

Institutional Review Report 2020

Institute of Technology Carlow



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, its regard to the expectations set out in the QQI quality assurance guidelines or their equivalent

and adherence to other relevant QQI policies and procedures. CINNTE reviews also explore how institutions have enhanced their teaching, learning and research and their quality assurance systems and how well institutions have aligned their approach to their own mission, quality indicators and benchmarks.

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

- the publication of terms of reference
- a process of self-evaluation and 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
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken.

This institutional review of Institute of Technology Carlow was conducted by an independent review team in line with the Terms of Reference in Appendix A. This is the report of the findings of the review team.

The Review Process

Each CINNTE review is carried out by an international team of independent experts and peers. The 2020 institutional review of Institute of Technology Carlow (IT Carlow) was conducted by a team of six reviewers selected by QQI. The review team was briefed by, and received training from, QQI on 12 February 2020 and the planning visit to Institute of Technology Carlow took place on 13 February 2020.

The main review visit had initially been scheduled to take place on site at IT Carlow in March 2020; however, 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 main review visit was rescheduled as a virtual visit. In collaboration with the institution and review team, QQI produced a set of operational guidelines in respect of the virtual visit and a revised main review visit timetable was agreed.

This CINNTE review for IT Carlow is the first QQI CINNTE review to be conducted virtually. A full schedule of 28 stakeholder meetings was held with the review team between 10 and 30 June 2020, during which the full review team met students, staff and external stakeholders.

The efficacy of the virtual review process was confirmed by the review team chair on behalf of the whole review team in the oral feedback report provided to IT Carlow.

The president of IT Carlow, 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 IT Carlow in planning, preparing for and implementing the virtual review process.



The Review Team

CHAIR

In August 2019, **Dr Elsa M. Núñez** began her 14th year as the president of Eastern Connecticut State University. She came to the university in 2006 following more than 20 years as a senior administrator at such institutions as City University of New York (CUNY) and the University of Maine System.

Dr Núñez has been a tenured faculty member of English at Ramapo State College, the College of Staten Island (CUNY), and Lehman College (CUNY). She also holds a faculty position as Professor of English at Eastern.

Author of two books 'Pursuing Diversity' (1992) and 'Hanging Out and Hanging On: From the Projects to the Campus' (2014), Dr. Núñez also has published numerous articles on language acquisition, diversity and other education issues.

Dr Núñez has firmly established Eastern's reputation as Connecticut's only public liberal arts university. Academic enhancements range from an increase in full-time faculty positions to the development of new majors. Under Dr Núñez's leadership, Eastern is ranked by U.S. News and World Report as the top public New England regional university in the North; has been recognised 10 times by the Chronicle of Higher Education as a 'Great College to Work For'; has been named a U.S. Green College by the Princeton Review 10 years in a row; and is recognised as one of the Top Workplaces in Connecticut by the Hartford Courant.

Dr Núñez received her B.A. from Montclair State College, her M.A. from Fairleigh Dickinson University and her doctorate from Rutgers University.

COORDINATING REVIEWER

Professor Pádraig Ó Duibhir is Deputy Dean and Director of International Relations at DCU Institute of Education. He is also Director of SEALBHÚ, DCU Research Centre for the Learning and Teaching of Irish. Prior to that he was Registrar of St Patrick's College, Drumcondra.

As a teacher educator and a former primary school principal, Professor Ó Duibhir brings a wealth of

practical knowledge and academic experience to his current roles. His work in curriculum development over many decades has been instrumental in shaping language curricula in Ireland. His major research interests lie in second language acquisition and pedagogy, and he is published widely on the teaching of languages to young learners. His 2018 monograph, *Immersion Education: Lessons from a Minority Language Context*, explored language attainment in young learners in minority language immersion programmes.

Professor Ó Duibhir serves on a broad range of DCU committees and has participated in in-house quality reviews. He also served on several boards including the boards of the Teaching Council and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Conor Moss is Group Director – Business Engagement, Skills and Employability at Sheffield Hallam University. Conor is an experienced academic with 20 years' experience across further and higher education. He started his academic career specialising in strategic management, leadership and organisational development. He has extensive experience developing successful educational partnerships with both the private and public sectors. As Group Director – Business Engagement, Skills and Employability Conor oversees the delivery of work-based employer provision and the delivery of embedded employability and employer focused curriculum.

Conor is passionate about working with employer and education partners to provide learners with access to higher-level skills, regardless of academic background or career stage. He leads the development of SHU's Work-Based Learning Framework which has supported rapid growth in Degree Apprenticeships, for which Conor has strategic oversight. He holds several board positions including Sheffield City Region LEP Skills, Barnsley College and University Vocational Awards Council.

Conor is a Senior Fellow of the HEA and a Fellow of the Learning Performance Institute.

LEARNER REPRESENTATIVE

Dr Sarah Markham completed her PhD in Physics at the University of Limerick in 2020. She is an awardee of the Institute of Physics Ireland Rosse Medal for graduate research communication. Sarah holds a BSc in Mathematics and Physics and a MSc in Biomedical Device Materials. In her current role, she has been involved in the coordination and induction of 19 visiting international researchers into the MOSAIC research group. Sarah also held the role of Logistics, Administration and Website Management for the 17th International Symposium on Electrets conference held in Limerick in September 2019.

As a member of the University of Limerick Physics Department's Equality and Diversity Committee, Sarah contributed to the successful application for Athena SWAN Bronze Award for the department. Her current role in the committee is to encourage under-represented groups to engage with physics and consider pursuing physics to third level education and beyond.

IRISH QUALITY ASSURANCE REPRESENTATIVE

Caroline Loughnane is Academic Secretary at the National University of Ireland Galway. As a member of the University Management Team she contributes to the strategic leadership of the university and is responsible for oversight of strategic and operational planning in the academic units.

As Academic Secretary at NUI Galway, Ms. Loughnane is the Principal Officer in respect of the academic administration of the university. She has lead responsibility for strategic planning and management in academic matters, including the development and implementation of the university's academic policies and plans. She also leads the university's strategic dialogue process with the Higher Education Authority.

Prior to this, Ms. Loughnane held the role of Director of Marketing and Communications at NUI Galway. She led a major brand development project for the university, which successfully repositioned the university in the higher education market place, as well as managing the university's marketing, communications and student recruitment functions.

Ms. Loughnane has also held the position of Head of Marketing at the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom where she gained excellent experience of operating in a highly competitive higher education landscape at a research-intensive university.

Ms. Loughnane holds a degree in English and History, and a MRes. in English Literature from NUI Galway, as well as a Postgraduate Diploma in Education and a Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing.

Over the last sixteen years, Ms. Loughnane has developed a comprehensive understanding of the higher education landscape in Ireland, the UK and Europe. She has a strong interest in the development of higher education systems and keeping up to date with system-wide developments and approaches, nationally and outside of Ireland. She has experience of setting strategic direction at organisational level and managing strategy implementation to ensure the delivery of objectives.

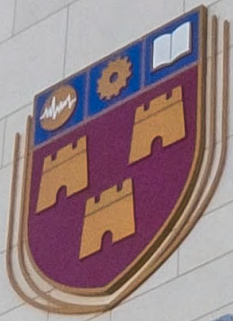
INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVE

Colm Eustace recently retired as CEO of Glanbia Agribusiness, a business unit of Glanbia Plc. He had held this position since 2005. Prior to this he held numerous senior management positions within Glanbia Agribusiness from when he joined in 1985. Currently Mr Eustace is working as a Business Consultant and an Executive Coach and Mentor.

Mr Eustace is currently a non-executive director of Grasslands Fertiliser Kilkenny Ltd., South Eastern Port Services Ltd., D. Walsh and Sons Ltd. and The Malting Company of Ireland. He holds a degree in Agricultural Economics from University College Dublin, a Master's Degree in Business Administration from Dublin City University, a Professional Diploma in Corporate Governance from the UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School and is completing a Professional Diploma in Business and Executive Coaching from the UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School.

Section

1



INSTITUTE of
TECHNOLOGY
CARLOW

Introduction and Context

Introduction and Context

Introduction

As part of the CINNTE cycle of institutional review of institutes of technology (IoTs), Institute of Technology, Carlow (IT Carlow, the institute) submitted in December 2019 an Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) and engaged in a (virtual) review team visit (June 2020).

MISSION AND VISION

The IT Carlow mission is: 'Engage, Learn, Innovate, Lead' which is focussed on 'empowering individuals to lead better lives, driving the creation of a vibrant economy and building strong communities'.

IT Carlow has developed values statements around the following six themes:

- Learner Experience
- Knowledge
- Achievement of Excellence
- Connectedness
- Creativity and Innovation
- Ethics

The institute's major strategic focus in the coming years is to achieve status as a multi-campus technological university — the Technological University of South East Ireland (TUSEI) – under provisions of the Technological Universities Act of 2018 and in line with the Project Ireland 2040 report. IT Carlow has been working closely with Waterford Institute of Technology under a 2017 memorandum of understanding (MOU) to explore TUSEI development. The institute's extended vision is to be a 'leading European Technological University' by 2030.

GOVERNANCE

IT Carlow's governance structures include a Governing Body composed of a chairperson, president and 17 members appointed under various sections of the Technology Higher Education Association (THEA)

Code. An Academic Council and its six subcommittees support the institute's educational programmes, and committees are also organised to support in the areas of ethics, health and safety, and equality, diversity and inclusivity.

BACKGROUND

IT Carlow is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2020. The institute has campuses in Carlow (1970), Wexford (1995) and Wicklow (2005) with 840 staff, a 60 per cent increase in the academic staff headcount in six years. Enrolments have grown by 55 per cent over the past seven years (2011–12 to 2018–19), with IT Carlow becoming Ireland's second largest institute of technology (of 11), at close to 8,500 enrolments – 55 per cent of these being full-time students – as well as more than 1,200 postgraduate students. Of special note are STEM enrolments, which have more than doubled in the past six years. In addition, the percentage of postgraduate researchers at IT Carlow in 2017-18 was second only to Athlone IT in the technological sector. Projections envisage that enrolments will increase to more than 10,000 over the next decade.

The institute has the highest percentage of postgraduate learners in the technological higher education sector and the highest percentage of lifelong learners in the higher education sector. The institute also includes ample international representation, with 88 different nationalities represented; 15 per cent of the student body is from outside Ireland. There have been more than 55,000 graduates from IT Carlow over the past 50 years, with more than 50 per cent of these remaining in the south-east of Ireland and Dublin.

The institute offers 68 bachelor's degrees or Higher Certificate programmes on its Carlow campus, and 15 on the Wexford campus. In addition, Carlow offers 25 master's level or Higher Diploma programmes, with Wexford offering 12 and Wicklow, eight. Students also benefit from student life activities, which include



65 sports clubs and societies that enjoy 40 per cent student participation. (IT Carlow has led the IT sector over the past few years in the arena of athletic achievement.)

The institute has active partnerships with organisations ranging from the Irish Defence Forces to An Cosán in Dublin (an institute offering adult education to women from disadvantaged areas in West Dublin), the Gestalt Institute of Ireland, the Tivoli Institute, and the Dublin Art Therapy Centre. A further educational partnership was recently added, with a new memorandum of agreement (MOA) signed in 2019 with Carlow College, St. Patricks. Part of the funding of more than €27 million available nationally for SMEs provided by the EU and other sources has supported IT Carlow's work in research and development, enterprise development, and other support of small- and medium-sized businesses.

Over the past few years, IT Carlow has taken several steps to enhance institutional planning and effectiveness, including development of the 2019-23 Strategic Plan—which built on the work of previous

planning including the 2014–18 Strategic Plan; the creation of the Office of Institutional Research and Planning; and the creation of the Office of Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity. The institute received Athena SWAN Bronze accreditation in 2019 for its efforts to support equity and social justice issues.

Top employers of the institute's graduates include Intel, IBM, Pfizer, Citibank and BNY Mellon. IT Carlow also maintains close relationships with local businesses, particularly in the technology, automated manufacturing, healthcare, and insurance sectors, to meet their workforce development needs.

FACILITIES

A €150 million master plan has increased floor space at IT Carlow by 40 per cent, led to the construction of four new buildings since 2012, and launched a €25 million South Sports Campus scheduled for mid-2020 completion. A €25 million Centre for Applied and Health Science will begin in 2021 and a Corporate Support Services Building will commence construction in 2021.

Contextual Factors

Contextual factors under which IT Carlow has undertaken its self-evaluation and CINNTE review include external forces, i.e. national and international social and technology trends; the institutional objectives found in IT Carlow's 2019–2023 Strategic Plan; and national and European Union goals for higher education.

TUSEI

As set out above, the institute's major strategic focus in the coming years is to achieve status as a multi-campus technological university (TU) under provisions of the Technological Universities Act of 2018 and in line with the Project Ireland 2040 report, and the institute has been working closely with Waterford Institute of Technology under a 2017 MOU to explore TUSEI development.

As referred to above, the institute's extended vision is to be a 'leading European Technological University' by 2030 and a partner with other higher education organisations in Ireland to position the nation as a Global Innovation Leader. TUSEI will have campuses in Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford, and Wexford, connecting and aligning educational resources to achieve maximum social and economic impact for the region. Envisioned is an educational continuum for learners, researchers, and collaborative partners, where a culture of engagement and innovation fuels new cross-disciplinary ideas and programmes. IT Carlow's commitment to lifelong learners, its student-centred culture, new innovations in its research capacity, and regional partnerships position IT Carlow well to meet its vision to be a leading technological university, and respond to Ireland's National Strategy for Higher Education (2011) to provide students with transitions and career pathways to foster employment, lifelong learning, civic engagement, and regional economic growth.

IT Carlow's financial management over the years has been sound, enabling the institute to grow its physical plant while enjoying a budget surplus, placing IT Carlow on a sound financial footing as it works towards TU status. The Governing Body will need to consider how to strategically use its budget surplus to advance the institution's mission and strategic objectives, particularly in the area of research and faculty/student ratio in the context of TU status.

RESEARCH

IT Carlow's 2019–23 Strategic Plan establishes research as a major institutional strategic objective in the coming years. The following are all components of IT Carlow's research objectives:

- growing institutional capacity for inter-disciplinary research
- responding to regional, national, and European Union needs
- doubling the number of postgraduate research students
- ensuring that research faculty comprise at least 50 per cent of total academic staff
- supporting entrepreneurs and emerging businesses in the region
- balancing research and teaching among academic staff
- increasing collaboration with other institutions of higher education and business partners.

The growth in the number of faculty with a PhD (which has almost tripled from 18 per cent in 2012) demonstrates the institute's commitment to research and expands IT Carlow's capacity to conduct research as a technological university. Current Centres of Research and Enterprise (CORE) include:

- Bioenvironmental Technologies
- Engineering
- Applied Social Studies
- Educational Research
- Industrial Design and Product Innovation
- Interactive Applications Software and Networks
- Men's Health and Rehabilitative Services
- the Business Research Group.

Existing supports for staff interested in engaging in research include the Conference Fund; four hours of teaching release time to write a European Union application; and an institutional repository for publications. IT Carlow is also considering use of Scopus. Further, the institute has been engaged in significant work with industry on industry-funded research.

PARTNERSHIPS

IT Carlow continues to pursue partnerships at local, regional, national, and international levels. (See Background section for details.)

IT Carlow's 2019–2023 Strategic Plan calls for increased knowledge transfer and applied research in support of entrepreneurs, small businesses, and communities, including increases in the number of agreements with industry partners and spin-out companies.

Educational partnerships are also part of IT Carlow's Strategic Plan. (As outlined above, the institute recently entered into a new MOA with Carlow College, St. Patricks.) Each faculty has an objective to develop at least one transnational collaborative academic programme. As educational partnerships are developed, the institute is committed to ensuring that programme offerings include postgraduate progression opportunities.

The institute's commitment to partnerships extends to collaborations with regional governance and public, private, and voluntary organisations to support economic development, entrepreneurship, work-based learning, and employment opportunities for IT Carlow students.

DIVERSITY

The Office of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity is charged with developing and implementing policies and practices that promote equity and social justice on IT Carlow campuses. The Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity Committee serves as a collaborative, campus-wide forum to promote a dialogue around issues of diversity, social justice and inclusion and support institutional progress toward related goals.

As part of the 2019–2023 Strategic Plan, IT Carlow will implement the recommendations of the 'Expert Group on Gender Equality in Higher Education' (2016) and those of the 'National Taskforce on Gender Equality in Higher Education' (2018).

Through student support services, cultural activities, and other actions and measures outlined in the IT Carlow Gender Equality Action Plan (2018), the institute intends to further advance gender equity on its campuses.

As set out above, IT Carlow received Athena SWAN Bronze accreditation in 2019 for its efforts to support equality, diversity, and inclusivity. The institute also aims to achieve individual department Bronze Awards.

IT Carlow is committed to supporting educational access to lifelong learning, especially for underrepresented groups, through equitable educational and career pathways and new pedagogical tools, as well as supportive student services on campus and online. Strategies include recognition of prior learning, identifying barriers to educational access, and supporting non-traditional learners (IT Carlow has set as its goal that 40 per cent of all students should be part-time learners).

IT Carlow is also committed to being an active global partner. The IT Carlow Internationalisation Strategy is a blueprint for embedding a global perspective in all programmes. In addition, the institute's aims to increase international enrolment to 15 per cent of the total (achieved in 2020), while also encouraging IT Carlow students to engage in study abroad programmes.

SUSTAINABILITY

In keeping with national and international sustainability goals, IT Carlow is committed to becoming a carbon neutral organisation. The institute's 2019–2023 Strategic Plan outlines strategies to balance enrolment growth and institutional development with environmental sustainability in keeping with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (zero hunger; no poverty; health; gender equality; education; sustainable cities; clean energy; etc.)

Key components of this objective include the adoption of sustainability measures for all campus infrastructure improvements/construction; upgrading the energy efficiency of existing infrastructures; maintaining 'Third Level Education Best Performer' status for reducing energy consumption and developing energy saving programmes; and teaching IT Carlow students to adopt sustainable practices. Achieving 'Green Flag' status and developing an IT Carlow Waste Management and Recycling Strategy are also components of IT Carlow's ongoing commitment to sustainability.

Approach to Quality Assurance

IT Carlow has a formal structure and an internal culture that supports quality assurance and enhancement. An atmosphere of collaboration is expressed in IT Carlow's ISER, and was reflected in interviews of administrators, faculty, staff, and students during the review team's virtual site visit. The approach to quality assurance aligns with, and is responsive to, QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015).

As acknowledged above, IT Carlow has in recent years taken several steps to enhance institutional planning and effectiveness, including development of the 2019-23 Strategic Plan — which built on the work of previous planning including the 2014–18 Strategic Plan; the creation of the Office of Institutional Research and Planning; and the creation of the Office of Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity. All of these steps contribute to the institute's effectiveness in identifying and responding to opportunities to improve the quality of IT Carlow systems, operations, and student learner outcomes.

Formal structures for evaluating institutional quality and recommending quality improvements include:

- the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee of the Academic Council
- annual academic programme reviews
- quinquennial programmatic reviews
- Professional Management and Support Staff (PMMS) Reviews.

