Waterford Institute of Technology

2022

Annual Quality Report:
Waterford Institute of Technology
Reporting Period 2020-2021

[Waterford Institute of Technology]

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Annual Quality Report (Waterford Insti Technology)
PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM
Reporting Period 2020-2021

PREFACE

The **Annual Quality Report (AQR;** formerly AIQR) forms part of Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) quality assurance (QA) framework of engagement with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The AQR provides documentary evidence of the development and evolution of each institution's internal quality system. It provides QQI with assurance that internal QA procedures have been established and are being implemented consistent with regulatory requirements.

The AQR, particularly part A, should assist with **document management** in the institutional review process and will facilitate institutions in providing review teams with procedural QA documentation in preparation for the external review process. It is an important part of the evidence base considered by external **review teams** as part of QQI's CINNTE cycle of institutional reviews, demonstrating that the institution's internal QA system is aligned with QQI's Core and relevant Sector- and Topic-specific Statutory QA Guidelines, and with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015 (ESG). It enables the review team to satisfy itself of compliance with these requirements for the purpose of the institutional review process.

Each AQR is **published in full on QQI's website**, providing transparency on the HEIs' assurance and enhancement of quality to external stakeholders. (As such, institutions should ensure that their submissions do not contain any data that they consider to be commercially sensitive.) Collectively, the AQRs comprise a single national repository of quality assurance practice in Irish higher education institutions.

Each year, QQI produces a synthesis report of the key themes highlighted across the AQRs, primarily arising from Part B of the reports.

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Guidelines on Completing the Report

The AQR is aligned with QQI's Core, Sector and Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and with the ESG (2015). A mapping of the ESG to QQI Core QA Guidelines is included in Table 1 below; the structure of Part A of this report template aligns with the first column of the table. Additional guidance on completing this template and reference material is included in each section. Institutions should adhere to this guidance and have regard to QQI Core, Sector and Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. **The guide text within each section should be deleted before submission of the report.**

Submission Process and Timeline

The deadline for submission of the AQR each year is in February of the relevant year, with the call for submission sent to institutions in November of the preceding year. Once the call for submission has been made, QQI will provide access to QQI's provider portal, QHub, to the designated institution contact(s) to facilitate submission of the report. Through QHub, each institution will have access to an editable version of its AQR for the previous reporting period. This document can then be amended/updated to reflect any changes or developments that occurred during the current reporting period before submitting the final report to QQI.

Completing the AQR

- When completing the AQR template, all relevant colleagues in the institution should be consulted.
- Consider whether external audiences will be able to understand the terminology used (particularly local abbreviations and acronyms); it may be helpful to include a glossary.
- Aim to avoid duplication in the report – where information is relevant to more than one section, the first mention may be referenced in subsequent sections.
- Provide reflections on what worked well, but also what may have been tried but did not work.

Report Structure

Part A: Internal QA System

Part A of the AQR comprises a record of each institution's current QA policies and procedures and should provide links to those policies and procedures. Private HEIs may provide links to the policies and procedures approved by QQI during initial access to validation (IAV) or reengagement. It is the responsibility of each HEI to ensure before submission of the AQR that all links are correct and functional, and that the policies and procedures referred to are the most up-to-date versions available. Given that the AQR is submitted in respect of a discrete reporting period, it may be helpful for institutions to establish a SharePoint/OneDrive folder (or similar) for each reporting period that contains the current versions of their policies and procedures, and that hyperlinks to these versions of the documents be provided in the AQR

Part A is to be completed only if there have been __material__ changes to QA policies and procedures during the reporting period. Such changes may include the approval and implementation of new polices or procedures, or significant amendments to existing ones.

Part B: Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE)

Part B of the AQR documents and captures QA activities, developments and enhancements undertaken by institutions **during the reporting period** and their **impact**. Insofar as is possible, institutions should demonstrate in Part B how plans set out in the previous AQR were progressed during the reporting period – these may be plans linked to strategic objectives, to reengagement advices, or to institutional review recommendations.

Case Studies

In each reporting period, QQI may request updates on specific thematic areas or may invite the institution to submit case studies in response to specific topics. Further, institutions may include case studies to share good practice on topics of their choosing, demonstrating QA and QE in action. In formulating case studies, institutions are encouraged to reflect on and highlight areas that may be of interest to other institutions and would benefit from wider dissemination. Further guidance is provided in Part B.

Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template[1]

Legislation

- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended)
- Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992 (as amended)
- Technological Universities Act 2018
- Universities Act 1997

QQI Documents

Statutory QA Guidelines (QAG)

- Core QAG
- Sector-specific QAG for Independent/Private Providers
- Sector-specific QAG for Designated Awarding Bodies
- Sector-specific QAG for Institutes of Technology
- Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes
- Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes
- Topic-specific QAG for Blended Learning

Other QQI Policy Documents

- QQI's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes, and Joint Awards, 2012
- QQI's Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners, 2015
- QQI Policy Restatement on Access, Transfer and Progression, 2015

Other National/International References

- European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)
- IHEQN Guidelines on Collaborative Provision
- National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland
- Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes, 2019
- HEA National Framework for Doctoral Education
- The Salzburg Principles
- The Salzburg II Recommendations
- SOLAS Code of Practice for Employers and Apprentices
- UN Sustainable Development Goals

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[1] These links will be updated as further guidance documents are published.

PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Table 1

Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)

AQR Part A Section	QQI QAG Core Sub-section No.	QAG Core Sub-section Title	ESG Standard No.	ESG Standard Title
1.0 - *Internal QA Framework*	2.1	Governance and Management of Quality	1.1	Policy for Quality Assurance
	2.2	Documented Approach to Quality Assurance		
2.0 - *Programme Development and Delivery*	2.3	Programmes of Education and Training	1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
4.0 - *QA of Research Activities and Programmes*				
8.0 - *Monitoring and Periodic Review*			1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
5.0 - *Staff Recruitment, Development and Support*	2.4	Staff Recruitment, Management and Development	1.5	Teaching Staff
2.3 - *Teaching, Learning and Assessment*	2.5	Teaching and Learning	1.3	Student-centred Teaching, Learning and Assessment
	2.6	Assessment of Learners		
3.0 - *Learner Resources and Supports*	2.7	Supports for learners	1.6	Learning Resources and Student Support
6.0 - *Information and Data Management*	2.8	Information and Data Management	1.7	Information Management
7.0 - *Public Information and Communication*	2.9	Public Information and Communication	1.8	Public Information
2.0 - *Programme Delivery and Development*	2.10	Other Parties Involved in Education and Training	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - *Monitoring and Periodic Review*				
9.0 - *Details of Arrangements with Third Parties*			1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
2.0 - *Programme Development and Delivery*	2.11	Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - *Monitoring and Periodic Review*			1.10	Cyclical External Quality Assurance
4.0 - *QA of Research Activities and Programmes*	QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes			

Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for Waterford Institute of Technology for the reporting period **1 September 2020 – 31 August 2021.**

It is to be submitted by **Friday, 25 February 2022**.

The AQR has been approved by the WIT Governing Body and is submitted by **Dr Paul O'Leary, Head of Quality Promotion.**

This report is the AQR for Waterford Institute of Technology for the reporting period **1 September 2020 – 31 August 2021.** The AQR has been approved by **WIT Governing Body** and **WIT Academic Council** and is submitted by the WIT Head of Quality Promotion, Dr Paul O'Leary.

The WIT Annual Quality Report (AQR) considers the operation and effectiveness of the institute's quality assurance procedures, lays out the strategic quality enhancement initiatives for the coming year and reports on the previous year's quality enhancement initiatives. The report measures compliance with European standards for quality assurance, the expectations set out in the QQI quality assurance guidelines or their equivalent and adherence to other relevant QQI policies and procedures. The report also explores how WIT has enhanced its teaching, learning and research, and its quality assurance systems and how well the institute has aligned its approach to its own mission, quality indicators and benchmarks.

The WIT Academic Council Planning Committee is central in engaging and approving the annual quality assurance reports, as the starting point for the conversations about the AQR to the final approved version being submitted to Academic Council and Governing Body. While there are many contributors to the AQR throughout the drafting process, the Head of Quality Promotion has responsibility for collating contributions from the WIT community and for the drafting of the report. Members of the broader WIT community contribute to the draft AQR document. These included the Academic Council's Planning Committee, Academic Council committee, WIT Governing Body, the Office of the President, the WITSU, the Offices of the Vice Presidents for Corporate Affairs and Finance, for Strategy, and for Research, the Academic Council and its sub-committees, the school boards, WIT staff and students.

The institute considers each AQR as an integral part of its own improvement process and established the following objectives as valued outputs from the process:

1. Benchmark the institute's QA framework against both the ESG, and against national guidelines;
2. Assess WIT engagement with students and other stakeholders and support for staff and researchers;
3. Reflect on the institutional actions since the previous AQR and
4. Articulate WIT's quality enhancement proposals for the coming academic year.

In last year's AQR report the point was made that the 2019-20 academic year was without comparison in the history of AQR reporting due to the public health restrictions imposed in response to COVID-19 impacted students, staff and the wider WIT community including in core areas of teaching, learning and research. The scheduled Institutional Review was deferred to the next academic year. This reporting period of 2020-21 was

even more disrupted, with the disruption spread out over the entire academic year. This report examines the resilience of the QA framework in response and outlines QE plans for the 2021-22 academic year.

This AQR has been presented by the Head of Quality Promotion to the Academic Council Planning Committee to Academic Council and to the Governing Body for feedback and approval.

1.0 Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

The Waterford Institute of Technology Strategic Plan 2018-2021 had its final academic year in the reporting period. While the quest for Technological University status with our merging partner IT Carlow was a dominant goal, there was also the important vision to continue to evolve into a community of collaborative, inclusive and innovative educators. The Plan provided a direction for Waterford Institute of Technology that was focussed on those opportunities and outlined the organisation's strategic goals for the coming period, guided by our over-arching vision. The transformational agenda set the targets that by 2022 the institute would be known:

1. For our provision of high-quality educational experiences to students that are student centred and responsive to learner needs;
2. As an accessible new university that offers a wide range of learning opportunities, access and progression routes and flexible modes of engagement with learning that reflect learner needs and societal change;
3. As a research-led organisation with a demonstrably impactful, innovative, and dynamic research community;
4. For being deeply embedded in regional discourse, policy-making, economic, social and cultural activity and as a driver of regional change;
5. For our international profile that finds expression in the approach of our students and staff and in our extensive partnerships;
6. As an effectively governed and managed organisation that is strategically focussed and demonstrates quality in all its activities.

