

Institutional Review Report 2018

Institute of Technology Sligo



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 ([Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015](#)), having 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, 2015 (ESG) 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; and
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken.

This institutional review of Institute of Technology Sligo 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 Team

Each CINTE review is carried out by an international team of independent experts and peers. The 2018 institutional review of IT Sligo was conducted by a team of six reviewers selected by QQI. The Review Team was trained by QQI on 19 February 2018. The Chair and Coordinating Reviewer undertook a planning visit to IT Sligo on 20 February 2018. The Main Review Visit was conducted by the full team between 16 April and 19 April 2018.

CHAIR

Professor Eva Werner is Rector of IMC University of Applied Sciences, Krems, Austria since 2010, where she is responsible for quality assurance and quality enhancement of IMC degree programmes and internationalisation, curriculum and programme design and development; and academic staff development. From 2002 to 2009, Eva was Deputy Head of the Academic Board of the University. In 2005, she was elected Vice-Rector and re-elected in 2008. Eva has taught and lectured at several higher education (HE) institutions in Austria as well as during numerous teaching missions abroad. She has extensive experience of audit and review of quality assurance procedures as a Chair and panel member with FINEEC, NVAO, EVALAG, AQ Austria, ZEVA, THE-ICE and FIBAA and was a member of the ECA Expert Panel of the CeQuInt Project (Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation). Eva is also a member of the General Assembly of AQ Austria since 2012.

COORDINATING REVIEWER

Dr Kate Clarke is an educational consultant. As Director of The Open University's Validation Service (OUVS) and Chief Executive of its Vocational Awarding Body (OUAB), she was a member of the senior team at The Open University for more than 12 years. Before that, she managed the Academic Quality Office at the University of Hertfordshire for nine years, where she was promoted to Deputy Director (Academic Quality), responsible for managing quality in TNE partnerships. Kate was a member of the Executive and served as both Vice-Chair and Chair of the Council of Validating Universities, a national membership organisation promoting quality and sharing experience and practice in collaborative provision. She has written QA Handbooks, guidance materials and regulatory documents. Kate continues to contribute to UK stakeholder and expert groups. She regularly participates in validation panels and has contributed to many QAA working groups. Kate has direct experience of QAA and QQI review. On the international front, Kate is trained as an ENQA reviewer and has presented at INQAAHE and British Council conferences and seminars. She was a member of the UNESCO international experts' forum on quality assurance in higher education. Kate is a member of the UK's HE Global network and a Trustee of the British Accreditation Council.

INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Dr Toon (Antonius) Martens is former Vice Chancellor at University College Leuven, Belgium where he was also Head of the Academic Council and responsible for budget and financial planning, human resources and social consultation. Toon has a Masters and PhD in Bioengineering (Food Technology) and over 30 years' experience as CEO, having led mergers at ALMA University Restaurants Catholic University Leuven, Leuven and University Colleges Leuven-Limburg, Leuven (Belgium). During 2013-2016, he led the merger of three university colleges involving 15,000 students and 1,700 employees. Since retiring, Toon is active as a consultant and member of several boards. He also held the post of President of the Council of Flemish University Colleges (VLHORA), working groups of VLHORA and the Ministry of Education. He was actively engaged in the development of quality systems for higher education. He was a member of the advisory board of the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) for many years.

INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVE

Karen Forte is Chief Information Officer (CIO) and Head of Services at Allianz Ireland Insurance. She has over 30 years' experience of working in Information Technology and has been a CIO in the insurance industry for nearly 30 years, having been with Allianz Ireland for nearly 20 years. Karen is a graduate of Trinity College Dublin, and a Fellow of the Irish Computer Society. She was also the inaugural President of the Association of Information Managers, which was founded in 2003. Karen began her career in the technology sector in 1978 with Andersen Consulting in London and joined Allianz as CIO in 1997.

LEARNER REPRESENTATIVE

Aidan Maher is in the third year of the BSc (Hons) in Computing at National College of Ireland (NCI) and a part-time member of the Students' Union (SU) executive team. His role as Communications Officer in the NCI Students' Union (NCISU) involves handling all social media content and postings for the NCISU website and graphic design work. Aidan is also a Student Leader and part of a team who assist students in their transition to college. He has also acted as class representative within the School of Computing. Aidan is participating in the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP), a collaborative initiative by the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and QQI. NStEP develops student capabilities and institutional capacity to enhance engagement at all levels across the higher education system.

QUALITY ASSURANCE REPRESENTATIVE

Dr Catherine Maunsell is Associate Professor of Psychology and Human Development at the School of Human Development within the DCU Institute of Education. From 2013 to 2016, Catherine was the Director of Quality Promotion and Assurance at St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra and following Incorporation, is currently a designated Institute of Education representative on the DCU Quality Promotion Committee. She is also a founding member of the Steering Committee of the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education based in DCU's St. Patrick's Campus. Catherine maintains an active research profile in the field of psychology and its relationship with education, children's rights, well-being and the professional development of teachers and teacher educators. She has been engaged as Irish Co-ordinator on a range of large-scale EU research projects in the broad areas of education, lifelong learning and social justice.



Section A

Introduction

Introduction and Context



Introduction

1. Introduction and Context

The Institute of Technology, Sligo (IT Sligo) opened in 1970, bringing higher education opportunities to the North West of Ireland. The Institution offers flexible programmes from Apprenticeship, through higher certificate and degree level programmes to taught postgraduate and research awards using both traditional and online delivery.

The Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) submitted by IT Sligo states *'The Institute is a focus for local business innovation and development and has an excellent track record in collaborating with enterprises, the community and creative industries across the core disciplines of Business and Social Sciences, Engineering & Design and Science. The Institute's 6,000 students include full time undergraduates, post-graduates, craft apprentices and online / blended learning students. Over a third of the students are attending off-campus, taking their learning through online/blended learning mode. The Institute currently has approximately 500 staff and occupies a modern, well equipped, 72-acre site in Sligo Town'*.

IT Sligo's reputation for educating the workforce through online/blended learning is driven by a commitment to educate those who might otherwise be unable to access higher education. Its learner profile includes school leavers and mature

learners, those in the workplace and those seeking employment, Springboard learners and learners on Apprenticeship programmes.

The ISER states *'The Institute also, is part of the Connacht-Ulster Alliance, working towards re-designation as a technological university, and works closely with state agencies and employer representative bodies to help grow the economic base in the region. The Institute participates in national and regional initiatives such as the Action Plan for Jobs and the Regional Skills Forum. With over 20,000 graduates, many of whom are working in the region, the alumni are important to the Institute. The Institute works closely with employers who take our students on work placements and employ graduates and a culture of student entrepreneurship is encouraged. Community engagement is also important, and IT Sligo makes its excellent conference and events facilities available to a range of external organisations'*.

In the three years preceding this Review, IT Sligo had experienced successive changes in its senior management team. At the time of the institutional review, the Executive team had been formed for less than 18 months and remained incomplete, with two key appointments still to be made to complete a new senior management structure.

Section B



Institutional Self-Evaluation
Report (ISER)

Institutional Self-Evaluation Report

The Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) submitted by IT Sligo provides a comprehensive and succinct description of the institutional Quality Assurance (QA) mechanisms for the key areas of teaching, learning and research. The ISER uses both the QA Guidelines of QQI and the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) as reference points. It comments on strengths and areas of development, thus demonstrating an overall reflective approach.

A cross-functional team, chaired by the Registrar, developed the ISER and steered the review process. Its core membership was: Registrar; Assistant Registrar; Educational Development Manager; Chair of the Academic Processes Committee and Heads of School. The core group normally met on a weekly basis, inviting additional members to contribute from time to time as appropriate.

As part of the self-evaluation process, each academic council committee reflected on its Terms of Reference and evaluated how effective they had been in meeting them. Representative focus groups with membership drawn from a range of internal and external stakeholders were also convened, to evaluate and feed back their perspectives on the effectiveness of quality assurance and quality enhancement processes and policies.

In the discussions during the visit, the Review Team heard from different groups that the development of the ISER had coincided with consultations, internally and externally, on a new Strategic Plan. In some cases, the Institute had harnessed these consultations in relation to the ISER, rather than conducting separate specific consultations. The timing of quality reviews and other activities is something the Review Team thought might be better managed and **recommends that the Institution review its approach to planning substantive evaluative activities, such as institutional review and strategic planning, to ensure that the impact of each is maximized and distinctive.**

The Review Team found the ISER provided helpful information about IT Sligo, the context in which it operates and the challenges and opportunities it faces. Furthermore, the ISER provided a frank and open analysis of strengths and weaknesses, which formed a helpful backdrop for discussions during the visit. **The Review Team commends the open and frank approach that was taken in developing the ISER and throughout the institutional review process.**

The ISER had been made available to staff for comment through the staff portal and disseminated widely, both to internal and external stakeholders. It was approved by the Academic Council, though not formally received by other committees. During the visit, the Review Team found a comprehensive awareness and understanding of the issues covered in the ISER and the value of the review process, although some groups had been more focused on the strategic planning process, which had happened alongside and complemented the preparations for the institutional review, as mentioned above.

The ISER and AIQR (Annual Institutional Quality Report) gave a good account of the quality system, its processes and their operation. Meetings confirmed a sound awareness and understanding of the Institution's requirements and procedures at all levels. The ISER acknowledged that in recent years successive changes of staff and of policies and processes – and a shortcoming with internal communications, version control and timely implementation of an online Quality Manual – had to some extent undermined these processes and staff confidence in them. **The Review Team recommends that the Institution continues to address the internal communication issues raised in the ISER through the development of a clear communication strategy. The aims of the strategy should encompass the promotion of greater consistency and coherence in the application of policies and the assurance of equity and fairness for staff and students.**

It was clear that the process of preparing for the institutional review and developing the ISER had been beneficial and harnessed constructive reflection. However, the Review Team is of the view that some of the additional activities undertaken for the ISER, such as the reflections on Committee effectiveness, ought to be routine elements of QA rather than one-off activities. IT Sligo is encouraged to make more systemic a quality culture that relies less on the requirements of external agencies. This will ensure evaluation activities continue to be fit for IT Sligo's purposes and – by drawing down from the inputs and outcomes of routine quality processes – thereby also reducing the burden of external requirements such as Professional, Regulatory or Statutory Body (PRSB) accreditation and QQI Review. **The Review Team recommends that the Institution embed some of the evaluative activities undertaken in preparation for institutional review in its routine QA systems and processes.**

Since the 2008 review, several factors have influenced the progress made in addressing that review's findings. Change and discontinuity in the senior management team, together with the impact of economic recession, have been significant factors. Furthermore, the ISER drew attention to internal review activities, commissioned by IT Sligo but undertaken by external consultants on the Institution's behalf, identifying a range of common areas for improvement. Yet, the Review Team was somewhat disappointed that the ISER recognised that there had been slow progress in completing necessary actions identified by the 2008 Review Team or subsequently by external consultants. Therefore, **the Review Team recommends that the Institution pays more attention to closing QA loops by better managing, tracking, completing and evaluating agreed actions.** The Review Team also encourages the Institution to review and improve its processes for planning, managing and evaluating change, further discussed in Section 3.