In addition, the Audit Committee to Governing Body provides additional review and feedback on the institute's quality initiative and performance.

Policy initiatives that address quality assurance throughout the institute's programmes include the IT Carlow Graduate Attribute Framework; the IT Carlow Learner Engagement and Progression Framework (LEAP); and the IT Carlow Roadmap for Blended Flexible and Distributed Learning.

While the institute's focus on the quality of the student experience extends across all areas of academic and student support operations, first-year and non-traditional students are recognised as needing specialised services to support their retention and progression. Faculty development, including engaging new faculty in research and encouraging new staff to take a Master's Degree in Teaching and Learning, is a key component of IT Carlow's commitment to quality. IT Carlow's Centre for Teaching and Learning also travels to other campuses to provide professional development at all three campuses.

Data and external input from employers and industry representatives are used systematically in programmatic review to ensure external validation. IT Carlow provides a programme for the training of external examiners, and staff training to engage effectively with external examiners.

The institute is also taking steps to embed the IT Carlow Graduate Attributes (student learner outcomes) across its academic and student life programming so that IT Carlow graduates:

- acquire the skills and competencies specific to their programme of study
- are socially responsible, active citizens
- possess global awareness
- have employability and entrepreneurial skills.

To ensure that these Graduate Attribute outcomes are achieved, IT Carlow continues to work to embed desired student learner outcomes in academic programmes, sports and society activities, and community engagement/volunteer programming.

Section 2

Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)

Methodology Used to Prepare the ISER

Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)

Methodology used to prepare the ISER

IT Carlow began the process of preparing for institutional review in January 2019. Following initial consultation between the Senior Executive Team, management teams and Academic Council, the Institutional Review Steering Committee, chaired by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Registrar (VPAAR), was established in February 2019 to prepare for the institutional review.

The Steering Committee is composed of 14 members, including two members of the Senior Management Team (VPAAR [Chair] and VP Research and Development), three heads of faculty, two heads of department, two heads of professional support services, key staff members including the Director of Institutional Planning & Research, Head of the Teaching and Learning Centre, Chair of the Academic Regulations Committee of Academic Council and Assistant Registrar, as well as the Students' Union President and VP Education, with the QA and Collaborations Officer in attendance. The group met on a regular basis throughout the project.

The Steering Committee adopted a consultative process when agreeing on the structure and thematic content of the ISER. The group held workshops to discuss the objectives of the CINTE institutional review process and alignment to the institute's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, and agreed on seven themes for the institutional review as follows:

- The Learner Experience
- Collaboration and Engagement
- Learning and Teaching
- Research, Innovation and Enterprise
- Management and Governance
- Quality Assurance and Enhancement
- Communication and Information

Sub-groups were established to examine each theme and set out terms of reference. Membership of the seven sub-groups is set out in the ISER. Each sub-group addressed a discrete theme, consulting with relevant stakeholders, reviewing existing quality review reports and in some cases commissioning independent external reviews – for example, reviews of the effectiveness of Governing Authority, and of Academic Council. Each sub-group prepared a chapter on its theme for the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report, with a more detailed report to inform other quality enhancement work in IT Carlow.

Significant efforts were made to consult with a wide range of stakeholders from across the organisation during the self-evaluation phase, including staff, students, and Governing Body members, as well as with collaborative partners and other key external stakeholders. As the project progressed, Governing Body, Academic Council and its committees, the management team, staff representative bodies and the wider staff groupings, and students were briefed on the progress of the ISER on a regular basis.

The institutional review was discussed regularly at Senior Executive Team meetings and management meetings. The VPAAR presented progress updates to Academic Council and Governing Body throughout the project.

At staff briefings at institution, faculty, department, and function levels, progress on the self-evaluation process and the recommendations were outlined and discussed. Briefings were also provided to the students' union and the Class Representative Council.

In December 2019, the draft ISER was taken to Senior Executive Team and management, Academic Council and Governing Body for comments and subsequent approval.



The ISER is a comprehensive document that provides a clear outline of the approach to quality assurance and enhancement at IT Carlow. It is also evident from the document that the institute takes an integrated approach to planning and quality assurance with a clear alignment between the institutional review and the institute's Strategic Plan, its HEA Compact, Annual Institutional Quality Reports, Faculty and Professional Support Service Quality Reviews.

In general, there is coherence of approach between the ISER and the AIQRs of the three previous years. There is evidence of a good understanding of both ESG 2015 and QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines.

Quality assurance approaches across the full suite of the institute's activities are set out clearly in the ISER, and it is evident that quality assurance and enhancement are actively managed by the institute. Additionally, the three AIQRs provided are well written and demonstrate a strong commitment to a quality culture and a comprehensive approach to quality assurance across all dimensions of the institute's activity. There is demonstrable development and improvement in quality enhancement over the three years of the AIQRs.

IT Carlow used the opportunity created by the institutional review and the development of the ISER to take a reflective approach, leading to the

identification by each sub-group of a number of recommendations that are currently being implemented. An example of the recommendations emerging from the development of the ISER includes a recognition of the need to further embed IT Carlow Graduate Attributes in curricula as part of programmatic review cycle in 2020-21.

In particular, the review team endorses the approach of the Steering Committee and the sub-group on quality assurance and enhancement in commissioning an external review of IT Carlow's quality assurance system in 2019 in preparation for the institutional review, and for the preparation of the Quality Work Plan. The review team also notes with approval IT Carlow's commissioning of external reviews of the effectiveness of its Governing Authority and its Academic Council as part of its preparation for the institutional review.

In general, the balance between description and reflection/evaluation is well-judged and appropriate across all sections of the ISER. The identification of a substantial number of recommendations for further attention is indicative of the developmental approach taken to the self-evaluation exercise.

The review team notes that the addition of further case studies to the ISER would have been beneficial in making some of the initiatives mentioned more tangible.

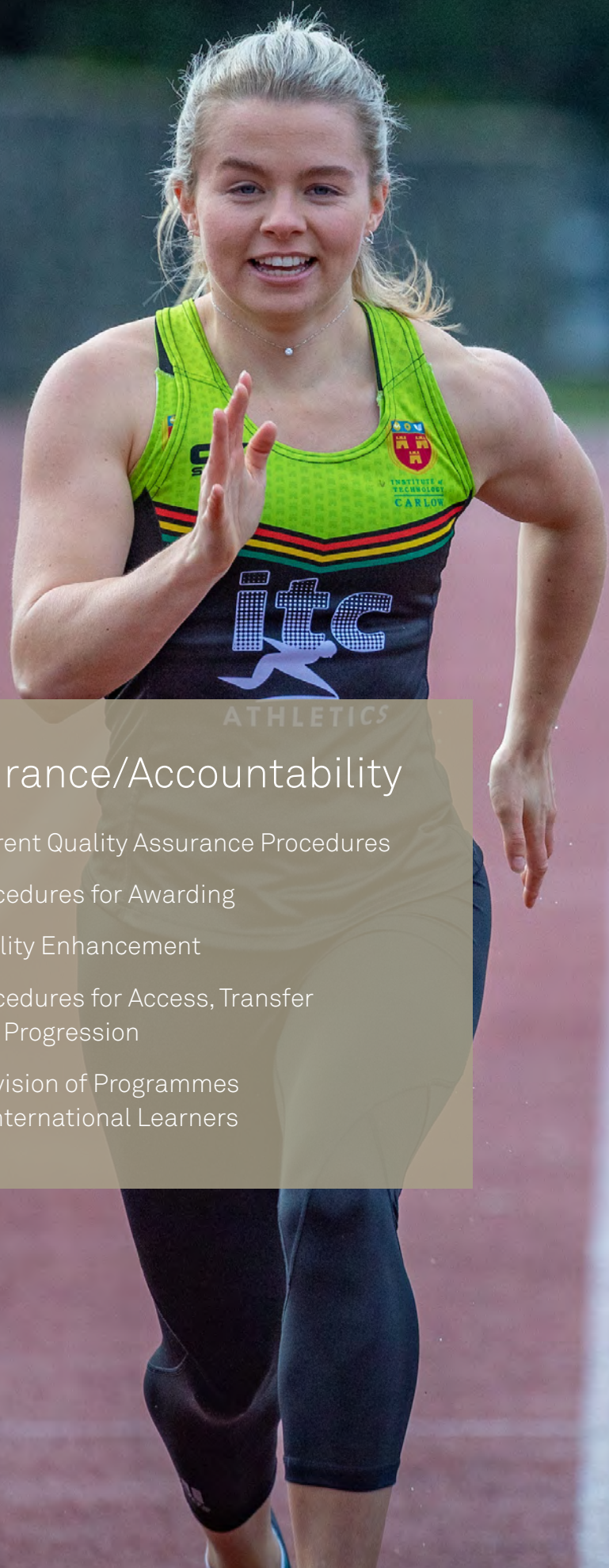
The review team also notes that the use of data and key performance indicators across the ISER was limited. The use of data to drive decision-making was not evident in the document, nor was it clear which metrics are used to measure performance across different areas of activity. The review team notes that the ISER would have been enhanced by the addition of the performance metrics used to underpin decision-making. Reviewers used several opportunities during the main review visit to seek further information on the use of data to inform decision-making at the institute in order to triangulate its views on areas of strategic importance.

COMMENDATION

The review team commends IT Carlow on the preparation of a comprehensive and reflective ISER document and recommends the publication of the document on the institute's quality webpage.



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 PROCEDURES

Since 1 January 2020, Institute of Technology Carlow (IT Carlow), under the commencement order for Section 36 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019, has been a Designated Awarding Body (DAB). This empowers IT Carlow to make awards up to Level 9 on the NFQ for taught and research programmes. In addition, IT Carlow has delegated authority at NFQ Level 10 in the research areas of Biological, Molecular and Environmental Science and research approval to NFQ Level 10 in Health Science, Engineering and Computing.

Quality assurance and enhancement procedures at IT Carlow are informed by ESG 2015 and by relevant QQI Statutory QA Guidelines (including sector-specific guidelines for institutes of technology and relevant topic-specific guidelines).

Since the last institutional review in 2010, IT Carlow has been undergoing rapid change and growth and will continue on this transformative trajectory into the future. As new complexities and developments occur within the institute, new roles, committees, and working groups have been established to ensure appropriate policies and procedures are put in place. These policies and procedures signal the institute's commitment to ensuring a valuable learner experience and provision of high-quality learning facilities, resources, and opportunities.

A summary of the key milestones for IT Carlow in terms of strategic planning and quality enhancement since the last institutional review in 2010 include the following:

- the signing of an MOU to initiate the TUSEI project to pursue technological university status (2012)
- a major Quality Assurance and Enhancement Gap Analysis and preparation of a work plan (2012)
- delegated authority extended to all NFQ Level 9 programmes (2013), and research approval granted for some NFQ Level 10 programmes (2018)
- attainment of designated awarding body status up to NFQ Level 9 (January 2020)
- signing of an MOA with the Irish Defence Forces (2014)
- appointment of CORE Research Directors (2014)
- commencement of Professional Support Service Reviews (2015)
- Research Strategy 2016-2020 published (2016)
- new Offices of Institutional Planning & Research, and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion established (2017)
- HEA Compacts for the periods 2014-17 and 2018-20
- Athena SWAN Bronze Award secured (2019)

As detailed above under section 2, reviewers found that the institute's Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Reports (AIQRs) were well written and consistent year-on-year and demonstrated significant development in the last number of years.

The details presented in IT Carlow's AIQRs are aligned with ESG 2015 and with QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines as well as relevant QQI topic- and sector-specific guidelines. Programmes and modules offered by the institute are aligned with

the NFQ. The AIQRs present both qualitative and quantitative evidence of the monitoring of quality within the institute.

The AIQRs highlight the strengths of the institute in terms of the inclusion of all stakeholders in development and implementation of policy; the communication of this policy to the public; the development of teaching staff; and the implementation of student-centred learning. Overall, the AIQRs demonstrate the commitment of IT Carlow to quality and its enhancement.

The central role of quality assurance at IT Carlow is further articulated by staff and students at all levels in the organisation, and the alignment of quality assurance procedures with the institute's Strategic Plan 2019-2023 is evident. Learner experience is the over-arching core value of the institute, sustained and enriched by a commitment to knowledge and the achievement of excellence; to the principles and practice of connectedness; to creativity and innovation; and to ensuring high standards of ethical behaviour in all its endeavours. The Strategic Plan was approved by the Governing Body, whose engagement with and oversight of the setting of measurable goals was evident during the main review visit. Ultimate responsibility for oversight of quality assurance at IT Carlow rests with the Governing Body as the statutory authority that guides and oversees the strategic direction and management of the organisation.

One of the main quality assurance functions of the Governing Body is the appointment of the institute's Academic Council to assist Governing Body members in the planning, co-ordination, oversight and development of the academic mission of IT Carlow and to support the Governing Body in protecting, maintaining and developing academic standards. This responsibility is discharged by means of a series of six committees, each of which includes representation from postgraduate and undergraduate learners, academic staff and institute management. In addition, professional support staff are routinely co-opted onto these committees to provide expertise where necessary. The six committees are:

1. **Academic Regulations**, which makes regulations governing the selection, admission, retention, graduation and exclusion of learners, as well as the making of awards
2. **Collaborative Provision**, which has oversight of all aspects of collaborative provision
3. **Programme Planning and Validation**, which is responsible for the development, monitoring, and review of all taught programmes
4. **Quality Assurance and Enhancement**, which protects, enhances, and develops academic standards for all programmes
5. **Research and Development**, which is responsible for the planning, approval, and review of all postgraduate research programmes
6. **Teaching, Learning and Support Services**, which develops policies to support excellence in teaching and a quality learning experience.

The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee has a specific charge to safeguard and enhance academic standards for all programmes. External examiner reports are submitted to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee for review. External examiners are a key pillar of the quality assurance process. The institute strives to attract international examiners wherever possible to ensure greater independence in the process. The review team noted that the training that IT Carlow provides to external examiners in its processes is good practice, while a separate training session is also provided to staff on the preparation of documentation for examiners.

Similarly, the Programme Planning and Validation Committee sets out a robust and detailed process for the design and approval of new programmes, with learner involvement throughout the process. During the main review visit, the Quality & Collaborations Officer outlined a comprehensive three-stage validation and approval process for new programmes, with all programmes reviewed by both an external validation panel and by Academic Council.

The reports of the six sub-committees of Academic Council are sent to Academic Council for review, and then to Governing Body for approval. The review team noted with approval that the Audit Committee of Governing Body also performs 'spot checks' of quality reviews to ensure that action plans are developed and implemented, and that the quality loop is fully closed. The VPAAR is the main link between Academic Council and the senior management team and is

supported in discharging his responsibility for quality assurance by the Assistant Registrar and the Quality & Collaborations Officer. A comprehensive quality manual provides a road map for and overview of:

- the overarching policy and procedures for quality assurance
- the governance framework
- procedures for quality assurance in teaching, learning and research
- on-going monitoring and review
- the learner voice
- procedure for the design, development, validation and withdrawal of programmes
- admission, progression and completion
- staff development
- learner supports
- information management.

The Quality Work Plan is included in the Quality Manual and details the schedule of policy reviews. Policies are continuously updated to reflect changing legislation and guidelines. The most recent updates reflect the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), equality diversity and inclusion (EDI) requirements and ESG 2015. In the review cycle, each policy is examined to ensure it is fit for purpose and updated to incorporate all relevant input.

The review cycle at IT Carlow includes faculty reviews, which include reviewing all programmes of education on a rolling five-year cycle; all programmes also undergo an annual review where external examiner feedback is addressed. Items such as assessment methods and programme delivery are discussed at programme boards and changes proposed.

For each collaborative partnership, the Collaborative Provision Policy clearly defines a schedule of reviews, which commence with annual reviews. These are supported by Joint Quality Visits, which are scheduled with the partner organisation by the Quality & Collaborations Officer. Three years after the signing of the relevant MOA, a formal collaborative review with an external panel is convened and the programme, the learner environment, the assessment methodology and the progression pathways are formally reviewed.

Upon successful completion of the three-year collaborative review, the collaborative programmes revert to the faculty five-year review cycle.

A relatively new development at IT Carlow has been the introduction of Professional, Managerial and Support Services Reviews (PMSS). This process requires each PMSS function to complete a self-evaluation report (SER) which develops a SMART strategic plan for the area. This is reviewed by an external panel of assessors drawn from other HEIs and industry. Review reports and action plans are then approved by the Senior Management Team. The review team notes IT Carlow's introduction of quality reviews for the Professional, Managerial and Support Services units, becoming the first institute of technology to do so, and the participation of students in this process. During the main review visit, it was clear in meetings with heads of department and heads of professional support services that a quality culture permeates the institute. Heads of department provided numerous examples of ways in which the annual programme reviews and 5-year faculty reviews resulted in enhancements being made to programmes and processes. For instance, feedback from academic staff in Science and Engineering demonstrated that industry representation on five-year review panels had a significant impact and materially enhanced programme content, resulting in more industry-ready graduates. These colleagues further noted that five-year reviews had informed resource allocation decisions at management level. It was also clear that learners are included in all review processes and are active members of decision-making committees.

IT Carlow also promotes a high degree of openness and transparency in its approach to quality assurance and makes available on its public website extensive information relating to the outcome of quality reviews. The IT Carlow quality webpage at <https://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/quality.htm> is a model of excellence in terms of transparency and demonstrates a clear commitment to a quality enhancement agenda. The Quality Manual is available on the website, alongside a policies and procedures repository, which includes policies on collaborative provision, joint awards, research, ethics in research, assessment, and academic standards, together with the outcomes of quality review processes and reports, including IT Carlow's Annual Institutional Quality Reports (AIQRs).

COMMENDATION

The review team commends IT Carlow for its strong commitment to QA, as well as evidence of a quality culture across the organisation, supported by robust governance structures.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**GOVERNING BODY**

As referred to above, IT Carlow is governed by a Governing Body, whose principal function is the control and management of strategic direction and institutional policy.

The Body meets ten times a year and is composed of a chairperson, 17 ordinary members (including 6 public nominees, 1 ICTU nominee, 5 industry nominees, 2 student nominees and 3 staff nominees) and the President. The Vice-President for Corporate Affairs acts as Secretary to the Governing Body with the other Vice-Presidents attending in an advisory capacity.

The Governing Body of IT Carlow has adopted the [2018 THEA Code of Governance for Institutes of Technology](#). This has been developed from earlier codes for the sector, based on the Government Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

The institute submits an Annual Governance Statement to the HEA. Based on the response of the HEA to the most recent Annual Governance Statement/Statement of Internal Control submitted by the institute, IT Carlow is compliant with the governance requirement and demonstrates commitment to effective governance.