While the impact of COVID was to temper the complete achievement of these targets, it also presented a unique test of the institute's resilience and flexibility, not foreseen when the strategy was initially drafted. In the reporting period, the resilient operation of the institute has been analysed published as an academic paper in an international conference on HE for the 2019-20 academic year[1] and in a HE journal for the reporting period.[2]

The overarching WIT philosophy and framework for Quality Assurance is set out in *Quality Assurance Framework for Waterford Institute of Technology* (WQAF) document ([link](#)). The purpose of the WQAF, is to enhance the quality environment of the institute, and to ensure the dual responsibilities of assuring that standards of awards and the ongoing improvement of activities are achieved. The framework is informed by the European Standards and Guidelines 2015 and by the statutory and regulatory environment in which Irish Education operates, including the application of QQI policies and the new operating environment for Institutes of Technology following the signing into law of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019.

The institute recognises that quality is delivered through all of the activities of the institute and is committed to engaging all staff in articulating, understanding and delivering on its responsibilities. These responsibilities include:

1. Ensuring all graduates of the institute meet the standards expected of their award;
2. Ensuring our teaching, learning and student support environments deliver appropriately for the diversity of our student body and that we support learners achieve their potential;
3. Ensuring the institute is responsive to the needs of the stakeholder at regional and national levels.

The WQAF philosophy and framework is supported by, and expressed in, the institute's policy, procedure and regulation documents. The *WIT Quality Manual* is issued on an annual basis and comprises 4 sections: Section A *Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes* (RTP); Section B *Programme Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy and Procedures* (RPA); Section C *Quality Assurance of Collaborative Programmes, including Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards* (RCP); Section D *Postgraduate Research Degrees: Regulations and Procedures* (RRD). The *WIT Quality Manual* is supported by a number of supplemental and subsidiary policy and procedure documents, which are available on the Policies and Regulations area of the WIT website, and will be referred to in later sections of this report.

Quality assurance decision-making fora

An organisational chart for the Structure of Responsibility for Quality is available in the WQAF. A description of the structure of quality assurance and improvement activities in the institute is also provided in the WQAF along with a detailed assignment of responsibilities at key stages in the cycle.

In terms of academic quality and standards, the Academic Council is the key decision-making body. The Academic Council is appointed by the WIT Governing Body, to assist it in the planning (including the strategic planning), co-ordination, development and overseeing of the educational and research work of the institute, and to protect, maintain and develop the academic standards of the programmes and activities of the institute. The Qualifications and quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019 states that awards "may only be conferred, granted or given on the recommendation of the academic council", which confers on the WIT Academic Council the determination of the awards granted by the institute and changes the relationship of WIT Academic Council to other Institute functions from advisory to decisive.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar has overall responsibility for co-ordinating the above processes and reporting to Academic Council and Institute authorities on progress and implementation. To ensure a link between Academic Council and Governing Body, a member of the Academic Council presents a report on the work of Academic Council to the Governing Body at least annually, but preferably once a semester. The Academic Council has established the following committees: Academic Quality Committee (AQ); Academic Planning Committee (AP); Learning and Teaching Committee (LT); Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Committee (RIE); School Boards; Standing Committee; and the Agenda Setting and Correspondence Committee. The Academic Council will normally delegate responsibility for detailed consideration, analysis and drafting of policies, procedures and other matters to its committees. Reports from committees on such matters will be referred to Academic Council for consideration by the larger meeting. Academic Council may adopt or reject such reports or refer them back to committee. A detailed account of the terms of reference and responsibilities of the subcommittees for Academic Council is given in the WIT Academic Council Constitution, which spells out the Terms of Reference, Code of Practice, Composition and Regulations, particularly section 5, and in the WIT Quality Manual: Programme Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy and Procedures (RPA), section 1.

An Organisational Chart of the School and Department structure in the institute, including service departments, and lines of responsibility is available on the WIT website.

Representation of learners and external stakeholders

The institute has developed systematic representation of learners and external stakeholders in the governance and management of quality within the institution.

The institute's Quality Manual (link) has sections that deal with the engagement of stakeholders across a number of institutional activities. These include:

1. The design of programmes of study;

2. The external validation of programmes of study;

There are also policy and strategy approaches for engagement with external stakeholders:
1. As part of industrial and work placement (link);
2. Through industry partnerships and MOUs in teaching and in research.
3. The evaluation of research proposals and activity (RSU, link);
4. As part of strategic planning and development (link);
5. As part of the School Review process (link);

The institute strategy emphasises our closeness to industry and the engagement of partnerships in teaching, learning and research.

Professional Body Recognition: Several WIT Programmes have Professional Body Accreditation. The *WIT Quality Manual* Section A *Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes* (RTP); spells out the required approach for dealing with Professional Bodies, for example, for individual modules that can be used to claim exemptions from professional examinations, or the status of professional accreditation of a given programme and, indeed the duties of Programme Boards to maintain the accreditation of the programme.

[1] O'Leary, P.; O'Byrne, D. (2021). Evaluation of a Higher Education institute's Quality Framework performance during COVID-19. 7th International Conference on Higher Education Advances (HEAd'21). Editorial Universitat Politècnica de València. 317-324. https://doi.org/10.4995/HEAd21.2021.13130

[2] O'Leary, P., & O'Byrne, D. (2021). Quality Framework Performance in One Year of COVID-19 Restrictions in a Higher Education Institute. Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice, 21(12). https://doi.org/10.33423/jhetp.v21i12.4696

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

The quality assurance of collaborative programmes is supported by a comprehensive set of regulations and the approval processes managed through relevant school boards, Executive Board and Academic Council, which are robust (see Section 3.1). WIT has entered into joint and double degrees, which are listed on the on the WIT website.

Current agreements in place include:

1. The BA (H) in International Business, which is a double degree programme with the Munich University of Applied Sciences.
2. The Master of Science in International Business/Master of Business in Internationalisation Collaborative Programme, which is a joint degree programme with the École Supérieure de Commerce, Bretagne, Brest.
3. Double BSc degree with the Nanjing University of Information Science & Technology (NUIST)

Apart from agreements with other HEIs, there are also agreements in place with other organisations and industry bodies:

1. Certificate in Radio Broadcasting and Presenting with WLR FM and Beat 102-103
2. MA in Social Justice and Public Policy, a collaborative provision with Social Justice Ireland
3. Teagasc and WIT collaboration agreement to establish and deliver educational programmes
4. The Higher Diploma in Arts in Television Production, which is co-delivered by WIT with Nemeton TV.

The institute has signed progression agreements with partner Colleges of Further Education, to offer preferential entry to students who successfully complete a linked QQI FET programme and who meet certain criteria. The Colleges of Further Education progression agreements are presented on the WIT website.

2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

2.1 Programme Development and Approval

The WIT policy and procedures for the design and approval of taught programmes are contained in Section B of the WIT *Quality Manual: Programme Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy and Procedures* (RPA). In general, programmes are proposed and designed by an Academic School or Schools, subject to internal and external review, and approved via the Academic Council and its committees.

There are a number of processes set out in the RPA for validating new programmes or amending existing programmes:

The CE1 process is required to make the initial 'business' case proposal for a new programme to consider rationale need, demand, resources, capacity to deliver the programme, and the proposed outline of the programme. It is proposed by an Academic School and reviewed by the WIT Executive Board. The relevant regulations may be found in Section B of the RPA, Sections 2.3-2.4, CE1 stage application.

The CE2 process is required for a full new programme proposal (leading to Major, Minor, Special Purpose or Supplemental Awards). It is proposed by an Academic School and reviewed by a Panel (comprising an external chair, external academic and industry representatives, student representative (for major awards only), and Registry and Academic Council representative), with the panel report and School response being considered by the Academic Quality Committee and then by the Academic Council. The relevant regulations may be found in Section B of the RPA, Sections 2.5-2.7, 2.10-2.11, CE2 stage application.

The CE4 process is required for a full new programme proposal leading a Joint Award programme, or a programme which has collaborative delivery. It is proposed by an Academic School and reviewed by a Panel (comprising an external chair, external academic and industry representatives, student representative (for major awards only), and Registry and Academic Council representative), with the panel report and School response being considered by the Academic Quality Committee and then by the Academic Council. The relevant regulations may be found in Section B of the RPA, Section 2.13 and in Section C of the WIT *Quality Manual: Quality Assurance of Collaborative Programmes, including Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards* (RCP).

The CE3 process is required for a significant amendment to an existing approved programme, which necessitates a change in programme learning outcomes. It is proposed by an Academic School and reviewed by a Panel (comprising external academic and industry representatives, and Registry and Academic Council representatives) with the panel report and School response being considered by the Academic Quality Committee and then by the Academic Council. The relevant regulations may be found in Section B of the RPA, Section 2.8.

The Minor Change Request process is required where the proposal is for minor change(s) to an existing approved programme, which does not necessitate a change in programme learning outcomes. It is proposed by an Academic School and reviewed by the Academic Quality Committee and then by the Academic Council. The relevant regulations may be found in Section B of the RPA, Section 2.9.

The Individual Module(s) Approval process is required where the proposal is to validate stand-alone modules. It is proposed by an Academic School and reviewed by an External subject expert(s), by the Academic Quality Committee and then by the Academic Council. The relevant regulations may be found in Section B of the RPA, Section 2.12.

WIT's approach to quality assurance is based on an open, transparent and easily assessable set of regulations that are supported by appropriate training. The institute publishes the quality framework annually, electronically and in hard copy. It maintains dedicated areas on sections of the intranet and Moodle for QA documentation and information. These areas also contain a number of resource files and guidance notes in key areas. In addition, the Office for Quality Promotion and Academic Policy Development has a specific remit in providing

training in key QA processes and providing an individualised response to questions. The Quality Promotion Information Area on Moodle also hosts a number of documents and videos available to staff, from preparing Learning Outcomes to the relevant NFQ (EQF: *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*.) The Quality Promotion Office also promotes and enables continuous quality improvement across the institute's academic and administrative units, primarily by managing the Quality Review process for Schools and Units. This work includes support and guidance to Heads of Schools and Directors of Units, as well as academic and administrative staff; engaging and liaising with reviewers; advising on the implementation of recommendations in the review report; analysis of all review process findings.