Section C

Quality Assurance

- 3.1 Current Quality Assurance Procedures
- 3.2 Governance and Management (Delegated Authority)
- 3.3 Enhancement of Quality
- 3.4 Access, Transfer and Progression
- 3.5 International Learners

Quality Assurance

3.1 Current Quality Assurance Procedures

The quality systems at IT Sligo consist of a range of quality assurance mechanisms based on policies and processes that are compliant with QQI and ESG guidance and standards. QA processes encompass institutional, school, programme and module levels with a clear focus on teaching-related processes. All institutional processes are laid down in a Quality Manual, which is considered the backbone of the quality management system. Approval and revalidation processes follow QQI QA Guidelines and policy. Data and feedback on curriculum and on the quality of teaching and assessment are collected at both module and programme level, with programme boards responsible for responding to quality issues that arise; and for taking steps to enhance quality through annual monitoring processes. The student's voice is heard through evaluations and representation in committees and boards. External Examiners are appointed and are involved appropriately in the quality assurance of assessment processes for IT Sligo awards. The Academic Processes Committee plays a key role in evaluating the effectiveness of assessment arrangements and in proposing improvements to the Institution's Marks and Standards Regulations. These are used by exam boards and by academic staff in the design and execution of the assessment process. The Institution provides induction for teaching staff and has mechanisms in place to identify staff development needs. A new role of Educational Development Manager has been established to support the agenda of development deemed appropriate to deliver strategic aspirations. The Review Team found sufficient evidence to support its conclusion that IT Sligo has robust and appropriate quality assurance of learning, teaching and assessment.

There is provision for evaluation of services and infrastructure, consideration of relevant external QA mechanisms such as reports and surveys, and the routine inclusion of external stakeholders in feedback loops. Responsibilities for quality assurance and enhancement are distributed across the Institution,

while functional management of quality systems and processes falls under the Registrar's portfolio.

The Review Team noted, and IT Sligo had acknowledged in the ISER, that there is some inconsistency in the application of agreed procedures. The Quality Manual is not perceived as user-friendly and is viewed as confusing by many staff members. When processes are changed, version control is an issue. The Review Team noted from the documentation and in discussions, that approved deadlines and processes set out in flow charts are not always strictly followed. In part, this was accounted for by multiple versions of the processes. Even though quality processes have been evaluated and revised in recent years, necessitating changes to the Quality Manual, the manual has not been systematically updated due to lack of resources. The Review Team saw several reports commissioned by IT Sligo which recommended that this should be given urgent attention. It has been recognised by IT Sligo and confirmed during review meetings, that additional resources are needed to support version control, update the Quality Manual, and make it available online. **The Review Team therefore recommends that the Institution continues and completes the steps already being taken to update and publish its Quality Manual and to develop a communication strategy to ensure greater consistency in its application.**

In general, the Review Team did not see clear evidence of routine and systemic evaluation of quality processes. A comparison between the processes described in the out-of-date Quality Manual and the newer arrangements on the staff portal did not reveal substantive changes to the processes and the Review Team felt that there was perhaps, a missed opportunity here.

IT Sligo is successful in engaging stakeholders such as learners, employers, and graduates in its quality assurance arrangements. There are currently more than 270 class representatives who can attend and contribute to programme boards. It was confirmed

in the meetings that these opportunities are highly appreciated, though not always used. Evaluation of issues arising through feedback from stakeholders is a major feature of a programmatic review, considering cognate programmes together, in each school, which takes place at five-yearly intervals. Programmatic review offers the opportunity to consider the totality of the provision, with revalidation of individual programmes at the same time. The Review Team saw several examples and heard from a range of staff that, while it is an intensive period of work for the school, the holistic approach brings value. The Review Team (and some of the stakeholders the Review Team met during the visit) were more sceptical as to whether the added value was proportionate to the time, effort and number of people required for this activity. This is another example of where the Review Team felt that the timing of quality activities might be better managed to bring clearer focus. Horizontal thematic elements in review (for example), might also offer potential to add greater value and enhance permeability across departments and more broadly. **The Review Team therefore recommends that IT Sligo more regularly evaluates the purpose, frequency and nature of its QA arrangements and develop processes and systems (aligned with QQI and ESG), that embody its distinctiveness as an Institution.**

The Review Team heard from academic staff preparing for programmatic review that there is currently no systematic way of sharing knowledge of the process, or its outcomes and disseminating good practice between departments and/or schools. In some cases, individual Heads of Department have contacted one another, so that the experience of preparing for programmatic review is shared informally. The Review Team learned that this was greatly appreciated and commends these initiatives for sharing good practice. However, because they are the initiatives of individuals rather than systematised features of the quality assurance system, there are missed opportunities for institutional learning. The proposed new management structure may facilitate greater permeability across the Institution, and more systematic sharing of good practice and institutional learning. **The Review Team recommends that the Institution seeks to encourage permeability as a feature of its internal structures and encourages further development and enhancement of mechanisms to promote awareness of good practice and provide opportunities to learn from one another.**

The Review Team also recommends that the Institution continues to evaluate, streamline and thoroughly systematise quality assurance at IT Sligo.

Given the number of IT Sligo programmes that require Professional, Regulatory or Statutory Body (PRSB) accreditation, the Review Team agreed with those staff, who appealed for greater alignment between IT Sligo procedures and those bodies' requirements. Where possible, conjoint approval using the same aligned documentation would be preferable. In some cases, curriculum and examinations are prescribed by these bodies and the Review Team heard of at least one example, where the timeline for introducing changes created difficulties and anxiety for both teaching staff and students. The Review Team recognised the challenges associated with external accreditation of various kinds and encourages the Institution to continue a dialogue with those bodies with the aim of minimising duplication of processes and anxiety for staff and students.

While some progress has been made in responding to previous reviews, an over-reliance on individuals and under-development of systems and processes has also, in the Review Team's view, contributed to a sense of inertia across a range of strategic areas and towards implementing improvements. During the review and in the ISER, changes in the Executive Team over recent years and changes or absences of nominated individuals at other levels of the organisation, were suggested as the main reason for the slow rate of progress. Another casualty of this period of change, was the process for the induction of new staff and staff development generally. In relation to quality processes, it appeared that not all staff are consistently and systematically made aware of the Institute's requirements. Lack of effective business continuity processes place undue stress and strain on those who subsequently step in to the roles. **The Review Team recommends that there is appropriate induction, communication and support for staff and other stakeholders in implementing approved processes and that the Institution continues to address the internal communication issues raised in the ISER, through the development of a clear communication strategy. The aims of the strategy should encompass the promotion of greater consistency and coherence in the application of policies and the assurance of equity and fairness for staff and students.**

The Review Team noted the weight of expectation across the Institution for the new role of Educational Development Manager to bridge many of the identified gaps. It will be important to support this new post with clear and realistic priorities, to manage what is otherwise an overwhelming and potentially unmanageable agenda. **The Review Team recommends that IT Sligo further develops its project management practices, so that priorities and responsibilities for action and monitoring progress are clarified.** This will support actions to improve procedures for closing loops in QA processes and improve the links between quality assurance and quality enhancement, which are themes of several of the Review Team's recommendations in section 3.2.

IT Sligo prides itself on meeting local and regional needs and this is characterised by creating programmes and curricula that respond directly to calls from industry and business. The Review Team detected some tension between the Institution's imperative to be responsive in meeting demands from employers/industry and its ability to assure the quality of the student experience. In some examples, the Review Team heard that learning resources and availability of appropriate space, are not always fully aligned in preparation for the commencement of new programmes. Management of time and space on computers in the library, postgraduate learning spaces and induction arrangements, were all issues raised by student groups. However, there is also evidence that IT Sligo is willing and able to 'pump-prime' with capital investment, on specialised facilities and equipment, where a robust business case can be made. The Review Team understands the challenges presented in resourcing activity, before any income is generated and commends IT Sligo for the risks that it has been willing to take. Part of the purpose of validation arrangements is to confirm, that the quality of learners' experience on a new programme is assured and that resources are in place before it commences. **In validating new programmes and more broadly, the Review Team recommends that IT Sligo move to a more pre-emptive and proactive approach, to make planning more effective, rather than employing a reactive approach to the management of quality issues as they arise.**

The Review Team met with staff, learners and employers involved in Apprenticeship programmes. The Institution has earned a strong reputation in this

area and there is clear evidence that this provision is firmly benchmarked with QQI guidelines. Appropriate arrangements are in place for workplace learners to access resources and for their workplace learning to be assessed and quality assured. Satisfaction with the teaching and learning environment provided, was expressed by both learners and staff in the meetings during the site visit.