As part of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Review, the Governing Body undertook a review of its effectiveness in accordance with the provisions of the 2018 Code of Governance for Institutes of Technology, which also satisfied the requirement under the Code of Governance to conduct an external review of the effectiveness of Governing Body. The review took the form of an external evaluation completed by Mazars and included the following elements:

- Project planning and a desk-based review of documents related to Governing Body performance
- Online Governing Body self-evaluation survey, based on the survey template recommended

under the Code of Governance, which aims to capture member views in relation to performance

- One-to-one meetings with a sample of individuals selected by IT Carlow to provide insight into performance
- Assessment of the Governing Body based on the results of the desk-based review and survey responses
- Reporting of observations and recommendations for improvement

The self-evaluation survey and report addressed the following eight thematic areas, with recommendations under each theme:

- i. Role of the Governing Body
- ii. Oversight Agreement
- iii. Governing Body Effectiveness
- iv. Codes of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest
- v. Business and Financial Reporting
- vi. Risk Management, Internal Control, Audit & Risk
- vii. Performance Evaluation
- viii. The Governing Body's Relationship with Management

In general, Governing Body members believe that the Governing Body is performing well. Areas of perceived strength include: setting and understanding of role/responsibility; setting of ethical tone; review of controls and procedures adopted by the institute; strategy setting; the oversight agreement; Governing Body skills; quality of Governing Body papers; and business and financial reporting.

Mazars made eleven recommendations related to the following areas: codifying roles and responsibilities of the Governing Body; Governing Body effectiveness including members' skills assessment; formalising the induction process; developing a code of conduct for members and a conflict of interests policy; external review of risk management arrangements; performance reviews of Governing Body and its sub-committees; and clarifying views of members on the Body's relationship with management. The Governing Body is considering these recommendations and will work to implement them in 2020.

The review team met with five members of the Governing Body, including the Chairperson. It was evident that the Governing Body is engaged with the organisation at an appropriate strategic level, with the Body taking a particular interest in the development of the Strategic Plan. Based on the information available to the review team, the Governing Body demonstrated an appropriate level of challenge to the Executive – for example, in its insistence on including more measurable goals in the institute’s Strategic Plan to facilitate the Body in holding the Executive to account for delivery of the Strategic Plan.

As noted previously, Governing Body appoints Academic Council and its sub-committees. Governing Body oversees the processes for quality assurance but devolves implementation to Academic Council and its sub-committees, particularly the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee. The Body relies on its internal members to raise any quality assurance issues that otherwise do not come up through the formal processes and structures.

The Governing Body has a particularly important role in terms of financial oversight in the institute. The current Governing Body inherited a healthy financial position and has sustained a strong financial discipline over an extended period of time, resulting in substantial surpluses which have enabled extensive capital development of the campus.

COMMENDATION

The review team commends the Governing Body and the Executive for their excellent stewardship of the institute’s resources, which has left IT Carlow in a strong position to pursue its ambition for technological university status.

Reviewers met with members of the Audit Committee, who outlined the oversight role of the committee, as well as the process for internal and external audit annually. It was evident to reviewers that there is good oversight of financial processing from an auditing perspective. The Audit Committee also reviews processes and procedures from Academic Council, and reviews Quality Reports of academic units to ensure action plans are implemented and the quality loop is closed.

The Chair and Governing Body members expressed confidence in the ability of the institute to respond

positively to the challenges presented by online learning in Academic Year 2020-21 following the global COVID-19 emergency and to maintain the core value of a learner-centred approach, based on the tremendous effort of staff to meet learner needs in the last semester.

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Academic Council plays a key role in setting the academic direction of the institute. It is chaired by the President and is composed of 45 members: 19 ex officio, and 26 elected from amongst the technical, administrative and academic staff, along with two registered learners.

The legal basis for Academic Council is section 10 of the Regional Technical Colleges Act, 1992, as amended. This provision sets out its key functions which include:

- designing and developing programmes of study
- establishing structures to implement those programmes
- making recommendations relating to the selection, admission, retention and exclusion of learners generally
- proposing the form and content of policies and regulations to be made relating to the academic affairs of the institute, including the conduct of examinations, determination of examination results, procedures for appeals by learners of the results of such examinations, and the evaluation of academic progress.

Academic Council meets regularly to consider reports from all of the core academic and academic support units within the institute, making decisions on matters of academic policy, procedure and planning. As noted previously, the work of Academic Council is carried out by its six sub-committees:

- i. Academic Regulations
- ii. Programme Planning and Evaluation
- iii. Quality Assurance and Enhancement
- iv. Research and Development
- v. Teaching, Learning and Support Services
- vi. Collaborative Provision



Sub-committees meet monthly and are responsible for initiating and developing policy proposals within their remit that are approved by Council. Each committee is chaired by a member of Council and membership includes both members of Council and co-opted members. Academic Council is accountable directly to the Governing Body, to which it provides regular formal reports.

Over the course of the review visit, the review team met with various members of Academic Council and with the chairs of the Academic Regulations Committee and the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, two sub-committees of Academic Council. The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee is chaired by the VPAAR and is responsible for all policies and procedures related to quality assurance. External examiners' reports are also considered by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, and then reviewed by Academic Council. The VPAAR is a key link between Academic Council and its sub-committees, and both the Senior Management Team and Governing Body, to whom he provides reports on the work of Council. For instance, the VPAAR reports on all five-year strategic reviews of faculty and five-year programme reviews to both senior management and to the Governing Body. The Review of the Effectiveness of Academic

Council is another example of a report that the VPAAR presents to both the Senior Management Team and Governing Body for consideration.

REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ACADEMIC COUNCIL

The review team notes that, as part of the preparation for the institutional review, the Academic Council undertook an external review of its effectiveness.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of Academic Council as an academic governance body, a working group was set up to examine international quality standards, to carry out quantitative and qualitative research on perceptions of Academic Council, and to identify key qualities by which its effectiveness could be determined, including:

- an open culture of debate
- credibility and relevance
- representative of the institute's community
- diversity of opinion
- open access to information
- mutual respect
- scrutiny.

Through an anonymised online survey of all staff, which aimed to assess the level of knowledge of the roles and functions of Academic Council amongst staff, the following conclusions were reached:

- There is limited awareness of the role and activities of the Council and its sub-committees
- Consultation, communication and openness and transparency in decision-making were regarded as areas requiring improvement by Council
- Strengths of Academic Council included: safeguarding and upholding academic standards and policies; maintaining operating standards that ensure that the regulations and quality standards of the institute are enforced and upheld.

The survey was followed by 14 face-to-face interviews with Academic Council members conducted by an external reviewer. It was generally agreed that members were kept informed of relevant strategic developments; that the meetings were well organised and efficiently chaired; and that Council was operationally effective. However, most interviewees felt that there was not sufficient debate at meetings, although they accepted that debate was encouraged. Reasons given for this included that many of the necessary deliberations occur in sub-committee meetings, and that, consequently, detailed scrutiny and debate of policy proposals from committees do not necessarily take place at plenary Council meetings. There was general agreement that Council's committee system worked effectively, in that the committees were trusted to initiate, develop, and finalise policy proposals.

Based on the interviews, the external reviewer concluded that IT Carlow's Academic Council is very effective in its statutory role, primarily by virtue of its committee structure, and that the problems identified were, for the most part, linked to a perceived absence of debate at Council meetings and a perceived lack of engagement with the wider staff body.

In summary, perceptions of the effectiveness of Council appear to centre on three areas: (1) communication of Council's overall activities to the wider staff body, (2) debating policy proposals coming from committees, and (3) the degree of consultation with the wider staff body, specifically in relation to new policy proposals.

Following the review of Academic Council, the following recommendations are made to address the findings regarding enhancing communication and consultation:

- Academic Council committee members should attend Programme Board meetings of a faculty other than their own to brief that Board on new policy proposals;
- Members of staff who have encountered issues with institute policies should be encouraged to communicate these to Council;
- At meetings of Council, the chairs of committees should fully set out the object and effect of any new policy proposals;
- There should be regular review of the induction provided to new members of Council;
- The scope and content of the Academic Council newsletter should be reviewed;
- The number of Professional Support Services staff involved in Academic Council and its committees should be increased.

The review team noted IT Carlow's completion of effectiveness reviews of both Governing Body and Academic Council as part of the planning for the institutional review and its commitment to implementing the recommendations of both reviews.

COMMENDATIONS

1. **The review team commends IT Carlow for its sustenance of a strong financial discipline over an extended period of time resulting in substantial surpluses. These have enabled extensive capital development of the campus in support of its pursuit of technological university status.**
2. **The review team commends IT Carlow for its strong commitment to QA, as well as the evidence of quality culture across the organisation, supported by robust governance structures.**

PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

IT Carlow offers more than 80 full-time CAO programmes to honours degree level, over 30 taught postgraduate programmes to master's degree level, almost 200 lifelong learning programmes and master's and doctoral research programmes with specialisms in ICT, Bio-environmental Technologies, Product Design, Engineering Technologies, Sport and Health Sciences and Social Sciences.

The review team considered IT Carlow's policies and procedures for programme development and for programme monitoring and review. The review team discovered a rigorous policy of programme quality assurance across the life cycle of programmes of education and training at IT Carlow. There is a well-defined process in place for each step from programme ideation through to delivery and quality oversight.

Programme ideation and design is managed within overall IT Carlow programme objectives, which are in line with the Strategic Plan 2019-23, and meet learner requirements in line with QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, both topic- and sector-specific, and QQI Awards Standards.

From programme ideation to actual programme delivery there is a well-defined process in place. At Programme Planning One (PP1), outline planning permission is sought from senior management and approval is required before the programme can proceed to Programme Planning Two (PP2). At the PP2 stage the programme must be assessed by the Programme Planning Committee. Approval is required before referral to the Academic Council for final approval. A Programme Planning Three (PP3) stage completes this life cycle loop of programmes of education and training at IT Carlow and caters for programme deactivation. Deactivation is triggered by lack of demand for a programme.

Within this process, learners trained by the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) are involved in the design of all programmes through their representation on Academic Council and those of its committees relevant to programme delivery. This partnership approach is in line with ESG 2015. The review team encountered some evidence of student participation in programme design during the virtual

interview process with students' union personnel and a representative selection of learners from IT Carlow's student body. However, when the review team met learners from the latter group, they were less aware of being involved in programme design or of taking an active role in the co-creation of the learning process, as is described in the Quality Manual.

External expertise and reference points are integral to programme design at IT Carlow and these elements form critical parts of all programme validation panels. This was confirmed by the review team across numerous platforms from local industry to national representative bodies. Programme Boards, as a matter of course, consult with these external expertise fora to enhance decision-making on new programme design.

At IT Carlow processes relating to programmes of education and training (i.e. design, approval, monitoring and review) are updated periodically to reflect current best practice. An example of such revision is the requirement for differential validation of learner experience across the three separate campuses of IT Carlow: Wicklow, Wexford, and Carlow itself. The review team found ample evidence of equivalence of learner experience at each campus. Covid-19 presented a challenge here in 2020, but investment in virtual learning capability at IT Carlow helped ensure an equivalence of learner experience across the three sites during this crisis.

The rigour of the programme process is ultimately underlined by a comprehensive annual review and entire programmatic review every five years. The annual review is carried out by the Programme Review Board. Under the parameters of this process, no more than 15% of programme content may be changed subsequent to review. The most recent in-depth programmatic review of IT Carlow's entire programme portfolio was completed in 2015-16, with the next scheduled to take place in 2020-21.

The review team notes the rigour of the processes and procedures at IT Carlow for managing programmes of education and training and makes the following commendation:

COMMENDATION

The review team commends IT Carlow for its responsiveness to external and internal feedback in programme design and redevelopment.

STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT

IT Carlow describes itself as an inclusive organisation with a tradition of supporting the development of its people. The review team was given access to comprehensive policies and procedures that support IT Carlow's approach to staff recruitment, management, and development. The review team explored the nature of the academic contract and the limitations in the national contract vis-a-vis the institution's ambitions. There is little flexibility in terms of workload allocation and allocation of research time for early career researchers or research in general.

In spite of these contractual challenges, IT Carlow has made tremendous progress in promoting a research agenda with a long-term commitment to supporting staff to obtain their doctorates. The institution has increased the proportion of academic staff qualified to doctoral level from 18 per cent in 2011 to 42 per cent in 2018. Furthermore, 97 per cent of all academic staff members have qualifications at NFQ Levels 9 and 10. IT Carlow is also increasingly recruiting for ambition and attitude that support its ongoing development and align with institutional values.



The review team discussed the institution's approach to performance management and appraisal. IT Carlow does not systematically use an appraisal process linked to the institution's KPIs; instead, the institute uses the annual review process to discuss performance and development needs. The review team believes that IT Carlow should explore opportunities for developing a systematic approach to workload management and staff development to facilitate the nurturing of a research culture across the institute. This would enable managers to link the institutional strategy and performance measures to an individual's work and performance appraisal, which is an approach found at many other HEIs.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY

IT Carlow has a strong commitment to equality, diversity and inclusivity, which is evidenced by its attainment of Athena SWAN Bronze accreditation in 2019. This is an impressive accreditation, with IT Carlow among the first institutes of technology to achieve the award under the expanded charter.

There is a clear equality, diversity, and inclusivity policy and governance in place across the institution. The Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity Committee serves as a collaborative, campus-wide forum to promote dialogue around issues of diversity, social justice, and inclusion and to support institutional progress towards related goals. The institution has a clear Gender Equality Action Plan (2018) to further advance gender equity on its campuses. The review team was provided with a range of examples of how governance in respect of equality, diversity and inclusivity works, as well as examples of IT Carlow's ongoing commitment to closing the gender gap across a range of metrics. Additionally, IT Carlow was one of the first institutes of technology to be awarded funding under the Senior Academic Leadership Initiative (SALI).

CENTRE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) plays a central role in enhancing quality on IT Carlow campuses through a range of professional development offerings including a Master's Programme in Teaching and Learning, which is promoted throughout the faculty and includes a module on assessment and student feedback. Module 1 of the programme has about 60 faculty

participants a year, who are encouraged to gather student feedback for formative assessments.

CTL seeks to understand individual faculty members' needs—for example, through one-to-one clinics and bootcamps—and this approach supports the institution's approach to creating a student-centred culture. Professional development is also offered to all staff at IT Carlow's three campuses and IT Carlow's collaborative partners.

It was apparent to the review team that the Centre's expertise was fully utilised in pivoting to online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. CTL provided workshops on online learning following the arrival of COVID-19 in Ireland, serving more than 500 faculty members across the campuses.

COMMITMENT TO DEVELOPING RESEARCH CAPACITY

As outlined in the section on research, the institution has a maturing approach to research and is cognisant that its staff's capacity to compete nationally and internationally for research funding, as well as IT Carlow's ability to retain high-calibre staff and to drive high-quality teaching and research, is critical. The institute requires all staff undertaking PhDs to do so at institutions other than IT Carlow to facilitate the building of research networks. The review team members note the importance of protecting research time for early career academics so that they can develop a publications profile early in their careers.

The review team acknowledges the significant limitations of the national contract for staff in the institute of technology sector, which prescribes teaching loads and includes no provision on the protection of time for research; the review team recognises the need for this issue to be addressed at a sectoral level. The step-change in research performance required to become a technological university requires sector-level support and solutions to enable the embedding of a research-informed culture across the institution.

COMMENDATIONS

1. **The review team commends IT Carlow for the authenticity of the values-based culture described in all publications. This culture is evidenced in the work of individuals at the institute.**

2. The review team commends IT Carlow for the excellent support it provides to staff interested in engaging in research, as evidenced by the percentage of staff who have attained PhDs over the past eight years, demonstrating IT Carlow's deep commitment to the pursuit of technological university status.
3. The review team commends IT Carlow for its very impressive and significant achievements in advancing gender equality, including the Athena SWAN Award and SALL initiative, which give the institute a mark of distinction among its peers.

RECOMMENDATION

The review team recommends that IT Carlow explore opportunities for developing a systematic approach to workload management and staff development to facilitate the nurturing of a research culture across the institute.

TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

The review team read a range of documents and met with a variety of groups to review the QA procedures in place in IT Carlow in respect of teaching, learning and assessment. The institute's Policy on Teaching and Learning is described in its Quality Manual. The review of teaching and learning strategies forms part of the programme development process described above. The review team also noted the role played by input from the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) in this process. Indeed, the CTL is one of the critical structures in place to support both staff and students in the area of teaching and learning. It helps to embed and support a learner-centred culture in the institute.

The review team met academic staff from IT Carlow and its collaborative partners, who verified the annual and five-year programmatic review processes. Academic staff reported that they draw on a range of data in conducting annual reviews including *inter alia*:

- external examiner reports
- enrolment and retention figures
- progression rates
- examination results
- national Student Survey results

- feedback from class representatives
- informal student feedback
- feedback from industry partners.

Programmes provided by collaborative partners are subject to Joint Quality Visits, which draw on similar data to that considered as part of the annual and five-year programmatic reviews, and include on-site teaching observation, interviews with staff and students, and a review of site resources. There are robust processes in place to ensure that annual reviews are in turn reviewed by heads of department and faculty, and, ultimately, the VPAAR. Institutional representatives and stakeholders confirmed that teaching, learning, and assessment are important parts of the review process.

As part of the programmatic review process, the content, structure, teaching and learning strategy, modes of delivery, work-based elements, and assessment strategy for each programme are reviewed and checked for alignment with strategic objectives. Programmatic reviews are conducted by a panel of external academics, industry representatives and a graduate representative. Evidence of the implementation of recommendations in relation to teaching, learning, and assessment arising during programmatic review was provided in IT Carlow's documentation and during the review team's meetings with faculty. An example of this is the foundation module in teaching and learning offered to all new staff and postgraduate research students by the CTL. Further, the provision of an MA in Teaching and Learning to faculty, and the number of faculty members who have successfully completed the MA in recent years, is impressive and demonstrates the commitment of both staff and institute to the teaching and learning experience of students.

The panel noted the intention of the institute to further embed IT Carlow Graduate Attributes Framework into all curricula and to stretch beyond academic programmes as part of Programmatic Review 2020-2021. Meetings with faculty revealed evidence of embedding graduate attributes in curricula. However, when the review team met with students and questioned them about the graduate attributes, they appeared unaware of them and were unable to articulate which attributes they had

gained or were gaining as part of their programmes in IT Carlow. The review team suggests that a more fundamental embedding of the Graduate Attributes Framework is required.

The review team noted that, in the ISER, IT Carlow provides details of the development of a new Academic Delivery Framework (ADF). This initiative arose from the last programmatic review conducted and is a consultative process, which involved the holding of workshops across all stakeholder groups within IT Carlow from October-December 2019. The new ADF will see the semesterisation of the academic year, with formal assessment occurring at the end of each semester. The ISER outlines the benefits of the new ADF and sets out the steps for a phased introduction of changes from 2020-2025. During the review team's meetings with faculty and students, there was support for the new ADF and recognition of the challenges that will need to be managed. Among the benefits mentioned were the facilitation of work placements, improved Erasmus student mobility, and the facility to track student progress. The last of these elements is particularly important in light of the concern expressed by faculty that, given the profile of some of their students, learners may not be ready for formal assessments at the end of their first semester. With careful monitoring of implementation and the strategies outlined in the ISER, the ADF should enhance the learning experience of students in IT Carlow.