Finally, the institute has had a dedicated Continuous Professional Development week in February each year, since 2004, during which staff are offered training on a wide range of topics, including QA processes, such as for new programme development/modifying existing programmes and creating NFQ-appropriate module descriptors.

2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

The WIT quality assurance procedures that encompassed the student lifecycle are primarily found in the WIT Quality Manual: Section A *Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes* (RTP) for taught programmes and Section *Postgraduate Research Degrees: Regulations and Procedures* (RRD) for research programmes. The Quality Manual is supported by a number of supplementary policies and process documents.

Admission Policies (link)

The institute is open and accessible to applicants offering multiple entry routes to its programme portfolio. This is captured in a range of admissions documents published on the WIT website, in the WIT prospectus and linked through the CAO, Qualifax, CareersPortal and similar websites. These policies are listed in the following:

1. Admission to Programmes of Study Policy Document;
2. Other School Leaving Examinations Policy Document;
3. Mature Applicant Policy Document;
4. Previous Higher Education Policy Document (under review and may not be implemented for 2020 intake);
5. Ardscoil na Mara Tramore Computer Studies Link Policy;
6. Deferral First Year Entry Policy and Procedure;
7. QQI Further Education and Training Awards Council Policy;
8. Leaving Certificate Recheck Policy;
9. Advanced Entry Applications (A4) Policy;
10. Qualification Baccalaureat and Brevet Policy;
11. Qualification GCE GCSE & BTEC Policy;
12. Qualification - BTEC Policy;
13. WIT Alert List 2021 Entry;
14. Undergraduate Full-time Independent Module Registration Policy;
15. Qualification LCVP Policy;
16. Leaving Certificate Subjects 2021;
17. Leaving Certificate Eligibility Criteria (Matriculation) 2021;
18. CAO Admissions Garda Vetting Programmes Policy;
19. WD019 BBS in Recreation and Sport Management Policy Document;

20. WD212 BBS (Hons) in Recreation and Sport Management Policy Document;
21. WD186 BSc (H) in Sports Coaching and Performance Policy Document;
22. WD144 Architecture Policy Document;
23. Available Places Policy;
24. Brexit Information for undergraduate applicants from the UK wishing to study in Ireland - as guidance evolves in relation to Brexit this information may be subject to change.

Admission Processes

The admission policies have transparent admission, transfer, progression and Recognition of Prior Learning processes underpinning them, which are in turn captured in the following list:

- *Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes* (RTP), Sections 2-4
- WIT Access, Transfer and Progression Policy (Regulations and link)
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy (website and also Moodle link)
- Admissions procedure (link) and international candidates (link)
- The Code of Practice of the Disability Office Student Life and Learning (link)
- Recording Policy: on the Recording of Oral and/or Visual Presentations for Students Registered with the Disability Office (link)
- WIT Progression Scheme (link)
- Deferral of Undergraduate Programmes Policy and Procedure (link)

Student Transfer

- Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes (RTP), Section 2.12 (transfer, link)
- RTP, Section 2.13 (advanced entry, link)
- Student Life and Learning information section on First Year transfer (link)

Student Progression

- Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes (RTP), Sections 7-11 (link)
- External Examiner policy (Quality Manual and also Moodle link)
- Computer Based Examinations policy (Quality Manual and also Moodle link)
- Anti-plagiarism policy (Quality Manual and also Moodle link)
- Regulations governing written examinations: RTP, Appendices 2 and 3 and WIT website (link)

Recognition (qualifications, periods of study, prior learning)

- Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes (RTP), Section 6 (link)
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy (website and also Moodle link)

Certification (qualification information, documentation)

- Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes (RTP), Section 12 (link)
- Policy on the conferring of Aegrotat Awards (Quality Manual and also Moodle link)
- Completing, Granting and Presentation of Awards Policy (Quality Manual and also Moodle link)

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2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

The Quality Promotion Information Office uses a dedicated area on Moodle to host a number of documents and videos, on preparing Learning Outcomes; guides for Programme Leaders, Programme Boards and School Boards, School Review staff, Module Editors; videos and guides on Learning Outcomes and Constructive Alignment. During WIT's dedicated continuous professional development week each year, staff are offered training on QA processes, such as new programme development/modifying existing programmes and creating NFQ-appropriate module descriptors.

New programmes are validated through the two-stage CE1 / CE2 process where the CE1 considers the 'business case' for the proposed programme and the CE2 considers in detail all aspects of a proposal with special reference to its academic merit and quality. As part of the validation process, some key issues a panel will pursue with a programme proposing team include:

- are the programme learning outcomes at the appropriate level as set out by the NQAI requirements and
- will the accumulation of the module learning outcomes result in the attainment of the programme learning outcomes?

WIT External Examiners have an important role in ensuring that a learner acquires the standard of knowledge, skill or competence associated with the level of each award within the NFQ. They are responsible for the detailed work of monitoring assessment and assessment outcomes and ensuring that standards are maintained in particular subject areas. External examiners responsibilities include approving the assessment instruments, signing off on the standards of marking and ensuring standards for the subject / discipline area concerned are consistent with national and international standards in the field.

The institute has just completed a cycle of school reviews, which also play a crucial role in ensuring learner standards. As part of each review, a Peer Review Group is asked to consider and validate the school's programmes. This is an opportunity to conduct a critical evaluation of the school's programmes and to streamline them.

The reports on all new programme reviews and all School Reviews are all routinely published on the institute's website (link).

2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The Learning and Teaching Committee of the WIT Academic Council is the policy formation and oversight committee tasked with the development of teaching learning and assessment policy. The Committee developed a Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategy (link), which is intended to enhance learning at WIT by establishing a common framework, aligned with the overall Institute strategy, for decision making across the institute on the future development of learning, teaching and assessment and has regulations regarding the delivery, assessment and progression of students embedded in its Quality Manual (RTP and RRD sections). The Committee

has intended to revisit the WIT Teaching & Learning Strategy and this is included in its work plan; In the reporting period, the Committee also produced a paper on Assessment & Its Management, which was approved by Academic Council, as well as a Practical Guide to writing Learning Outcomes and a draft Green Paper on Computer-Based Exams. In response to the national lockdowns, the committee produced two documents for staff dealing with academic delivery, *Guidelines for remote and online assessment Academic Year 2020-2021* (Version 1 and a later Version 2) and *Guiding principles for programmes migrating to a blended learning approach to programme and module delivery*.

Procedures in respect of teaching and learning strategy for each programme are established as part of the programme validation (RPA section) and through the periodic School Review process. For example, the School of Lifelong Learning and Education completed its Review process in the reporting year. This was a lengthy and comprehensive review of all School activities and School strategy and has resulted in an updated programme and module portfolio, an aligned vision for the strategic direction of the School and a clear implementation plan for quality enhancement that includes some new structures (School Board and School Research Programme Board) and greater alignment with the WIT Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

Quality assurance of teaching is provided via the School Review (all recent Review reports are publicly available) and also through the external examiner process. The WIT Policy on External Examining can be found in the Academic Council Information Area on Moodle and also in the WIT Quality Manual: RTP section, which is available publicly on the WIT webpages, on the WIT Intranet on Q:\Public\Registrar\Quality, as well as in the Academic Council Information Area/Quality Manual and also in the Quality Promotion Information Area on Moodle.

Quality assurance is also provided using student feedback through representation on programme boards, local course-specific feedback, the national studentsurvey.ie, formerly known as the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and via the nationally approved QA3 survey. These surveys were of particular benefit in the past two reporting periods, in assessing the institute's response to COVID and trying to ascertain where the student expectations had moved as a result of all of the changes.

Quality Assurance promotion occurs through workshops in the staff Professional Development week and through material available on Moodle, to help staff engage with the following:

Programme development or alteration, the WIT Module Catalogue, engaging with the Quality Framework, External Examining, Learning Outcomes, Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, QQI Documents and Policies, Award Standards, Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQN), European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), The Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The Academic Council's Learning and Teaching Committee and the Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning (CTEL (link)) were instrumental in guiding the academic response to emergency remote teaching. The Committee produced guidelines early in the first national lockdown and CTEL offered a support infrastructure for flexible modes of programme delivery and assessment. The support structures also included designated academic instructional design guidance, professional development support for academic course teams in blended learning (two 10 ECTS NFQ Level 9 modules available to staff), access to the bespoke e-learning pods (3) for synchronous teaching and asynchronous recording, and equipment for on-line delivery and the continuation of the institute-wide Community of Practice to support peer to peer engagement with TEL, shared knowledge of TEL pedagogies and to build expertise in TEL across WIT.

The WIT Educational Services Unit (link) supports video conferencing and web conferencing and also provides services to staff for installation, maintenance and booking of educational equipment.

Finally, the institute has had a dedicated Continuous Professional Development week in February each year, since 2004, during which staff are offered training on a wide range of topics, including lecture delivery, WIT Quality Framework, interview techniques, health and safety, child protection, etc.

Programme Delivery and Assessment

Programme delivery and assessment are the core of WIT's activities, so the quality assurance policies and procedures for programme delivery and assessment are present in multiple weblinks, both publicly and internally available. These links reflect the variety of students who attend WIT and their needs, offering flexible learning paths, including different modes of delivery and pedagogical approaches.

The Academic Quality Committee, on behalf of the Academic Council) approves the appointment of all external examiners, both at undergraduate and postgraduate (taught and research) levels. The appointment of external examiners is an important part of the institute's quality assurance. The Academic Quality Committee ensures that standards are uniformly applied across the institute. Further information on the External Examiner reporting and setup can be found on the WIT webpage (link).

Information for Programme Specific Regulations are all contained in the Approved Programme Schedules, available on the WIT Moodle Intranet (link), which are sorted by Department. Programme regulations are approved by the Academic Quality Committee and then by Academic Council.

Examination Regulations: The regulations governing written examinations and also the anti-plagiarism policy are published on the WIT website (link).

The institute has a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, which is published on the institute website and is intended to enhance learning at WIT by establishing a common framework, aligned with the overall Institute strategy, for decision making across the institute on the future development of learning, teaching and assessment.

Policies in respect of the programme delivery include:

1. WIT *Quality Manual* , particularly Section A *Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Programmes* (RTP) which is available publicly on the WIT webpages, the WIT Intranet, as well as in the Academic Council Information Area/Quality Manual on Moodle;
2. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy (website and also Moodle link);
3. External Examiner Policy (Quality Manual and also Moodle link);
4. Anti-plagiarism Policy (Quality Manual and also Moodle link);
5. Policy on the Conferring of Aegrotat Awards (Quality Manual and also Moodle link);
6. Approval of Minor, Special Purpose, Supplemental Awards (Quality Manual and also Moodle link);
7. Completing, Granting and Presentation of Awards Policy (Quality Manual and also Moodle link);
8. The Code of Practice of the Disability Office Student Life and Learning (link);
9. Recording Policy: on the Recording of Oral and/or Visual Presentations for Students Registered with the Disability Office (link);
10. The Student Complaints Policy (link).