Overall, at the level of institutional processes and procedures, the Review Team observed a proclivity towards infrequent 'big bang' quality assurance, as distinct from lighter touch but more systemic, habitual, data-driven QA, that would characterise and nurture a more embedded institutional quality culture. The Review Team thought that IT Sligo would benefit from improved collection of valid statistical data. It was noted that participation in a variety of internal and external surveys (ISSE, equal access) is very low. Better data will encourage the Institution to benchmark itself more systematically and to use these benchmarks critically, to evaluate the effectiveness of quality systems and quality enhancement. The Department of Education's HEA system performance framework, will be helpful to IT Sligo in developing this strand. As IT Sligo implements its strategic plan for growth and development, it will be necessary to streamline and adopt consistent and verifiable means to drive quality enhancement. The collection and evaluation of effective data, capable of analysis at institution, school, department, programme and module level, is also necessary to further embed quality assurance and enhancement at all levels. **The Review Team therefore recommends implementation of more data-driven, benchmarked and routine quality systems to improve the efficiency and responsiveness of quality assurance and enhancement throughout the Institution. This will encourage more systematic and regular evaluation of data and qualitative feedback, year on year, that may potentially reduce the time and effort required for programmatic review (for example) and make it a more manageable and efficient mechanism.**

The Review Team recognised the strong sense of collegiality and the benefit of IT Sligo's hitherto relatively modest size, that has fostered a culture in which staff are accessible to students and to each other, facilitating a less formal approach to quality assurance and enhancement. There is

an effective Students' Union and a very good and mutually supportive relationship between its officers, Registry and Student Services. The Review Team did not doubt the effectiveness of this approach to date and it was clear that staff take enormous pride in the Institution's mission and vision and in the collaborative way they support their students and one another. However, the Review Team questions the sustainability of this in the context of the rapid expansion and institutional development that is anticipated in the coming years. A clear link between quality assurance and quality enhancement is also challenging for IT Sligo to demonstrate, because in many cases quality enhancement initiatives and innovation arise more informally than formally and are not necessarily captured through the governance arrangements. Day-to-day issues will continue to arise through Programme Committees and it is appropriate that action is taken quickly. However, recording and reporting action taken will need to be better systematised and formalised in the future. In order to demonstrate more clearly the link between quality assurance and enhancement, **the Review Team recommends that actions or decisions taken by individuals, managers or working groups that may be relevant to action plans or the closing of QA loops, are more formally captured and reported through IT Sligo's governance structure.** Examples of this are also provided elsewhere in this report, such as more formally capturing the development of collaborative partnerships and working relationships between the Students' Union and management.

To support the new and ambitious Strategic Plan, the Review Team encourages IT Sligo to balance its current strengths, in fostering strong individual responsibility for quality with the further development of a systematic, systemic, quality culture across the Institution. In the Review Team's view, this will be essential to enable the Institute to scale-up student numbers, maintain the range of its awards across levels (levels 6 to 10), and sustain its mixed modes of delivery (part-time, full-time, online, block release and research). As mentioned elsewhere in this report, the Review Team recommends that the Institution continues and completes steps already being taken to evaluate, streamline and thoroughly systematise quality assurance. This should be alongside a communication strategy to raise awareness and routinely induct all staff.

In other areas, IT Sligo demonstrated how it is successfully tackling inconsistent application of processes by streamlining and modernising, and thus enhancing quality. An example of good practice in quality enhancement, can be seen in the IT Sligo arrangements for the production, moderation and setting of examinations which have been improved through the introduction of a pilot of Guru; a range of internal feedback, as well as External Examiners' reports, had prompted the attention given to this matter. The pilot has been evaluated as successful and, following approval at Executive and Academic Council, IT Sligo will consider implementation across the board from September 2018. Similarly, the Review Team was provided with evidence demonstrating effective quality enhancement arising from student feedback, such as the introduction of anonymous marking; and 'Grade Book' which provides visibility of continuous assessment marks to staff. 'Module Manager' provides a common template and supports consistency in the description of learning outcomes, assessment and curriculum at module level. The Review Team regarded these initiatives as part of the evidence base, supporting its conclusions about the Institution's quality assurance of assessment.

Postgraduate taught programmes are subject to comparable levels of quality assurance as undergraduate provision. In its meetings with academic staff and students, the Review Team heard that there is some inconsistency in the provision of study and research skills to support postgraduates. This is a further example of a quality issue that was identified some years ago and of a commitment having been made to develop an IT Sligo module, though it has not yet been implemented. Elsewhere in this report, this point is captured by the recommendation that the Institution should pay more attention to closing QA loops by better managing, tracking, completing and evaluating agreed actions.

While some postgraduates have been offered the opportunity to take an appropriate module at another institution, not all staff or students are aware of this opportunity. In the interests of equity, fairness and consistency, the Review Team encourages the Institution to develop a common policy and approach. Elsewhere in this report, the Review Team recommends the development and implementation of a clear communication strategy. The aims of the strategy should encompass the promotion of greater

consistency and coherence in the application of policies and the assurance of equity and fairness for staff and students.

IT Sligo has been successful in partnering with industry in bidding for and conducting research projects. While evaluation of these projects is generally a requirement for the funding body, IT Sligo does not have a systematic approach of its own. The Review Team understood that funding for research in the Institutes of Technology is not directly derived through core funding and that it will remain necessary for all research activities to be funded largely through winning external contract funding. Nonetheless, with the planned growth and development of IT Sligo's research profile and activity and its aspirations to meet the criteria for a Technological University (TU), the Review Team believes it will be necessary for the Institute to establish its own quality assurance and enhancement systems to monitor and evaluate research. **The Review Team recommends that in further developing and systematising its quality assurance arrangements, appropriate quality assurance and enhancement processes are also applied to research.**

All IT Sligo provision, including online delivery and Apprenticeship programmes, are subject to the same quality assurance arrangements. In discussion, staff identified some aspects of online delivery that offered enhanced opportunities to monitor learner engagement, for example. It was noted too that online learners are very proactive in offering regular feedback on their experience and that their expectations are high. As noted elsewhere in this report, the Review Team thought that there would be value in the Institution, considering how some of the benefits and effective learning tools offered through online provision, could be shared with on-campus learning and inform the quality assurance system. **The Review Team recommends that the Institution continues to evaluate the feedback and experience gained from online delivery for remote and full-time students and consider the benefits of wider on-campus delivery of some teaching methods available online.**

The Institute has established innovative partnerships with Ulster University and National University of Ireland Galway (NUI Galway) respectively. In both cases, it was IT Sligo's strong track record of delivering

online education to learners in work, together with its experience and capacity for engaging with industry and professionals, in developing programmes that made them partners of choice. Collaborative programmes with Ulster University are jointly-developed and jointly-delivered programmes, leading to Ulster University or IT Sligo awards or joint awards, dependant on the path chosen. The quality assurance arrangements are relatively straightforward, with Ulster University's regulations and requirements taking precedence. There has been negotiation and agreements have been reached about areas of distinctiveness, such as Qualification Frameworks and Levels, across the two national HE systems. In the IT Sligo and NUI Galway partnership, a joint award is conferred, and so the quality assurance issues have been more complex. In all cases it has been necessary to address issues related to differences and divergent regulations and processes. The Review Team observed that the evaluation of practice and assessment regulations in the collaborative context, was a good example of the way that partnerships can enhance quality. **More broadly, the Review Team heard in numerous meetings about the Institution's attention to the quality assurance of assessment, through its marks and standards regulations, exam boards, programme boards and the work of the Academic Processes Committee and commends the Institution for the attention given to this aspect of quality assurance.**

In the documentation seen by the Review Team and in meetings during the review, it was clear that the above-mentioned collaborative programmes are exemplars of innovative and ground-breaking partnerships, even though they represent risk to the partners. While the Review Team commended the innovation and appetite for managed risk, there was a sense in which the IT Sligo approach to partnerships, is characteristic of its institutional culture, i.e. they emerge from personal networks rather than strategic intent. Learning, for example, about the need to recognise and address differences in assessment-related regulations, takes place by doing, rather than anticipating risks and planning how to manage them. The Review Team agreed with the view that 'one size will not fit all' and supports a flexible approach to due diligence. With a partner of high standing outside Ireland, a flexible due diligence stage, can anticipate some of the challenges that will arise, before collaborative pro-

grammes commence. **The Review Team commends the innovation represented in these collaborative programmes and recommends that IT Sligo systematically capture and share learning from collaborative partnerships, to inform the quality assurance arrangements for future partnerships.**

The Review Team noted that many of the challenges that are being managed in these partnerships, will be of direct relevance to the further development of the Connacht-Ulster Alliance (CUA)¹ and IT Sligo's work towards re-designation as a TU. The Review Team appreciates that the Institution's approach to

preparations towards TU status, is to focus on IT Sligo meeting the criteria, so that it is ready to be a partner of choice in an alliance. IT Sligo does not wish to expend time and effort mapping and aligning systems, regulations and procedures, until it is clearer who its partners will be. It is also watching closely the process of more advanced TU applications. One approach, currently favoured by IT Sligo, is to achieve TU status and begin the alignment work subsequently. The Review Team thought that time invested in aligning quality systems, could potentially build relationships and trust across the partners and avoid a crisis management scenario later in the process.

1 The **Connacht-Ulster Alliance (CUA)** is a strategic partnership of three Institutes of Technology in the Connacht-Ulster region of Ireland: Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT), Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT) and Institute of Technology, Sligo. The three Institutes are collaborating with a view to lodging an application for university status under the Technological Universities Act.

3.2 Governance and Management (Delegated Authority)

The ISER described the governance arrangements at IT Sligo and during the review visit the Review Team met with representatives from its constituencies. The Academic Council reports to the Governing Body and has a range of committees. The Executive Committee is a senior management group that sits outside the academic governance structure. Heads of the three schools report to the President, as does the Registrar, who manages specified functional areas. New management positions were in the process of implementation during the review.

A new Strategic Plan was approved as IT Sligo was preparing for this institutional review. At its centre are aspirations for growth and for meeting the criteria for TU status. The Review Team was impressed by the Institution's resilience, ambition and everything that has been achieved to date. The team's focus in its recommendations, is therefore to support IT Sligo in future-proofing the Institution, in the context of its ambitious aspirations. IT Sligo's capacity to improve and increase its research activity, is a key performance indicator for meeting the TU criteria. It was noted that funding for research at IT Sligo is not directly derived through core funding, but largely through partnerships with industry, EU project funding or other sources. Alongside this, a further plank of IT Sligo's institutional identity and of the strategic direction that has been set is its relationship with its region, community, culture and economy. The Review Team saw multiple endorsements of this key role, from internal and external stakeholders and clear evidence of the impact IT Sligo has in the opportunities it offers. **The Review Team commends IT Sligo as an outstanding example of engagement and dialogue with its region and for the regard in which it is held by the communities that it serves.**

The Strategic Plan underlines the mission and vision of IT Sligo and sets an ambitious direction of travel. It offers a comprehensive, broad and numerous set of objectives. The Review Team heard many staff support the ambition and direction that has been set, expressing an appetite and readiness for the change programme, that is necessary to achieve objectives. There is enormous pride in the Institution and a very strong staff commitment to and endorsement of its values. However, the Review Team also saw many examples of worthy targets that are not yet met, of

resources not matching ambition and of staff already working exceptionally long hours and covering a range of duties or roles. To some extent, the period of fiscal constraint during austerity, subject to the National Employment Control Framework and the ongoing requirements of mandatory reporting, regulations, and nationally agreed practices for public organisations in relation to staffing, placed limitations on the Institution's ability to achieve its goals and to be agile in doing so. In this context, it seems to the Review Team that it would be appropriate, if not crucial, to ensure that goals and plans can be matched by the resources necessary to achieve them. The Review Team heard examples of 'just in time' or 'fire-fighting' responses to challenges as they occur, at all levels of the Institution. The Review Team also heard that the Institute at times 'plays catch up'. While some of this is beyond IT Sligo's direct control, it seems to the Review Team that more proactive and robust planning, change and risk management methodologies would facilitate a different culture. In the Review Team's view, this requires a step-change that it believes IT Sligo is ready and prepared to take. **The Review Team recommends the Institution move to a more pre-emptive and proactive approach to managing change and risk, so as better to support and monitor the achievement of its goals.**

The Strategic Plan has a large number of objectives and actions and it was not entirely clear to the Review Team, that there are effective mechanisms to agree priorities in place, to plan and implement change, and to monitor and evaluate progress. It was clear in discussions that the management team, other staff and the wider stakeholder constituency envisage many opportunities for IT Sligo, and it is understandable that the Institution wishes to grasp them. However, the Review Team also heard a desire for planning at IT Sligo to be more strategic and discriminating in the future. The Review Team perceived a tangible tension between the Institution's desire to be responsive to industry and the awareness that it can and should create fewer and more strategic centres of excellence that can become world leaders in their field.