During the review team's meetings with faculty and students, team members were struck by the learner-centred approach at IT Carlow. Students reported that faculty were very approachable and that there were opportunities to give feedback in relation to teaching, learning and assessment informally after classes, or more formally through the class representative system. While this process is quite robust, we recommend the following:

RECOMMENDATION

The review team recommends that IT Carlow implement the anonymous systematic collection of student feedback to collect information on course content, delivery, and assessment as part of the annual programme review cycle.

SUPPORTS FOR LEARNERS

IT Carlow has shown that it has an effective students' union capable of identifying the needs of the students and communicating these needs appropriately to bring about change. Students' union officers receive extensive training before and during their terms to ensure that they are adequately prepared for the role. These training sessions include students' union officer training through the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) and role-specific training – for example, counselling referral and conflict management. A handover period from outgoing officers to incoming officers ensures continuity and that incoming officers understand projects and initiatives that commenced in previous terms, thereby enabling the progression of actions and schemes.

The students' union plays a strong role in ensuring that learners are actively engaged in quality assurance throughout IT Carlow, with student representatives holding seats on the Governing Body; Academic Council and its sub-committees and working groups; programme stream boards; and collaborative provision committees. More recently, students have been integral members of COVID-19 response groups and student fora in relation to the technological university agenda. An example of the students' union ensuring effective communication between the student body and management was the application by students' union members of a block to the progression of the new academic delivery framework until the feedback and concerns of the students were gathered using a dedicated email.

In this case, the students' union also ensured clear communication from management to the student body by inviting the VPAAR to speak at the class representative council. The students' union also plays a strong role in promoting engagement with the national student survey, contributing to IT Carlow's reasonably high response rate of 29 per cent in 2019.

During the main review visit it became clear that, although part-time positions for students' union representatives exist in the Wexford campus, these are often vacant as a result of their voluntary nature. With the students' union playing such a vital role in gathering student input and feedback, an effective link between class representatives and management



via the students' union is required. **Plans to establish a full-time students' union position in Wexford were discussed over the course of the main review visit and it is recommended that these be implemented.**

IT Carlow provides a range of academic and pastoral supports to its students, including a retention centre for information technology and computing students; academic writing support; mathematics support; counselling services; and medical services. All students of IT Carlow are provided with equal access to online supports, such as the teaching and learning student hub on Blackboard. This facility is widely employed throughout the institution, with some courses integrating aspects of the resource as a course requirement. Although IT Carlow offers many supports online, the institute also considers the ease with which its various student cohorts can access certain modes of provision. Part-time students in the Wicklow campus are provided with supporting information, such as IT Carlow's Library Guides, in physical format, as the institution has identified that this student cohort was less likely to search for supports online. Both on- and off-campus inductions are provided to students enrolled on collaborative programmes with partners such as the Gestalt Institute of Ireland, Tivoli, An Cosán and The Irish Defence Forces. The provision of counselling services is an example of a support that has been implemented by IT Carlow after it identified that this was required by learners on its collaborative programmes.

IT Carlow has evidenced data-driven enhancement for learner supports through its internal PMSS review process and international LibQUAL survey. One of the outcomes of these reviews was to employ a new member of staff dedicated to lifelong learners to ensure parity of support between lifelong learners and full-time IT Carlow students. An additional example of action taken following review is the significant investment undertaken by IT Carlow in upgrading its Wi-Fi provision, with improvements completed within six months of review. While support staff make good use of the data gathered via PMSS review and LibQUAL survey, it was indicated during the main review visit that increased data and access to existing data would enhance ability to provide supports and resources to all students.

To ensure access to appropriate resources for a student population with varied needs, students that may require additional supports, such as international learners or students with disabilities, are closely monitored and enjoy a high level of interaction with support staff. Staff's increasing access to progression data for students with high support needs is helpful in responding to these students' needs.

Postgraduate students are supported to acquire pedagogical training – and thus improve the quality of teaching and support that they provide to undergraduate students – by undertaking an optional level 9, 10-credit teaching module. IT Carlow is currently the only institute of technology to offer such a programme, and it has proven very popular among the postgraduate student cohort.

Clubs and societies play a strong role in enhancing student experience and contributing to the community and culture of an institute of higher education. The emphasis on sporting culture is evident throughout IT Carlow, and, with learner experience as one of its core values, IT Carlow has invested significantly in its physical infrastructure to facilitate sporting activities, including GAA and rugby stadia. The location of the facilities has been carefully thought out and planned to maximise student body engagement beyond the athletes themselves.

An additional example of support provided to clubs and societies are rehearsal spaces for IT Carlow's drama society. These are facilitated in both the Wexford and Carlow campuses, allowing interaction and integration between the two campuses. The importance and benefit of clubs and societies was highlighted by students during the review visit. Students proposed that awareness and access to clubs and societies be increased by the implementation of a dedicated website or webpage containing details of and contacts for each club/society.

One action set out in IT Carlow's strategic plan 2019-2023 is to 'increase our participation in Erasmus+ and provide other short-term study and work placements abroad'. Students who had engaged in outgoing learner mobility programmes, including Erasmus+, spoke of the high level of enthusiasm evident in, and support provided by, the international office before, during, and after the study/placement abroad.

However, through discussions with students and staff during the main review visit, a general lack of awareness of opportunities for international study/traineeships was perceived.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **The review team recommends that IT Carlow develop a more holistic approach to internationalisation, incorporating and enhancing the internationalisation of the curriculum and increasing outbound mobility of students, in order to realise its ambition of becoming a globally connected institute.**
2. **The review team recommends that IT Carlow fully implement its plan to have a full-time students' union representative at the Wexford campus.**

INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

ESG 2015 cites 'reliable data as crucial for informed decision-making and for knowing what is working well and what needs attention' (Section 1.7). ESG 2015 requires effective processes to collect and analyse information about programmes of study and other activities to feed into the internal quality assurance system.

QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines identify the need for controls and structures to be put in place to generate named data/reports which are communicated to staff and management for self-monitoring and planning purposes.

IT Carlow has processes in place for the collection, analysis and use of relevant information for the management of programmes and other activities. At a senior level, on both the Senior Executive Team and the Governing Body, there was demonstrable support for an evidence-based approach to the governance and management of the institute. There are processes in place to collect and analyse data about programmes and activities, which feed into internal quality assurance processes.

However, the systematic use of data to drive evidence-based decision-making right across the institute was not demonstrated in the ISER or during the main review visit.

The ISER is a well-presented, informative and reflective document, but the institute's use of data to inform strategic direction and decision-making was not evident in the report. During the main review visit, IT Carlow made available a comprehensive online library of data sets and reports, which provided reviewers with useful contextual information and demonstrated a commendable openness and transparency on the part of the institute.

Meetings with staff at all levels during the main review visit revealed a lack of ready access to relevant timely datasets to inform decision-making at a local level. There were no common datasets that underpinned the discussions pertaining to, for example, student retention, progression, achievement, and destination.

Where examples of use of data to make decisions were provided, they were generally relatively limited in the breadth of datasets used, or the depth of the data analysis. The review team is strongly of the view that institutionalising the use of data right across the organisation to inform decision-making will be an important step in transitioning to technological university status.

It was clear to the review team that key performance indicators (KPIs) existed at the Senior Executive Level – for the Strategic Plan 2019-2023 and for the new Research and Innovation Impact Strategy 2020-2024 – and that the Governing Body also placed significant emphasis on the development of measurable KPIs for the Strategic Plan. However, familiarity with and ownership of these KPIs by staff across the organisation was not always evident.

Senior management did note that target setting and measurement of performance against targets is to some extent dictated by external processes such as the Strategic Dialogue and Compact process with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the requirements of the TUSEI project, as set out in the Technological Universities Act 2018. It should be noted that in these external review processes IT Carlow consistently performs well and, in many cases, exceeds the targets set.

Review team members were heartened to note that IT Carlow had appointed a Director of Institutional Planning and Research in 2017. The review team also



noted that the Athena SWAN Accreditation project had necessitated the development of various data sets to inform the accreditation submission, and that further development of data sets in this field is anticipated.

IT Carlow is compliant with Freedom of Information and GDPR legislation and operates both a Records Management Policy and a Records Retention Schedule.

The review team regards the development of an evidence-based, data-informed culture as an essential requirement for IT Carlow as it looks forward to the next important stage in its development. The review team believes that the KPIs linked to the Strategic Plan 2019-2023 need to be defined more clearly to align with the institute's ambitions and cascaded across the organisation to ensure shared ownership of the targets.

The review team recommends that the Office of the Director of Institutional Planning and Research develop an institutional data set that is fully understood and consistently used throughout the organisation to support evidence-based

management decision-making that consistently measures progress against KPIs. Access to this dataset should be widely shared with heads of faculty, heads of department, heads of research COREs and heads of professional support services.

The review team notes favourably the work of the Deputy Librarian in encouraging academic staff to engage with Scopus to analyse their research performance relative to their peers and suggests that this approach should be expanded and developed further as part of the new Research and Innovation Impact Strategy 2020-2024.

Although the review team recognises that world ranking systems are limited in the range of criteria they consider, IT Carlow's performance in the U-Multirank league table is a positive development to build on. Related to the development of KPIs and performance in rankings is the establishment of formal benchmark partners, nationally and internationally, for comparative and networking purposes. A useful exercise in preparing for the next stage of development may be to establish formal benchmark partnerships with a small number of international institutes/technological universities,

who could be seen as aspirational partners with whom IT Carlow could exchange best practice and key learnings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **The review team recommends that IT Carlow strengthen its Strategic Plan 2019-2023 to better describe a set of measurable institutional key performance indicators that will drive the defined strategic intent of becoming a leading European technological university.**
2. **The review team recommends that IT Carlow develop an institutional data set that is fully understood and consistently used throughout the organisation to support evidence-based management decision-making that consistently measures progress against KPIs.**
3. **The review team recommends that IT Carlow establish formal benchmark national and international partners for research and teaching purposes and leverage their support to elevate institutional reputation.**

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

In the interests of public confidence in standards, openness and transparency, ESG 2015 requires institutions to publish information about their activities and programmes which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible (Section 1.8). This information should include:

- selection criteria for admission to programmes
- the intended learning outcomes of programmes
- the qualifications awarded
- the teaching, learning and assessment procedures
- the pass rates
- the learning opportunities available to students
- graduate employment information.

IT Carlow meets all of the above standards for public information and communications and demonstrates a strong commitment to maintaining an open and transparent culture. Communication with internal and external stakeholders is a key priority for the institute

and the ISER sets out a template detailing the range of stakeholders and the variety of communication channels that IT Carlow uses to engage with them. During the main review visit, the review team met with numerous stakeholders and it was evident in these meetings that IT Carlow goes to considerable effort to communicate in an open and engaging manner with all stakeholders.

Information about programmes of teaching and learning is communicated to learners, prospective learners, and their influencers through the institute's Communications Office, which includes a schools liaison function for student recruitment purposes. During the main review visit, the review team met with key stakeholders including feeder school principals, guidance counsellors, heads of further education centres and specialist education centres, who reported high levels of satisfaction with IT Carlow's engagement with their learners (who are prospective students of the institute). It was clear from these meetings that IT Carlow takes a very proactive approach to engaging with prospective learners and provides a wide range of opportunities to share information about its programmes and activities with prospective learners. The institute regularly engages with key influencers to seek advice on how best to meet the information needs of students.

IT Carlow offers advice and support to second-level students, their families, guidance counsellors and teachers through its Schools Liaison Programme, which aims to support prospective students in making informed career choices. Feedback on the relevance and quality of the institute's Schools Liaison Programme is sought on a regular basis from schools through their guidance counsellors.

Opportunities to meet with institute staff at various events scheduled throughout the academic year include the following:

- 130 school visits and presentations
- campus visits
- participation in 22 exhibitions
- four open days at the Carlow and Wexford campuses.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the review team was unable to visit the campus for the main review visit, but IT Carlow provided a very informative virtual campus tour video which provided review team members – and prospective visitors – with an excellent overview of the campus. IT Carlow issues a number of publications, which are available on request, to assist prospective students, including:

- The Full-time Prospectus
- The Part-Time Prospectus
- The Postgraduate Prospectus
- The 'Course to Career' booklet
- The IT Carlow Student Handbook
- The IT Carlow Lifelong Learning Prospectus.

The institute's website includes an employability statement and full details of undergraduate, postgraduate and part-time programmes, including entry requirements, course details, numbers of available places, duration of study, subjects of study, the application process, special features of programmes, further study and careers information, graduate profiles and an interactive enquiry button on each course page. Curriculum details are managed through the Akari online curriculum management system. The institute also produces undergraduate, postgraduate, and part-time prospectuses with full programme information. The website includes full details of programmes offered at the Wexford campus and by collaborative providers. IT Carlow might consider the merits of a centralised enquiry (email and telephone) service to capture and respond to public enquiries.

Further, IT Carlow's website includes a dedicated section setting out the full range of student support services available to learners at the institute. The review team members were particularly encouraged to note the comprehensive COVID-19 Alerts page, which set out the most recent updates from the Government, IT Carlow's President, senior management and IT Carlow's departments in one convenient location. IT Carlow also uses social media channels including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube to provide information to its diverse range of external and internal stakeholders.

A news page on IT Carlow's website highlights the institute's latest developments and activities, and an 'Upcoming Events' section keeps stakeholders informed of campus events. The ISER indicates that further work is needed to develop an alumni database due to GDPR restrictions, which prevent the ongoing use of previously developed databases. In meetings with graduates, the review team noted that, while informal contacts with alumni are maintained by staff across the institute, a more formal process, underpinned by an institutional strategy for alumni relations, should be developed.

IT Carlow communicates with a range of businesses and external bodies; the review team was able to meet with employer partners who expressed positivity in respect of their interactions with IT Carlow, and, although they noted that communication could at times be ad-hoc, industry partners assured the review team that they were able to navigate the system and find the right office or department of the institution. The Industry and Innovation section of the website clearly sets out the SME and entrepreneurial support provided to businesses, as well as the range of ways in which the institute engages with the business community. The review team notes the development of a CRM system (Pipedrive) in 2019-20 to manage research, development and innovation client interactions. There does not seem to be one business gateway (telephone and email enquiry service) into the institution, which may lead to missed opportunities and lack of coordination and connectedness of opportunities.

The Quality section of the IT Carlow website is a model of good practice in terms of transparency. It includes details of IT Carlow's Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, the Quality Manual, a full suite of policies and procedures for quality assurance, as well as publications and review outcomes and reports, including IT Carlow's AIQRs, and the reports arising from institutional reviews.

In preparing the ISER, the Communication and Information sub-group of the self-evaluation Steering Group recommended the development of an institutional communication strategy to enhance access to relevant information for internal and external stakeholders. The review team endorses this recommendation as a helpful approach to building on the excellent work already underway in this domain.

OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

IT Carlow pursues a number of collaborative partnerships that are a core part of the institution's strategy and culture. Collaboration with other parties involved in education and training is deeply embedded in the culture and DNA of IT Carlow: 'the boundaries that can sometimes isolate higher education Institutes were never built here' (Strategic Plan 2019-2023). In particular, IT Carlow has long-standing collaborative arrangements with The Irish Defence Forces and An Cosán. Furthermore, recent developments include a hub of programmes centred around psychotherapy through collaborations with the Gestalt Institute of Ireland, Dublin Art Therapy College, and The Tivoli Institute. The most recent collaboration has been with the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, which focusses on qualifications in supply chain management. IT Carlow is a sectoral leader in the provision of a lifelong learning continuum across the higher education spectrum. It works closely with post-primary schools and colleges and education and training boards in its region.

IT Carlow has 80 articulation agreements with partners in 18 countries to facilitate learners with a range of voluntary study abroad opportunities, primarily in their third year of study. In 2018 it formed an important strategic collaborative partnership with Carlow College, St Patricks. Carlow College is a liberal arts college that was founded in 1782 and is Ireland's second oldest university-level institution. Over the next five years IT Carlow plans to increase its collaboration and engagement with Carlow College. In addition, using the exemplar of its collaboration with the Defence Forces, IT Carlow plans to engage in further joint-awarding collaborations within a wider disciplinary area. The institute also seeks to ensure all joint-awarding collaborative programmes have postgraduate progression opportunities. Another IT Carlow goal is to support all its collaborative partners in working to improve their quality systems in teaching, learning, assessment and research.

The review team found a rigorous process of quality assurance in respect of all aspects of collaborative provision at IT Carlow. Until 1 January 2020, IT Carlow had delegated authority from Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) for all joint collaborative

and transnational provision to level 9, with ongoing monitoring of collaborative arrangements against guidelines originally set out by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), one of QQI's antecedent bodies. Since 1 January 2020, IT Carlow has been an autonomous designated awarding body in its own right for awards up to NFQ Level 9.

IT Carlow has a well-defined collaboration development life cycle of four stages: Collaboration Investigation; Collaboration Development; Collaboration Management and Collaboration Evaluation and Review. This process is supported by the VPAAR's Office and the Quality Assurance and Collaborations Officer and overseen by the Collaborative Provision Committee of Academic Council. Collaboration investigation takes place against a backdrop of risk assessment and strategic fit and involves programme development and validation, potentially resulting in an MOA. The 'Collaboration Management' stage delivers the programme, while the 'Evaluation and Review' stage oversees the Collaborative Process and the Programme Delivery. The 'Review' process consists of an annual review (assisted by annual Joint Quality Visits by IT Carlow's Quality and Collaborations Officer) and a review three years after the MOA has been signed; if successful at this stage, the review schedule subsequently reverts to the faculty five-year review programme.

The review team met students and representatives of collaboration partners to interrogate their experience of collaborative programmes. On the whole, the review team found that collaborative students on wholly delivered IT Carlow programmes had an experience broadly equivalent to students on IT Carlow's own programmes. A recurring theme raised by collaborative partners was that collaborative partners should be facilitated to participate more fully in IT Carlow events. Other frequent themes raised by collaborative partners were the need to maintain a closer connection with alumni of all collaborative programmes, to celebrate the excellent work going on at the community level as result of the programmes, and to communicate the successes of these partnerships to the wider community.

The review team is confident that, on the whole, IT Carlow has good processes for the development, oversight and management of collaborative partners.

However, there is scope to take a more holistic view of the collaborative partner portfolio on an annual basis to ensure quality oversight and alignment with institutional strategy.

COMMENDATION

The review team commends IT Carlow for its strong commitment to its collaborative and access partners, as well as the support infrastructure IT Carlow provides to its partners. The review team further commends IT Carlow for the embedded nature of its quality oversight and monitoring of collaborative and access partnerships.

SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

In line with ESG 2015 Section 1.10 and QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines Section 11, IT Carlow has a robust cycle of self-evaluation, monitoring and review of programmes of education and training, research and related services in place.