The institute supports these policies in some cases with an operational procedure. For example, admission to WIT is defined in the WIT *Quality Manual*, but this is elaborated on in greater detail in a dedicated webpage:

Procedures

1. Admissions procedure Admissions procedure (<u>link</u>) and international candidates (<u>link</u>);
2. Procedures for external examiners (<u>link</u>);
3. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy (<u>website</u> and also Moodle <u>link</u>);
4. Viewing of examination scripts (<u>link</u>);
5. Recheck of Examination Results form available from the Office of the Registrar or <u>online</u>[1];
6. Procedure to <u>appeal</u> examination results.

The RTP section of the WIT Quality manual makes specific reference to a range of delivery and assessment policies and procedures including *inter alia* the determination of awards, the balance of assessment, the assessment of group activities, progression criteria and the requirement to produce student handbooks detailing programme information.

Students are involved in programmes and assessment through:
1. Membership of programme boards;
2. School boards;
3. Academic Council and Council committees;
4. Learner representatives on new programme review panels;
5. External Examiner interviews;
6. The Complaints Policy;
7. Membership of appeals panels.

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[1] Due to Covid-19 restrictions it was not possible to carry out Viewing of Scripts or Rechecks. Students requiring feedback on their assessment results were encouraged to contact the relevant lecturer during office hours.

3.0 Learner Resources and Support

The student environment is composed of academic and welfare support activities, which, while separate, are strongly related. There are a number of functional units dealing with these areas. Broadly, they all come under the remit of the Office of the Registrar. In response to broadband access challenges highlighted by COVID-19, the institute established the Digital Study Hub to enable students on campus to stream or attend lectures online in a secure and dedicated environment.

The institute strategy is strongly regionally focussed and recruits by far the largest number of learners from the south-east region, typically ranking first across Waterford, Wexford and Kilkenny. The institute also recruits strongly from under-represented student populations, especially students with disabilities and has concentrated resources on providing a high-quality education for all. The institute aims to grow numbers of part-time learners, and consequently has increased the flexibility in its curriculum through an increase in minor and special purpose awards, and in online and concentrated / block delivery.

Academic support activities include:
1. WIT Digital Study Hub
2. Library resource (link);
3. Computer services (link);
4. Virtual learning (Moodle) support;
5. Computing and Maths Learning Centre support;
6. WIT Research Support Unit;
7. Access support (link);
8. Retention Office (link);
9. International Office (link);

In addition to Academic support there are a range of other services targeted at broad student welfare and development. These are generally coordinated by the Student Life & Learning (link to all listed supports); as are many of the above academic resources. The general support activities include:
1. Student Assistance Fund (SAF);
2. WIT Laptop Scheme;
3. Waterford Adult Educational Guidance Service (WAEGS);
4. Careers Development Centre;
5. Student Counselling Service;
6. Disability Service;
7. Orientation / Induction Support;
8. Semester 1 Supports;
9. 1916 student Bursaries;
10. School of Science and Computing Student Support Service;
11. Peer to Peer Mentoring;
12. Retention, deregistration and programme transfer procedures (link);
13. Student Handbook (link).

These activities are underpinned by a policy and procedures based approach to activities. Policies include:
1. WIT Quality Manual, particularly the RTP and RRD sections
2. REACH Programme (access) Policy (link);
3. Access, transfer and retention policies set out in the RTP section of the WIT Quality Manual (link);
4. Code of Practice for the Disability Office (link);
5. Policy on recording of oral and/or visual presentation in WIT (link);

6. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy (website and also Moodle link);
7. Additional points policy (link).

Student Affairs are presented in a new webpage with key information and FAQs for students (link) Policies in respect of student finance and FAQs are available

1. Academic delivery 2021/22;
2. Registration;
3. Student Fees;
4. Student Grants;
5. New Students Registration FAQs;
6. Continuing Students Registration FAQs;
7. Repeat Learners FAQ;
8. CAO Admissions FAQs;
9. Defer, Deregister or Transfer;
10. Examinations Hub;
11. Digitary - Digital Documents;
12. Academic Calendar;
13. Academic Timetables;
14. Quality Assurance for Students;
15. Admissions, Registration & Examinations Helpdesk;
16. Education Verifications.

Student Finance is managed by the Office of the Vice President of Corporate Affairs and Finance. Student finance can be complex, so a dedicated web-page was created with information on budgeting, fees and grants (link).

The IT network and procedures receive ongoing investment and attention to improve the student experience, including an online student request facility to simplify student request for official documentation.

The WIT Library has also brought in changes to enhance the student experience:
- a booking system to accommodate Covid social distancing measures to reserve a space
- operation of a new digital hub to enable access to a work space with high internet speeds on campus
- enhanced Wi-Fi access throughout library buildings
- offer of additional hours library access during the exam periods
- provision of additional reader spaces

Extra resources and support have also been put in place to support staff in terms of professional development and enhancing their research, including their supervision of research students. For example, there is a dedicated Masters module on Research Supervision and WIT Research Connexions is a support scheme comprised of ten funding pathways to enable and support research activity and develop research capacity and capability across the Schools of the institute. The scheme and the project are designed to provide the entire WIT academic and research community the opportunity to apply for internal funding to enhance research activity, promote research networking and connections, increase competitively won research funding and increase the number of

quality peer-reviewed publications, all ambitions linked to the institute's wider strategy and all aligned with national strategic objectives with regard to research. The breadth of pathways recognises the variety of levels of research infrastructure and research "maturity" within Schools, Departments, and research groupings.

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

The quality assurance procedures for the design, approval, delivery, assessment and monitoring of research programmes are captured in Section D of the WIT Quality Manual, *Postgraduate Research Degrees: Regulations and Procedures* (RRD), which is available publicly on the WIT underline webpages, on the WIT Intranet on Q:\Public\Registrar\Quality, as well as in the Academic Council Information Area/Quality Manual on Moodle).

The RRD sets out the regulations in respect of registration, enrolment, supervision, transfer and assessment of research candidates. In addition, the RRD is also supported by a webpage dedicated to research policies and procedures (link) including:

- Policies of the Technology Transfer Office (TTO)
  - o TTO Guidelines
  - o The Intellectual Property policy
  - o Conflict of Interest policy
  - o Consultancy policy
- Policies for Research Practice
  - o Definition and Organisation of Research at WIT
  - o Code of Conduct for the Responsible Practice of Research
  - o Open Research policy
  - o Research Ethics policy
- Policies for Project Management
  - o Procedural Guide for Managing Research Projects
  - o Guidelines for Remote Working in Research
  - o WIT Overheads policy

The institute's Research Support Unit developed a Data Management guidance document to assist researchers in developing a quality Data Management Plan, for European Union H2020 funding proposals and projects.

- Policies for Data Protection
  - o Data protection policy
  - o Data Retention policy
  - o Data Retention Schedule
  - o Data Management Guidance
  - o Authorship and Data Retention policy

The Vice-President for Research, Innovation and Graduate studies launched the WIT Research Strategy 2020-2023 (link) to capture the research vision for the near term, including the proposed merger and TU formation.

For postgraduate students there is a dedicated section including useful guides, such as the Research Postgraduate Student Induction Handbook, links for career development and other useful links.

The Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship (RIE: link) committee advises and makes recommendations to the WIT Academic Council on matters relating to research. The responsibilities of this committee are defined in the Academic Council Constitution (section 5.3.4), available on Moodle and on the WIT web-pages. The RIE has also created a number of subcommittees to ensure the diverse range of activities under its remit is fully considered. The subcommittees are:

1. The Research Programme Boards (RPBs) are primarily School-based and act in advance of the institute-wide remit of the Research Postgraduate Enrolment Group (PGEG). These both (first the RPBs and then later the PGEG) consider postgraduate student (<u>Future Postgraduate</u> page) registration applications for enrolment (including a QQI Application, if relevant), Structured PhD applications PG_A2, applications for transfer or confirmation of candidature from the Masters to Doctoral registers (PGC), for Structured PhD students (PG_C). A postgraduate may also apply to PGEG for a variation in candidature (PG3). A step-by-step guide has also been published for research postgraduates and for supervisors (<u>link</u>). New school-based research programme boards were established during 2017-18 to support the Research Postgraduate Enrolment Group and the ongoing training and progression of research students. A SharePoint <u>site</u> accessible by everyone with a WIT login, has been set up as the central repository for the various forms relating to management of research postgraduate students, the process specifications associated with the research postgraduate regulations and a schedule of relevant meetings.

2. The institute's <u>Research Ethics Committee</u>, scrutinises all research which involves humans and animals to ensure it is compliant with statutory requirements and is conducted to the highest ethical principles.

The Academic Council's Quality Committee also has a function related to research, and that is to oversee the standards in the appointment of external examiners for research activities. The examining process, panel membership and required examiner qualifications and experience are all detailed in the RRD. School Postgraduate examination boards approve the decisions of the examiners.

The WIT Human Resource Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) Action Plan continued to be executed, under the direction of the HRS4R's Operational Committee. As a recipient of the HR Excellence in Research Award (<u>link</u>) from the European Commission, WIT is committed to developing its supports for researchers, there are also a number of supports for students and supervisors, including

- Institute-wide Generic Skills training for Postgraduates (prior to the advent of the WIT Structured Doctorate, which will have its own Universal Path Modules) (<u>link</u>);
- Institute-wide Supervisor Training via a module on the WIT MEd;
- WIT is also represented on the national Research Supervision Working Group and National Forum for Research Integrity.

Other Research Quality highlights included:

- As a response to the restrictions imposed by Covid-19 social distancing, <u>Guidelines for Remote Working in Research</u> was created to support WIT researchers.
- Annual reports were submitted to the Research Support Office by research centres, groups and individual researchers.
- The Office of Research, Innovation & Graduate Studies produces a webpage on Key Facts and Figures (<u>link</u>)
- Research active staff and students are encouraged to engage with *Research Professional* (an online platform to facilitate staff and students in searching for research funding) (<u>link</u>)

The WIT Library is also involved in promoting Research Quality and has been actively involved in the formulation of the Institutional Research Open Access policy, provision of Institutional Repository services and awareness raising in relation to 'Plan S'. WIT Library is also actively involved in promoting and in formulating the Open Science and Open Data policies with the WIT Academic Council's Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Committee.