Examples of this tension include the proliferation of programmes and the large portfolio of programmes. Whilst programmatic review (see above) offers

opportunities to rationalise, the tendency is to add rather than subtract. On the one hand, an extensive choice of electives for students might be regarded as a good thing. However, on the other hand, where there is insufficient critical mass and programme pathways cannot proceed this can lead to disappointment for learners and/or their sponsors. The Executive and subsequently Academic Council approves initial proposals for new programmes, so there is an opportunity to be more strategic. However, from the evidence seen during the review, it is rare for initial approval to be denied. During the site visit, the Review Team heard many examples of grass-roots initiatives bringing forward new programme proposals in response to demand. IT Sligo has set its course on an ambitious strategy, yet it has limited resources to achieve it. New programme development and approval, albeit often utilising existing modules, is a resource-hungry activity. IT Sligo's regional impact is not necessarily the same thing as its response to demand from stakeholders in the region and it may be helpful to benchmark impact in other ways and to more critically evaluate demand through IT Sligo's processes. The aspiration to build a reputation for excellence across fewer specialist areas is potentially at odds with the current imperative to meet demand. **The Review Team therefore recommends that the Institution keep under review the effectiveness of its governance and decision-making arrangements in managing and steering strategy.**

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, there is evidence of various kinds of QA engagements since the previous institutional review and comprehensive plans of action have been agreed. Evidence that action has been completed, signed off and evaluated for effectiveness was more difficult to discern and in a number of cases, it was unclear where responsibility for closing the QA loop rested. As reported above, custom and practice at IT Sligo has relied heavily on collegial and less formal approaches, on individuals rather than systems. Elsewhere in this report, **the Review Team recommends that, in view of the Institute's ambitions for the future, a more sustainable, systemic and systematic approach to closing the QA loop is adopted.** The Review Team's earlier recommendation, relating to more regular and routine review by the Academic Council of the Terms of Reference and effectiveness of its sub-committees in meeting them, is also relevant here.

A new management team was in the process of being appointed at the time of the review. Two new Vice Presidents, with responsibility for delivering on Strategic Plan objectives regarding online and research objectives, respectively, were yet to be appointed. Quality remains a functional area under the Registrar. A new role of Assistant Registrar is already in place, to support this function. At school level, an investment has been made to create new departments, reflecting the Institution's new academic areas and disciplines and providing for greater differentiation and specialisation in established areas. **Some structural issues were noted by the Review Team, and it is recommended that the Institute should keep these under review, as it fully implements the new structure. These include:**

- Ensuring that new arrangements do not have unintended consequences, such as creating further barriers to opportunities for cross-departmental, school and institutional initiatives and sharing good practice. The Review Team observed that hard-pressed staff are already conscious that the old structures created unhelpful silos.
- Embedding a more systematic quality assurance approach across the Institution and encouraging ownership at school, department and programme level. In discussion, it was clear that the new role of Assistant Registrar has been welcomed and effective. However, the Review Team did not see evidence of an infrastructure to support quality assurance at school level. **For example, there are no school level committees or designated roles that have specific responsibility for quality management at school level.** Plans to improve business processes and enhance administrative support may provide the necessary head space at school and department level.
- The potential for a disconnect between the Research Office and schools (see below).
- The potential for a disconnect between support services and other non-academic areas such as human resources, academic development in schools and institutional quality assurance.

The Review Team was made aware of investments already made to support the implementation of the

new structure. The many strands of communication have been recognised as a major internal challenge and the Review Team's recommendations support the commitment to enhance this. There is also a commitment to create more head space for academics, for example, through business process re-engineering and streamlined processes. There are also new arrangements in place for the middle-tier management team to meet regularly. All these measures are appreciated by IT Sligo staff and welcomed by the Review Team. However, **the Review Team recommends that IT Sligo Executive and the Governing Body pay attention to prioritising, planning and monitoring progress closely, to ensure completion and sign-off on project strands in the future.**

The Review Team explored the development of a research culture at IT Sligo and how it will be integrated into and inform the Institute's academic culture, curriculum and teaching. A Research Office has been established in Registry to drive and co-ordinate research at the Institute, led by a Head of Research. Three Strategic Research Centres (SRC) have been established in recognition of established expertise and are successful in bidding for and completing research projects in those areas. In addition, there are five Recognised Research Groups (RRG) in emerging areas.

The Review Team had conversations with a range of academic staff, at school and department level, as well as with the Executive, Research Office, and members of the Research and Innovation Committee. As part of the Institution's journey towards meeting TU criteria, the Strategic Plan has established targets for increasing the numbers of its staff holding PhD qualifications. The Review Team was told that this would be achieved both through recruitment of new staff and by enabling existing staff to gain PhDs. However, teaching remains a significant element of the workload and the Review Team heard that those staff who are research-active, do not have any remission from contractual teaching hours but are expected to do their research, largely in their own time. It was recognised at all levels of the Institution, that the research agenda requires both a culture shift and a shift in contractual expectations. There was a view, that the existing academic contract has sufficient flexibility, to facilitate differential

distribution of time for research, teaching and engagement and is already used in this way. Those supervising PhD students have a formula applied whereby there is a decrease in teaching hours per supervision. The Review Team heard that the formula is not applied consistently across the Institution and **recommends that IT Sligo ensure transparency of information and equity in application of rules, to support and enhance its commitment to the research agenda.**

The Research and Innovation Committee has the largest membership of any of the Institute's committees. Membership is, at present, open and voluntary, and the interest in it is seen as a reflection of the commitment of individuals to the research agenda. It was clear to the Review Team that there is enormous energy and enthusiasm behind this and a recognition that significant culture change is needed to move from the present to the future. The Review Team formed the view that in structural and strategic terms, there is a danger of a disconnect between the Research Office and schools, as outside an SRC there is no research support funding; while school and departmental focus is predominantly on teaching. The Review Team was concerned by the potential for missed opportunities for research to be embedded in the development of curriculum and teaching, if research is structurally separate from schools. Staff are encouraged to cluster into a Research Group but if they want to benefit from Research Support Funding they must be a member of an SRC. As school resourcing and priorities are currently driven by teaching, it seemed to the Review Team, that there are insufficient incentives or mechanisms to encourage strategic research development at this level. Instead, the Review Team thought there is potential for SRCs to arise in a relatively ad-hoc, as distinct from strategic, manner. This appeared to the Review Team to dilute the sense in which the Research Office will be able to steer research strategy. **The Review Team therefore recommends that the Institution pays particular attention to ensuring that its new organisational structure supports and nurtures the integration of its emergent research culture with the wider academic life of the Institution. The effectiveness of structures should also be benchmarked against efficiency in promoting institutional learning and sharing good practice in this respect.**

3.3 Enhancement of Quality

In 3.1 above, a number of effective examples of quality enhancement and improvements to IT Sligo quality processes are cited. The Institution has a strong track record of delivering bespoke and specialised programmes in innovative ways, through online delivery, for example. As previously mentioned though, there is a clear commitment and effective enhancement taking place, it is not always clear that enhancement initiatives have arisen through the Institution's routine quality assurance processes. For example, in the AIQR over the last three years, it was reported that a working group has been established to address some of the institutional issues that have been raised in relation to the appointment and management of External Examiners and the reporting process. No documented information was available to the Review Team about its Terms of Reference and its progress. Infrequent meetings had taken place, but no formal minutes were recorded. The implementation of the GURU pilot is seen to have addressed many of the issues that the group had been established to address. It appears, however, that the introduction of a standard approach to the setting and approval of examination papers through GURU, addressed an important institutional issue that had also given rise to the establishment of a working group. **It is recommended that the Institute take steps to ensure that quality enhancement initiatives are more systematically captured through the governance structures and can be properly tracked back to IT Sligo's quality assurance processes.**

The online environment, and technology-assisted methods more generally, has been a catalyst for a range of quality enhancement initiatives and IT Sligo is justifiably proud of its achievements. These range from the development and delivery of sectoral Apprenticeships in the region and nationally, through innovative cross-institutional joint delivery partnerships and to CPD provision. At the same time, IT Sligo is committed to maintaining and enhancing quality for on campus learners. The Review Team met with staff involved in online delivery and heard that they appreciate and value the support they are given in learning new skills and pedagogical methodologies. **The Review Team commends the support and development opportunities offered to staff involved in the delivery of online programmes, as an example**

of good practice for quality enhancement in teaching.

Wider human resource (HR) issues appeared to the Review Team to be an area of concern at IT Sligo and a significant impediment to effective quality enhancement at the micro level of supporting, managing and developing people, at the level of enhancing programme delivery and assuring the quality of teaching staff, and at the macro level of planning for the delivery of strategic objectives requiring a step change in institutional culture. An example of this, though not the only one, arises in the area of research. The Institute is building on its origins and moving towards meeting criteria for TU. The legacy of requisite and, predominantly nationally determined, terms and conditions, staff appraisal, support and development, are a challenge in achieving the step-change that is necessary. There is a common format for the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) across the HE sector and there is some scepticism in IT Sligo, as to its value and its uneven application. The Review Team is not in a position to know whether the nationally prescribed PMDS is fit for IT Sligo's purpose or how much flexibility there may be for the Institution to adapt it, so that it is a better fit. The Review Team formed a strong view that IT Sligo needs to have in place better arrangements to appraise and support all staff in all areas. Furthermore, it is a strategic issue to embed quality enhancement, staff development, and build and develop capacity, skills and knowledge. The Review Team heard examples that demonstrated how this issue relates to the quality assurance of teaching, the student experience, to the workload of staff, the support for research ambitions, and staff and student morale. Effective staff management is a quality issue and the Review Team formed the view that the Institute needs to have better data and information to support this. Quality depends on all categories of staff in the Institution doing what they are supposed to do and being supported, rewarded and valued. **The Review Team recommends that, as IT Sligo transforms itself towards meeting TU criteria, HR policies, practices and culture will need to better ensure equity and fairness, inform staff development, manage workload for individuals, and grow research. Perceived inconsistencies will**

need to be addressed. It is recommended that IT Sligo develop a more robust, systematic and routine arrangement for appraisal of all staff as a priority, perhaps exploring a more distributed model to meet the different needs of staff.

