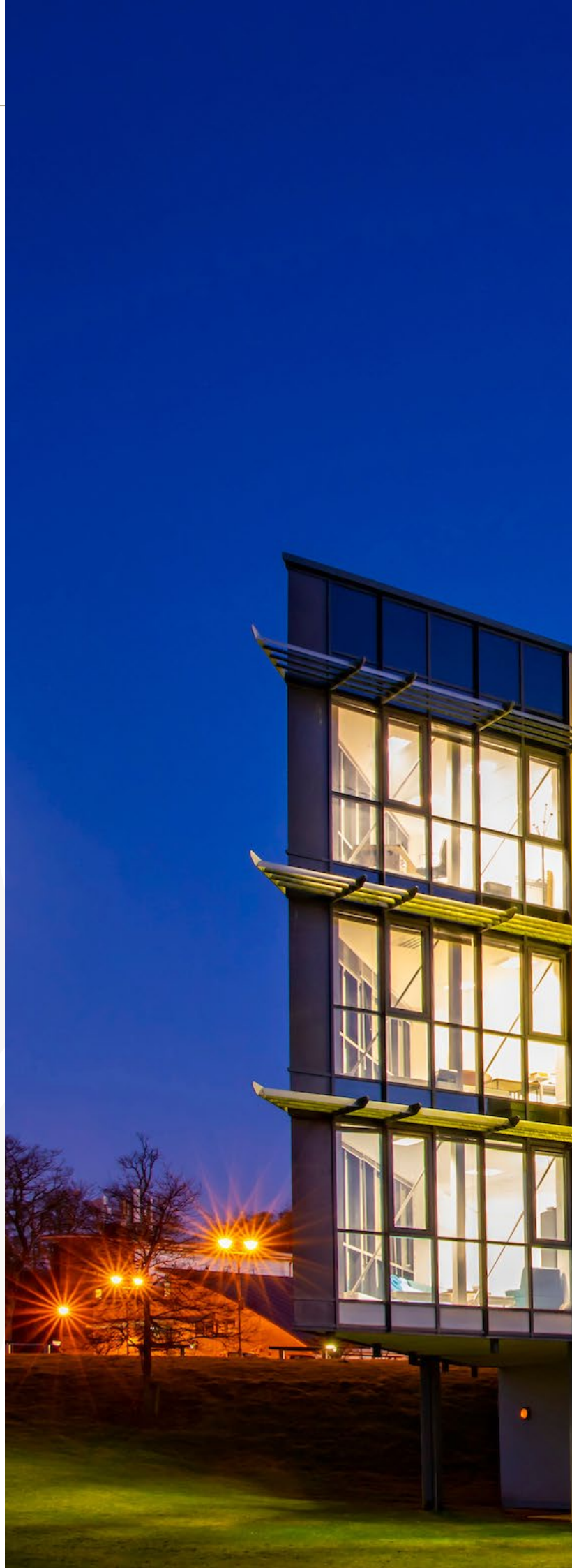
The review team met with an institution whose

strategy and practice is characterised by its regional mission of raising the skills level of the local talent pool to as high a level as possible through education and research. WIT has all processes and policies in place to ensure that ATP is well-managed. Moreover, the review team recognises that WIT is well aware of all the challenges of student life and is keen to provide a wide variety of support services. Various initiatives are being undertaken to provide data on the most important phases of the student lifecycle to help the institute respond in a well-informed way. However, the review team notes that there is clear urgency in this endeavour, as, although some measures have been taken to improve the situation, attendance of scheduled classes remains a cause for concern.

The review team concludes that WIT complies with the *QQI Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression*.

The extent to which the procedures are compliant with the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners

The review team recognises that WIT's strategy and actions are geared towards developing a stronger international profile both in education and research. The team found evidence that appropriate support is being provided for international undergraduate students, although there is an issue relating to the organisation of support of international research students and WIT might consider seeking more targeted feedback from this student cohort. The team also found that WIT is compliant with the *Code of Practice for the Provision of Education and Training to International Learners* and hopes that the institution will be able to sustain and extend its international partnerships through further appropriate benchmarking to identify the most suitable partners.



Section 5

Institutional Response



Institutional Response



Waterford Institute of Technology
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA PHORT LÁIRGE

WIT INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO QQI CINNTE REVIEW GROUP REPORT

Waterford Institute of Technology welcomed the QQI CINNTE Review Team in November 2020 to perform a cyclical review of the Institute's performance and objectives. Notwithstanding the challenges and delays posed by COVID19, the Institute was pleased with the professional and open nature of the review meetings and communications before and after the Review Team's visit and in particular the recognition of the quality and performance of Institute staff, students and stakeholders.

WIT welcomes the Review Team's commendations and recommendations, in particular that the Team acknowledged the clear evidence of collegiality and a strong student focus throughout the Institute. Furthermore, given the challenges posed by the past 12 months, it was encouraging that the expert panel commended WIT for its robust, rapid, and flexible response to COVID-19, which has enabled the Institute to continue delivering programmes and maintaining high standards.

The entire review process has provided the Institute an opportunity to work collectively, to reflect on performance and to learn from the external review experts. The Review Team have recognised the important roles in the ISER ranging from our governance, management and academic structures to our students and communities.

