Annual Quality Report
Waterford Institute of Technology
Reporting Period 2019-2020

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PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM
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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 WIT'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, was also used for document management in the WIT Institutional Review (IR) process and facilitated the Institute in providing the IR team with procedural QA documentation in preparation for the external review process. WIT's AQR is an important part of the evidence base considered by the external review team, demonstrating that the institute'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).

The WIT AQR will be published in full on QQI's website, providing transparency on WIT's assurance and enhancement of quality to external stakeholders (as such, WIT's AQR submission does not contain any data that may be considered to be commercially sensitive.)

CONTENTS

Links to Reference Documents underpinning this Report

Legislation

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

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

PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

The AQR uses European Standards and Guidelines (ESG (2015)) as a benchmark against which WIT's Internal Quality Assurance should be compared. The table below displays how the AQR maps to ESG (2015).

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* **8.0** – *Monitoring and Periodic Review* **9.0** – *Details of Arrangements with Third Parties*	**2.10**	Other Parties Involved in Education and Training	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
			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 2019 – 31 August 2020.** The AQR has been approved by **WIT Governing Body** and **WIT Academic Council** and is submitted by **Dr Paul O'Leary.**

The WIT Annual Quality Report (AQR) considers the operation and effectiveness of the Institute's quality assurance procedures. The report measures compliance with European standards for quality assurance, regard to the expectations set out in the QQI quality assurance guidelines or their equivalent and adherence to other relevant QQI policies and procedures. 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 has been 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 WIT community were invited to 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.

The 2019-20 academic year was without compare in the history of AQR reporting. 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 report portrays the institute's actions in that period and its plans for the 2020-21 academic year.

1.0 Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

The Waterford Institute of Technology Strategic Plan 2018-2021 sets out our vision to be a community of collaborative, inclusive and innovative educators. The Plan provides a direction for Waterford Institute of Technology that is focussed on those opportunities and outlines the organisation's strategic goals for the coming period, guided by our over-arching vision. The transformational agenda will ensure that by 2021 the Institute will 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.

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 WIT quality assurance framework, as described in 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.

1.2 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.

Admissions Policies ([link](#))

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 2019 Entry;
14. Undergraduate Full-time Independent Module Registration Policy;
15. Qualification LCVP Policy;
16. Leaving Certificate Subjects 2020;
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

- *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 (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 (link)
- Completing, Granting and Presentation of Awards Policy (link)

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.

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 are preparing to revisit the WIT Teaching & Learning Strategy in work plan; the learning, teaching and assessment strategy will support the Institute's strategic plan and will inform the continued development of the learner experience and learner environment. 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.

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 Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and via the nationally approved QA3 survey.

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 School of Lifelong Learning and Education, through the activities of the Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning (CTEL ([link])) has developed a support infrastructure for flexible modes of programme delivery including e and blended learning. The support structures put in place include designated academic instructional design support, professional development support for academic course teams in blended learning (two NFQ 10 ECTS L9 modules now available to staff), bespoke e-learning pods (3) installed to offer a suitable teaching and learning space and equipment for on-line delivery and the introduction of an 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 (website and also Moodle link);

4. Anti-plagiarism Policy (website and also Moodle link);

5. Policy on the Conferring of Aegrotat Awards (website and also Moodle link);

6. Approval of Minor, Special Purpose, Supplemental Awards (website and also Moodle link);

7. Completing, Granting and Presentation of Awards Policy (website 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 (link) and international candidates (link);

2. Procedures for external examiners (link);

3. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy (website and also Moodle link);

4. Viewing of examination scripts (link);

5. Recheck of Examination Results form available from the Office of the Registrar or online;

6. Procedure to appeal 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. Membership of appeals panels.

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.

Academic support activities include:

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

In addition to Academic support there are a range of other services targeted at broad student welfare. These are generally coordinated by the Student Life & Learning (link); as are many of the above academic resources. The general support activities include:

1. Student Assistance Fund (SAF, link);
2. The Waterford Adult Educational Guidance Service (REGSA, link);
3. Student Counselling service (link);
4. The Careers Centre (link);
5. Disability Service (link);
6. Induction support (link);
7. Peer to peer support (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. Student Assistance Fund Policy and Procedure (link);
7. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy (website and also Moodle link);
8. Additional points policy (link);

Procedures and/or operating protocols include:

1. Induction processes (link);

2. Student Handbook ([link](#));
3. Student Counselling ([link](#));
4. Retention, deregistration and programme transfer procedures ([link](#));

Student Finance is managed by the Office of the Vice President of Corporate Affairs and Finance. Policies in respect of student finance and FAQs are available at [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:

- enhanced Wi-Fi access throughout library buildings
- offer an additional 40 hours library access during the exam periods
- provision of additional reader spaces
- provision of a student breakfast club and pet therapy for students during exam periods in conjunction with WITSU

Extra resources and support have also been put in place to support staff in terms of professional development and enhancing their research. For example, 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

QA of Research

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 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 policies including:

1. The research strategy 2020-2023 (link)
2. Research Postgraduate Student Induction Handbook (link)
3. Research Ethics policy (link)
4. Data protection policy (link)
5. Authorship and Data Retention Policy (link)
6. The Intellectual Property policy (link)
7. The student complaints policy (link)
8. Conflict of Interest Policy (link)
9. Definition and Organisation of Research at WIT (link)
10. WIT Code of Conduct for the Responsible Practice of Research (link)
11. WIT Open Research Policy (link)

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 Postgraduate Enrolment Group (PGEG): considers postgraduate student (Future Postgraduate page) registration applications for enrolment (including a QQI Application, if relevant), Structured PhD applications PG_A1 and PG_A2, applications for transfer from the Masters to Doctoral registers (PG_C and QQI Application, if relevant), for confirmation of candidature for Structured PhD students (PG_C) and applications for confirmation of candidature for probationary traditional Doctoral students (PG4). 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 (link). 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 site or link, accessible by

everyone within the institute 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.