The role of Educational Development Manager (EDM) has been established to enhance Learning and Teaching and support staff development. It is a relatively new post but a programme of activities, aimed at promoting innovation and sharing effective teaching practice, has already been successfully delivered. **The Review Team commends the investment in the EDM post and recognises its potential to make a difference to quality enhancement. However, the Review Team recommends that IT Sligo clarify the boundaries between the EDM role and the work of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC).** It appeared to the Review Team that there is potential for the EDM portfolio to expand beyond what is manageable and a danger of duplication of effort. In implementing the recommendations of this report, there is an opportunity to ensure that, in the future, the Institute's routine QA processes become the means to identify an agenda for the EDM role, rather than relying on one-to-one and less formal conversations.

The team met with external stakeholders who emphasised the constructive dialogue between IT Sligo and themselves. This is a significant strength for IT Sligo and the Review Team commends it as an example of best practice. These relationships contribute to quality enhancement at IT Sligo and it was clear to the Review Team that IT Sligo, its programmes, learners and its graduates are highly regarded by the communities they serve. The Institution is seen to add value to the region in which it is located and to the sectors and industries with which it engages.

However, the Review Team's view is that the Institution is missing opportunities to disseminate information about good practice and maximise institutional

learning. A more structured approach would help to move from an individualised to an institutional approach, that adds value to the enhancement of the Institution's quality culture. For example, the Review Team was of the view that a more systematic focus on gathering intelligence from the Innovation Centre (offering opportunities for IT Sligo graduates) would be beneficial to the correlation between IT Sligo programmes and real-life work. The Review Team heard of a recent initiative that gave students on the Application Development course an opportunity for directly related part-time paid work in the Innovation Centre. However, this had sprung from two individuals talking to one another and making the connection, and not from a structured and systematic approach. Thus, the Review Team recommends in Section 3.1 that the Institution seek better ways to increase permeability through its organisational structure and its processes, with a view to supporting institutional learning and promoting quality enhancement.

Similarly, the Review Team was of the view that alumni are currently an under-utilised resource for quality enhancement and encourages the Institution to continue with its plans to systematise the management of IT Sligo-Alumni relationships.

There are constructive and effective working relationships between the Students' Union (SU) and all areas of IT Sligo's management and support services. The Review Team thought that the SU was a strong force for quality enhancement at IT Sligo and heard many examples of issues being raised through the SU and action taken to enhance quality. This is commendable but, as noted elsewhere, overly dependent on individual relationships. As referenced earlier, the Review Team recommends that issues raised in this way are collected more systematically and reported through the governance arrangements. The team met with current SU office holders who are admirably proactive, so it will be in the interests of both SU and IT Sligo to systematise these interactions as much as possible and ensure continuity and continued benefit.

3.4 Access, Transfer and Progression

IT Sligo is very successful in delivering higher education to under-represented groups and learners with low CAO points or no previous qualifications. There is a range of appropriate and robust arrangements in place for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). First generation HE students, mature learners in the workplace and those seeking career change (online and CPD learners, for example) are amongst those who find second chance opportunities at IT Sligo. The Institution has been involved in a national initiative, 'Springboard', to bring unemployed people back into Education and Training. The profile of these learners brings challenges. The Review Team reviewed a range of initiatives and ongoing activities that have been developed to support learners who may be struggling. These have included pre-sessional support and mentoring. There were mixed views about the effectiveness of the mentoring scheme. The Review Team saw evidence where IT Sligo had previously evaluated retention initiatives and, where they were not effective, reconsidered or improved them. Most recently, analysis of progression in Mathematics has led to the development of a Maths Centre to provide remedial support. Initial outcomes suggest that this intervention has been extremely successful in reducing drop-out rates. The Institution intends to establish similar Centres in other areas in due course. **The Review Team commends, as an example of quality enhancement, the Institution's success in identifying the needs of specific learners and the supportive interventions that are provided.** These initiatives also provide evidence to support the team's overall conclusions about the effectiveness of IT Sligo's quality assurance arrangements.

An internal audit, conducted by PWC in June 2017, focussed on the retention challenge and the Institution's response to the report provided another example where action had been agreed but not yet implemented, due to staff changes. Issues of planning, continuity and over-reliance on individuals rather than systems are dealt with elsewhere in this

report and the Review Team recommends a more robust approach to determine priorities, clarify responsibilities and to monitoring and signing off completion.

It was clear that, at every level of the Institution, retention mattered to everyone and there was no complacency about this challenge. Interestingly, IT Sligo has noticed that in many ways the quality assurance of the online environment, creates more timely opportunities for intervention than in the more conventional campus-based learning. For example, a learner's active engagement with learning activities online is clear and can be monitored more easily. In this and in other areas, the Review Team considered that IT Sligo might do more to reflect on and share the learning and good practice from its online offer and bring that institutional learning into the enhancement of all of its programmes. Online provision is recognised as a key strength of the Institution, not least for its contribution to widening access. However, the Review Team detected an element of defensiveness in the rhetoric around online delivery. For example, the emphasis is on replicating the campus experience by providing 'live' lectures online. In fact, the primary value is that online learners have access to these lectures on demand. In its meetings with students and external stakeholders, it was clear to the Review Team that opportunities to watch and listen again, in their own time, is highly valued. The Review Team is of the opinion that on-campus learners would also value this feature. The Institution is encouraged to continue to explore and innovate in its distinctive blend of learning. In this way, the Institution's key strengths will continue to differentiate it from others and confer benefits on all its learners. **The Review Team commends IT Sligo's commitment to online provision and encourages the Institution to celebrate its value, as part of a blended learning experience that can also enhance on-campus learning and teaching.**

3.5 International Learners

IT Sligo has a growing number of incoming international learners on campus and the Review Team saw evidence of appropriate support available to them. There is no apparent retention issue with international learners. An International Office supports recruitment and arranges bespoke induction and additional study skills for international learners. Whilst there is an international recruitment strategy at IT Sligo, there is no wider internationalisation strategy and with a small team, such as the current IT Sligo International Office team, there is a need to be strategic about the countries that will be visited for recruitment purposes and the establishment of partnerships. So far, this has been determined year by year.

With regard to online programmes, transnational learners 'find' IT Sligo rather than being actively recruited by them. However, a number of online programmes are delivered to meet demand in multi-national companies, and so the cohort is correspondingly (and increasingly) transnational, in terms of the location of learners. During meetings, the Review Team heard divergent views about the strategy for the future. On the one hand, the ISER and meetings with senior management made it clear that transnational and international expansion are not strategic priorities. On the other hand, the team heard from other meetings that there is an enthusiasm for opportunities to deliver online to an Irish diaspora around the world. The potential to adapt professional programmes in some sectors to other regulatory landscapes outside Ireland and England was also

discussed. The Review Team was of the view that any growth in transnational learners should occur by design. At present, it appeared to the Review Team that potential risks are not being sufficiently anticipated. For example, in some countries the learning platform (Moodle) will not work and in others, software licencing issues may create copyright and other risks. **The Review Team heard that IT Sligo is taking active steps to learn from online providers elsewhere in the world and commends this initiative. It is recommended that IT Sligo develop a more coherent policy in relation to transnational learners and in doing this makes use of external benchmarks and reference points such as QQI Guidelines and Code of Practice.**

In all discussions on international matters, the main focus from institutional representatives was on incoming students. There was an acknowledgement that outward student mobility from IT Sligo is growing, but still rather low. Heads of School spoke of moves to internationalise curricula and research collaborations to contribute to this. There was a recognition that international learners add richness to the community of learners at the Institution. A structural issue was raised relating to resources, whereby schools are not receiving any per capita income for the Erasmus students that they are supporting. **The Review Team recommends that the Institute give more attention to Internationalisation and develop its policy and practice in this area.** This does not arise in contradiction to the Institute's mission and values, but rather is essential to it.

Section D

Conclusions

Overarching Commendations and Recommendations

Specific Commendations and Recommendations

Top 5 Commendations and Recommendations

Overarching Statements about QA

Conclusions

Overarching Commendations and Recommendations

The Review Team saw that many of the commendations and recommendations can be grouped into cognate over-arching issues.

OVERARCHING COMMENDATIONS

The Review Team found sufficient evidence to **commend** as good practice:

1. The strength and depth of the Institution's engagement with its external stakeholders. Reviewers saw and heard clear evidence of support, enthusiasm and engagement with IT Sligo. This is evident, too, in the regional impact of the Institution. Multiple examples were provided of effective two-way dialogue with local government, industry and representative agencies. However, the Review Team noted that IT Sligo Alumni are a largely untapped resource and are currently undervalued. This was recognised in the ISER and the Review Team wished to support the Institution, in its intention to address this.
2. There is an admirable and constructive relationship between the SU and Senior Management. The Review Team felt that the SU is a great support to the Institution. The student voice is strong through their representation in QA processes, with 270 class representatives and evidence that their contribution to programme boards is effective and valued.
3. The Review Team saw several examples of collaboration, cross-institutional and intra-institutional, that are innovative and ground-breaking and encourages IT Sligo to keep under scrutiny its structures and processes so that they improve permeability, consistency and the sharing of good practice and enhancement of quality in the future.
4. IT Sligo has a distinctive and successful strength in supporting access, transfer and progression in the ladders and bridges created by its Level 6, Apprenticeship and online provision.
5. IT Sligo holds a national leadership role in online delivery, which plays into its success in widening participation, serving the needs of its professional/industry partners and regional impact. The Review Team encourages IT Sligo to have greater confidence in the positive differentiation of online delivery; and to continue to share institutional learning gained from quality assuring this environment for the benefit of all staff and learners.
6. The open and frank approach that was taken in developing the ISER and throughout the institutional review process. The Review Team respected the way the Institution has harnessed the institutional review and tied it firmly into its strategic planning cycle.
7. Staff at all levels of the Institution are passionately committed to giving students a good experience and to the Institution's mission and values. There is notable appetite for change and for the ambitious agenda that has been set by the Strategic Plan.
8. Delegated authority is exercised with diligence and under arrangements that are consistent with QQI and ESG expectations and standards. At school level, programmatic review is thorough and inclusive of feedback from students, alumni and employers.
9. IT Sligo has effective mechanisms to support quality enhancement. For example, the needs of specific learners are routinely identified and supportive interventions are provided. In its recommendations, the Review Team encourages the Institution to make more explicit, the link between quality assurance arrangements and quality enhancement.
10. IT Sligo is highly regarded by employers and its graduates are perceived as 'job-ready' by employers.

OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS

In framing its recommendations, the Review Team is mindful of supporting IT Sligo in future-proofing itself in its ambitions for growth and meeting TU criteria. As a hitherto relatively modest-sized institution, IT Sligo has developed a quality culture that has been able to depend on personal interactions and individuals talking to one another. Given its growth already and expansion plans, what may once have been a strength is now a challenge. Strategic intent to scale up numbers and to meet criteria for TU status will require a step-change for IT Sligo. This is recognised by the Institution and the Review Team believes, that with a period of stability ahead, it is in a good place to meet this challenge.

The Review Team found sufficient evidence to **recommend** the following activities to the Institution for further attention and development:

1. Continue and complete steps already being taken to:

- Evaluate, streamline and thoroughly systematise quality assurance at IT Sligo. This should include the implementation of more data-driven, benchmarked and routine quality systems to improve the efficiency and responsiveness of quality assurance and enhancement.
- Evaluate regularly and adapt or change processes that are not delivering value and enhancement. IT Sligo's QA requirements should be designed to suit its own provision and distinctiveness. As an Institution with delegated authority, IT Sligo is encouraged to continue to embed its own arrangements and use external (QQI, ESG for example) guidelines as reference points for benchmarking rather than as narrow prescription.
- Ensure that there is appropriate induction, communication and support for staff and other stakeholders in implementing approved processes.
- Address the range of internal communication issues raised in the ISER and in this report through the development and implementation of a clear communication strategy. The aims of the strategy should encompass the promotion of greater consistency and coherence in the application of policies and the assurance of equity and fairness for staff and students.

2. Improve the Institution's processes for planning, managing and evaluating change.

Notwithstanding the difficulties that have been created in recent years by rapid changes in the leadership of the Institute, the Review Team found examples where the quality cycle had not been completed and loops closed. Outcomes of QA engagements and strategic planning are characterised by large numbers of agreed actions; but the locus of responsibility is not always as clear as it should be; and follow-through is not adequately tracked, recorded and reported. In relation to this institutional review, the Review Team suggests that an action plan is agreed by the Governing Body and monitored and signed off by Academic Council. A more systematic and realistic approach to project planning and implementation, more broadly, will be beneficial. The Review Team was concerned that the recently approved Strategic Plan contains too many objectives and insufficient direction in terms of priorities.

To improve the link between quality assurance and quality enhancement, the Review Team recommends that where actions, tracking, or management decisions relating to academic quality are made outside the governance structure, for example by the Executive, care should be taken to report this to Academic Council.

3. The Institute should evaluate its current HR policy and culture.

Quality depends on all categories of staff in the Institution doing what they are supposed to do and being supported, rewarded and valued. As IT Sligo transforms itself towards meeting TU criteria, it will be necessary to transform HR policies, practices and culture to ensure equity and fairness, inform staff development, manage workload and grow research. Perceived inconsistencies should be addressed. A more robust, systematic and routine arrangement for appraisal of all staff should be a priority, perhaps exploring a more distributed model, such as 360° appraisal.

4. The Institute should keep under review the difficult balance between dynamic responsiveness and strategic direction.

There is a recognition that finite resources require a more strategic approach to academic development, research collaboration and partnerships. However,

the expectations of external stakeholders, regional imperatives and the culture within the Institution creates a challenging tension. Organic growth of online, international and transnational student numbers may have been manageable in the past but hold risks for the future. Rapid and responsive development must not be at the expense of student experience and lead times need to be sufficient for ensuring that the resources to support new programmes are in place before they commence. Ultimately, difficult decisions have to be made about what can and cannot be done and priorities agreed by the Governing Body. Proactive planning and risk analysis should replace reactive response as far as possible in the future.

5. Keep under review the new organisational structure.

The Review Team welcomed the examples provided where individuals have initiated cross-boundary or cross-organisational partnerships of various innovative kinds and commended this good practice. However, the Review Team was of the opinion that internal structures at IT Sligo have hitherto inhibited rather than facilitated this. As noted elsewhere in this report, the institutional culture is characterised

by a heavy reliance on personal networking. The Review Team saw evidence in the new organisational structure that these issues have been recognised by the Institution. As this is fully implemented, IT Sligo is encouraged to evaluate and keep under scrutiny the effectiveness of new arrangements, in enhancing permeability of internal structures and promoting systematic, systemic and consistent implementation of strategies, policies, processes and procedures, including responsibilities for staff management and development.

The Institution should ensure that the new structure supports and nurtures the integration of its emergent research culture with the wider academic life of the Institution. The effectiveness of structures should also be benchmarked against efficiency in promoting institutional learning and sharing good practice.

6. Develop policy and practice to support internationalisation and transnational activities.

The Review Team found a nascent understanding of internationalisation and of the challenges inherent in transnational learners taking its online programmes. The team recommends that the Institution further develop its policy and practice in these areas.

Specific Commendations and Recommendations

The following commendations and recommendations appear in the body of the report.

The Review Team commends the Institution:

1. For the open and frank approach that was taken in developing the ISER and throughout the review process;
2. For its care and attention to the quality assurance of assessment, through its marks and standards regulations, exam boards, programme boards and the work of the Academic Processes Committee;
3. For the innovation represented by its collaborative programmes;
4. As an outstanding example of engagement and dialogue with its region and for the regard in which it is held by the communities that it serves;
5. For support and development opportunities offered to staff involved in the delivery of online programmes, as an example of good practice for quality enhancement in teaching;
6. For its investment in the Educational Development Manager post and its potential to make a difference to quality enhancement;
7. For the constructive dialogue between IT Sligo and external stakeholders as a significant strength and example of good practice;
8. For its success in identifying the needs of specific learners and the supportive interventions that are provided;
9. For its commitment to online provision and the Review Team also encourages the Institution to celebrate its value, as part of a blended learning experience that can also enhance on-campus learning and teaching;
10. For taking active steps to learn from online providers elsewhere in the world.

The Review Team recommends the Institution:

1. Reviews its approach to planning substantive evaluative activities, such as institutional review and strategic planning, to ensure that the impact of each is maximised and distinctive;
2. Embeds some of the evaluative activities undertaken in preparation for institutional review into its routine QA systems and processes;

3. Pays more attention to closing QA loops by better managing, tracking, completing and evaluating agreed actions;
4. Continues and completes the steps already being taken to update and publish its Quality Manual and to develop a communication strategy to ensure greater consistency in its application;
5. More regularly evaluates the purpose, frequency and nature of its QA arrangements and develops processes and systems (aligned with QQI and ESG) that embody its distinctiveness as an institution;
6. Seeks to encourage permeability as a feature of its internal structures and encourages further development and enhancement of mechanisms to promote awareness of good practice and provide opportunities to learn from one another;
7. Continues to evaluate, streamline and thoroughly systematise quality assurance;
8. Ensures there is appropriate induction, communication and support for staff and other stakeholders in implementing approved processes; and that the Institution continues to address the internal communication issues raised in the ISER, through the development of a clear communication strategy. The aims of the strategy should encompass the promotion of greater consistency and coherence in the application of policies and the assurance of equity and fairness for staff and students.
9. Moves to a more pre-emptive and proactive approach to make planning more effective, as distinct from reactive management of quality issues as they arise;
10. Further develops its project management practices, so that priorities and responsibilities for action and monitoring progress are clarified;
11. Implements data-driven, benchmarked and routine quality systems to improve the efficiency and responsiveness of quality assurance and enhancement throughout the Institution. This will encourage more systematic and regular evaluation of data and qualitative feedback, year on year, that may potentially reduce the time and effort required for programmatic review (for example) and make it a more manageable and efficient mechanism;

12. Ensures that actions or decisions taken by individuals, managers or working groups that may be relevant to action plans or the closing of QA loops, are more formally captured and reported through IT Sligo's governance structure;
13. In further developing and systematising its quality assurance arrangements, appropriate quality assurance and enhancement processes are also applied to research;
14. Continues to evaluate the feedback and experience gained from online delivery and considers the benefits of wider on-campus delivery of some teaching methods available online;
15. Systematically captures and shares learning from collaborative partnerships to inform the quality assurance arrangements for future partnerships;
16. Moves to a more pre-emptive and proactive approach to managing change and risk, to better support and monitor the achievement of its goals;
17. Keeps under review the effectiveness of its governance and decision-making arrangements in managing and steering strategy;
18. In view of the Institute's ambitions for the future, adopts a more sustainable, systemic and systematic approach to closing the QA loop;
19. Keeps some organisational issues under review as it fully implements the new structure, including:
 - i. Ensuring that new arrangements do not have unintended consequences, such as creating further barriers to opportunities for cross-departmental, school and institutional initiatives and sharing good practice. The Review Team observed that hard-pressed staff are already conscious that the old structures created unhelpful silos.
 - ii. Embedding a more systematic quality assurance approach across the Institution and encouraging ownership at school, department and programme level. In discussions, it was clear that the new role of Assistant Registrar has been welcomed and effective. However, the Review Team did not see evidence of an infrastructure to support quality assurance at school level, for example, although plans to improve business processes and enhance administrative support may provide the necessary head space at school and department level.
- iii. The potential for a disconnect between the Research Office and schools.
- iv. The potential for a disconnect between support services and other non-academic areas such as HR, academic development in schools, and institutional quality assurance.
21. Through the IT Sligo Executive and the Governing Body, pays attention to prioritising, planning, and monitoring progress closely to ensure completion and sign-off on project strands in the future;
22. Ensures transparency of information and equity in application of rules, to support and enhance its commitment to the research agenda;
23. Pays particular attention to ensuring that its new organisational structure supports and nurtures the integration of its emergent research culture with the wider academic life of the Institution. The effectiveness of structures should also be benchmarked against efficiency in promoting institutional learning and sharing good practice in this respect;
24. Takes steps to ensure that quality enhancement initiatives are more systematically captured through the governance structures and can be properly tracked back to IT Sligo's quality assurance processes;
25. Addresses HR policies, practices and culture to better ensure equity and fairness, inform staff development, manage workload for individuals and grow research. Perceived inconsistencies will need to be addressed. A more robust, systematic and routine arrangement for appraisal of all staff should be a priority, perhaps exploring a more distributed model to meet the different needs of staff;
26. Clarifies the boundaries between the Educational Development Manager role and the work of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC);
27. Develops a more coherent policy in relation to transnational learners and in doing this makes use of external benchmarks and reference points such as QQI Guidelines and Code of Practice;
28. Gives more attention to Internationalisation and develops its policy and practice in this area.