The Institute will continue this engagement process in developing the Institutional Review Implementation Plan, so that each of the stakeholders may contribute to the drafting of the best course of action and may be partners in the actual tasks drawn up to deliver on the Implementation Plan. This consultative engagement will also allow wider and more diverse opinions to be gathered for example on how to strengthen the Institute's self-reflection processes and to continue to review the effectiveness of governance arrangements for the oversight of quality assurance, quality enhancement, risk, student participation, resources, and finance. Moreover, it will permit the Institute to consider new approaches to strengthening two-way feedback and staff development to enhance optimal deployment of staff resources and further develop internal communication to enhance the institution-wide promulgation of good practice. Finally, this approach will also afford the Institute the medium and inputs needed to develop the best approach to develop more systematic approach to feedback from students and to develop benchmarking to facilitate the implementation of the Institute's international strategy.

The report validates the quality assurance environment of the Institute and the quality of the teaching, learning and research conducted at the Institute. It represents to us, and our communities, a validation of the quality of our graduates and our wider outputs to the region. In that regard we value the report's assertion that the Institute has successfully embraced the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, the European Standards and Guidelines for Higher Education (2015), the QQI Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression, and other relevant topic-specific Quality Guidelines.

The Institute's Strategic Plan 2018-2021 clearly formulates WIT's aim to grow into an internationally recognised technological university, while firmly keeping to its regional mission as a driver of change embedded in an entrepreneurial culture. We thank the CINNTE Review Panel for commending WIT for its fruitful integration of the ISER process with the strategic aim of becoming a technological university and the linking of the two



processes by the Institute's formulation of bridging objectives. The Panel Report is important to the Institute in considering the recommendations for structures and the positive impact this may have in the establishment of a technological university. The Institute recognises that as part of the technological university process that there is an opportunity to engage in further appropriate benchmarking against other national and international institutions as a part of its QA and QE development. Our clear international vision, strategy, and enthusiasm was also commended as it has enabled the establishment of international networks, student and staff exchange as well as research funding. We concur with the recommendation to further develop benchmarking as part of the Institute's international strategy as a way of supporting synergetic partnerships with the best-suited international HEIs. Internationalisation is a key strategy in WIT's future and the concept of 'Internationalisation at Home' will be a key component of WIT's international strategy in order to maintain its international dimension and mindset in times of COVID-19 measures and beyond.

WIT's success in developing and supporting a growing active research community has been recognised by the Review Team, underpinned as it is by a number of well-developed and innovative policies, processes and procedures for the management and quality assurance of research and PhD education and training. We see the merit in the Review Team's recommendation to concentrate on the quality of outcomes of research, the nature and extent of activity across the academic disciplines and on the sufficiency and quality of research infrastructure and plans to continue establishing and developing research groups and centres within the school structures in order to drive the quality research agenda. This process will be further enhanced through appropriate external and international benchmarking being undertaken as well as our commitment to ongoing full and comprehensive institution-wide research quality reviews based on a long-term research strategy. The Institute also recognises the benefits of the release of staff time that how that benefits the future enhancement

of research and will continue to invest in initiatives that facilitate the release of staff for research.

Widening access, student retention and the provision of more flexible learning opportunities for students will continue to be priorities for the Institute into the future. The review team commended WIT's development of key initiatives in these areas and for setting as a target the provision of access, transfer and progression opportunities for all candidates. We are proud to have a strong record and commitment to addressing opportunities to participate in higher education and supporting students to this end. Indeed, we appreciate the commendation on our well-developed system for student support in access, transfer and progression. The Institute recognises the ongoing need to monitor and continue to address the multitude of issues underlying access, transfer and progression and the benefits of creating cross-institutional debate to arrive at potential mechanisms and strategies to deal with them.

The CINNTE Review Panel commended WIT on the ongoing staff development initiatives introduced within the Institute, particularly in the areas of supervisor training, course leadership, pedagogy, and research process support. The Institute is committed to staff development and this is captured in the WIT Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, which the Review Team highlighted for promoting student capabilities and achievement through the development of good practice and the provision of an appropriate physical, social, and technological environment for learning, and enhancement of student experience.

The Institute accepts the potential offered by further enhancing existing engagements with external stakeholders, including those also involved in education and training. There is a clear benefit to developing synergies with other WIT activities, such as QA and QE, through regular targeted external surveys and structural involvement in focus groups.

The CINNTE Review Team has produced a positive and encouraging report, which will be of great benefit in WIT's ongoing journey of high quality in its performance and expectations. Over the coming months, the Institute will work with its staff, students and stakeholders to produce an implementation plan in response to the Review Team's report.

WIT would like to thank the Review Team and the members of the QQI Higher Education Reviews Unit for their management and support throughout the institutional review process. The process of preparation, panel meetings and consideration of commendations and recommendations has proven to be very rewarding across the Institute community.

Professor Willie Donnelly

President

Dr Derek O'Byrne

Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar

APPENDICES

A group of surfers in yellow wetsuits are walking on a beach, carrying surfboards. The surfboards are in various colors, including white, pink, and teal. The beach is wet, and the surfers' reflections are visible in the shallow water. The background shows a blue sky with some clouds and a distant horizon.