5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

The appointment of teaching staff is based in the first instance on nationally agreed DoES circulars. WIT applies this standard as a baseline, but ordinarily appoints staff who have qualifications far in excess of the standard. Recruitment procedures are in place to define person specifications, minimum and desirable qualities prior to the initiation of recruitment. In general, the WIT HR policies are listed on the dedicated staff webpage:

1. WIT Staff Handbook
2. Absence Following Assault
3. Annual Leave
4. Career Break Scheme Administration & Clerical
5. Career Break Scheme For Academic Staff
6. Child Protection Policy
7. Child Safeguarding Statement
8. Code of Conduct Policy
9. Compassionate Leave
10. Conflicts of Interest Policy
11. Consultancy Policy
12. CorePortal Guide to Processing Leave
13. Covid19 Face Covering Policy
14. Cycle to Work Scheme
15. Designated Contact Persons
16. Dignity and Respect Policy
17. Dignity and Respect Procedure
18. Disciplinary Procedure
19. Email Policy
20. Emeritus Policy
21. External Work Form January 2020
22. Flexi Time Scheme for Admin & Library Staff
23. Fraud Policy
24. Force Majeure Leave
25. Garda Vetting
26. Good Practice Guide on Managing Conflict
27. Grievances and Disputes' Policy
28. Intellectual Property Policy
29. Leave for Appointments
30. Marriage and Civil Partnership Leave Policy
31. Maternity Information Sheet
32. Maternity Leave Policy
33. Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R) Policy for the Effective Recruitment and Selection of Funded Research Staff at Waterford Institute of Technology
34. Parental Leave Policy and Guidelines
35. Paternity Leave Circular IOTS
36. Probation Policy
37. Procedure For Claiming Illness Benefit
38. Progression Policy
39. Public Services Stability Agreement 2018 to 2020 Increases Due
40. Shorter Working Year Scheme C.L.
41. Shorter Working Year Scheme FAQs

42. Sick Leave Procedures
43. Staff Social Media Policy
44. Staff training and development strategy (link);
45. Travel Pass Scheme
46. Transfer Policy for Admin and Library Staff
47. WIT Disclosure Policy
48. WIT Code of Conduct for the Responsible Practice of Research
49. WIT Adverse Weather Policy

The institute has a dedicated staff resource to training and development and an Institute-wide Training and Development Committee that develops policy and procedures in respect of training and development of staff (academic, administration and support), including the organisation of the annual training and development week in semester 2.

WIT offers opportunities for, and promotes, the professional development of all staff. The Training and Development Committee report to the WIT Executive Board and developed the Staff Learning & Development Strategy 2020-2021 (link). WIT is committed to encouraging and facilitating staff to pursue professional and personal training and development both in the interests of performing their duties at the highest level possible for the accomplishment of the strategic objectives of the institute and also for self-fulfilment. Key priorities include: an expansion of teaching and research at levels 9-10, with a corresponding improvement of developing knowledge competency of staff in both upper level occupational training and applied research; the further strengthening of networking with industry and community organizations in training and research; and an expanded international orientation and portfolio of international activity. The Training and Development Committee plan also included a number of areas such as teaching and learning (such as modules in Practical Pedagogy, Blended Learning, etc.), management training, academic management, leadership and supervision (including a popular Research Supervision module) and other relevant areas, which emerged after the all-staff consultation process, including health and safety, dignity and respect, course leader training, team building at administrative and support level.

The institute's School of Lifelong Learning and Education provides development opportunities to staff, by providing modules from their portfolio of programmes, including the Masters in Education in Teaching and Learning (link), for continuous professional development, with modules offered in Adult Learning, Research Supervisory Skills, Blended Learning, Academic Enquiry, Applied Pedagogy, Mentoring, Curriculum Development and Assessment, Content and Interaction for Teaching & Learning Online, Education Research Methods, Education Research Project and Independent Learning Project.

Finally, the Centre For Technology-Enhanced Learning (link) run training workshops and a community of practice to support the development and utilization of the WIT eLearning infrastructure.

6.0 Information and Data Management

The primary policy and procedure documents governing data protection are presented in a dedicated Data Protection webpage (link) and include:
1. Data protection policy;
2. Data Protection Procedures;
3. Data Retention Policy ;
4. Data Retention Schedule;

Other policies relating to information and data management are included in the resource webpage dedicated to staff (link):
1. Staff Social Media policy;
2. Cloud Storage Acceptable Usage policy;
3. E-mail policy;
4. Computer and Network Security Policy;

A similar resource webpage dedicated to students includes policies relating to information and data management (link)
1. Recording Policy: on the Recording of Oral and/or Visual Presentations for Students Registered with the Disability Office;
2. Computer and Network Security Policy for students;
3. Student Social Media policy
4. E-mail acceptable usage policy;
5. E-mail Policy for staff communication with students.

WIT has a dedicated student record system (Banner), which records each student's progress from registration onto to the completion of the programme of study. This system provides key data, such as establishing a profile of the student population and monitoring student progression, success and drop-out rates. This in turn has been used to inform decision-making and improvements to programmes. For example, the statistics on access, progression and awards were presented and analysed, by each school for their School Review. WIT's MIS team produce dedicated report writing and data analysis facilities under a request system. The institute has committed to upgrading the Banner system as part of a national initiative to upgrade HE student record systems.

As well as data policies, regulations exist to guide the collecting, analysing and using of relevant information. The quality assurance procedures for programme boards, who collect and use data in reports to the Academic Council are defined in Sections A (RTP) and B (RPA) of the WIT Quality Manual , which is available publicly on the WIT webpages, on the WIT Intranet on Q:\Public\Registrar\Quality, as well as in the Academic Council Information Area/Quality Manual and also the Quality Promotion Information Area on Moodle. Programme board responsibilities include collecting, analysing and using relevant information that range from reflecting on the outputs of teaching and learning strategies, examination performance, award distribution, and taking or recommending appropriate remedial action when required.

Student satisfaction surveys are a growing part of the information strategy. While currently sought through student representation on Governing Body, Academic Council, programme evaluation panels, programme boards and local course-specific feedback, the institute is

strategically developing the use of the national studentsurvey.ie, formerly known as the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE), and the nationally agreed QA3 programme survey. The evaluations of the studentsurvey.ie and QA3 data are available through the Office of the Head of Quality Promotion and offered to each school for school-wide use.

7.0 Public Information and Communication

The institute has a published policy on the range and extent of public information that it makes available. As part of this policy, it routinely provides, to the public, an extensive range of quality assurance and other documents including:

1. All of its quality policies and procedures
2. Outputs of quality processes including:
    a. Programme validations
    b. School Review reports
3. Operational and financial policies, including data protection and freedom of information policies
4. Statutory information such as annual reports and strategic plans
5. Advice and guides to students, including handbooks
6. Programme information including award levels, progression opportunities and indicative programme content
7. Minutes of Governing Body meetings
8. Information on complaints procedures
9. Contact information

Freedom of Information: In general, members of the public are entitled to obtain official information from WIT, provided it does not conflict with the public interest and the right of privacy of individuals. The Act, how it relates to WIT and the process of applying are all presented here.

Data Protection aims to protect individuals' right to privacy with regard to the processing of their personal data by those who control such data. The Data Protection Acts of 1988 and 2003 lay down rules about the safeguarding of the privacy of personal data, in both manual and electronic format, covering such areas as the obtaining, processing, keeping, use, disclosure, accuracy, appropriateness, retention and an individual's right to access and correct their personal data.

The WIT Data Protection Policy document, which outlines our Data Protection responsibilities, the personal data we collect and information on how to make a request for access to personal records is all available here.

Since 2019, WIT is a member of the Integrity at Work programme, a Transparency International (TI) Ireland initiative that helps foster workplaces where people are supported to raise concerns of wrongdoing and act with integrity. As part of the commitment to protecting workers who raise concerns, WIT signed the Integrity at Work Pledge to ensure that workers reporting wrongdoing would not face penalisation and that action will be taken in response to the concerns raised. Members of the WIT community considering reporting a concern, know that independent, free and confidential advice is available from TI Ireland's Speak Up Helpline or can also make an enquiry via secure online form at www.speakup.ie. They may also refer to the WIT Disclosure Policy

8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

Internal review and monitoring are a central part of the overall WIT quality strategy and framework (see diagram in the Institution-Led QA Section). All activities are subject to review and enhancement in line with good governance principles. Monitoring is based upon:

1. Internal review of activities (i.e. programme management structures sections RRD and RTP of the Quality Manual) which may also include user feedback (i.e. students or employers)

2. External review of the activities, which are led from the institute regulations (i.e. external examining in RRD and RTP sections of Quality Manual, link), the commissioned review of an activity (i.e. the enhancement review of international office admissions or the operation of the research scholarships) or from the production and evaluation of a self-evaluation report such as school and programmatic reviews (link)

The quality of programmes is monitored on an ongoing basis. Programme Boards, which include student members, report annually to WIT Academic Council. External Examiners validate the quality of assessment activity and work with staff on the ongoing development of programmes. Annual reporting is primarily managed and administered by the School Offices. These regulations are set out in the appropriate sections of the WIT Quality Manual.

The WIT External Examiner role is clearly outlined in a dedicated webpage (link), with the underlying external examiner policy on the Moodle Policies page and also in Chapter 8 (Examination Boards and External Examining) in Section A (RTP) of the WIT Quality Manual: *Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes* , which is available publicly on the WIT webpages, on the WIT Intranet on Q:\Public\Registrar\Quality, as well as in the Academic Council Information Area/Quality Manual and also in the Quality Promotion Information Area on Moodle.

Programme boards are key to internal monitoring at a programme level. The overall role and makeup of programme boards is laid out in section 3.2 of Section B (RPA) of the WIT Quality Manual (webpage). Every postgraduate is considered a programme in their own right, and progress is monitored annually by progression boards. A SharePoint site, accessible by everyone who has a WIT login, has been set up as the central repository for the various forms relating to management of research postgraduate students, the process specifications associated with the research postgraduate regulations and a schedule of relevant meetings, including progression board meetings.