QUINQUENNIAL STRATEGIC AND PROGRAMMATIC REVIEW

All faculties, and more recently Professional Support Units, have been the subject of cyclical quality reviews since the last institutional review in 2010. A two-stage quinquennial strategic and programmatic review of all academic faculties was completed in 2015, with outcomes published on the Quality website. It was evident in meetings with staff at all levels in the institute that the five-year reviews are regarded as a major opportunity to have an external evaluation of all aspects of the strategic direction of a faculty (including the Research COREs), as well as programmes of study. The review team was provided with clear examples of changes made to programmes following reviewer feedback, such as ensuring that programmes were more relevant to the needs of industry following feedback from external industry/employers. In meetings with academic staff, it was also clear to the review team that the Senior Executive Team takes the findings of strategic and programmatic reviews seriously, with heads of department citing examples of decisions in respect of resource allocation being made in response to review findings.

ANNUAL PROGRAMME REVIEWS

All programmes undergo an annual review, which includes *inter alia* external examiners reviewing the programme and making recommendations for enhancements which, if approved by programme boards, are then implemented in the following year. Programme reviews have resulted in changes to methods of assessment and programme delivery, among other aspects of programmes.

The learner voice is central to programme reviews at IT Carlow and, in meetings with the review team, student representatives outlined examples of changes to programmes that had been made in response to feedback from students. The review team noted that IT Carlow piloted the NStEP programme for student engagement, which involves the provision of training to student representatives to ensure that the student voice is heard during reviews and in the proceedings of decision-making committees. As outlined in the Support for Learners section, the review team recommends that IT Carlow introduce an anonymous systematic collection of student feedback process at programme level which should feed into the annual programme reviews.

COLLABORATIVE REVIEWS

As part of all collaborative partnerships, the Collaborative Provision Policy clearly defines a schedule of reviews, which commence with annual reviews. These are supported by joint quality visits, which are scheduled with the partner by the Quality & Collaborations Officer. Three years after the signing of the MOA, a formal collaborative review with an external panel is convened and the programme, the learner environment, the assessment methodology and the progression pathways are formally reviewed. Upon successful completion of the three-year collaborative review, the collaborative programmes revert to the faculty five-year review cycle. There was good evidence during the review meetings that IT Carlow has a robust quality assurance process in place for collaborative partners to ensure the quality of the learner experience on collaborative programmes. However, as outlined in the data and information section, the systematic use of data to make evidence-based decision needs to be improved. This would enable IT Carlow to better understand the comparative performance of students on

collaborative programmes and manage the inherent risk of collaborative programmes.

PROFESSIONAL, MANAGERIAL AND SUPPORT SERVICES REVIEWS

To complement the programmatic reviews, IT Carlow has implemented a comprehensive Professional, Managerial and Support Service (PMSS) review

process since 2015. This process allows each support service function to complete a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) which develops a SMART strategic plan for the area. This is reviewed by an external panel of assessors drawn from other HEIs and industry. These reviews and responses to them are approved by the Senior Management Team.



POLICY REVIEWS

The comprehensive review of all of IT Carlow's policies and procedures is included within the scope of self-evaluation and monitoring requirements. IT Carlow's Quality Work Plan is included in the Quality Manual and details the schedule of policy reviews. Policies are continuously updated to reflect changing legislation and guidelines. The latest major updates reflect the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and ESG 2015.

In the review cycle, each policy is examined to ensure it is fit for purpose and updated to incorporate all relevant input. A document management system is in place to log changes to each policy and procedure. The Quality Work Plan is reviewed twice a year to capture the ongoing review and evolving nature of quality assurance and enhancement within the institute.

The review team is confident that robust self-evaluation, review and monitoring processes are in place at IT Carlow and commends the institute for its strong commitment to a quality culture at all levels of the organisation.

COMMENDATION

The review team commends IT Carlow for its strong commitment to, and provision of support infrastructure for, a broad range of collaborative and access partners. The review team further commends IT Carlow for the embedded nature of quality oversight and monitoring of its collaborative and access partnerships.

RESEARCH

IT Carlow prioritises research and innovation that is collaborative and connected, drawing expertise and experience from IT Carlow's strategic priority fields of education to maximise economic, societal and environmental impact. Research at the institute is shaped by and grounded in an educational ethos and learning-centred approach, with members of the research community supported and empowered to develop personally and professionally.

The Research and Innovation Impact Strategy 2020-2025 was developed in the knowledge of a joint application with Waterford Institute of Technology for designation as a technological university. The latter

has been shaped by the Technological Universities Act 2018 and, in particular, the Technological Universities Research Network (TURN) Report 2019. The TURN Report sets out a vision for research in the technological universities which seeks to leverage the distinctive features of institutes of technology, namely their connectedness to their regions and their collaborative approach, enabled by digital connectivity, to drive regional development and assist in positioning Ireland's HE system as a global innovation leader.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IMPACT STRATEGY 2020-2025

IT Carlow's goal for research and innovation impact under its Research and Innovation Impact Strategy 2020-2025 is to increase productivity and innovation in connected and sustainable research, scholarship and creative activities that impact societal, economic and environmental development. The Research and Innovation Impact Strategy 2020-2025 sets out an ambitious and pragmatic cross-institutional roadmap for impactful research and innovation, which is characterised by a culture of interdisciplinarity and connectedness across all aspects of the institute's activities.

The Research and Innovation Impact Strategy 2020-2025 focuses on four key strategic cross-cutting themes to align disciplinary capacity to meet challenges in:

- Environment, Biotechnology, Sustainability
- Smart Systems, Technology, Materials
- Health, Wellbeing, Demographic Change
- Informed, Creative and Inclusive Society

Impact is a key feature of the Research and Innovation Strategy, with four cross-cutting dimensions of Impact: Strategic Direction, Strengthening Capacity, Actively Engaging and Creating Change.

Research at IT Carlow is structured into seven faculty-based Centres of Research and Enterprise (COREs) across the disciplinary specialisms of Engineering, Biotechnological and Environmental Sciences, Health, Design, Gamification and ICT, Social Studies and Education, working together to action and provide holistic and integrated solutions.

SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH

A number of key strategic developments have taken place since the last institutional review in 2012, which have transformed the Research & Innovation (R&I) environment at IT Carlow including:

1. A faculty-based CORE Directorate, tasked with the development of disciplinary-specific strategies, building unique capacities and capabilities, and responding to the evolving needs of the academic teams within each CORE.
2. A Research and Commercialisation Support Centre (RCSC), tasked with leading, managing and supporting innovation through enterprise development; research and development solutions; EU research and innovation projects; knowledge transfer and commercialisation; and research administration.
3. IT Carlow's Hubs for Innovation and Enterprise (HIEs), Technology Gateway and Designated Activity Companies (DACs) for Innovation and Enterprise, engaging in key strategic areas including Design, Insurance Technologies and Regional Enterprise and Innovation.
4. Investment in a new research building, the Dargan Centre for Research and Innovation, designed to capitalise on the opportunities for idea generation, knowledge production and knowledge exchange, through the co-location of specialised multidisciplinary research facilities and personnel.
5. A Postgraduate Studies Office (PSO) serving as a central resource for postgraduate students and researchers, while leading the development of an institutional strategy for postgraduate education
6. A Development and Research Office, composed of the RCSC, PSO, DACs, International Office and Communications Office, and leading the identification and development of institutional priorities
7. President's Fellowships Awards and the President's Conference Fund, supporting discrete research actions, aligned with CORE strategies.
8. A Centre for Teaching and Learning (CLT) supporting all researchers in their professional development.

9. An Institutional Repository (online and open access) providing for the collection, storage and analysis of institutional research.
10. An Office for Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP) support for evidenced-based policy-making, strategic planning, performance monitoring and benchmarking.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The review team is satisfied that IT Carlow has a comprehensive new research and innovation strategy in place in line with the requirements for research provision in technological universities and that research structures are designed to encourage and support the engagement of academic staff in the research agenda. The review team notes that this is a recent strategy — published in February 2020 — and recommends the roll-out of this strategy across the institute. In particular, the performance indicators set out for the next five years need to be distributed and owned across the institute, with progress monitored and reported annually.

The review team notes the absence of specific targets for research publications for academic staff in the new strategy and advises that Research COREs develop publication and dissemination strategies which support staff and students in the development of their publication profiles.

QA PROCEDURES FOR RESEARCH

The review team is satisfied that IT Carlow has appropriate procedures in place to ensure the quality of its research activity. In particular, there are comprehensive policies and procedures in place for the quality assurance of postgraduate awards by research and dissertation at NFQ Level 9 and Level 10, in line with QQI's *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Research Degree Programmes*. These procedures include regulations for all aspects of the process of awarding research degrees including admissions, registration, progression, transfer to Level 10, appointment of supervisors, nomination of examiners, validation requirements for new research programmes, academic integrity and anti-plagiarism regulations, ethics in research regulations, regulations for presenting dissertations and other research outputs.

The review team notes IT Carlow's move to structured PhD programmes and the use of supervisory teams to supervise doctoral students. The review team endorses IT Carlow's approach to registering research students on Level 9 Research Master's programmes initially before transferring learners over to the Level 10 PhD track as appropriate. This approach has the effect of building learner confidence and engagement with Level 10 programmes and enhances completion rates (70 per cent completed in the period 1997-2020) and completion times (on average 3.5 years for Research PhDs and four years for Structured PhDs).

In general, the review team noted with approval the significant level of support provided to research students, the flexible and collegiate approach of academic staff in supervising research students, and the supportive, nurturing environment created for research students at the institute.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Since 2012, IT Carlow has been on a transformative journey to develop a research culture and enhance its research performance. To date, the journey has focused on enhancing research infrastructure, facilities and supports and on increasing the number of staff holding PhD qualifications, in line with the requirements for technological university designation.

The institute has enjoyed significant success in increasing the percentage of staff holding level 10 qualifications from 18 per cent in 2012 to 50 per cent in 2020, and the review team commends this performance.

The approach to creating a research culture has been very facilitative and supportive, with individuals encouraged to set their own performance targets. A range of supports is available to staff interested in engaging in research including a conference fund; teaching buy-out to draft applications for EU funding; an institutional repository for publications; and engagement with Scopus for research metrics.

As discussed above, as IT Carlow prepares to embark on the next leg of its journey towards technological university status, a step-change will be required in the institute's approach to research development. In order to achieve the critical mass and increased capacity in research that is recommended by the TURN Report, it will be important to institutionalise a developmental

approach to engagement with research which promotes the emergence of a research-informed culture across the institute. This will necessitate engagement with a broader definition of research performance and the roll out of a wider range of performance indicators for research. In addition, IT Carlow will need to move from setting department level research KPIs to agreed institutional KPIs for research performance, as set out in the Research and Innovation Impact Strategy.

Recognising the limitations on resources in the higher education sector in Ireland, it will be important for the institute to further refine the priority research areas in which IT Carlow believes it can achieve critical mass and recognition over time, with prioritisation and targeting of these areas for investment in the future. The review team also considers that the establishment of national and international benchmark partners for research purposes would be beneficial in helping to develop a research-informed culture. In line with the recommendations of the TURN Report, it is critical for IT Carlow to build staff capacity to enable the institute to compete nationally and internationally for research funding, to retain high calibre staff, and to drive high quality teaching and research. Building links with research-led universities in Ireland and beyond for joint PhD supervision and partnerships on grant proposals will help the institute to build beneficial research networks. In this regard, the institute's requirement that all staff undertaking PhDs should do so outside of IT Carlow is commendable and represents an excellent opportunity to build research networks. Reviewers also note the importance of protecting research time for early career academics so that they can develop a publications profile early in their careers.

INNOVATION AND ENTERPRISE

IT Carlow has a strong tradition of engaging with industry and enterprise to advance shared research projects with the aim of enabling the economic, social and cultural development of the South-East Region.

The institute established the Enterprise Ireland-funded Design+ Technology Gateway in 2016 to further support and enhance technology-driven disciplines, linking technology to business opportunities and user needs. Design+ is an inclusive design-led regional and national industry portal,

which complements 14 other Technology Gateways in Ireland, and acts as a regional portal through which local industry can leverage the skill sets of the national network. Companies source technology solutions for their ‘close-to-market’ needs in a wide range of sectors including ICT, biotechnology, polymer technologies, manufacturing, connected media, engineered materials, pharmaceutical and healthcare. The aim is to increase efficiency, sustainability, and competitive advantage for industry.

In addition, the institute is part of the Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative Consortium involving Athlone Institute of Technology, Maynooth University and Waterford Institute of Technology. This consortium has developed strong collaborative practices over the course of the Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiatives TTSI2 and TTSI3. The consortium was recognised as being very effective through the achievement of an ‘A-plus Rating’ in performance and in feedback provided by the expert panel of the mid-term review (10 September 2019). The technology transfer (TT) model that IT Carlow employs is one of support and proactive development of opportunities.

The institute also monitors knowledge-transfer (KT) effectiveness through its progression along the KT Maturity Framework. The KT Maturity Framework captures the experience of the TT/KT staff, the activity of the Technology Transfer Office (TTO) and the research performing organisation’s (RPO) commitment to and management of TT/KT. Over the past seven years, IT Carlow has progressed from level 1 maturity to level 4 (of 5 levels) in 2019.

The review team commends the institute for strong levels of engagement with industry. In meetings with industry and enterprise partners, it was clear to reviewers that the institute is very responsive to the needs of industry in its region and that mutually beneficial research partnerships are in place. The principle of ‘connectedness’ is a defining feature of the institute’s approach and it is evident that, through its commercialisation and knowledge transfer activity, IT Carlow is a driver of regional development for the South-East Region.

COMMENDATIONS

1. The review team commends IT Carlow for the excellent support provided to staff interested in engaging in research as evidenced by the percentage of staff who have attained PhDs over the past eight years. This demonstrates a deep commitment to a TU agenda.
2. The review team commends IT Carlow for its strong commitment to engagement with industry and community, as evidenced by the institute’s recent top ranking in the Multirank system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The new Research and Innovation Impact Strategy sets out a comprehensive vision for research with measurable targets for the next five years; however, the review team recommends that these performance indicators be distributed and owned across the institute, with progress monitored and reported annually to promote the emergence of a research culture across the institute.
2. As resources will always be limited the review team recommends that the institute, over time, further refine priority research areas to achieve critical mass and recognition, prioritising these in terms of investment.

Objective 2 – Procedures for Awarding

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF PROCEDURES FOR AWARDING

Under the provisions of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019 IT Carlow has been a designated awarding body for awards up to level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications since 1 January, 2020; QQI remains awarding body for awards at level 10 and IT Carlow must apply to QQI for validation of any new level 10 programmes. As such, IT Carlow is now able to determine the standards for its own awards with reference to the NFQ.

The ISER confirms that IT Carlow is in compliance with the relevant sections of ESG 2015 and QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and sets out a comprehensive set of actions to align the Strategic Plan 2019-2023 and HEA Performance Compact with sections of the ESG. The personnel and departments responsible for each action and the timeframe for completion are clearly identified.

As discussed above under the section on programmes of education and training, the review team determined that IT Carlow has robust quality assurance procedures in place to assess the strategic fit of new



programme proposals, to manage the development process, and to assess programme delivery.

The role of external examiners is critical to ensuring the quality of the qualifications awarded by IT Carlow. The Quality Manual details the roles and responsibilities of external examiners. There was evidence in review team meetings with faculty that external examiner feedback was responded to appropriately in the annual programme review and quinquennial programmatic review processes.

As discussed under objective 1, IT Carlow has established collaborative agreements with a number of providers — An Cosán, the Irish Defence Forces, the Gestalt Institute of Ireland, Carlow College St Patrick's, the Tivoli Institute, Dublin Art Therapy College and the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport. The review team had an opportunity to meet with representatives of these collaborative partners, who spoke with great enthusiasm about their relationship with IT Carlow, the support that they received, the QA measures in place to ensure the quality of their programmes, and their alignment to the vision of IT Carlow. The collaborative partners also spoke about the mutual benefits of their relationship with IT Carlow.

Having met with faculty and reviewed the substantial documentation provided, the review team is satisfied that IT Carlow has robust quality assurance policies and procedures in place for awarding qualifications and that the implementation of these policies is closely monitored. These policies and procedures are compliant with the ESG 2015 and QQI guidelines.

THE GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

As previously discussed, all programmes awarded through IT Carlow are reviewed annually in addition to a quinquennial programmatic review. Programmatic review has previously been a two-stage process with up to a year between stages. Programmatic reviews were carried out for each faculty, with high-level strategic issues examined in stage 1 and a programme-by-programme review and revalidation for a further five years in stage 2. To increase the impact of programmatic review, these two stages will be merged into a single stage process for the next cycle of programmatic reviews. Panels to conduct programmatic reviews contain academic, industry and student representatives.

An objective of programmatic review is to assess the level and standard of knowledge, skill and competencies required for an award to be made. Stage 2 reports are presented to Academic Council by the VPAAR. Validation decisions are endorsed at meetings of Academic Council. Conditions and recommendations indicated in the report are implemented at faculty level by the head of department with changes typically implemented within the first two years. Annual status reports are presented to Academic Council by the VPAAR to show what steps have been taken and progress that has been made.

The review team is satisfied that the governance system in place is suitable for assuring the quality of procedures for awarding and there was evidence of effective decision-making in respect of these procedures at the main review visit. The structures in IT Carlow in respect of programmes and awards, faculty, Academic Council and Governing Body, support a quality culture.

Objective 3 – Quality Enhancement

ASSESSMENT OF IT CARLOW'S POLICIES, STRUCTURES AND PROCEDURES FOR QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

In addition to the provisions of ESG 2015 and QQI's Statutory Core QA Guidelines, QQI has also published a set of sector-specific quality assurance guidelines for institutes of technology. In keeping with these guidelines, the review team finds that IT Carlow has instituted a comprehensive set of policies, structures, and procedures to maintain and enhance the quality of its academic programmes and support services. Quality enhancement review and implementation practices are closely aligned with other IT Carlow planning processes, including the AIQR, the Strategic Plan, the Institutional Self-Evaluation Review, and IT Carlow's technological university application. The review team endorses IT Carlow's self-analysis and recommendations surrounding its recent (January 2020) designation as a designated awarding body to award level 9 academic degrees in various disciplines, and the recommendation to create an Academic Integrity Advisory Group.

The institute has a formal Quality Manual that details the policies and procedures used at IT Carlow to ensure quality. These include governance frameworks, programmatic design/approval, learner input and feedback, staff development, and other operational areas. To ensure an ongoing quality improvement culture, IT Carlow has implemented a process for conducting annual and five-year reviews of academic programmes and support services, as well as collaborative partnerships.

The Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR) reaffirms the institution's commitment to quality and outlines current policies. Various committee and Governing Body meetings related to quality are noted, as are the composition of review panels and the number of programme and PMSS reviews during the year.

Structures for carrying out QA at IT Carlow include the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) of the Academic Council, which reports to the Governing Body. Membership of the Academic Council spans the institution and includes faculty,

administrators, professional staff, linked providers and students. The QAEC uses the AIQR and other review documents to inform the annual QA Plan of Work. In addition to a formal schedule of annual and five-year academic programme reviews, the institute also manages a review schedule for support services and collaborative provision.