Appendices

A: Terms of Reference

B: Main Review Visit Timetable

Appendix A:

Terms of Reference (Terms of Reference for the Review of Institutes of Technology)

SECTION 1 Background and Context for the Review

1.1 Context and Legislative Underpinning

These are the Terms of Reference for the Review of an Institute of Technology (non-Designated Awarding Bodies) and encompass the following institutions:

- Athlone Institute of Technology
- Dundalk Institute of Technology
- Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology
- Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology
- Institute of Technology Carlow
- Institute of Technology Sligo
- Letterkenny Institute of Technology
- Limerick Institute of Technology
- Waterford Institute of Technology

In 2016, QQI adopted a policy on cyclical review in higher education which sets out in greater detail the scope, purposes, criteria, model and procedures for review. These are represented in the Terms of Reference and the Handbook for the Review of Institutes of Technology. QQI has introduced an annual reporting process for institutions whereby institutions are required to submit an Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR). The aim of the AIQR is to provide a contemporary account of quality assurance (QA) within an institution. Information is provided through an online template and it is published. Collated annual reports are provided to periodical Review Teams. Annual reporting allows institutions and QQI to engage on a regular basis. Published annual reports assist with documentation management for institutions in reviews and lessen the burden on institutions in the lead-up to a review.

This review cycle is being conducted in a very changed context for higher education. The landscape for higher education has been significantly reshaped since the last cycle of reviews commenced. Smaller colleges have been merged with universities and many institutes of technology are reorganising and preparing mergers as part of the Technological University process. New alliances and partnerships envisaged by Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape have commenced. A new approach to public funding has been introduced and operated by the Higher Education Authority (HEA). Initiatives for enhancement such as the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (NFETL)

have been formalised at a national level. These developments mean that there are new sources of information and external benchmarks available to institutions that can be used to inform self-evaluation in this review cycle. Key measurements such as entry profiles, student retention, graduate profiles and staff and student satisfaction rates can provide a quantitative source of information for institutions to assist in internal decision-making and to help demonstrate evidence of the quality of an institution's offer.

The 2012 Act states that QQI shall consult with the HEA in carrying out the review. QQI has agreed with HEA that this will take the form of engagement with QQI on the Terms of Reference and confirmation of the status of the institution within the higher education system, sharing individual institutional profiles and data with the Review Team. Further details of the agreement can be accessed [here](#).

Institutes of technology completed a statutory review cycle from 2009–2012. Prior to this, IoTs were reviewed for the purpose of granting delegation of authority. This review cycle commences in 2017 and will terminate in 2022.

The 2017–2022 Review Cycle Schedule is as follows:

INSTITUTION	COMPLETION DATES			
	ISER	PLANNING VISIT	MAIN REVIEW VISIT	REPORT
Institute of Technology, Sligo	Q4 2017	Q1 2018	Q2 2018	Q3 2018
Letterkenny Institute of Technology	Q4 2017	Q1 2018	Q2 2018	Q3 2018
Dundalk Institute of Technology	Q2 2018	Q3 2018	Q4 2018	Q1 2019
Waterford Institute of Technology	Q3 2019	Q3 2020	Q4 2020	Q1 2021
Institute of Technology, Carlow	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020
Limerick Institute of Technology	Q4 2020	Q1 2021	Q2 2021	Q3 2021
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology	Q2 2021	Q3 2021	Q4 2021	Q1 2022
Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology	Q2 2022	Q3 2022	Q4 2022	Q1 2023
Athlone Institute of Technology	Q2 2022	Q3 2022	Q4 2022	Q1 2023

1.2 Purposes

The Policy for the Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions highlights four purposes for individual institutional reviews. These are set out in the table below.

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

SECTION 2

Objectives and Criteria

2.1 Review Objectives

OBJECTIVE 1

To review the effectiveness and implementation of the QA procedures of the institution, through consideration of the procedures set out, primarily, in the AIQR. Where necessary, the information provided by the AIQR is supplemented by additional information provided through documentation requests and interviews. The scope of this includes reporting procedures, governance and publication. This also incorporates an analysis of the ways in which the institution uses measurement, comparisons and analytic techniques, based on quantitative data, to support quality assurance governance and procedures. Progress on the development of quality assurance since the last review of the institution will be evaluated. Consideration will also be given to the effectiveness of the AIQR and Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports (ISER) procedures within the institution.

The scope of this objective also extends to the overarching approach of the institution to assuring itself of the quality of its research degree programmes and research activities.

This objective also encompasses the effectiveness of the procedures established by the institution for the assurance of the quality of alliances, partnerships and overseas provision, including TU clusters, mergers, transnational provision, joint awarding, joint provision and regional fora.

OBJECTIVE 2

To review the procedures established by the institution for the governance and management of its functions that comprise its role as an awarding body. The team will focus on evidence of a governance system to oversee the education and training, research and related activity of the institution and evidence of a culture that supports quality within the institution. Considerations will centre upon the effectiveness of decision-making across the institution.

OBJECTIVE 3

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

To review the congruency of quality assurance procedures and enhancements with the institution's own mission and goals or targets for quality.

To identify innovative and effective practices for quality enhancement.

OBJECTIVE 4

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

OBJECTIVE 5

Following the introduction of a statutory international education quality assurance scheme, to determine compliance with the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners.

2.2 Review Criteria

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 1

The Review Report will include a specific qualitative statement on the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of the institution and the extent of their implementation. The report will also include a specific statement on the extent to which the quality assurance procedures can be considered as compliant with the ESG and as having regard to QQI's statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (QAG). These statements will be

highlighted in the report of the review.