Students' expectations, needs and satisfaction with their programmes, the learning environment and support services, and their fitness for purpose, is sought through student representation on programme boards, local course-specific feedback, the national studentsurvey.ie, formerly known as the studentsurvey.ie, formerly known as the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and via the standard surveying of QA3 (programmes). The evaluation of the ISSE/ studentsurvey.ie and QA3 data is considered at the Academic Council Planning Committee and is available in the Quality Promotion Information Area on Moodle or through the Office of the Head of Quality Promotion and offered to each school for school-wide use.

[Higher Education Institution]

2022

Annual Quality Report (Institution)
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2020-2021

PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

In terms of Quality Implementation and Developments, the institute progressed with many ongoing and new initiatives, with notable milestones in relation to the Technological University application with IT Carlow, the completion of the 2018-2021 WIT Strategy and initiatives as a result of or indeed in spite of the difficulties posed by, Covid-19. COVID-19 continued to pose a challenge to the continuing high quality operation of higher education in the institute. WIT's quality framework had held up in the first truncated year of Covid-19. However, Covid-19 continued to impact Irish society for the entire reporting period. The institute's Quality was created long before national lockdowns or social distancing and was tested in a manner that had not been foreseen on the framework's creation.

This report therefore incudes an analysis of the framework's performance while continuing to operate under the sustained pressure brought about by COVID-19, examining in particular its robustness in offering students a quality education experience and to confirming the standard of our education and graduates to the wider public.

1.1   Strategic QA Updates

WIT is committed to offering high quality, transformative educational experiences that are student centred and responsive to learner needs. This year was the final year of the Waterford Institute of Technology Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021, which identified WIT's ambitions in educational and operational realms, including the intention to create a Technological University (TU) together with the Institute of Technology Carlow. The merging of the institutes has seen an evaluation of quality assurance and enhancement systems in both Institutes, with a merged and improved system now under preparation for approval by the new TU's Academic Council.

WIT retains a strategic focus in its quality development activities, which are based on 5 strategic themes (ST):

1. To increase the type and variety of **awards** and to enhance the process by which awards can be created as a means of being more flexible and responsive (ST-A);
2. To meet the QA performance criteria, across teaching & learning, research and the student experience, of the proposed Technological University (ST-TU);
3. To enhance **learning** opportunities across access and life-long learners (ST-L) and **international student** (ST-IS) markets,
4. To enhance **industry focus** by offering greater pathways for continuous professional development and up-skilling in industrial and commercial settings (ST-IF);
5. To improve the **effectiveness** and responsiveness of administration and quality assurance governance (ST-E).

This strategic focus to quality assurance and enhancement systems supports the Institution's strategic objectives. The Strategic Plan sets out targets, which are supported by the quality development activities' 5 strategic themes (ST). The WIT Strategic Plan envisages that WIT will be known:

I.   For our provision of high-quality educational experiences to students that are student centred and responsive to learner needs (ST-A, ST-IS);
II.   As an accessible new university that offers a wide range of learning opportunities, access and progression routes and flexible modes of engagement with learning that reflect learner needs and societal change (ST-TU, ST-IS);
III.   As a research-led organisation with a demonstrably impactful, innovative, and dynamic research community (ST-TU);
IV.   For being deeply embedded in regional discourse, policy-making, economic, social and cultural activity and as a driver of regional change (ST-L, ST-IF);

V. For our international profile that finds expression in the approach of our students and staff and in our extensive partnerships (ST-IS);
VI. As an effectively governed and managed organisation that is strategically focussed and demonstrates quality in all its activities (ST-E, ST-A).

In engaging with our wider community, WIT is committed to an approach of openness, transparency and ease of engagement. This not alone means that all policies and procedures should be published and readily available, but the design of policies and implementation of procedures should result in public, easily understood and easily accessed processes that enable user to readily engage. In order to further instil confidence quality review reports and regulations are also all published publicly. All quality reviews involve panels comprise a wide representation that include peers from outside the institute to provide objectivity and to allow comparisons against external quality standards.

WIT aligns strategy and Quality Assurance through the Executive Structure, School Review process and programme design and development (via the Academic Council). Specific roles are defined for the Office of the President, Office of the Registrar and the various committees of Academic Council. The responsibilities are generally defined within the quality assurance framework document (link) and in the WIT Quality Manual (link), Academic Council *Terms of Reference, Code of Practice, Composition and Regulations* (constitution, link) and the Governing Body Code of Conduct for Governing Body Members (link).

In this second, COVID-restricted year, the institute remained faithful to the 5 strategic themes in many ways, including the following:
1. Continuing online with new award approvals and flexibility-inspired amendments to existing awards (ST-A);
2. Presenting to an evaluation panel of external experts the proposal for a Technological University through virtual engagements (ST-TU);
3. Continuing the growth in blended learning, while maintaining consistent standards, which will enhance **learning** opportunities for current students and across access and life-long learners (ST-L) and **international student** (ST-IS) markets,
4. Proposing more funded flexible programmes and the adoption of microcredentials/digital badges to improve industry pathways for continuous professional development and up-skilling (ST-IF);
5. Maintaining the **effectiveness** and responsiveness of administration and quality assurance governance, when the entire operation moved to virtual platforms, including completing the Institutional Review (ST-E).

To achieve these strategic themes, there were many changes and innovations introduced already in the previous reporting period in response to COVID, and some more in the current reporting period, to maintain high standards in:
1. The academic activities of the institute, including course design and approval, the setting and monitoring of standards, the making of awards and the academic integrity of the learner and learning process. These activities also took into account different types of learners, including the required new modes of delivery (such as technology enhanced learning, including on-line delivery), as well as the diversity of types and backgrounds of learners. There was also some flexibility required with research students especially those connected to funding agency and industry projects and the obligations of research funding structures;
2. The behaviour of staff and students that define expectations of integrity and respect in the operations of the institute community, with integrity being increasingly challenged;
3. The ongoing expectations of the public, the institute and the learner with respect to teaching, learning and assessment, the delivery of services and the overall environment of the institute;
4. The recruitment and development of academic staff in support of the teaching and learning environment and support of the delivery of services;

5. The overall operations of the institute including the financial and resource management and the creation of the infrastructure, administrative and technical operational policies to support effective management.

Accountability, control and scrutiny were ensured through external review, reporting, student surveys, programme and School Boards, new programme and programme change panel reviews, postgraduate vivas, meeting the national higher education quality body (QQI) in biennial Dialogue Meetings, and maintaining transparency of all framework actions through publication on the institute website.

Covid-19 imposed restrictions were in force throughout the academic year. In spite of the fluid nature and ongoing challenging nature of the crisis, the Academic Council continued to provide leadership in considering and approving the institute's academic direction. As in the previous reporting year, Council dealt with the fluid nature of the challenge both nationally and locally by meeting more frequently and holding single topic meetings where necessary. The meeting schedule is captured in the section on Governance and Management. The institute continued to measure and monitor institutional performance, for example in new student applications, exam attendance, monitoring the transition online through indicators such as virtual learning environment page-hits, completion of one school's structured doctoral application following external peer expert review, internal reviews of new and modified programmes, the final year of the 2018-21 Strategic Plan and the completion of the scheduled Institutional Review.

Finally, to ensure effective leadership in the coming years a number of progressive steps have been taken, including electing a new Academic Council and with the new Governing Body offering oversight and direction through Covid, the merger with IT Carlow and TU application and the overall operation of the institute.

1.2   Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR) Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Update on Status Provide brief update on status, whether completed or in progress. If an action was planned in the previous AQR, but not completed, provide reasons/short reflections for the delay/non-completion.
1	Ongoing operation under COVID-19	The ongoing response to COVID-19 includes a reversion to previous delivery and assessment and the return to the number of ECTS credits (10) a student may carry. Programme Boards were be empowered to apply to retain positive aspects of delivery and assessment, with the applications going for external peer review before presentation to Academic Council.
2	Technological University	The institute will continue to work in the Academic Year 2021-22 on the Technological University preparation with IT Carlow. The TU project will include the advancement of joint policies, frameworks and structures, in a continuation of the merge change programme. The Designation Day is scheduled for the coming academic year.
3	Student Engagement	The Higher Education Authority-National Forum for Teaching & Learning Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement (SATLE) Funding at WIT in the coming year will be themed Closing the Feedback Loop. This scheme draws on two themes from the document Understanding and Enabling Student Success in Irish, namely Higher Education Engagement and Student Partnership as well as Evidence-based Decision-making. Each of the WIT Schools will develop projects alone or joined to other Schools and will base the quantitative parts of their projects on the studentsurvey.ie and QA3 data from the institute.

1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Agenda Setting	Academic Council	Academic Quality	Research	Academic Planning	Teaching & Learning
	07/09/20				
29/09/20	06/10/20	15/09/20	15/09/20	22/09/20	22/09/20
03/11/20	10/11/20	13/10/20	13/10/20	20/10/20	20/10/20
01/12/20	08/12/20	17/11/20	17/11/20	01/12/20	01/12/20
26/01/21	02/02/21	12/01/21	12/01/21	19/01/21	19/01/21
02/03/21	09/03/21	09/02/21	09/02/21	16/02/21	16/02/21
13/04/21	20/04/21	16/03/21	16/03/21	23/03/21	23/03/21
11/05/21	18/05/21	04/05/21	04/05/21	11/05/21	11/05/21
01/06/21	08/06/21	01/06/21	25/05/21	25/05/21	01/06/21

To negotiate the multiple challenges created by COVID-19 and the national lockdown, Academic Council held Special Meetings on the following dates:

Special AC Meeting 8	07.09.20
Special AC Meeting 9	09.09.20
Special AC Meeting 10	20.01.21
Special AC Meeting 11	23.02.21
Special AC Meeting 12	13.04.21
Special AC Meeting 13	22.04.21

During the Summer break, the Academic Council Standing Committee met on the following dates:

AC Standing Committee Meeting 11	06.07.21
AC Standing Committee Meeting 12	01.09.21
AC Standing Committee Meeting 13	16.09.21

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

There have been no specific changes to units of governance, and to leadership/management, including new roles established during the reporting period. However, the TU preparations have seen considerable consideration devoted to future structures, including for example the design and make-up of the Academic Council and the nature of the Council's sub-committees.

1.4   Internal Monitoring and Review

1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

WIT completed a Covid-delayed Institutional Review in the reporting period. The Institutional Self Evaluation Supplemental Report (Link) was completed in February 2020 for Panel Review beginning on April 27th, 2020. Following the first COVID-19 national lockdown, the institute agreed with QQI to a new Institutional Review date starting on November 17th, 2020. While the review delay was an immense disappointment, it also presented an opportunity to extend the terms of the Institutional Review to include the institute's response to the national lockdown and its plans for the academic year 2020-21, captured in the Institutional Self Evaluation Supplemental Report (Link).