The Quality and Collaborations Officer, Academic Council Administrator, and Head of the Centre for Teaching and Learning provide staff support to advance the work of the QAEC. The VPAAR serves as the QAEC's liaison to the senior management team. In addition, the Audit Committee, a sub-committee of the Governing Body, identifies three to four areas annually for internal auditing and works with external auditors to review the effectiveness of the internal auditing process.

The review team found that the QAEC is active, meeting once a month and engaging in planning and monitoring the institute's Quality Plan of Work. Other Academic Council committees also impact quality enhancement efforts at IT Carlow, and include Programme Planning and Validation, Academic Regulations, Research and Development, Collaborative Provision, and Teaching, Learning, and Support Services. External examiner reports go to the QAEC and Academic Council subgroups to develop new policies for Governing Body review.

The review team finds that IT Carlow uses external expertise effectively in the QA process, including business and industry representatives, as well as individual external examiners and examination boards. Training is provided to external examiners, who are recruited from throughout the United Kingdom and used extensively. External examiners meet with staff and the Head of the Centre for Teaching and Learning. The institute works diligently to use international examiners to ensure that reciprocity and conflicts of interest are avoided.

In addition to using its QA framework to improve academic programmes and support services, the review team found clear evidence that IT Carlow also periodically reviews its QA structures, policies, and practices to seek improvements. In 2012, a gap analysis was the impetus for policy updates, the

creation of the position of Quality and Collaborations Officer, and the eventual creation of the Office of Institutional Planning and Research. In 2019, a similar review of the quality system took place, and it is being used to adjust the Quality Work Plan. An internal working group has also surveyed the campus and received 457 responses on how to improve quality at IT Carlow. One recommendation was that communications around policies and procedures be improved.

The review team examined several specific IT Carlow review processes and found that each follows the institute's standards for engaging external reviewers, learner participation, scheduled reviews, and the use of formal reports to drive quality improvements. Discussion of each of these separate processes follows.

Academic Programme Review: Following the guidance of ESG 2015 and QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, IT Carlow's academic

programmes are subject to formal processes to review programme proposals, design, curriculum development, and teaching/delivery. Students are represented on review panels and receive (NStEP) training. In addition to student representation on review panels, student feedback is also captured in the national Student Survey, as well as through input from the Class Representative Council, which meets bi-monthly.

The Academic Council recently updated the procedure for new programme proposals, with guidance to academic departments, external validation, support from the Centre for Teaching and Learning, and separate processes for developing a proposal outline, full programme proposal, and approval by the Programme Planning and Validation Committee. In addition, a separate process is in place for programme and design/delivery. The ISER also explains that a special differential validation process is in place to validate and approve new programmes at off-site locations.



Annual programme reviews and a schedule of rolling five-year reviews consider assessment methods, programme delivery, student workload and progression, retention, and other metrics, and include learner representatives and external reviewers. (The last five-year programmatic review was in 2015-16.) Industrial Review Boards meet annually to provide external perspectives. Student feedback is gathered informally by individual faculties as well as through the Class Representative Council and student representation on the Academic Council. Examiner feedback is forwarded to department heads and shared with the Academic Council. Interviews with faculty indicate industry feedback has been used to adjust curriculum in programmes such as the Game Development programme. High-demand programmes include Social Care, Sport and Health Sciences, and Early Childhood Education and Care. Other programmes, e.g. BA in Youth and Community Services, have been discontinued due to enrolment decline.

Collaborative Provision Reviews: The Collaborative Provision Policy establishes a review process for collaborative partnerships, which provides for a due diligence process to determine the mission, resources, and learning outcomes fit of collaborative provision agreements. Programmes undergo the validation process, followed by implementation. Site visits of partner sites are followed up by a comprehensive report to the VPAAR. When issues arise, e.g. the use of a different approach by Irish Defence Forces for students with disabilities, a joint committee is set up to align procedures. The Collaborative Provision Committee reviews teaching and learning with collaborative partners at each meeting. Partnerships have also been cancelled for a variety of reasons.

The schedule includes annual reviews, joint quality visits scheduled with partner institutions, and a collaborative review by an external panel three years after an initial MOU. Following successful completion of the three-year collaborative review, collaborative programmes are transitioned to the faculty five-year review cycle.

PMSS Review: In addition to academic review, the review team notes that IT Carlow is the first IoT to institute professional management and support services reviews. Student representatives are included in the reviews, which provide for the completion of a self-evaluation report by each service

area. In addition to reviewing PMSS offices, the institute plans to increase the number of PMSS staff on the Academic Council.

Policy Review: The IT Carlow Quality Manual also calls for an institutional policy review, based on a published schedule. Recent policy updates have been made with regard to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) and ESG 2015.

Role of the Governing Body in Quality Enhancement: Following the December 2019 Effectiveness of the Governing Body Report, the Governing Body is undergoing new membership nominations. Student representatives on the Governing Body have historically been vocal and involved. The Governing Body has done a good job of financial management and fiscal transparency/auditing over time, evidenced by the institute's budget surpluses. The Governing Body's Audit Committee is active, identifying 3-4 areas to audit annually and working with external auditors to monitor internal auditing practices. Members of the Governing Body told the review team during the main review visit that they feel comfortable in meeting with staff individually outside of Governing Body meetings and feel they represent all stakeholders and no single constituency.

Centre for Teaching and Learning: The Centre has a central role in enhancing quality on IT Carlow campuses through a range of professional development measures including offering a Master's Programme in Teaching and Learning that is promoted throughout the faculty and which features a module on assessment and student feedback. Module 1 attracts about 60 faculty participants a year. Faculty are encouraged to gather student feedback for formative assessments.

The review team identified a number of practices that reaffirm that the structure and work of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee of the Academic Council demonstrate a strong commitment to using QA guidelines and principles to improve institutional systems and enhance learner success and outcomes. In particular, the review team notes the commitment to involving students in the quality enhancement process, including membership of the Academic Council and participation in PMSS reviews. The focus on individual faculty needs in respect of upskilling to better meet learners' needs in altered learning environments – through one-to-one clinics

and bootcamps – during COVID-19 also attests to IT Carlow’s commitment to a student-centred culture. Professional development is also offered to faculty and professional staff at all campuses, with the CTL traveling to other campuses as needed. The review team also find noteworthy IT Carlow’s diligence in recruiting international examiners from a variety of backgrounds to provide objective evaluations of IT Carlow programmes and services. The institute’s website – for its efforts in assuring and enhancing quality – is also noteworthy for its transparency and comprehensiveness.

While a separate and terminal process, the ISER reflects IT Carlow’s participatory model in reviewing and improving institutional programmes and processes. The review team notes that engagement of administrative staff and faculty in the recent ISER has also contributed to the institute’s commitment to, and implementation of, quality enhancement measures. Volunteers from across the campus down to the department level participated in forums and other vehicles for developing the report, and a variety of communication tools were used to solicit input and update staff on the process and progress made.

The review team was interested in discovering how the shift from terms to semesters at IT Carlow will impact programme quality, and how implementation will be achieved consistently and on an institution-wide basis – in particular, the impact of implementation on first-year students. Faculty who met with the review team expressed their belief that there is a need to develop new assessment strategies, as well as their concern for how students with disabilities will perform in a semester framework.

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The review team recommends the development of assessment strategies to address the new semesterisation model, including a focus on students with disabilities.**

ASSESSMENT OF THE ALIGNMENT OF IT CARLOW’S QUALITY ENHANCEMENT WITH MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS

As noted above, IT Carlow’s mission is ‘Empowering individuals to lead better lives, driving the creation of a vibrant economy and building strong communities.’

The institute’s major strategic focus in the coming years is to achieve status as a multi-campus technological university (TUSEI) under provisions of the Technological Universities Act of 2018 and in line with the Project Ireland 2040 report. IT Carlow has been working closely with Waterford Institute of Technology under a 2017 MOU to explore TUSEI development. The institute’s extended vision is to be a ‘leading European Technological University’ by 2030.

The review team finds that IT Carlow’s quality assurance and enhancement policies and practices advance the institute’s mission and strategic goals, particularly as they relate to ensuring academic programme quality and relevance, learner outcomes, student participation in quality reviews, and partnerships with local, national, and international educational and business partners.

The review team has found convincing evidence that IT Carlow is a learner-centred institution which actively supports student learning. IT Carlow has an active students’ union representing undergraduate and postgraduate students. Four full-time officers are supported by training in sexual health, counselling referral, conflict management, suicide prevention, and other topics. A Class Representative Council (CRC) has more than 90 class representatives — one for every 15 students. Wexford campus also has a CRC. The institute plans to have a full-time students’ union officer at the Wexford campus, as well as a deputy president. (These measures are based on requests made by Wexford campus students.) IT Carlow students are represented on many of the institute’s committees: students have two seats on the Academic Council, and also sit on the Governing Body, the Athena SWAN committee, the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, the Collaborative Provision Committee, and other institutional groups and committees. Student voices are heard, and student representatives assume active roles in committees, e.g. students developed the student charter for the ISER.

An example of how the student voice has led to changes within the institution is provided in the successful student-led effort to install gender-neutral bathrooms. In addition, students participate in PMSS reviews. Student input was used to adjust the Mature Student Orientation to include information on literacy and library skills. Student input is also

provided to improve academic and other student support services, e.g. writing instruction, and students are surveyed to assess library services and computer support. The institute's efforts to include students in all aspects of its operations – academic, quality enhancement, student life, support services, and other student-critical programmes – were clear to the review team.

Some students interviewed by the review team raised as a concern the issue of noise created by student groups in the library; the students have requested that more be done on this issue. (The review team notes that the development of a new library is included in the IT Carlow Master Plan.) The students' union has also solicited student input through class representatives on the Learner Engagement and Progression Framework, including an examination of admissions processes and events such as DARE and HEAR.

Students are also aware of the institute's plans to merge with Waterford IT to create a technological university and are keen to ensure that there is seamless integration with Waterford IT's Student Union. The institute's English language course for international students is an example of IT Carlow's commitment to the success of its international students.

Research is an important IT Carlow strategic goal, yet faculty participation is currently voluntary and research initiatives responds chiefly to local interests. The review team suggests that research should be institutionalised to a greater extent, with a national/international scope, more benchmark partners identified, and incentives provided for broader faculty participation. At present, research performance measures are set at the department level and postgraduate student participation is uneven. The Research and Development Committee is the appropriate place for institutional metrics to be developed and distributed. Metrics can include: spinouts, patents created, industries engaged, company partnerships, and overall effectiveness of industry partnerships. A balance of pure research and industry-specific research should also be considered.

The institute is in the process of adjusting its culture from being primarily a teaching institution to integrating faculty/student research. Teaching

load, innovation vouchers, and other incentives and rewards will help faculty to embrace research opportunities. External funding from industry and other sources can also be pursued to support research goals.

The review team notes the extensive network of partnerships that IT Carlow has created through collaborations with business/industry and educational organisations.

COMMENDATIONS

The review team commends the institute for responding to enrolment growth with a proactive plan for facilities and modernisation expansion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **The review team recommends that the anonymous systematic collection of student feedback be implemented to collect information on course content, delivery, and assessment as part of the annual programme review cycle.**
2. **The review team recommends that IT Carlow establish formal benchmark national and international partners, for research and teaching purposes, and leverage their support to elevate institutional reputation.**

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT METRICS

A sampling of institutional metrics includes:

- The institute exceeds TU average percentage of faculty with PhDs
- The institute is meeting its Mature Student Target
- The institute exceeds Students with Disabilities Targets
- The institute received an A+ rating for its work with the KTI Consortium
- The institute's faculty/student ratio is below benchmarks in U-Multirank comparisons.

The ITC 2019–2023 Strategic Plan and other IT Carlow planning documents articulate a number of objectives, desired outcomes, and aspirational goals. The institute also reviews and responds to a number of external measures, including QQI standards, EHEA standards, U-Multirank, and other rankings.

What is not in place, however, is a manageable set of measurable institutional KPIs that are housed and tracked in one location; published for internal and external stakeholders; and used to drive institutional decisions, including enrolments (5- and 10-year projections), programme development and modification, campus growth, budget allocations, and other key actions. During the review team's meeting with the Governing Body during the main review visit, the need to develop institutional KPIs was acknowledged by the Governing Body. Those could include enrolment figures, retention rates, graduation rates, progression to postgraduate programmes (at IT Carlow and elsewhere), number of faculty with

PhDs, faculty/student ratio, and others. There is also a need to gather, analyse and share data on part-time learners, lifelong learners, and students with disabilities. Incentives could be introduced to broaden SciVal usage as Scopus is implemented.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **The review team recommends that IT Carlow develop an institutional data set that is fully understood and consistently used throughout the organisation to support evidence-based management decision-making that consistently measures progress against KPIs.**



Objective 4 – Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION (ATP) – THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ATP

The review team is satisfied that IT Carlow is effectively implementing access, transfer, and progression processes in accordance with the QQI *Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression* (2015).

IT Carlow has a strong tradition of providing access to targeted groups through the Carlow Access Programme. The review team met a range of access partners ranging from schools, colleges of further education and training, and education and training boards. It is clear that IT Carlow is committed to working within its community to provide access and progression opportunities for a range of learners.

This includes students from widening participation areas, mature learners, specific schemes (DARE) to support disabled students and, commendably, a specific scheme for the Traveller community. The review team heard from external stakeholders a range of examples of IT Carlow's support for their organisations in the preparation of their learners for third-level education. It is clear IT Carlow plays an important part in supporting educational attainment and economic development in Carlow and the broader region.

IT Carlow was one of the first HEIs to engage with Specialisterne Ireland, which provides support to students who have a diagnosis on the autism spectrum, including preparation for, and support with, placements resulting in higher employment rates for students with disability.

IT Carlow's student body has grown significantly since 2010 and is increasingly very diverse with 26.1 per cent access learners in 2015-16 and a large number (up to 50 per cent) of lifelong learning students and other non-traditional learners. Indeed, IT Carlow is the largest lifelong learner and work-based learner provider in the sector, providing some 212 programmes. This is supported structurally by a dedicated Faculty of Lifelong Learning and a range of special purpose awards that recognise the changing nature of the learner by providing a modular approach to support individual attainment of minor and major awards.

CREDIT AND RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

IT Carlow has systems, procedures, and expertise in supporting the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) aligned to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Procedures for RPL are clearly articulated in the IT Carlow QA Manual. The institute supports learners in respect of advanced entry by awarding credit for experiential learning not previously academically accredited.

INFORMATION PROVISION

IT Carlow provides clear guidance and documentation on its website on entry requirements for prospective learners, the Access Programme for CAO learners, and detailed sections on RPL. Additionally, there is significant information on the DARE (Disability Access Route to Education) scheme and other related student support.

Objective 5 – Provision of Programmes to International Learners

The learner population of IT Carlow has undergone considerable growth since 2011-12, and the cohort of international learners is no exception to this. International learners of non-EU origin make up a greater percentage of total international learners than their EU counterparts, increasing from 154 non-EU international learners in 2011-12 to 430 by 2018-19.

Internationalisation is a strategic priority of IT Carlow, as outlined in the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, and the institute has a target to grow numbers to 15 per cent by 2020. IT Carlow aims to 'ensure a global dimension in the design and delivery of education, research, and knowledge exchange'. At the time of the review, non-EU international learners made up 13 per cent of the total learner population at IT Carlow.

During the course of the main review visit, the jeopardising impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the expected further increase to this percentage was raised by the institution.

IT Carlow showed evidence of supports for international learners in accordance with the *Code of Practice for the Provision of Education and Training to International Learners*. Published documents include *Provision of Pastoral Care for International Students of Institute of Technology Carlow*, *Policy and Procedure for Collection of Fees*, and the *Learner Engagement Progression Framework*.

A dedicated international office provides supports to international learners, including bespoke inductions.

The review team met a group of international learners who attested to the high level of support provided by the international office on arrival at IT Carlow. While the support received on arrival was praised by international students, learners noted that increased communication and preparation prior to travel to Ireland would also ease the transition.

The review team also heard evidence during the main review visit that the International Office provides English language classes with mandatory participation by those of non-English speaking backgrounds. IT Carlow demonstrated good integration of these language classes and the review team noted that the institute monitors the classes' effectiveness in preparing students to progress academically. Of particular note was the focus on academic and technical language in the English language supports.

A pervasive desire of staff and students to ensure integration of international students with the full student body was evident throughout the review. Initiatives and practices evidenced include group work, limiting intake of international students for courses in high demand to ensure a mix with national students, and cultural events held by the institution. Social integration was identified as a current weakness but is to be addressed by the incoming students' union welfare officer through the implementation of a 'buddy' system.

Section 4

Conclusions

Overall Findings and Conclusions



Conclusions

Overall Findings and Conclusions

IT Carlow has engaged in a transformative process since its last institutional review in 2010. It has had a clear strategic focus since 2012 in preparing for technological university status. Some evidence of this transformative process is the growth in student numbers of 55 per cent between 2011-12 and 2018-19. The growth in postgraduate researchers has also been very significant. Through a combination of supporting staff in undertaking doctoral qualifications and recruitment, IT Carlow has succeeded in exceeding the average percentage of faculty with PhDs to meet TU criteria. The Strategic Plan 2019-2023 sets out a clear vision to become a leading European Technological University: Inspiring Individuals, Transforming Society by 2030.

FINDINGS

The review team commends this ambitious vision and, having met with a wide range of faculty, staff, students and stakeholders during the review and reviewed a wealth of documentation, the review team is also satisfied that IT Carlow is aligned with QQI's Statutory QA Guidelines and with ESG 2015.

The commendations and recommendations set out below arose from the very positive engagement the review team had with IT Carlow. They are intended to be constructive and supportive in helping IT Carlow continue with its transformative changes.

COMMENDATIONS

1. The review team commends IT Carlow for the transformation that has taken place in its institutional development and strategic direction since the last institutional review.
2. The review team commends IT Carlow's strong and effective management team, which is systematic in developing and implementing administrative processes and procedures for the institute.
3. The review team commends IT Carlow for the authenticity of the values-based culture described in all publications. This culture is evidenced in the work of individuals at the institute.
4. The review team commends IT Carlow on the preparation of a comprehensive and reflective ISER document and recommends the publication of the document on the institute's quality webpage.
5. The review team commends IT Carlow for its sustenance of a strong financial discipline over an extended period of time resulting in substantial surpluses. These have enabled extensive capital development of the campus in support of its pursuit of technological university status.
6. The review team commends IT Carlow for its strong commitment to QA, as well as the evidence of quality culture across the organisation, supported by robust governance structures.
7. The review team commends IT Carlow for its strong commitment to, and provision of support infrastructure for, a broad range of collaborative and access partners. The review team further commends IT Carlow for the embedded nature of quality oversight and monitoring of its collaborative and access partnerships.
8. The review team commends IT Carlow for its strong commitment to student support and engagement and notes the ample evidence provided that IT Carlow is a student-centred institution.
9. The review team commends IT Carlow for its responsiveness to external and internal feedback in programme design and redevelopment.