The statements may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements, recommendations and possibly recommendations for directions in reference to this objective.

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

- ESG
- QQI Core Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines
- QQI Sector Specific QA Guidelines for Institutes of Technology
- Section 28 of the 2012 Act
- QQI Policy and Criteria for Making Awards (including FET provision)

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

- For Apprenticeship, QA Guidelines for Apprenticeship Programmes
- Sectoral Protocols for Research
- Sectoral Protocols for Joint Awards
- The institution's own objectives and goals for quality assurance

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 2

The Review Report will include a specific qualitative statement on the effectiveness of the procedures established for the overall operation and management of the institution as an awarding body.

The statements may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements, recommendations and possibly recommendations for conditions in reference to this objective.

The criteria to be used by the team in reaching conclusions for this objective are ESG (Parts 1.1 and 1.4 in particular), QQI Core QAG, QQI Sector-Specific Institute of Technology QAG and QQI Policy and Criteria for Delegation of Authority.

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 3

The Review Report will include a specific qualitative statement on the enhancement of quality by the institution through governance, policy, and procedures.

This statement may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements and recommendations in reference to this objective. If identified, innovative and effective practices for quality enhancement will be highlighted in the report.

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

- The institution's own mission and vision
- The goals or targets for quality identified by the institution
- Additional sources of reference identified by the institution.

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 4

The report will include a qualitative statement on the extent to which the procedures are in keeping with QQI policy for Access, Transfer and Progression.

This statement may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements and recommendations and possibly recommendations for conditions in reference to this objective.

The criterion to be used by the team in reaching conclusions for this objective is QQI Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression.

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 5

When the statutory international education quality assurance scheme is in place, the report will include a qualitative statement on the extent to which the procedures are compliant with the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners.

This statement may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements and recommendations and possibly recommendations for conditions in reference to this objective.

The criterion to be used by the team in reaching conclusions for this objective is the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners.

KEY QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE REVIEW FOR EACH OBJECTIVE

- How have quality assurance procedures and reviews been implemented within the institution?
- How effective are the internal quality assurance procedures and reviews of the institution?
- Are the quality assurance procedures in keeping with European Standards and Guidelines?
- Are the quality assurance procedures in keeping with QQI policy and guidelines, or their equivalent?
- Who takes responsibility for quality and quality assurance across the institution?
- How transparent, accessible and comprehensive is reporting on quality assurance and quality?
- How is quality promoted and enhanced?
- Are there effective innovations in quality enhancement and assurance?
- Is the student experience in keeping with the institution's own stated mission and strategy?
- Are achievements in quality and quality assurance in keeping with the institution's own stated mission and strategy?
- How do achievements in quality and quality assurance measure up against the institution's own goals or targets for quality?

SECTION 3

The Review Process

3.1 Process

The primary basis for the review process is this handbook.

3.2 Review Team Profile

QQI will appoint the Review Team to conduct the institutional review. Review Teams are composed of peer reviewers who are students and senior institutional leaders and staff from comparable institutions as well as external representatives. The size of the Team and the duration of their visit will depend on the size and complexity of the institution but in general the Review Team for an institute of technology will consist of five or six persons. Each Review Team includes a chairperson and coordinating reviewer, and may be supported by a rapporteur, who is not a member of the team, to take and collate notes of meetings. A single team may undertake the review of two different institutions.

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

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

The Review Team will be appointed in keeping with the following profile:

1. A Review Chairperson

The role of the chairperson is to act as leader of the Review Team. This is an international reviewer who is a (serving or recently former) senior third-level institution leader – usually a head of institution or deputy head of institution or a senior policy advisor who:

- » possesses a wide range of higher education experience
- » demonstrates a deep understanding of the complexities of the higher education system
- » understands often unique QA governance arrangements
- » has proven experience in the management of innovation and change.

2. A Coordinating Reviewer

The role of the coordinating reviewer is to act as secretary to the Team as well as to be a full Review Team member. This is usually a person with expertise in the Higher Education system and prior experience in participating in external reviews. As the coordinating reviewer is responsible for drafting the report, he or she will possess proven excellent writing abilities.

3. A Student Reviewer

The role of the student reviewer is to represent the student voice in the Review Team. The student reviewer will be typically a student with significant experience of higher education or an undergraduate student who has completed a quality assurance training programme and can represent the viewpoint of students.

4. An Industry Representative

The role of the industry representative is to bring an industry perspective to the Review Team. This representative should understand that their role in the review is to represent industry as a whole and not any particular industrial sector. QQI may seek guidance on the suitability of a particular profile for an industry representative from the institution.

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

- » Experience of higher education quality assurance processes
- » Experience of postgraduate research programmes
- » Experience and proven ability in the advancement of teaching and learning

Details of Review Team roles and responsibilities can be found in Appendix B of the Cyclical Reviews Handbook.