Top 5 Commendations and Recommendations

The Review Team wishes to highlight the following 5 commendations:

1. The Review Team commends the strength and depth of the Institution's engagement with its external stakeholders. Reviewers saw and heard clear evidence of support, enthusiasm and engagement with IT Sligo. This is evident, too, in the regional impact of the Institution. Multiple examples were provided of effective two-way dialogue with local government, industry and representative agencies.
2. IT Sligo holds a national leadership role in online delivery, which plays into its success in widening participation, serving the needs of its professional/industry partners and regional impact. The Review Team encourages IT Sligo to have greater confidence in the positive differentiation of online delivery and to continue to share institutional learning gained from quality assuring this environment, for the benefit of all staff and learners.
3. Staff at all levels of the Institution are passionately committed to giving students a good experience; and to the Institution's mission and values. There is notable appetite for change and for the ambitious agenda that has been set by the Strategic Plan.
4. IT Sligo has effective mechanisms to support quality enhancement. For example, the needs of specific learners are routinely identified and supportive interventions are provided.
5. IT Sligo is highly regarded by employers and its graduates are perceived as 'job-ready' by employers.

The Review Team wishes to highlight the following 5 recommendations:

1. **The Review Team recommends that the Institute continues and completes steps already being taken to:**
 - Evaluate, streamline and thoroughly systematise quality assurance at IT Sligo. This should include the implementation of more data-driven, benchmarked and routine quality systems to improve the efficiency and responsiveness of quality assurance and enhancement.
 - Evaluate regularly and adapt or change processes that are not delivering value and enhancement. IT Sligo's QA requirements should be designed to suit its own provision and distinctiveness. As an institution with delegated authority, IT Sligo is encouraged to continue to embed its own arrangements and use external (QQI, ESG for example) guidelines as reference points for benchmarking rather than as narrow prescription.
 - Ensure that there is appropriate induction, communication and support for staff and other stakeholders in implementing approved processes.
 - Address the range of internal communication issues raised in the ISER and in this report through the development and implementation of a clear communication strategy. The aims of the strategy should encompass the promotion of greater consistency and coherence in the application of policies and the assurance of equity and fairness for staff and students.
2. **The Institute should improve its processes for planning, managing and evaluating change.**

Notwithstanding the difficulties that have been created in recent years by rapid changes in the leadership of the Institute, the Review Team found examples where the quality cycle had not been completed and loops closed. Outcomes of QA engagements and strategic planning are characterised by large numbers of agreed actions; but the locus of responsibility is not always as clear as it should be; and follow-

through is not adequately tracked, recorded and reported. In relation to this institutional review, the Review Team suggests that an action plan is agreed by the Governing Body and monitored and signed off by Academic Council. A more systematic and realistic approach to project planning and implementation, more broadly, will be beneficial. The Review Team was concerned that the recently approved Strategic Plan contains too many objectives and insufficient direction in terms of priorities.

To improve the link between quality assurance and quality enhancement, the Review Team recommends that where actions, tracking or management decisions relating to academic quality are made outside the governance structure, for example by the Executive, care should be taken to report this to Academic Council.

3. **The Institute should evaluate its current HR policy and culture.**

Quality depends on all categories of staff in the Institution doing what they are supposed to do and being supported, rewarded and valued. As IT Sligo transforms itself towards meeting TU criteria, it will be necessary to transform HR policies, practices and culture to ensure equity and fairness, inform staff development, manage workload and grow research. Perceived inconsistencies should be addressed. A more robust, systematic and routine arrangement for appraisal of all staff should be a priority, perhaps exploring a more distributed model, such as 360° appraisal.

4. **The Institute should keep under review the difficult balance between dynamic responsiveness and strategic direction.**

There is a recognition that finite resources require a more strategic approach to academic development, research collaboration and partnerships. However, the expectations of external stakeholders, regional imperatives and the culture within the Institution creates a

challenging tension. Organic growth of online, international and transnational student numbers may have been manageable in the past but hold risks for the future. Rapid and responsive development must not be at the expense of student experience and lead times need to be sufficient, for ensuring that the resources to support new programmes are in place, before they commence. Ultimately, difficult decisions have to be made about what can and cannot be done and priorities agreed by the Governing Body. Proactive planning and risk analysis should replace reactive response as far as possible in the future.

5. **The Institute should keep under review the new organisational structure.**

The Review Team welcomed the examples provided where individuals have initiated cross-boundary or cross-organisational partnerships of various innovative kinds and commended this good practice. However, the Review Team was of the opinion, that internal structures at IT Sligo have hitherto inhibited rather than facilitated this. As noted elsewhere in this report, the institutional culture is characterised by a heavy reliance on personal networking. The Review Team saw evidence in the new organisational structure, that these issues have been recognised by the Institution. As this is fully implemented, IT Sligo is encouraged to evaluate and keep under scrutiny the effectiveness of new arrangements, in enhancing permeability of internal structures and promoting systematic, systemic and consistent implementation of strategies, policies, processes and procedures, including responsibilities for staff management and development.

The Institution should ensure that the new structure supports and nurtures the integration of its emergent research culture with the wider academic life of the Institution. The effectiveness of structures should also be benchmarked against efficiency in promoting institutional learning and sharing good practice.

Overarching Statements about QA

Given the rate and pace of change at senior level in IT Sligo and the period of austerity that has preceded this institutional review, IT Sligo has made remarkable achievements. At all levels of the Institution, the Review Team met passionate and committed people, very engaged with the mission, ambitions and work of IT Sligo and its learners.

Based on the Review Team's evaluation of the ISER, supporting documentation and meetings conducted during the visit, the Review Team concluded that there is sufficient evidence to confirm that institutional quality assurance procedures are effective and appropriate and cover teaching, learning and assessment in a comprehensive way. Institutional strategic planning, governance and management of quality assurance and enhancement meet expectations for a higher education institution in the European Higher Education Area. The Institution's quality assurance procedures are compliant with the ESG and have appropriate regard to QQI's statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (QAG). Furthermore, the

Institution has established appropriate procedures for the overall operation and management of the Institution as an awarding body, and delegated authority is exercised in a robust and diligent manner. The Institution's endeavour in the enhancement of quality is effective and the Review Team saw evidence of good practice for this. However, the Review Team recommends that the Institution seek better alignment between effective, but relatively informal, mechanisms and its more formal governance, policy and procedures. IT Sligo has in place procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression which are well established and effective, in keeping with QQI policy. With regard to the Institution's internationalisation endeavours, the Institution has in place procedures for international learners on-campus, which are compliant with the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners. The Review Team recommends that the Institution develop further its international policy and strategy, taking account of transnational learners in the online environment.



APPENDICES

Appendices

- A: Terms of Reference
- B: Main Review Visit Schedule
- C: Institutional Response

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 Blanchardstown
- Institute of Technology Carlow
- Institute of Technology Sligo
- Institute of Technology Tallaght
- 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 team.

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 2023.

The 2017-2023 Review Cycle Schedule is:

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
Institute of Technology, Tralee	Q4 2018	Q1 2019	Q2 2019	Q3 2019
Waterford Institute of Technology	Q2 2019	Q3 2019	Q4 2019	Q1 2020
Institute of Technology, Carlow	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020
Institute of Technology, Tallaght	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020	Q1 2021
Institute of Technology Blanchardstown	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020	Q1 2021
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
Cork Institute of Technology	Q4 2021	Q1 2022	Q2 2022	Q3 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 the 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 the handbook.

3.2 Review Team Profile

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

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

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

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

1. A Review Chairperson

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

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

2. A Coordinating Reviewer

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

3. A student reviewer

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

4. An industry representative

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

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

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

3.3 Procedure and timelines

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

STEP	ACTION	DATES	OUTCOME
Terms of Reference (ToR)	Completion of an institutional information profile by QQI Confirmation of ToR with institution and HEA	9 months before the Main Review Visit (MRV)	Published Terms of Reference
Preparation	Appointment of an expert Review Team Consultation with the institution on any possible conflicts of interest	6-9 months before the MRV	Review Team appointed
Self-evaluation	Forwarding to QQI of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)	12 weeks before the MRV	Published ISER (optional)
Desk Review	Desk review of the ISER by the Team	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 'directions' are issued to the institution. In general, where directions are issued the follow-up period will be sooner and more specific actions may be required as part of the direction</i>		
	Preparation of an institutional implementation plan	1 month after decision	Publication of the institutional implementation plan by the institution
	One-year follow-up report to QQI for noting. This and subsequent follow-up may be integrated into annual reports to QQI	1 year after the MRV	Publication of the follow-up report by QQI and the institution
	Continuous reporting and dialogue on follow-up through the annual institutional reporting and dialogue process	Continuous	Annual Institutional Quality Report Dialogue Meeting notes
Note: The total period from start to finish is approximately 15 months but will depend on QQI committee meeting dates.			