Unit of review for which report has been published during reporting period	Date of completion/reason for conducting review (if not planned) or non-completion (if planned but not conducted)	Links to relevant publications
Institutional Review	November 2020	Institutional Review Report and Institutional Response document, published on the WIT website Link
School of Humanities Structured Doctorate Application Review	June 2021	External Panel's Assessor Report due in the next reporting period

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels[2] involved in IQA

The criteria for the engagement of peer reviewers (both internal and external) is part of WIT's internal institutional-led QA process. The information in this section provides data and transparency in relation to peer reviewers/evaluators and their involvement in WIT institutional-led internal QA systems.

(i) Expert Review Team/Panel Size and Related Processes

The following details are in respect of review/evaluation processes that concluded during the reporting period.

	Total	Academic Schools/ Department	Professional Services/Support Unit	Approval/Review of Linked Provider	Programme Approval	Programme Review	Other
Number of review/ evaluation processes	30	0	0	0	1	4	0
of those:							
On-site processes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Desk reviews	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Virtual processes	30	0	0	0	29	29	0
Average panel size for each process type*	7.4	0	0	0	1	5	0

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

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[2] QQI acknowledges that the terminology used to describe the groups of individuals that conduct peer review/evaluation varies from institution to institution.

(ii) Composition of Expert Review Teams/Panels involved in IQA

Details in respect of the composition of the panels convened by WIT for review/evaluation/approval processes that concluded during the reporting period are set out below.

'Similar institution' denotes an institution with a similar scope and mission – for WIT, this might be another IoT or a university of applied science, or similar.

Type of Expert/ Role on Panel	Total	Gender			Internal	National	International			Institution Type	
		Male	male	Other, or unspecified			UK, incl. NI	Other European	Outside of Europe	Similar	Different
Chair	30	26	4	0	7	30			0	20	3
Secretary	30		30	0	30				0		
Academic/Discipline Specific	69	54	15	0		57	12		0	49	20
Student Representative	23	19	4	0					0	4	19
QA	30	24	6	0	30				0		
Teaching & Learning	74	59	15	0		62	12		0	54	20
External Industry /Third Mission	57	30	27	0		52		5	0		57

1.5 Undergraduate and Research Awards

In the 2020-21 academic year, at undergraduate and taught postgraduate level the institute made 2371 Major Awards and 426 Minor & Special Purpose Award. In research, there were 21 graduates, sixteen at Level 10 and five at Level 9. The vivas for two of those had taken place at the end of the previous reporting period in the 2019-20 academic year, one a QQI approved PhD and one a PhD where WIT has delegated authority at Level 10. Of the

seventeen vivas, seven DBAs were successfully completed, five QQI PhDs were successfully completed, with 1 process ongoing, four PhDs where WIT has delegated authority, with three being successfully completed, where one was unsuccessful and one was ongoing at the end of the reporting period. At Level 9, there were seven Masters submissions, with five being successfully completed, and two are ongoing and will be reported on in the next reporting period.

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

There were a number of Internal Quality Assurance developments and enhancements in the reporting period, many still as a consequence of COVID-19, the continuation of emergency remote teaching and assessment and measures responding to the difficulties experienced by students as a result of missed opportunities to access broadband, computing infrastructure and on-campus exams. The WIT Quality Framework continued to be tested in unimagined ways by COVID-19 and the institute followed up on last year's peer reviewed conference publication analysing the quality framework's response with a peer reviewed journal publication presenting an even deeper analysis of the framework's response in the reporting year.[1]

Governance

Part A Section 1.0 of this report describes the overall governance, executive management and academic management structures, led by the WIT Governing Body. The current WIT Governing Body held its first meeting on October 1st, 2020 and its meeting minutes are publicly available on the WIT website here. The Body's membership consists of external stakeholders, as well as learners and staff and has faced the two extra challenges of overseeing the institute's COVID-19 response and the drive to achieve Technological University status.

The WIT Academic Council normally meets once per month on average during an academic year. However, the complexity posed by COVID-19 meant that Council chose to meet more frequently, as can be seen from the list of Special meetings posted earlier in this report. As for the first COVID-19 disrupted academic year, Council made a number of key decisions to enable the institute to continue to offer a high-quality experience to all students and to maintain public confidence in its awards. These key decisions include:

- Continuing online delivery and assessment where programme boards and/or the social distancing requirements deemed it appropriate.
- Providing alternative options to placement or study abroad modules / semesters.
- Continuing or approving ongoing amendments to the modes/types of assessment in a module.
- Enabling Programme Boards to swop modules between semesters for the 2020/21 Academic Year.
- Proposing to delay delivery of elements of a module or to restructure the delivery of the modules.
- Setting a start date for academic year 2021-22.

Regulatory Framework

Just as the WIT regulatory framework was crucial to the successful negotiation of the national lockdown and the completion of the 2019-20 academic year, also in this reporting period the framework was tested and proved itself in a variety of ways. The WIT regulatory framework is designed to operate in a complex environment that must provide for effective policies and procedures. Detail on the actual operation of the framework is outlined in this section. For now, it is simply worth reiterating that during the COVID-19 enforced restrictions and in the planning for the Academic Year 2020-21, the framework covered:

1. The academic activities of the institute, including course design and approval, the setting and monitoring of standards, the making of awards and the academic integrity of the learner and learning process. Increasingly, these regulations must also account for different types of learners, including new modes of delivery (such as technology enhanced learning, including on-line delivery), as well as the diversity of types and backgrounds of learners.
2. The behaviour of staff and students that define expectations of integrity and respect in the operations of the daily activities of the institute community.

3. The expectations of the institute and the learner with respect to teaching, learning and assessment, the delivery of services and the overall environment of the institute.
4. The recruitment and development of academic staff in support of the teaching and learning environment and support of the delivery of services.
5. The overall operations of the institute including the financial and resource management and the creation of the infrastructure, administrative and technical operational policies to support effective management.

The institute strove to maintain its own high standards throughout the academic year. Accountability, control and scrutiny were ensured through reporting, for example from the Institutional Review panel, external examiners, Programme and School Boards; sampling the student voice through the QA3 and studentsurvey.ie student surveys; new programme and programme change panel reviews; postgraduate vivas, submitting revised programme information for the Irish Register of Qualifications and maintaining transparency through publication of all evaluation reports on the WIT website.
In spite of the complexity and changing nature of the crisis and the requirements of the TU submission, the institute Executive Board and Academic Council provided leadership in considering and approving the institute's direction throughout the crisis and beyond into planning the future. WIT continued to measure and monitor institutional performance, for example in CAO outcomes, exam attendance, monitoring the transition online through indicators such as Moodle page-hits, completion of the School of Humanities structured doctorate application by the same panel of external experts, who reviewed the previous Schools' applications, internal reviews of new and modified programmes and of course preparation of the Institutional Review supplementary document for a delayed review in November 2020.

Financial Governance

Excellent financial governance is a key component in the institute's successful overall governance. The institute has not been insulated from the negative impact on finances caused by COVID-19's business disruption and uncertainty. During the reporting year, the institute was required to refashion many of its estate to operate in a COVID-compliant and safe manner. The monitoring and reporting on income and expenditure was carried on as for pre-COVID times. Income remained reduced in some areas during the academic year 2020-21, triggered by closures of or limited access to the institute buildings and reductions in income due to a ceasing of trading activity associated with student services, a requirement to offer refunds or deferrals and the decision to waive fees for some normal activity, such as repeat examinations. There has also been an increase in unpaid fees, much of which may not be recoverable in the current economic climate.

The reporting academic year (2020-21) includes a continued re-orientation of activity to online and blended modes for academic delivery along with a blend of remote and on-site working for the majority of staff members. Ongoing extra financial support and commitments from the Exchequer have been crucial in the successful ongoing provision. This move has been underpinned through the ongoing acquisition of additional ICT and network infrastructure, dedicated provision of a digital study hub and of a laptop scheme for students, continuing changes to the physical environment required to enable the delivery of the academic programmes via remote learning and face-to-face with social distancing and related health and safety costs, e.g. PPE, cleaning materials and extra cleaning staff.

Technological University

The preparation for panel assessment of the TU application continued in the year under the chairmanship of Mr. Tom Boland, former Chief Executive of the Higher Education Authority (HEA), as Programme Executive Director.

Eight project streams that started in the previous year have produced TU-ready outputs, co-chaired by Senior Management from both merging Institutes, covering key aspects of the merger and joint submission. The streams are as follows:

- Corporate Services
- Student Services
- Student Lifecycle
- Academic/ T&L
- Research & Innovation
- Engagement
- Multi-Campus
- Communications
- Student Union

Each project stream has in turn been subdivided into as many as 6 Working Groups, with each Working Group project again co-chaired by staff from both merging Institutes and with membership drawn from both Institutes. Membership of each Workgroup is typically 10 people.

The project was divided into three phases:

- Initial Set-up, Orientation, Pre-panel Phase (completed at the end of October 2020)
- Phase 2: Panel Visit to Designation Day
- Post Designation Day Phase

Design of the new TU's quality/regulatory framework began in the reporting period. Both merging institutes' frameworks were compared, using the European Standards and Guidlines (ESG) as a benchmark.

Quality Assurance Framework during COVID-19 in 2020-21

The operation of the institute's Quality Assurance Framework under continued COVID-19 restrictions was successful due to three interrelated activities:

1. the sustained operation of cycles of development, implementation and review of policies and procedures that inform activity and initiate new policy, procedures and practices;
2. a defined structure that clearly articulates responsibility of key individuals or bodies with respect to the quality assurance activities; and
3. continued publishing policies and procedures across the range of Institute activities that were approved by the appropriate instructional body.

Evidence of the success of these interrelated activities include the continued:

1. external reports such as external examiners and programme validation reports, etc.;
2. committee reports from council activities, standing committees (i.e. student appeals, ethics committee), or ad hoc committees established for a particular purpose (e.g. COVID-19 specific action committees of council);
3. performance reports, such as programme level completion rates, CAO attractiveness reports etc.;
4. student collected data such as the national Irish Survey of Student Engagement/studentsurvey.ie (ISSE), student feedback QA3s, direct feedback from students on programme boards and the representation of students on key institutional committees such as Academic Council and Governing Body.