3.3 PROCEDURE AND TIMELINES

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

STEP	ACTION	DATES	OUTCOME
Terms of Reference (ToR)	Completion of an institutional information profile by QQI Confirmation of ToR with institution and HEA	9 months before the main review visit (MRV)	Terms of Reference published
Preparation	Appointment of an expert Review Team Consultation with the institution on any possible conflicts of interest	6-9 months before the MRV	Review Team appointed
Self-evaluation	Forwarding to QQI of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)	12 weeks before the MRV	ISER published (optional)
Desk Review	Desk review of the ISER by the Team	Before the initial meeting	ISER initial response provided
Initial Meeting	An initial meeting of the Review Team, including reviewer training and briefing	5 weeks after the ISER, 7 weeks before the MRV	Team training and briefing is complete and Team identify key themes and additional documents required
Planning visit	A visit to the institution by the Chair and Coordinating Reviewer to receive information about the ISER process, discuss the schedule for the main review visit and discuss additional documentation requests	5 weeks after the ISER, 7 weeks before the MRV	An agreed note of the Planning Visit

STEP	ACTION	DATES	OUTCOME
Main Review Visit	To receive and consider evidence on the ways in which the institution has performed in respect of the objectives and criteria set out in the ToR	12 weeks after the receipt of ISER	A short preliminary oral report to the institution
Report	Preparation of a draft report by the Team	6-8 weeks after the MRV	
	Draft report sent to the institution for a check of factual accuracy	12 weeks after the MRV	
	Institution responds with any factual accuracy corrections	2 weeks after receipt of draft report	
	Preparation of a final report by QQI	2 weeks after factual accuracy response	QQI Review Report
	Preparation of an institutional response	2 weeks after final report	Institutional response
Outcomes	Consideration of the Review Report and findings by QQI together with the institutional response and the plan for implementation	Next available meeting of QQI committee	Formal decision about the effectiveness of QA procedures In some cases, directions to the institution and a schedule for their implementation
	Preparation of QQI quality profile	2 weeks after decision	Quality profile published
Follow-up	The form of follow-up will be determined by whether or not 'directions' are issued to the institution. In general, where directions are issued the follow-up period will be shorter and more specific actions may be required as part of the direction		
	Preparation of an institutional implementation plan	1 month after decision	Publication of the institutional implementation plan by the institution
	One-year follow-up report to QQI for noting. This and subsequent follow-up may be integrated into annual reports to QQI	1 year after the MRV	Publication of the follow-up report by QQI and the institution
	Continuous reporting and dialogue on follow-up through the annual institutional reporting and dialogue process	Continuous	Annual Institutional Quality Report Dialogue Meeting notes

Note: The total period from start to finish is approximately 15 months but will depend on QQI committee meeting dates.

Appendix B

Main Review Visit Schedule

17th November

Governance, Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement

TIME	GROUP	PEOPLE
09.00-09.30	Institutional Coordinator	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr Derek O'Byrne, Registrar and Vice-President Academic Affairs 2. Dr Paul O'Leary, Head of Quality Promotion
09.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
10.00-10.45	1. President & Registrar	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Professor Willie Donnelly, President 2. Dr Derek O'Byrne, Registrar and Vice-President Academic Affairs
10.45-11.30	2. Executive Board	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ms Elaine Sheridan VP for Corporate Affairs and Finance 2. Dr Richard Hayes VP for Strategy 3. Dr Mark White VP for Research, Innovation and Graduate Studies 4. Dr Suzanne Denieffe Head of School of Humanities 5. Dr Peter McLoughlin Head of School of Science and Computing 6. Dr Helen Murphy Head of School of Lifelong Learning & Education 7. Dr Tom O'Toole Head of School of Business 8. Dr Ken Thomas Head of School of Engineering 9. Dr John Wells Head of School of Health Sciences
11.30-12.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
12.00-12:45	Panel Lunch/Break	
12.45-1:30	3. Governing Authority	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Councillor Jim Moore Chairperson 2017-present; ex-CEO Natl. Parents Council post-primary 2. Councillor Kieran Bourke Tipperary Education and Training Board 3. Ms Imelda Buckley Senior Manager in Financial Services 4. Ms Anne-Marie Caulfield Waterford Chamber of Commerce 5. Mr John Fortune President WIT Students Union 6. Mr David Kane WIT Professional Staff Representative 7. Mr. Michael Quinn Deputy Chief Executive Waterford City and County Council 8. Ms Louise Walsh WIT Lecturing Staff Representative
1.30-2.00	Panel Review Team Meeting	

TIME	GROUP	PEOPLE
2.00-2.45	4. Academic Council	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr Rebecca O'Mahony Lecturer in Dept of Science 2. Dr TJ McDonald Lecturer in Dept of Computing & Mathematics 3. Dr Fiona Dowling Lecturer in Dept of Creative & Performing Arts 4. Dr Jennifer Kavanagh Lecturer in Dept of Applied Arts 5. Ms. Mary Lyng Lecturer in Dept of Computing & Mathematics 6. Dr Tom O'Toole Head of School of Business 7. Mr Mark Aulsberry Students Union Engagement & Events Officer 8. Ms Rhiannon Kavanagh Students Union VP for Education
2.45-3.15	Private Review Team Meeting	
3.15-4.00	5. Academic Department Governance and Enhancement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ms Hannah Butler School Administrator Humanities 2. Dr Michael Bergin Head of Dept of Applied Arts 3. Dr Alan Davy Head of Dept of Computing & Mathematics 4. Ms Claire Fitzpatrick School Administrator Engineering 5. Dr Michael Harrison Head of Dept of Health Sciences 6. Ms. Máire Henry Head of Dept of Architecture 7. Mr Ger Long Head of Dept of Accounting 8. Mr Neil Quinlan Head of Dept of Lifelong Learning
4.00-4.30	Private Review Team Meeting	
4.30-5.15	6. Self-Evaluation Team	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr Paul Clogher Lecturer in Dept of Applied Arts 2. Ms. Lynne Cusack Academic Data Administration 3. Dr Hazel Farrell Lecturer in Dept of Creative and Performing Arts 4. Mr. John Fortune Students Union President 5. Ms. Rhiannon Kavanagh Students Union VP for Education 6. Ms. Mary Lyng Lecturer in Dept of Computing & Mathematics 7. Dr. Orla O'Donovan Head of Dept of Science 8. Dr Paul O'Leary (Coordinator) Head of Quality Promotion
5.15-5.45	Private Review Team Meeting	