Appendix B

Main Review Visit Schedule

Day 1: Monday 16 April 2018

TIME	MEETING WITH	PURPOSE
8.30 – 9.30	Private Review Team Meeting	
9.30 – 10.00	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator.
10.00 – 10.30	President and Registrar	Private meeting with President and Registrar.
10.30 – 11.15	IT Sligo Executive	To discuss institutional mission, strategic plan, roles and responsibilities for QA and enhancement.
11.15 – 11.45	Private Review Team Meeting	
11.45 – 12.30	Governing Body Representatives	To discuss the mechanisms employed by the Governing Body for monitoring QA and enhancement with IT Sligo in line with the Acts and how it ensures its effectiveness.
12.30 – 1.30	Private Review Team Meeting and Lunch	
1.30 – 2.15	Students' Union Officers	To discuss student engagement and student role in in QA, strategic planning and decision-making process.
2.15 – 2.45	Private Review Team Meeting	
2.45 – 3.30	External Stakeholders-Representative Groups and Local Government	To discuss the Institute's engagement with external stakeholders.
3.30 – 4.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
4.00 – 4.45	Meeting with External Stakeholders – Industry and Commerce, including Alumni	To discuss the Institute's engagement with external stakeholders and alumni.
4.45 – 6.00	Private Review Team Meeting	

Day 2: Tuesday 17 April 2018

TIME	MEETING WITH	PURPOSE
9.00 – 9.30	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator to clarify issues from previous day and review today's schedule.
9.30 – 10.15	Meeting with representatives (Chairs and Members) from Planning and Coordination Committee, Academic Processes Committee, and Assistant Registrar	To discuss how the Institute monitors the effectiveness of its quality management processes and structures.
10.15 – 10.45	Private Review Team Meeting	
10.45 – 11.30	Meeting with representatives from Academic Council	To discuss how the Academic Council monitors the effectiveness of its quality management processes and structures.
11.30 – 11.45	Private Review Team Meeting	
11.45 – 12.30	Management and Staff involved in HR and Staff Development	Discuss how the Institute monitors effectiveness of its quality management processes and structures.
12.30 – 1.40	Students - round table discussions over lunch	Discussions with students recruited by Students' Union, including undergraduate, postgraduate and international students.
1.40 – 2.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
2.00 – 2.45	Meeting with Managers and Officers of Student Support Services	To discuss involvement in QA and enhancement.
2.45 – 3.10	Private Review Team Meeting	
3.10 – 4.00	Meeting with Managers of Service Units	To discuss involvement in QA and enhancement in relation to Student Support Services, Communications and IT.
4.00 – 4.30	Private Review Team Meeting	
4.30 – 5.15	Academic Staff representatives from all three Schools	To discuss QA Processes at the Academic Department Level - implementation and how effectiveness is ensured.
5.15 – 5.30	Private Review Team Meeting	
5.30 – 6.15	Academic Heads of Departments	To discuss quality management processes at the Academic Department Level - implementation and how effectiveness is ensured.
6.15 – 6.45	Private Review Team Meeting	

Day 3: Wednesday 18th April 2018

TIME	MEETING WITH	PURPOSE
9.00 – 9.30	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator to clarify issues from previous day and review today's schedule.
9.30 – 10.15	Meeting with VP Research Innovation and Engagement, Head of Research, Head of Technology Transfer and Innovation, Chair of Research and Innovation Committee, Strategic Research Centre Directors	To discuss the development of Research and Innovation in the Institute.
10.15 – 10.45	Private Review Team Meeting	
10.45 – 11.30	Meeting with Academic Staff – Research from Strategic Research Centres, Recognised Research Groups, Individual Researchers and Post Docs	To discuss staff experience of research management and supervision, the relationship between teaching, research, and innovation, QA and enhancements impact on the research student experience.
11.30 – 12.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
12.00 – 12.45	Online Learning Management	To discuss quality management processes for online delivery, their implementation and how their effectiveness is ensured.
12.45 – 1.30	Private Review Team Meeting and Lunch	
1.30 – 2.15	Academic Staff involved in Online Learning	To discuss quality management processes for online delivery, their implementation and how their effectiveness is ensured.
2.15 – 2.45	Private Review Team Meeting	
2.45 – 3.30	Meeting with Collaborative Provision Partners	To discuss quality management processes for programmes offered with collaborative partners.
3.30 – 4.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
4.00 – 4.45	Management and Staff involved in Collaborative Provision and Collaborative Monitoring and Review Academic Committee	To discuss how the Institute monitors the effectiveness of its quality management processes and structures.
4.45 – 5.15	Private Review Team Meeting	
5.15 – 6.00	IT Sligo Executive	Return meeting with IT Sligo Executive.

Day 4: Thursday 19 April 2018

TIME	MEETING WITH	PURPOSE
9.00 – 9.30	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator to clarify issues from previous day and review today's schedule.
9.30 – 10.15	Management and Staff involved in Apprenticeships.	To discuss QA and enhancement in Apprenticeships.
10.15 – 10.45	Private Review Team Meeting	
10.45 – 11.45	Management and Staff involved in Internationalisation	To discuss QA and enhancement in International Education.
11.45 – 12.15	Private Review Team Meeting	
12.00 – 12.30 <i>Parallel meeting</i>	Meeting between QQI and Institutional Coordinator and ITS staff	To gather initial feedback on the institution's experience of the review process.
12.15 – 12.45	Optional Meeting with President	Additional meeting with President, if required.
12.45 – 1.45	Private Review Team Lunch	
1.45 – 3.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
3.00 – 3.30	QQI Cyclical Reviews Unit	To discuss the Review Team's main findings and ensure alignment with the Terms of Reference for the review.
3.30 – 3.45	Private Review Team Meeting	
3.45 – 4.15	Report to Executive	Presentation of key findings to IT Sligo Executive.
4.15 – 5.00	Oral Report to IT Sligo	Presentation of key findings to IT Sligo, including staff and students who participated in the review.

Day 5: Friday 20 April 2018

Private meeting of Review Team to prepare the Review Report.

Appendix C



Institutional Response

IT Sligo welcomes the findings of the Institutional Review Team and thanks the Review Team for producing a thorough and comprehensive report.

We understand, on initial reading that the range and depth of this consideration, commendations, and recommendations have implications for every level and function of the Institute. We have begun a process of commending the report to our academic committees and management groups to ensure that the deep reflection on the detail of the report informs and influences our ongoing development of a continuous quality improvement culture.

The Institute is committed to developing the commendations further and to addressing the recommendations identified. We will develop an action plan for all the recommendations. In this initial response only the top 5 recommendations will be addressed.

1. **The Review Team recommends that the Institute continues and completes steps already being taken to:**
 - a. Evaluate, streamline and thoroughly systematise quality assurance at IT Sligo,
 - b. Evaluate regularly and adapt or change processes that are not delivering value and enhancement,
 - c. Ensure that there is appropriate induction, communication and support for staff and other stakeholders in implementing approved processes,
 - d. Address the range of internal communication issues raised in the ISER and in this report through the development and implementation of a clear communication strategy.

Institute Response:

Through the work of the Academic Council and its Committees the Institute will strive to implement more streamlined, data driven, benchmarked and routine quality systems to improve the efficiency and responsiveness of both quality assurance and enhancement. This will reinforce the role of Quality Infrastructure as integral to the work of the Institute, and to embed a quality culture across the Institute. Whilst the Academic Council will have overall responsibility for quality, ownership of quality will be devolved to schools at both the assurance and enhancement levels, with best practice in enhancement being rolled out across the Institute. As an integral part of a learning organisation processes will be evaluated for their usefulness and efficiency on a systematic basis, shaped by feedback from all users at all levels of the Institute and stakeholders. The Institute will develop an effective documentation and training management system to manage documentation, revision control and implementation of required training. In addition, induction, training, and communications strategies will be developed.

An integrated communications strategy will be developed that will close the loop between the Academic Council and the Institute Executive, Senior Management Team, and operational committees. This strategy will also include how stakeholders such as students and employers are informed of our processes.

2. **The Institute should improve its processes for planning, managing and evaluating change.**

Institute Response:

The Institute will develop a quality action plan and an academic plan for the Institute and has identified an upcoming offsite Academic Council event to start the development of this plan. The actions for these plans will be taken through the academic council committees to agree deliverables, deadlines and responsibilities. The plans will be agreed by Governing Body. In a similar manner to the Strategic Plan progress will then be tracked by Academic Council at each of its meetings. Regular updates will be reported back to Governing Body. A reasonable number of actions will be agreed, to ensure that these can be delivered within agreed timelines.

Where actions overlap with Strategic Plan or Higher Education Authority Mission-based Performance Compact 2018-2021, these will be mapped to reduce the number of individual actions. For example, Strategic Plan Action 6.5, is intended to improve evidence-based information systems to inform decision making, where the Institute will embed a culture of applying relevant data to inform decision making.

3. **The Institute should evaluate its current human resource policy and culture.**

Institute Response:

The Institute agrees that quality depends on all categories of staff in the Institution being supported, rewarded and valued to allow them to carry out their role to the best of their abilities. The Institute will benchmark current human resource policy and culture to ensure equity and fairness. Through the existing mechanisms such as the Institute-wide information and consultation forum and interactions between the Institute and staff representative groups, the Institute will define a culture to support the delivery of excellent services across the entire range of Institute activities. These mechanisms will also be used to address perceived inconsistencies. While the Institute is bound by certain national agreements such as PMDS, it will work with local staff representatives to agree delivery mechanisms that meet the requirements of staff and the Institute.

Equality, diversity and inclusion will be promoted and provision made for staff well-being and work-life balance. Following from Action 6.3 of the IT Sligo Strategic Plan 2017-2022, this will involve an externally hosted staff satisfaction survey (e.g. trust, well-being and work life balance) to prioritise initiatives.

4. **The Institute should keep under review the difficult balance between dynamic responsiveness and strategic direction.**

Institute Response:

The Institute acknowledges that this is a challenging recommendation to achieve. There are a number of competing internal and external drivers for this from regional stakeholders and from national strategy. Proactive planning and risk analysis will be used to prioritise strategic direction for the Institute and to decide what can and cannot be achieved.

The Governing Body will carry out a formal review of the Strategic Plan and Higher Education Authority Mission-based Performance Compact 2018-2021 twice per year and in so doing will be evaluating the rate of responsiveness to on-going developments as they occur, while also maintaining the drive towards achieving strategic KPIs. This will be carried out with the assistance of the Academic Council.

5. **The Institute should keep under review the new organisational structure.**

Institute Response:

Action 6.1 of the IT Sligo Strategic Plan 2017-2022, is to deliver the actions of the plan by implementing the new organisational structure, to meet the needs of staff and students to deliver the actions of the plan and to be responsive to stakeholder needs.

The Institute organisational structures will be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that they are fit for purpose and align with best practice in the sector. New departments will be created as the need arises and in discussion with the relevant internal stakeholders. A strategy to promote cross faculty, department and organisational partnerships will be facilitated in a similar manner to those that developed the multidisciplinary Strategic Research Centres and Groups. Whilst there will be a role for initiatives built on personal networking, the Institute will work to ensure permeability of internal structures. Communication strategies to highlight good examples of collaboration will be identified and implemented.