Sustained Operation

Sustaining quality and excellence was achieved through maintaining thorough reviews, by external panels and external examiners, with panel reports continuing to be published on the WIT website for the WIT community and the wider public to examine.

There were 56 new postgraduate registrations approved by Council in 2020-21. The assessment of postgraduate research students continued throughout the reporting year, as reported on page 56 of this report.

Programme Reviews by External Panels (all held remotely):

Programme	Date
Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (Level 9, 30 Credit, Minor Award linked to MEd in Teaching and Learning)	28.09.2020
Certificate in Technology-Enhanced Learning (Level 9, 30 Credit, Minor Award linked to MEd in Teaching and Learning)	28.09.2020
Master of Business in Lean Enterprise Excellence	23.07.2021
Master of Business Administration	23.07.2021
Master of Business	23.07.2021
Master of Science in Organic and Biological Agriculture (Level 9: 90 Credits)	26.07.2021
Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Architecture (Level 8: 240 Credits)	27.07.2021
Master of Architecture (Level 9: 90 Credits)	27.07.2021
Bachelor of Engineering (H) in Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering	28.07.2021
Bachelor of Science (H) in Construction Management (Level 8: 60 Credits)	29.07.2021
Bachelor of Engineering (H) in Electrical Engineering	30.07.2021

Processing prospective research students continued without interruption, with all Postgraduate Enrolment Group (PGEG) meetings taking place as scheduled.

Students also contributed to the sustained operation through the first-hand accounts of their experience as learners in the annual studentsurvey.ie, formerly known as the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and QA3 surveys, covering their experiences of remote learning, expectations for retention of some practices, their own development, their engagement with the institute academically and as users of our support services.

Policy Development

Two policies were offered as Green Papers to Academic Council in the reporting period on offering micro-credential awards and the required quality framework, and on the possibility of submitting Article-based PhDs. Following feedback at Council, both are expected to return to Council in the next reporting period as White Papers (draft policy).

Article-based PhDs produce a thesis developed around a series of publications. This approach can suit some candidates and offers both advantages and challenges to the candidate, the supervisory team and the institute. Article-based PhDs contribute to publication profiles. However, the decision to pursue this route to PhD should not be taken lightly, as there are risks inherent with the choice, around the time to publish and the consequences it may have for doctorate completion, the lack of guarantee of being

published and the imperative to construct a coherent dissertation that confirms the quality of the candidate and their work.

Micro-credentials can facilitate the requirement of learners to engage with learning at a micro level, as low as a single ECTS (if credit-bearing). As such, they represent an alternative approach to career and professional development whereby an individual's skills, achievements, and accomplishments can be recognised. They can provide the possibility to enhance skills and to manage career pathways. To offer such awards, the institute requires the development of a coherent, robust and innovative framework is important to support the validity, credibility and recognition of micro-credentials.

Academic Measurement, Reporting and Publication

Measurement, reporting and publication are key aspects of good academic governance. Throughout the 2020-21 academic year the institute has continued to meet reporting requirements, for example in submitting the previous year's Annual Quality Review. The institute also updated on the Irish Register of Qualifications details of all WIT courses leading to qualifications recognised within the National Framework of Qualifications.

Student feedback and participation is an important aspect of the capacity of the institute to assess its performance. Two institute-wide surveys have been carried out and their reports published, the Irish studentsurvey.ie (formerly Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE)) and the QA3 programme survey.

Emergency Remote Learning and Teaching

In the last reporting period, following the national shutdown, the remainder of semester two 2019-20 was delivered in Emergency Remote Teaching mode, with a small number of exceptions where remote teaching was not possible. This form of education delivery continued in the 2020-21 reporting period, with some exceptions for skill acquisition education in parts of the year (when COVID guidelines deemed it safe).

Academic Council determined that students should not be hindered in achieving their educational and career objectives as a result of COVID-19. Programme Boards were therefore empowered to select appropriate actions in the interests of the student and were empowered to permit COVID-impacted students to progress to their next year of study. The regulation on progression for continuing students in the 2020-21 was amended to include that a programme board may allow students to progress, if negatively impacted by COVID-19. In circumstances where any credit deficit is greater than 20 credits then the students had to be counselled on the implications of progressing on their future workload. Programme Boards could identify the most progressive way students would be able to complete outstanding credits for all such students. Progression plans could include multi-year elements.

Moreover, Academic Council decided on the manner in which assessment would occur to complete Semester 2 and for repeating students.

Programme Boards were also requested to provide an additional repeat assessment (online where possible) before the start date of the 2020/1 academic term as an additional opportunity to accumulate the credits to students impacted by COVID-19 during repeat examinations. Programme Boards could decide on the appropriate mechanisms for implementing additional assessment and the parameters for ensuring quality assurance of the graduate outcomes cognisant of achieving consistency of outcome between student cohorts.

[1] O'Leary, P.; O'Byrne, D. (2021). Evaluation of a Higher Education institute's Quality Framework performance during COVID-19. 7th International Conference on Higher Education Advances (HEAd'21). Editorial Universitat Politècnica de València. 317-324. https://doi.org/10.4995/HEAd21.2021.13130

O'Leary, P., & O'Byrne, D. (2021). Quality Framework Performance in One Year of COVID-19 Restrictions in a Higher Education Institute. Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice, 21(12). https://doi.org/10.33423/jhetp.v21i12.4696

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

The institute is represented on the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) established by QQI in November 2019. NAIN issued guidelines on Academic Integrity in the reporting period and the new TU's Academic Integrity policy will be guided by these. The institute offered staff training on academic integrity, academic misconduct, detection and prevention/reduction techniques. Students have been offered academic writing training.

The institute has a part-time Research Integrity Officer, reporting to the Vice President for Research, Innovation and Graduate Studies.

Most of the academic delivery was in Emergency Remote Teaching mode, with a small number of exceptions where remote teaching was not possible. The Academic Council continued to monitor this delivery and adapted regulations to support the best learning. Enhanced support, including targeted training, continued to be offered from Computer Services and from the Centre for Technology-Enhanced Learning (CTEL).

3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

This section describes QA and QE activities for the upcoming reporting period and demonstrates how these are aligned to WIT's mission and strategic objectives. The Institutional Review and proposed merger and TU application with IT Carlow will dominate developments in the QA/QE space. However, follow-on initiatives after the institute's COVID-19 response will also require some endeavours, while in parallel WIT will also continue to focus on some Strategic theme work-packages for 2020-21:

1. To increase the type and variety of awards and to enhance the process by which awards can be created as a means of being more flexible and responsive (ST-A);
2. To meet the QA performance criteria, across teaching & learning, research and the student experience, of the proposed Technological University (ST-TU);
3. To enhance learning opportunities across access and life-long learners (ST-L) and international student (ST-IS) markets;
4. To enhance industry focus by offering greater pathways for continuous professional development and upskilling in industrial and commercial settings (ST-IF);
5. To improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of administration and quality assurance governance (ST-E).

The strategic planning process establishes the overarching strategic framework for the institute and its enhancements activities. The strategic plan forms the basis of reporting at WIT and is tightly connected to the performance compact agreed with the HEA. The plan is therefore evaluated on a consistent basis and reviews of the plan conducted. Following the mid-term review in 2018-9, the institute continues to show strong progress against targets in (among others):

1. Continuing the community of practice for on-line learning;
2. Preparing for the external evaluation of WIT's first Research Institute;
3. The publishing of a student COVID charter;
4. The continued development of Further Education (FE) relationships with Institute and the seamless transition of FE learners into WIT;
5. Increasing the numbers of flexible learners in the institute;
6. To improve retention figures and the broader educational experience the institute generates detailed retention reports and has introduced peer-to-peer mentoring initiatives;
7. The institute continues to be challenges by the financial circumstances of HE funding generally and specifically its current resource and cost base.

COVID-19

The ongoing quality assurance response to COVID-19 included a reversion to previous delivery and assessment and the return to the number of ECTS credits (10 credits) a student may carry. Programme Boards were also empowered to apply to Academic Council to retain positive aspects of delivery and assessment, with the applications going for external peer review before presentation to Academic Council.

TU application

WIT continued to work in the Academic Year 2020-21 on the strategic objective of the Technological University application with IT Carlow. The work included presenting work to a preparatory panel of experts as well as the panel appointed by the HEA to evaluate the overall submission.

Institutional Review

The deferred Institutional Review took place in November of this reporting academic year. The external panel of experts, engaged constructively with the institute and produced a report confirming the quality of the performance of QA in WIT and with some suggestions to help direct the trajectory of continuous self-improvement.

Student Engagement

The Higher Education Authority-National Forum for Teaching & Learning Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement (SATLE) Funding at WIT in the coming year will be themed Closing the Feedback Loop. This scheme draws on two themes from the document Understanding and Enabling Student Success in Irish, namely Higher Education Engagement and Student Partnership as well as Evidence-based Decision-making. Each of the WIT Schools will develop projects alone or joined to other Schools and will base the quantitative parts of their projects on the studentsurvey.ie and QA3 data from the institute.

The WIT Strategic Plan had an Action to enhance the collection of student feedback on the teaching and the teaching environment, specifically through the Irish Survey on Student Engagement (ISSE) (with a target of increasing participation to 40%). The survey response rate has risen from a low of 10% to over 27% of the student population, with the intention of reaching the target threshold in the near future.

No.	Relevant objectives Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	**Planned actions and indicators** *Note: Include details of unit responsible, and how planned action will address the relevant strategic priority and/or reengagement advice/CINNTE recommendation.* *If the institution is preparing for cyclical review, include how the planned actions will address the relevant review objective(s).*
1	Technological University Quality Development	Development (with ITC partners) of Governing Structures for Academic Affairs, Academic Profile and Strategy, Awards Standards, Regulation and QA Environment, Engagement, Research QA, Student Services, Student Lifecycle.

2	COVID-related (PB changes)	Delegation of some decision-making on progression and delivery to programme boards
3	Student Engagement	Initiation of new SE initiatives under the HEA/National Forum SATLE fund

3.2   Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

The moves towards the formation of the Technological University mean that no WIT reviews are planned for the upcoming academic year (2020-2021).

3.2.1   Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

Please provide a composite update on new and continuing objectives arising from previous reviews here.

Please delete guide text before submission.

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
N/A (TU formation)		

3.2.2   Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

The new Technological University will be reviewed within 18 months of formation under the Cinnte review.

4.0   Additional Themes and Case Studies