18th November
Student Experience

TIME	GROUP	PEOPLE
9.00-9.30	Institutional Coordinator	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr Derek O'Byrne, Registrar and Vice-President Academic Affairs 2. Dr Paul O'Leary, Head of Quality Promotion
9.30 -10.15	1. Student experience: delivery and assessment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr Judith Breen Lecturer in Dept of Education 2. Mr Ken Deevy Lecturer in Dept of Engineering 3. Dr Séamus Dillon Lecturer in Dept of Languages Tourism & Hospitality 4. Dr Frances Finn Lecturer in Dept of Nursing 5. Dr Felicity Kelliher Lecturer in School of Business 6. Dr Paula Lane Lecturer in Dept of Nursing 7. Dr Claire Lennon Lecturer in Dept of Science
10.15-10.45	Private Review Team Meeting	
10.45-11.30	2. Student Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Laura Keane Head of Student Life and Learning 2. Angela Collins Careers Office 3. Denis Harris Programme Leader BA (Hons) in Marketing & Digital Media 4. Siobhan Roche Math Learning Centre 5. Ben Nolan Students Union Welfare Officer 6. Dr Aidan McGrath IT Manager 7. Ms Aishling O'Toole Academic Admin and Student Affairs Manager 8. Mr Terry O'Brien Institute Librarian 9. Ms Paula Brazil Erasmus+ support
12.00-12.30	3. Central Services Governance and Enhancement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ms Elaine Greenan Estates Manager 2. Ms Kathryn Kiely Industry Services Manager 3. Dr Colette Moloney Assistant Registrar - Awards Office 4. Dr Neil O'Sullivan Pay & Benefits Manager 5. Ms Olive O'Connor Marketing & Communications Manager 6. Mr Paul Quirke Capital Projects Manager 7. Ms Críostiona Innseadúin Finance Manager
12.30-13.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
1.00-2.00	LUNCH	

TIME	GROUP	PEOPLE
2.00-2.45	4. Flexible delivery strategy and implementation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr Helen Murphy Head of School of Education & Lifelong Learning 2. Mr Ken McCarthy Centre for Technology-Enhanced Learning 3. Cathal Ryan HCC programme and Developer of first online programme 4. Ms Geraldine Mernagh Adult Literacy Development Centre founder 5. Ms Maeve O'Grady Lecturer and RPL Advisor 6. Ms Laura McGibney Online Engagement Advisor 7. Mr Colm Dunphy Lecturer in School of Science and Computing 8. Prof Denis Harrington Head of Graduate Business
2.45-3.15	Private Review Team Meeting	
3.15-4.00	Students (UG & PGT)	
	Parallel session	
	5. Undergraduate Full Time	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gareth Dineen 2020 Graduate BEng School of Engineering 2. Ms Laura O'Connell Apprentice Student 3. Mr Killian Fitzgerald BSc student School of Science and Computing 4. Ms. Kayleigh Meade 20080606@mail.wit.ie 5. Ms Imelda Morrissey 2020 Graduate BA School of Humanities 6. Mr Dimitri Saridakis BSc student School of Science and Computing 7. Ms Obianuju (Uju) Ekedozie SoELL Student of the Year 2018 8. Ms Aoife Molloy BA student School of Humanities
	6. Postgraduate Taught and Mature Students	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ms Rebecca Byrne School of Humanities 2. Ms Katie Chance School of Humanities 3. Ms Lynn Ellingworth School of Science and Computing 4. Ms Emily Mordaunt School of Business 5. Ms Sinead O'Neill School of Science and Computing 6. Ms Deeksha Pathak School of Science and Computing
	Parallel session	
	7. International Students	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mr Adeyemi Ariyo School of Engineering 2. Mr Pilar Luz Rodrigues School of Humanities 3. Mr Sonal Malakar School of Engineering 4. Mr Huayu Qin School of Science and Computing 5. Mr Arham Sherif School of Engineering 6. Mr Wentao Wu School of Science and Computing
4.00-4.30	Private Review Team Meeting	

TIME	GROUP	PEOPLE
4.30-5.15	8. Student Union Officers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mr John Fortune (President) 2. Ms Rhiannon Kavanagh (VP for Education) 3. Mr Mark Aulsberry (Events and Engagement Officer) 4. Mr Ben Nolan (Welfare and Equality Officer)
5.15-5.30	Private Review Team Meeting	