10. The review team commends IT Carlow for the excellent support provided to staff interested in engaging in research, as evidenced by the percentage of staff who have attained PhDs over the past eight years, demonstrating IT Carlow's deep commitment to the pursuit of technological university status.
11. The review team commends IT Carlow for its strong commitment to engagement with industry and community, as evidenced by its recent top ranking in the Multirank system.
12. The review team commends IT Carlow for its strong commitment to the professional development and training of staff in the area of teaching and learning and the renewal of IT infrastructure.
13. The review team commends IT Carlow for its very impressive and significant achievements in advancing gender equality, including the Athena SWAN and SALI initiative, which give the institute a mark of distinction among its peers.
5. The new Research and Innovation Impact Strategy sets out a comprehensive vision for research with measurable targets for the next 5 years; however, the review team recommends that these performance indicators be distributed and owned across the institute, with progress monitored and reported annually to promote the emergence of a research culture across the institute.
6. As resources will always be limited the review team recommends that the institute should, over time, further refine priority research areas to achieve critical mass and recognition, prioritising these in terms of investment.
7. The review team recommends that the anonymous systematic collection of student feedback be implemented to collect information on course content, delivery, and assessment as part of the annual programme review cycle.
8. The review team recommends that IT Carlow fully implement its plan to have a full-time students' union representative at the Wexford campus.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The review team recommends that IT Carlow strengthen the Strategic Plan 2019-2023 to better describe a set of measurable institutional key performance indicators that will drive the defined strategic intent of becoming a leading European technological university.
2. The review team recommends that IT Carlow develop an institutional data set that is fully understood and consistently used throughout the organisation to support evidence-based management decision-making that consistently measures progress against KPIs.
3. The review team recommends that IT Carlow establish formal benchmark national and international partners, for research and teaching purposes, and leverage their support to elevate institutional reputation.
4. The review team recommends that IT Carlow develop 10-year projections for student numbers and portfolio mix to assist with clarifying optimal shape, size and student mix of the institute.
9. The review team recommends the development of assessment strategies to address the new semesterisation model, including a focus on students with disabilities
10. The review team recommends that IT Carlow explore opportunities for developing a systematic approach to workload management and staff development to facilitate the nurturing of a research culture across the institute.
11. The review team recommends that IT Carlow develop a more holistic approach to internationalisation, incorporating and enhancing the internationalisation of the curriculum and increasing outbound mobility of students, in order to realise its ambition of becoming a globally connected institute.
12. The review team recommends that, to ensure sufficient risk management and portfolio oversight, the institute should introduce an annual strategic overview and assessment of collaborative partnerships as part of an annual review presented through Academic Council and the Governing Board.

TOP 5 COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMENDATIONS

1. The review team commends IT Carlow for the transformation that has taken place in its institutional development and strategic direction since the last institutional review.
2. The review team commends IT Carlow's sustenance of a strong financial discipline over an extended period of time resulting in substantial surpluses. These have enabled extensive capital development of the campus in support of its pursuit of technological university status.
3. The review team commends IT Carlow's strong commitment to QA, as well as the evidence of quality culture across the organisation, supported by robust governance structures.
4. The review team commends IT Carlow's strong commitment to student support and engagement and notes the ample evidence provided that IT Carlow is a student-centred institution.
5. The review team commends the excellent support provided by IT Carlow to staff interested in engaging in research, as evidenced by the percentage of staff who have attained PhDs over the past eight years, demonstrating IT Carlow's deep commitment to the pursuit of technological university status.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The review team recommends that IT Carlow strengthen the Strategic Plan 2019-2023 to better describe a set of measurable institutional key performance indicators that will drive the defined strategic intent of becoming a leading European technological university.
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4. The review team recommends that the anonymous systematic collection of student feedback be implemented to collect information on course content, delivery, and assessment as part of the annual programme review cycle.
5. The review team recommends that IT Carlow explore opportunities for developing a systematic approach to workload management and staff development to facilitate the nurturing of a research culture across the institute.

OVERARCHING STATEMENTS ABOUT QA

The effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of the institution and the extent of their implementation.

In conducting its review, the panel read a range of documentation, including the ISER provided by the IT Carlow, the AIQRs for 2017, 2018 and 2019, the Quality Assurance Handbook, documentation for various programmatic reviews and other supplementary documentation provided. The review team met with a wide range of staff, students, members of Governing Body, alumni, collaborative partners and external stakeholders to verify the veracity of what they had read. Based on the data gathered through this process, the review team is satisfied that IT Carlow is implementing its current quality assurance policies and procedures effectively.

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 (QAG).

Following the extensive process described above, the review team is satisfied that IT Carlow's QA policies and procedures are 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 visit and review of documentation, it concludes that IT Carlow has effective procedures in place for the operation and management of the institution as an awarding body. These procedures are aligned with the designated awarding power granted to it and are exercised in a satisfactory manner.

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

The review team found evidence that the necessary governance policy and procedures are in place to support a systematic approach to quality enhancement throughout the institute.

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

The review team is satisfied that the procedures for access, transfer and progression processes in IT Carlow are in accordance with the QQI Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression (2015).

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

The review team equally found evidence that appropriate supports are being provided to international students and that IT Carlow is compliant with the Code of Practice for the Provision of Education and Training to International Learners.



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Section 5

Institutional Response



Institutional Response

Introduction

Institute of Technology Carlow very much welcomes the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) CINNTE Review carried out in June 2020 by an international panel of experts and peers, the Independent Review Team (IRT), to evaluate the effectiveness of institutional quality assurance processes. The review process itself was balanced and thorough, the review report is representative and comprehensive, and the Institute highly values the additional perspectives, experience and advice facilitated by this review.

Preparation for the review provided the Institute with an opportunity to critically appraise its activities, focusing on an all-encompassing evaluation of quality enhancement undertaken since the last Institutional Review in 2010-11. The Institute's self-evaluation review was conducted throughout 2019 building upon extensive and ongoing monitoring and review processes conducted throughout the Institute over several years. These included reviews of governance, teaching and learning, research and innovation, encompassing programmatic and academic domains, as well as professional, managerial and support services. The self-evaluation review has identified a range of new opportunities and actions for the future in order to ensure additional positive outcomes for students, staff and stakeholders. These actions together with the recommendations from the IRT have been prioritised for implementation in the coming months and years.

The Virtual Review Process

The review, and the main review visit itself, took place amidst a backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and the necessary restrictions imposed by public health guidelines. The physical site visit by the IRT, scheduled for the end of March 2020, was postponed. However, working closely with QQI and the Chair of the IRT, and supported by an Institutional Repository of almost 17,000 documents, arrangements were made for the necessary meetings and discussions to take place through virtual means. The virtual platform enabled the IRT to engage effectively and extensively with staff, learners and stakeholders from across the Institute and regions. This was the first virtual review undertaken in the QQI CINNTE cycle, serving as both a national and international exemplar for how such reviews can be successfully conducted in exceptional times.

Commendations

The IRT Report sets out thirteen commendations.

The Institute warmly welcomes the IRT's acknowledgement of the transformational development that has taken place since the last Institutional Review and the strategic direction that has since been adopted. This is further emphasised in the report through the IRT's statement that *"IT Carlow's commitment to lifelong learners, its student-centred culture, new innovations in its research capacity, and regional partnerships position IT Carlow well to meet its vision to be a leading technological university, and respond to Ireland's National Strategy for Higher Education (2011) to provide students with transitions and career pathways to foster employment, lifelong learning, civic engagement, and regional economic growth."*

Recognition by the IRT of the authenticity of the values-based culture was particularly appreciated and further endorses the student-centred focus of all in the Institute's community.

The Institute's strong commitment to Quality Assurance and compliance with ESG 2015 and QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines was acknowledged by the IRT, as was the clear evidence for the quality culture across the organisation that is supported by robust governance structures.



The Institute thanks the IRT for their commendations relating to the strong institutional commitment to engagement with industry, community and a broad range of collaborative and access partnerships. This is further enhanced by the commitment of the Institute to further develop its culture of equality, diversity and inclusivity, most recently evidenced by the Athena SWAN Bronze Institutional Award under the Extended Charter.

The Institute also thanks the IRT for their commendations relating to the strength and effectiveness of the management team, the sustenance of strong financial discipline over an extended period of time, and the extensive capital development of the campus in support of its pursuit of technological university status.

Recommendations

The IRT Report sets out twelve recommendations.

The Institute welcomes these recommendations and acknowledges that they build upon and further expand on the recommendations identified during the institutional self-evaluation process.

Several of these recommendations relate to the strengthening of strategic measurable institutional KPIs and the value of a more comprehensive institutional data set to further inform decision making as the Institute progresses towards university designation and future development as a leading European technological university. The recommendation regarding establishment of formal national and international benchmarking partners, is particularly relevant in this respect.

Institute of Technology Carlow remains strongly committed to further enhancing institutional research culture. This is evidenced by the ambitious goals detailed in the [Research and Innovation Impact Strategy 2020-2025](#) launched in March 2020. The Institute welcomes the commendation from the IRT on the excellent support provided to staff interested in engaging with research, together with the investment in staff development over several years for the attainment of higher awards to doctoral degree level and related outputs. The IRT recommendations relating to distribution of research impact performance indicators across faculties and campuses, and the prioritisation of research thematic areas towards the achievement of critical mass, are agreed and reflected in this plan. Work is already underway to implement these recommendations.

In welcoming these and other recommendations arising from the review, the Institute notes that several of the IRT recommendations are aligned with [Strategic Plan 2019-2023](#). These recommendations will help shape the planned mid-term review of this Strategic Plan and guide the inclusion of additional key performance deliverables to further ensure the achievement of strategic intent. Through the Office for Institutional Planning and Research, the Institute will put an increased emphasis on institutional data sets to enhance evidence-based decision-making, including plans for continued growth in student numbers and portfolio, while providing for additional benchmarking opportunities against national and international partners across all activities.

A key institutional developmental milestone for the coming academic years is implementation of the new Academic Delivery Framework (ADF). This Framework was designed and is being implemented in a manner that maximises the potential benefits for learners accruing from the movement from a fully modularised year-long academic year, to a fully modularised semesterised academic year. As part of the Teaching and Learning Strategy, special consideration will be given to the development of assessment strategies to support the new semesterisation model. Allied with the Student Success Strategy - the Learner Engagement and Progression Framework - the new ADF will support students from all backgrounds.

The IRT commended the student-centered approach of Institute of Technology Carlow and student engagement will continue to be enhanced through many avenues, including the systematic collection of student feedback as part of the annual programme review cycle. Recommendations regarding internationalisation and linked provision are also welcome and will drive advances in these key areas of institutional strength.

Conclusion

The QQI CINNTE Institutional Review process provided the opportunity for institute-wide analyses and reflection, while capturing the strong commitment of staff, students and stakeholders to the future development of the Institute towards university designation.

Institute of Technology Carlow sincerely thanks all members of the IRT, particularly the Chair of the IRT, Professor Elsa Núñez and the IRT Coordinator, Professor Pádraig Ó Duibhir, for their expert engagement with the process and their highly constructive feedback and report.

Thanks are also due to the staff, students, alumni and stakeholders, the Institutional Review Steering Group, members of the many working groups, those who met with the IRT, and the wider institutional community, for their enthusiastic and authentic engagement with the process.

The Institute gratefully acknowledges the work of the members of the Institutional Reviews Unit in QQI for guiding and supporting Institute of Technology Carlow in completing this review in unprecedented and extraordinary times.

Dr Patricia Mulcahy
President

David Denieffe
*Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Registrar
CINNTE Institutional Review Coordinator*

5th October 2020

APPENDICES

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
- Cork 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
- Institute of Technology Tralee
- 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"> - adhering to purposes, criteria and outcomes that are clear and transparent - publishing the reports and outcomes of reviews in accessible locations and formats for different audiences - evaluating, as part of the review, institutional reporting on quality and quality assurance, to ensure that it is transparent and accessible
<p>4. To encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - using the expertise of international, national and student peer reviewers who are independent of the institution - ensuring that findings are based on stated evidence - facilitating 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. The 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
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

STEP	ACTION	DATES	OUTCOME	
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 <i>In some cases, directions to the institution and a schedule for their implementation</i>	
	Preparation of QQI quality profile	2 weeks after decision	Quality profile published	
Follow-up	<i>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</i>			
	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 Timetable

10th June 2020

Day 1: Management

TIME	DETAILS	ATTENDEES
12.30pm – 1.00pm	Private Review Team Meeting	
1.00pm – 1.30pm	Opening Meeting with Institutional Coordinator	David Denieffe, VPAAR
1.30pm – 2.00pm	Private Meeting with President	Dr Patricia Mulcahy, President
2.00pm – 2.45pm	<p>Senior Executive Team: Institute's mission, strategic plan and the roles and responsibilities for QA and enhancement This session includes the heads of faculty.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr Patricia Mulcahy, President 2. Cormac O'Toole, VP for Corporate Affairs 3. David Denieffe, VPAAR 4. Declan Doyle, VP for Development & Research 5. Dr David Dowling, Head of Faculty of Science 6. Dr Frances Hardiman, Head of Faculty of Engineering 7. Dr Joseph Collins, Head of Faculty of Lifelong Learning 8. Dr Karen Hennessy, Head of Wexford Campus 9. Maebh Maher, Head of Faculty of Business & Humanities
2.45pm – 3.30pm	Private Review Team Meeting	
3.30pm – 4.15pm	<p>Students' Union Executive: Student engagement and the student role in the institute's QA, Strategic planning and decision-making processes.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thomas Drury, President 2. Ronan Larkin, VP Education & Lifelong Learning 3. Tawnya Foster, VP Welfare & Equality Officer 4. Adam Clarke, Postgraduate Students' Officer 5. Valentina Michaela, Societies & Sports Officer 6. Michael Cahill, Mature Students' Officer
4.15pm – 4.45pm	Private Review Team Meeting	

TIME	DETAILS	ATTENDEES
4.45pm – 5.30pm	Institutional Review Self-Evaluation Team	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. David Denieffe, VPAAR 2. Declan Doyle, VP for Development & Research 3. David Buckley, Estates Manager 4. Dr Cathal Nolan, Head of Department of Aerospace, Mechanical and Electronic Engineering 5. Dr David Ryan, Director of the Office of Institutional Planning & Research 6. Dr Janette Davies, Deputy Head of Campus, Wexford Campus 7. Dr Yvonne Kavanagh, Assistant Registrar 8. John Tully, Lecturer, Chair of Academic Regulations Committee of Academic Council 9. Rosemary Flynn, Head of Learner Support & Student Services 10. Thomas Drury, President, Students' Union
5.30pm – 5.45pm	Break	
5.45pm – 6.30pm	Governing Body: Mechanisms employed for monitoring QA and enhancement and how it ensures effectiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. John Moore, Chair of Governing Body 2. Valerie Farrell, Member 3. Lily Holmes, Member 4. Catherine O'Donnell, Member 5. Ger Frisby, Member
6.30pm – 7.00pm	Private Review Team Meeting	



11th June 2020

Day 2: Academic and Research

TIME	DETAILS	ATTENDEES
12.30pm – 1.00pm	Private Review Team Meeting	
1.00pm – 1.15pm	Meeting with VPAAR	David Denieffe, VPAAR
1.15pm – 1.45pm	Private Review Team Meeting	
1.45pm – 2.30pm	<p>Academic Staff: Involvement in QA and enhancement Group A (Business) Group B (Engineering and Science) Group C (Wexford Campus and Lifelong Learning)</p>	<p>Group A (Business)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mary Beare Aust, lectures in Early Childhood Philosophy of Education, Pedagogy and Curriculum, Literacy Numeracy Science & Technology Quality Provision in Early Years Settings 2. Una Grant, lectures in Sustainable Marketing, Research Methods, Organisational Research 3. Hilary Dempsey, lectures in Design Studio, Product Design Innovation, Human Centered Design & Interaction <p>Group B (Engineering & Science)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr David Allen lectures in Electronics 2. Dr Eoghan O Shea lectures in Architecture 3. Dr Annemarie Enright lectures in Molecular Biology, Genetics & Immunology, Research Project 4. Dr Diarmuid Ó Sé lectures in Programming, Applied Physics, Discrete Structures and Algorithms and Retention. 5. Jennifer Wallace lectures in Anatomy, Advanced Rehab, Clinical Studies and Research Project <p>Group C (Wexford & LLL)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kevin Moynihan, Carlow Campus, lectures in Business – Accounting and Finance 2. Maeve Dempsey, Wicklow Campus, lectures in Social Care 3. David O’Callaghan lectures in Creative Design Studies, Design Print Production, Web Design and Digital Media 4. Lorraine Galvin, lectures in Information Technology, IT & Digital Media and Event Management 5. Denis Coleman lectures in Business, Supply Chain Management and Communications
2.45pm – 3.00pm	Break	

TIME	DETAILS	ATTENDEES
3.00pm – 3.45pm	Research: Development of Research and Innovation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Declan Doyle, VP for Development & Research 2. Brian Ogilvie, Research & Commercialisation Support Manager 3. Deborah Pollard Jackson, Research & Commercialisation Support Centre Administrator 4. Dr Brian Casey, designCORE 5. Dr Brian Jackson, Head of Postgraduate Studies 6. Dr Claire Lodge, healthCORE 7. Dr Daire O Broin, gameCORE 8. Dr David Dowling, Head of Faculty of Science 9. Dr Dean Callaghan, engCORE 10. Dr Greg Doyle, Chair of R&D Committee 11. Dr Niamh McCrea, socialCORE 12. Dr Susan Flynn, eduCORE 13. Dr Thomae Kakouli-Duarte, enviroCORE 14. Sarah O'Brien, Research, Development & Innovation Programme Support Officer
3.45pm – 4.00pm	Break	
4.00pm – 4.45pm	<p>Academic Research Staff: Staff experience of research management and supervision, the relationship between teaching, research and innovation, QA and enhancements and the impacts on the research student experience</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr Yvonne Kavanagh, Assistant Registrar 2. Dr David Ryan, Director of the Office of Institutional Planning & Research 3. Dr Dean McDonnell, socialCORE 4. Dr Dorel Picovici, engCORE 5. Dr Greg Doyle, gameCORE 6. Dr Guiomar Garcia-Cabellos, enviroCORE 7. Dr Kieran Germaine, enviroCORE 8. Dr PJ White, designCORE 9. Dr Rosemary O'Hara, enviroCORE 10. Dr Sharon Kinsella, healthCORE 11. Dr Susan Flynn, eduCORE 12. Dr Tomás Dwyer, Wexford Campus
4.45pm – 5.15pm	Private Review Team Meeting	