19th November Research and Staff

TIME	GROUP	PEOPLE
09.00-9.30	Institutional Coordinator	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr Derek O'Byrne, Registrar and Vice-President Academic Affairs 2. Dr Paul O'Leary, Head of Quality Promotion
9:30-10:00	Private Review Team Meeting	
10:00-10.45	1. Research Strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr Mark White VP for Research, Innovation and Graduate Studies 2. Ms Kathryn Kiely Industry Services Manager 3. Ms Susie Cullinane Senior Project Coordinator 4. Ms Josephine Holohan National Research Programme Officer 5. Dr James O'Sullivan Manager Technology Transfer Office. 6. Ms Philomena Treacy EU Research Programme Officer 7. Dr Sasitharan Balasubramaniam, Director of Research TSSG 8. Mr Kevin Doolin Director of Innovation at the TSSG
10:45-11.15	Private Review Team Meeting	
11:15-12:00	2. Research Programme design, delivery and assessment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr Mike Kinsella Researcher in the School of Science 2. Dr Nick McCarthy Researcher in the School of Science 3. Professor John Nolan Director of NRCI 4. Dr John O'Brien Researcher in the School of Humanities 5. Dr. Sheila O'Donohoe Researcher in the School of Business 6. Dr Paul O'Leary Head of Quality Promotion 7. Dr Derek Sinnott Chair School of Engineering Research Programme Board 8. Dr Mark White VP for Research, Innovation and Graduate Studies
12-12:30	Private Review Team Meeting	
12:30-13:00	Break	
13.00-13:15	Private Review Team Meeting	

TIME	GROUP	PEOPLE
13.15-14:00	PGR Students 2 parallel sessions	
	3. Postgraduate research students - STEM	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ms Mariana Gavendova School of Science Ms Marina Green School of Health Sciences Mr Brendan Phelan School of Engineering Mr Dylan Power School of Health Sciences Mr Florian Scheibein School of Health Sciences Ms Nikita Jalodia School of Science Ms Grainne Dilleen School of Science
	4. Postgraduate research students - Social Sciences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ann Burke School of Humanities Orla Hayes School of Business Wendy O'Leary PG Forum; School of Humanities Paul Sheahan School of Business DBA student Mandy Lalrindiki School of Business DBA student
14.00-14:30	Private Review Team Meeting	
14:30-14.45	Break	
14.45-15.30	5. HR and staff development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ms Sue Hurley HR Manager Ms Eimear Fitzpatrick HR Business Partner for Research Dr Anne Graham Lecturer on Education Masters Dr Catherine Lowry O'Neill Lecturer on Education Masters Ms Kathleen Moore Walsh Lecturer; Secretary to WIT TUI Branch Ms Corina Power CPD, FOI & DP Co-ordinator Ms Roisín Shanahan Senior HR Business Partner Mr Derek Sheridan Reprographics Services; Training & Development Strategy
15.30-16.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
16.00-16.45	Two parallel sessions	
	6. Recently appointed staff/ staff that have been in post for significant period of time - also part-time staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mr Albert Byrne Head of Department of Trades (FT, Long Service) Ms Maria Ronan, Social Care (PT, new) Ms Kate Madden Department of Nursing (FT, Long Service) Ms Deirdre Mullane (PT, New) Ms. Ann Marie McGrath (FT, Long Service) Dr. Aisling Tuite (FT, New) Mr Mark Doyle (FT, new) Ms Gráinne Callanan (FT, Long Service)

TIME	GROUP	PEOPLE
	7. Alumni/ Graduate destinations/skills (including Springboard+ graduates). Transition from academic to workplace	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Harley Barnes, School of Health Sciences 2. Nicola Kelleher, School of Health Sciences 3. Bernard Thompson, School of Science 4. Juber Nunes, School of Science juberjj@yahoo.ie School of Science (HDip) 5. Ms Teresa Dowling, School of Health Sciences 6. Ms Sandra Kelly School of Humanities 7. Declan Sheridan, graduated 2015
16.45-17.15	Private Review Team Meeting	

25th November Internationalisation and Collaboration

TIME	GROUP	PEOPLE
09.00-9.30	Institutional Coordinator	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr Derek O'Byrne, Registrar and Vice-President Academic Affairs 2. Dr Paul O'Leary, Head of Quality Promotion
9:30-10:00	Private Review Team Meeting	
10:00-10:30	1. Key Institute Initiatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mr Colm Bonnar Access and Outreach programmes 2. Dr Geraldine Cleere Lecturer in Law & Criminology; P2P Lead 3. Ms Katie Dillon Keane P2P Coordinator 4. Ms Laura Hartery Assistive Tech promotion in Second Level 5. Ms Eleanor Kent New Laboratory Apprenticeships Development Mr Eamonn de Leaster Award-winning online Comp Sci HDip 6. Dr Orla O'Donovan Grant Preparation Support Scheme 7. Mr Fergal O'Hanlon Broadening Your Third Level Experience
10:30-11:00	Private Review Team Meeting	
11:00-12noon	2. International staff, internationalising the curriculum, Diversity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr Richard Hayes Vice President for Strategy 2. Ms Sinéad Day International Affairs Manager 3. Dr Niamh Murphy Lecturer in Health Sciences 4. Mr Juergen Bauer Lecturer in Architecture 5. Ms Amanda Freeman-Gater Lecturer in Computing & Mathematics 6. Ms. Philomena Treacy EU Research Programme Officer 7. Dr Ken Thomas Head of School of Engineering 8. Dr Don O'Neill Lecturer in Languages, Tourism and Hospitality
12:00-12:30	Private Review Team Meeting	

TIME	GROUP	PEOPLE
12:30-1:15	Panel Lunch Break	
1:15-1:30	Private Review Team Meeting	
1:30-2.00	3. Collaborative Provision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr Fionnuala Brennan Higher Certificate in Custodial Care 2. Dr John O'Brien MA in Social Justice 3. Mr Declan Cahill Master of Business in Internationalisation 4. Dr Cara Daly BSc in Horticulture 5. Father Sean Healy Social Justice Ireland 6. Dr Colette Moloney Assistant Registrar 7. Frank Murphy Head of Curriculum Development Teagasc
2.00-2.30pm	Private Review Team Meeting	
2.30-3.15	External Stakeholders	
	Parallel session Employers and ATP stakeholders	
	4. Employers and Industry Stakeholders	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mr Paul Nolan Dawn Meats Group Development Manager 2. Kevin P Fitzgerald Sunlife Director of Learning and Development 3. Aoife O'Brien Global Head of Recruitment at Taxback Group 4. John O'Shaughnessy Managing Director Clancy Construction 5. Cian O'Brien Head of Innovation, Digital & Engineering at Sanofi 6. Brendan O'Neill - Director PwC Ireland 7. Chief Officer Paddy Boyce Irish Prison Service College
	5. ATP stakeholders - ETB [FET Directors]/community/guidance counsellors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mr Jason Ryan Deputy Principal Dungarvan WWETB 2. Ms Noreen Reilly Principal WWETB
3.15-3.45pm	Private Review Team Meeting	
3:45-4:00	BREAK	
4:00-4:30	Private Review Team Meeting	
4:30-5.15	Meeting with Executive Board	<p>Ms Elaine Sheridan VP for Corporate Affairs and Finance Dr Richard Hayes VP for Strategy Dr Mark White VP for Research, Innovation and Graduate Studies Dr Suzanne Denieffe Head of School of Humanities Dr Peter McLoughlin Head of School of Science and Computing Dr Helen Murphy Head of School of Lifelong Learning & Education Dr Tom O'Toole Head of School of Business Dr Ken Thomas Head of School of Engineering Dr John Wells Head of School of Health Sciences</p>

TIME	GROUP	PEOPLE
5:15-5:45	Private Review Team Meeting	
6.00-7.00	HOLD: Optional Chair/ Coordinating Reviewer & Private Review Team Meetings	

26th November Feedback

TIME	GROUP	PEOPLE
9:00-10:30	Private Review Team Meeting	
10:30-11:00	Break for Review Team	
10:30-11:00	QQI and Institutional Coordinator	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr Derek O'Byrne, Registrar and Vice-President Academic Affairs 2. Dr Paul O'Leary, Head of Quality Promotion
11.00-11.30	Meeting with QQI	
11.30-12.30	Private Review Team Meeting	
12.30-12:45	Meeting with President	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prof Willie Donnelly
12:45-1.45	Lunch	
1.45-2.15	Oral Report	
2.15-5.30	Private Review Team Meeting	

Glossary of Terms

Glossary of terms, acronyms and abbreviations from this report

Term	Definition
2012 Act	Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
AC	Academic Council
AQR	Annual Quality Report (formerly Annual Institutional Quality Report; AIQR)
AskWIT	WIT's one-hub service point for students
Athena SWAN	Charter recognising and encouraging advances in gender equality
ATP	Access, Transfer and Progression
CAO	Central Applications Office
CEDRE	Centre for Enterprise Development and Regional Economy
CINNTE	The name given to QQI's first cyclical review period
CTEL	Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning
DAB	Designated Awarding Body
DARE	Disability Access Route to Education
EIRC	Eco-Innovation Research Centre
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESG, 2015	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
EU	European Union
GB	Governing Body
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IoT	Institute of Technology
ISER	Institutional Self-Evaluation Report
ISO	International Organization for Standardization

IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
IT	Information Technology
ITC	IT Carlow
KPI(s)	Key Performance Indicator(s)
MRV	Main Review Visit
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centre
NCRI	Nutrition Research Centre Ireland
NFETL	National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NStEP	National Student Engagement Programme
PAC	Postgraduate Admissions Centre
PG	Postgraduate
PGR	Postgraduate Research
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy (/Postgraduate Doctoral Research Degree)
PMBRC	Pharmaceutical and Molecular Biotechnology Research Centre
PMDS	Performance Management and Development System
QA	Quality Assurance
QDM	Quality Dialogue Meeting
QE	Quality Enhancement
QAG	(QQI's Statutory) Quality Assurance Guidelines
QE	Quality Enhancement
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAF	Student Assistance Fund
SAR	Self-Assessment Report
SEAM	South-East Applied Materials
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SLL	Student Life and Learning
SMT	Senior Management Team
SU	Students' Union
SWOT Analysis	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats Analysis
THEA	Technological Higher Education Association
ToR	Terms of Reference
TSSG	Telecommunications, Software and Systems Group

TU	Technological University
TUSEI	Technological University for South-East Ireland
UG	Undergraduate
VP	Vice-President
VPAAR	Vice-President Academic Affairs and Registrar
WIT	Waterford Institute of Technology
WITSU	Waterford Institute of Technology Students' Union
WRTC	Waterford Regional Technical College