22nd June 2020

Day 3: Quality Assurance

TIME	DETAILS	ATTENDEES
12.30pm – 1.00pm	Private Review Team Meeting	
1.00pm – 1.15pm	Provisional meeting with VPAAR	David Denieffe, VPAAR
1.15pm – 2.00pm	Quality Assurance Structures: Discussion including the experience of implementing QA throughout IT Carlow	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. David Denieffe, VPAAR 2. Dolores McCann, Office of VPAAR 3. Dr Yvonne Kavanagh, Assistant Registrar 4. Dr Siobhan Ryan, Quality Officer 5. Sandra Kirwan, Academic Council Administrator 6. Dr Gina Noonan, Head of Centre for Teaching and Learning
2.00pm – 2.30pm	Private Review Team Meeting	
2.30pm – 3.15pm	Quality Assurance Effectiveness: How does IT Carlow monitor the effectiveness of its quality management processes and structures; how does it ensure the outcomes of QA processes are enacted in an appropriate, consistent and timely manner?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. David Denieffe, Chair of Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee 2. Dr Allison Kenneally, Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion 3. Dr Brian Jackson, Head of Postgraduate Studies 4. Dr Chris Meudec, Lecturer, Dept of Computing 5. Dr Dina Brazil, Chair of Teaching, Learning & Support Services Committee 6. Dr Greg Doyle, Chair of Research & Development Committee 7. Dr Joseph Collins, Chair of Collaborative Provision Committee 8. Dr Yvonne Kavanagh, Assistant Registrar 9. John Tully, Chair of Academic Regulations Committee 10. Ronan Larkin, VP Education & Lifelong Learning, Students' Union 11. Nigel Whyte, Head of Department of Computing 12. Dr Siobhan Ryan, Quality & Collaborations Officer 13. Thomas Drury, President, Students' Union
3.15pm – 3.45pm	Private Review Team Meeting/ Break	

TIME	DETAILS	ATTENDEES
3.45pm – 4.15pm	<p>Academic Quality Management Processes: Implementation of processes and how their effectiveness is ensured</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maebh Maher, Head of Faculty of Business & Humanities 2. Dr Eileen Doyle-Walsh, Head of Department of Humanities 3. Myles Kelly, Head of Department of Sports, Media and Marketing 4. Dr Martin Meagher, Head of Department of Business 5. Dr Frances Hardiman, Head of Faculty of Engineering 6. Dr Eoin Homan, Head of Department of Built Environment and Extended Campus 7. Dr Cathal Nolan, Head of Department of Aerospace, Mechanical and Electronic Engineering 8. Dr David Dowling, Head of Faculty of Science 9. Nigel Whyte, Head of Department of Computing 10. Paula Rankin, Head of Department of Science 11. Dr Karen Hennessy, Head of Wexford Campus 12. Dr Janette Davies, Deputy Head of Campus, Wexford Campus 13. Dr Joseph Collins, Head of Faculty of Lifelong Learning 14. Lindsay Malone, Deputy Head of Faculty of Lifelong Learning
4.15pm – 4.30pm	Private Review Team Meeting	
4.30pm – 5.15pm	<p>Student Support Services: Involvement in QA and enhancement</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rosemary Flynn, Head of Learner Support & Student Services 2. Aisling McHugh, Access Officer 3. Donal McNally, Director of Sport 4. Fr Martin, Chaplain 5. Judy Murphy, Careers Advisor 6. Dr Gina Noonan, Head of Centre for Teaching and Learning 7. Dr Mary Delaney, Head of Library and Information Services 8. Dr Fintan Bracken, Deputy Librarian 9. Fergal Flanagan, Computing Services Manager 10. Colm O'Connor, Senior Technical Officer, Computing Services
5.15pm – 5.45pm	Private Review Team Meeting	

25th June 2020

Day 4: International & Infrastructure

TIME	DETAILS	ATTENDEES
1.30pm – 2.30pm	Private Review Team Meeting	
2.30pm – 3.15pm	Internationalisation: Involvement in QA and enhancement in international education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Declan Doyle, VP for Development & Research 2. Donal McAlister, International Manager 3. Dr Yvonne Kavanagh, Assistant Registrar 4. Larry Banville, Accounting Lecturer, Department of Business 5. Mary Bates, International Office Erasmus+ 6. Paddy Byrne, Aerospace Technician, Department of Aerospace, Mechanical & Electronic Engineering 7. Rachel Ní Neill, International Office Non-EU
3.15pm – 3.30pm	Break	
3.30pm – 4.15pm	<p>Informal Meeting with:</p> <p>Postgraduate Students</p> <p>International Students</p> <p>International student engagement in the institution, particularly the student learning experience, attended by incoming and outgoing student representatives.</p> <p>Students Studying on Collaborative Programmes</p>	<p>Group A – EU Students (Erasmus) and International Students</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Canada: Jake Elliott, Year 4 of BBus (Hons) in Marketing 2. China: Ge Liu, Year 2 of Bachelor of Arts in Accounting 3. Incoming from France: Dimitri Paumard, Year 3 of Bachelor of Engineering in Electronic Engineering 4. Iran: Masih Shafieian, Year 1 of BSc (Hons) in Computer Games Development 5. Outgoing Irish: Alexandra Walton, Year 2 of BA (Hons) in Art at the Wexford Campus 6. Outgoing Irish: Shane Fennell, Year 4 of BSc (Hons) in Biosciences <p>Group B – Students Studying on Collaborative Programmes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Defence Forces - Ciaran Carey, Year 4, MSc Military Engineering 2. An Cosán – Niamh Reynolds 3. An Cosán – Bríd O'Neill 4. An Cosán – Deirdre Lawlor 5. An Cosán – Brona Broderick 6. Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport – Rory Comerford, Year 1, Higher Certificate in Business in Logistics and Supply Chain 7. Defence Forces - Donal Clare, Year 5, MSc Military Engineering 8. Dublin Art Therapy College – Alfred Bozic, Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Integrative Counselling & Art Therapy 9. Dublin Art Therapy College – Madeline Polcer, Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Integrative Counselling & Art Therapy 10. Irish Gestalt Centre – Mairead Barry, Year 1, Master of Arts in Gestalt Psychotherapy <p><i>Continued >></i></p>

TIME	DETAILS	ATTENDEES
		<p>Group C – Postgraduate Students</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aaron Byrne, healthCore, level 10 2. Foo Shen Hwang, Fin Embedded Composite PCM Thermal Management System for Li-ion Battery Packs, level 9 3. Anna Karpinska, enviroCore, level 9 4. Liam Hickey, gameCore, level 9 5. Manasa Hegde, Evaluation of Functional Sol-Gel Coatings for Marine Renewable Energy Applications, level 9 6. Sarah Jayne Burke, User Centered Design, level 9 7. Stephanie Coakley, enviroCore, level 10 8. Tadgh Foley, Sports Economics, level 9 9. Thomas Fortune, Social Care, level 9
4.15pm – 4.45pm	Private Review Team Meeting	
4.45pm – 5.30pm	HR & Staff Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cormac O’Toole, VP for Corporate Affairs 2. Colette Lane, Head of Human Resources 3. Dr Allison Kenneally, Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion 4. Dr Gina Noonan, Head of Centre for Teaching and Learning 5. Damien Raftery, eLearning Officer 6. Dr Susan Flynn, Lecturer, Centre for Teaching and Learning 7. Emmett Cullinane, Learning Technologist 8. Deirdre McColgan, Self-Evaluation Report Co-ordinator, Donegal ETB (Observer)
5.30pm – 6.00pm	Estates and Capital Investment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cormac O’Toole, VP for Corporate Affairs 2. Eleanor Rea, Finance Manager 3. Bernie Tallon, Procurement Officer, Finance Office 4. David Buckley, Estates Manager 5. Keith Williams, Capital Projects Manager 6. Fiona O’Connor, Estates 7. Deirdre McColgan, Self-Evaluation Report Co-ordinator, Donegal ETB (Observer)
6.00pm – 6.30pm	Private Review Team Meeting	

26th June 2020
Day 5: Stakeholders

TIME	DETAILS	ATTENDEES
1.00pm – 1.30pm	Meeting with VPAAR	David Denieffe, VPAAR
1.30pm – 2.00pm	Private Review Team Meeting	
2.00pm – 2.45pm	Stakeholders – Access and Transfer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kevin Lewis, Chief Executive, Waterford & Wexford Education & Training Board 2. Paul Cahill, Home School Community Liaison, STAR (NTRIS) Wexford 3. Tom Farrell, Guidance Consultant, Private Practice 4. Fred Tuite, Career Guidance, Pobail Scoil, Kilkenny 5. Tony Dalton, Director, Further Education & Training Services, Laois Offaly Education & Training Board 6. Mary Foley, Guidance Counsellor, St Leo's College 7. Dr Markita Mulvey, Principal, Carlow Institute of Further Education & Training 8. Marie Cumiskey, Guidance Counsellor, Presentation College 9. Mary Prior Butler, Training Services Manager, Kilkenny & Carlow Education & Training Board 10. Noreen Murphy, Senior Assessment & Candidate Support Executive, Specialisterne Ireland 11. Deirdre McColgan, Self-Evaluation Report Co-ordinator, Donegal ETB (Observer)
2.45pm – 3.00pm	Break	
3.00pm – 3.45pm	Stakeholders - Industry and Community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Michael Lynch, Manager Midland Border East Skillnet 2. Mick Kelly, Chief Executive Officer, Simply Work Flow 3. Aidan Mahon, Business Development Manager, Insurtech Network Centre DAC 4. Aine Gahan, Manager, Carlow County Childcare Committee. 5. Gerry Maley, Business Manager, HSE 6. John Connaghton, Training Services, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, Dun Laoghaire 7. Margaret Connolly, Training Manager, Carne Financial Services 8. Mike Managan, REL 9. Pat Amond, Carlow Tool Making 10. Brian McCann (Breen MacCana), Unum 11. Niall Browne, Thermoair 12. Deirdre McColgan, Self-Evaluation Report Co-ordinator, Donegal ETB (Observer)
3.45pm – 4.00pm	Break	

TIME	DETAILS	ATTENDEES
4.00pm – 5.00pm	<p>Student Representatives: 2 x meetings – 3 panel members at each:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student Representatives From all faculties and campuses of IT Carlow (undergraduate and graduates) 2. Graduates 	<p>Group A – Current Students</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alex Porter, Year 3 of Honours Bachelor of Laws (LLB) 2. Bernadette Sheil, MA in Child Youth & Family Studies, Lifelong Learning Carlow Campus 3. Anne Marie Kirwan, Postgraduate Research Student – young people’s attitude towards the environment (student at Wexford Campus) 4. Chloe McNabb, Year 2 of Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Media and Public Relations 5. Emma O’Byrne, Year 4 of Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Information Technology Management 6. Harry Dunne, Year 4 of Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Cyber Crime and IT Security 7. Iris Whelan, Year 3 of Bachelor of Business (Honours) (student at Wexford Campus) 8. Michael Rainsfort Ryan, Year 2 of Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Computer Games Development 9. Rory Whyte, Year 3 of Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Sports Rehabilitation and Athletic Therapy 10. Shane Corcoran, Year 2 of Honours Bachelor of Laws (LLB) 11. Stephen Cruise, Year 4 of BSc (Honours) in Quantity Surveying 12. William Hennessy, Year 2 of Bachelor of Business (Honours) <p>Group B – Graduates</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sean Dunne graduated with Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Civil Engineering in 2017, currently employed as Site Engineer/Agent with Clonmel Enterprises Ltd 2. Aoife Fitzpatrick graduated with a Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Marketing in 2019, currently employed as intern at IT Carlow 3. Colin Leahy graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Applied Social Studies in Professional Social Care in 2018, currently employed as Ammunition Examiner Instructor at Department of Defence 4. Dr Richard Lally graduated with a Doctor of Philosophy by Research in 2016, currently employed at Altec 5. Eleanor Cobbe graduated with a Master of Science in Pharmaceutical Regulatory Affairs in 2018, currently employed as a Quality Compliance Officer at Eirgen Pharma 6. Jennifer Byrne graduated with a Bachelor of Engineering in Military Communications in 2019, currently employed as Engineering Technician Grade V with the Defence Forces <p><i>Continued >></i></p>

TIME	DETAILS	ATTENDEES
		<p>Group B – Graduates (continued)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Sean Kelly graduated with a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Sport & Exercise, currently employed as Performance GDA with Kilkenny GAA 8. William Kinsella graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Sport Coaching & Business Management in 2016, currently employed as a Sports Development Officer at Football Association of Ireland 9. Veronica Byrne graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Early Childhood Education and Care in 2015 and a Master of Arts in Child, Youth and Family Studies in 2017 and Master of Arts in Leadership in Early Years in 2018, currently Manager / Owner of Safe Hands Crèche and Montessori 10. Eva Law graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Youth & Community in 2018, currently a postgraduate student on the MA in Child, Youth & Family Studies at IT Carlow 11. Charlene Somers graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Applied Social Studies in 2017 and a Master of Arts by Research in 2019, currently employed as a social care worker in Disability Residential Care for Youths with Nua Healthcare 12. Deirdre McColgan, Self-Evaluation Report Co-ordinator, Donegal ETB (Observer)
5.00pm – 5.30pm	Private Review Team Meeting	



29th June 2020

Day 6: Collaborations

TIME	DETAILS	ATTENDEES
12.30pm – 12.45pm	Provisional meeting with VPAAR	
12.45pm – 1.15pm	Private Review Team Meeting	
1.15pm – 2.00pm	Collaborative Provision and Collaborative Monitoring: Arrangements for ensuring the quality of provision for staff and students for programmes offered with collaborative partners	1. Dr Frances Hardiman, Head of Faculty of Engineering 2. Dr Eoin Homan, Head of Department of Built Environment and Extended Campus 3. Anne Meaney, Extended Campus Coordinator 4. Dr Joseph Collins, Head of Faculty of Lifelong Learning 5. Lindsay Malone, Deputy Head of Faculty of Lifelong Learning 6. Dr Clare Power, Lifelong Learning Manager 7. Eoin O'Brien, Lifelong Learning Manager 8. Dr Siobhán Ryan, Quality Officer 9. Dr Cathal Nolan, Head of Department of Aerospace, Mechanical and Electronic Engineering (manages the DF Military Communications Systems programme) 10. David Denieffe
2.00pm – 2.15pm	Break	
2.15pm – 3.00pm	Staff Teaching on Collaborative Programmes: Involvement in QA and enhancement	1. Lt Col David Fitzpatrick, Registrar 2. Capt Emer Kelly, SO, Office of Registrar 3. Tricia Norris lectures in Psychotherapy 4. Billy Desmond, lectures in Psychotherapy 5. Dr Thomas Murray lectures in Community Development 6. Mark Coffey lectures in Supply Chain Management 7. Dr Agnes Maciocha lectures in Supply Chain Management 8. Jean Strong lectures in Art Therapy, Psychology and Counselling 9. Adrienne O'Shea lectures in Art Therapy, Psychology and Counselling
3.00pm – 3.30pm	Break	
3.30pm – 4.15pm	Open Session Review Team may request to meet again with specific individuals or groups (if required)	Declan Doyle, VP for Development & Research
4.15pm – 4.45pm	Break	
4.45pm – 5.30pm	Private Review Team Meeting	

30th June 2020

Day 7: Feedback/Clarifications

TIME	DETAILS	ATTENDEES
1.00pm – 1.20pm	Clarify issues from previous day and review today	David Denieffe, VPAAR
1.20pm – 1.30pm	Break	
1.30pm – 2.00pm	OPEN slot Review Team may request to meet again with specific individuals or groups (if required)	
2.00pm – 3.00pm	Private Review Team Meeting	
3.00pm – 3.15pm	Break	
3.15pm – 4.00pm	QQI Cyclical Reviews Unit: Discuss the Review Team's main findings and alignment with the terms of reference	
4.00pm – 4.30pm	Private Review Team Meeting	
4.30pm – 5.00pm	Meeting with President and Institutional Coordinator	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr Patricia Mulcahy, President 2. David Denieffe, VPAAR
5.00pm – 5.30pm	Oral Report to Senior Executive Team and the ISER Working Group	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr Patricia Mulcahy, President 2. David Denieffe, VPAAR 3. Cormac O'Toole, VP for Corporate Affairs 4. Declan Doyle, VP for Development & Research 5. Maebh Maher, Head of Faculty of Business & Humanities 6. Dr David Dowling, Head of Faculty of Science 7. Dr Frances Hardiman, Head of Faculty of Engineering 8. Dr Joseph Collins, Head of Faculty of Lifelong Learning 9. Dr Karen Hennessy, Head of Wexford Campus 10. Dr Janette Davies, Deputy Head of Wexford Campus 11. Dr Cathal Nolan, Head of Department of Aerospace, Mechanical and Electronic Engineering 12. Dr Yvonne Kavanagh, Assistant Registrar 13. John Tully, Lecturer, Chair of Academic Regulations Committee of Academic Council 14. Thomas Drury, President, Students' Union 15. Rosemary Flynn, Head of Learner Support & Student Services 16. David Buckley, Estates Manager 17. Dr David Ryan, Director of the Office of Institutional Planning & Research

Glossary

Term	Definition/Explanation
2012 Act	Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
AC	Academic Council
ADF	Academic Delivery Framework
AIQR	Annual Institutional Quality Report
Athena SWAN	Charter that recognises and encourages advances in gender equality
ATP	Access, Transfer and Progression
CAO	Central Applications Office
CINNTE	The name given to QQI's first institutional review cycle
CORE	Centres of Research and Enterprise
CRC	Class Representatives Council
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
CTL	Centre for Teaching and Learning
DAB	Designated Awarding Body
DAC	Design Activity Company
DARE	Disability Access Route to Education
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ESG (2015)	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
EU	European Union
FET	Further Education and Training
GAA	The Gaelic Athletic Association
GB	Governing Body
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEAR	Higher Education Access Route
ISER	Institutional Self-Evaluation Report

ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
IRT	Independent Review Team
ISSE	Irish Survey of Student Engagement
ISER	Institutional Self-evaluation Report
IoT/ IT	Institute of Technology/ Information Technology
ITC/ IT Carlow	Institute of Technology Carlow
KPI(s)	Key Performance Indicator(s)
KT(I)	Knowledge Transfer (Ireland)
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRV	Main Review Visit
(U-)Multirank	An international ranking system for higher education institutions
NFETL	National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NStEP	National Student Engagement Programme
NUI	National University of Ireland
OIRP	Office for Institutional Research and Planning
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PMSS	Professional Management and Support Staff
PP1/2/3	Programme Planning One/Two/Three
PSO	Postgraduate Studies Office
QA	Quality Assurance
QE	Quality Enhancement
QAEC	Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee
QAG	(QQI's Statutory) Quality Assurance Guidelines
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
R&I	Research and Innovation
RCSC	Research and Commercialisation Support Centre
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RPO	Research Performing Organisation(s)
SALI	Senior Academic Leadership Initiative
SciVal	A web-based analytics software tool, providing visual access to research performance
Scopus	An abstract and citation database

STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
T&L	Teaching and Learning
THEA	The Technological Higher Education Association
ToR	Terms of Reference
TT(O)	Technology Transfer (Office)
TTSI	Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative
TU	Technological University
TURN	Technological Universities Research Network
TUSEI	Technological University of South-East Ireland
UMT	University Management Team
USI	The Union of Students in Ireland
VP	Vice-President
VPAAR	Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar



INSTITIÚID
TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA
CHEATHARLACH