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 MA in Learning and Teaching;
- WIT is also represented on the national Research Supervision Working Group and National Forum for Research Integrity.

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

Other Research Quality highlights included:

- An updated Intellectual Property Policy.
- A revised Research Day Policy was prepared, reviewed by Executive Board, Heads of Departments and sent for staff consultation.
- Annual reports were submitted to the Research Support Office by research centres, groups and individual researchers.
- An Annual Report is produced by the Office of Research, Innovation & Graduate Studies (<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 is 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 formulating Open Science and Open Data initiatives with the WIT Academic Council's Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Committee.

Finally, research activity of each school area is considered as a key strategic item for each periodic School Review. Schools were required to develop, or amend, their individual School research strategies and research implementation plans. The strategy and plan was to set School-wide priorities and goals for research, with an emphasis on the focus and quality of research, and identify clear metrics for their evaluation.

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. In the reporting period, a Code of Conduct for the Responsible Practice of Research was drafted, reviewed by the Academic Council's Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Committee, the WIT Executive Board and sent out for consultation to staff unions and the students union. Two other policies that were drafted were the Conflict of Interest Policy and the Intellectual Property Policy.

Human Resource Policies are listed in the following (all on this link):

1. Adverse Weather Policy;
2. Annual Leave Policy;
3. Career Break Scheme Administration & Clerical;
4. Career Break Scheme For Academic Staff;
5. Child protection policy;
6. Code of Conduct policy;
7. Code of Conduct for the Responsible Practice of Research
8. Compassionate Leave policy;
9. Conflict of Interest policy;
10. Consultancy Policy;
11. CorePortal Guide to Processing Leave;
12. Covid19 Face Covering Policy;
13. Cycle to Work Scheme;
14. Designated Contact Persons;
15. Dignity and Respect policy;
16. Dignity and Respect Procedure for Staff;
17. Disciplinary Procedure;
18. Disclosure policy;
19. E-mail 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 policy;

25. Garda Vetting policy;

26. Good Practice Guide on Managing Conflict;

27. Grievances and Disputes policy;

28. Intellectual Property policy;

29. Leave for Appointment policy;

30. Marriage and Civil Partnership Leave policy;

31. Maternity Leave policy;

32. Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R) Policy for the Effective Recruitment and Selection of Funded Research Staff;

33. Parental Leave policy and Guidelines;

34. Probation Policy;

35. Procedure For Claiming Illness Benefit;

36. Progression Policy;

37. Sick Leave policy;

38. Staff Social Media Policy;

39. Staff Handbook;

40. Staff training and development strategy (link);

41. Transfer Policy for Admin and Library Staff

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 teaching staff. The Training and Development Committee report to the WIT Executive Board and developed the Staff Training and Development Strategy Plan (link), with a successor Staff Learning & Development Strategy in the final approval stages. 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, Educational Theory, Practical Pedagogy, Mentoring, Curriculum Development and Assessment, Reflective Practice in Education, Research Methods in Education and Independent Learning.

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 management are (unless otherwise specified, policies are on this link):

1. Social Media policies for students (link) and for staff;
2. E-mail policy;
3. Recording Policy: on the Recording of Oral and/or Visual Presentations for Students Registered with the Disability Office (link);
4. Cloud Storage Acceptable Usage policy (link);
5. Computer and Network Security Policy (link);

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.

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 Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE), and the nationally agreed QA3. The evaluation of the ISSE data is 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.

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 Policy is presented in the Academic Council policies webpage, 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 or link, accessible by everyone within the institute 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 Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and via the standard surveying of QA3 (programmes). The evaluation of

the ISSE data is available through the Office of the Head of Quality Promotion and offered to each school for school wide use.

9.0   Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

WIT has many academic programmes accredited by Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PRSBs). Accreditation is an important aspect of the overall assurance of professional standards and quality of the institute's graduates, over a period of time specified by the PRSB. WIT does not have dedicated, institution-wide, quality assurance procedures for engagement with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies and other quality assurance and awarding bodies. Notwithstanding this, each school area maintains professional accreditation in line with the discipline norms. It is the strategy of the Institute to support wide professional accreditation. The Institute does draw a distinction between types of external bodies:

1. Professional accreditation: a body that accredits the programme directly, such as Engineers Ireland (Engineering), Bord Altranais agus Cnáimhseachais na hÉireann (Nursing) and Psychological Society of Ireland;

2. Professional standards: a body that recommends standards, but accredits graduates based on modules or content covered (e.g. Teaching Council, Chartered Accountants Ireland, Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA), etc.).

9.1   Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

The total number of arrangements in place with each of the following (i) PRSBs, (ii) awarding bodies, or (iii) QA bodies are indicated in the table below.

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	53
Awarding bodies	0
QA bodies	0

In the boxes below, details are provided of any programmes for which accreditation/approval has been extended, or which have been newly accredited/approved, during the reporting period.

1. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	
Name of body:	Engineers Ireland

Programme titles and links to publications	Master of Science in Construction Project Management
	Master of Science in Innovative Technology Engineering
	Master of Science in Sustainable Energy Engineering
	Master of Engineering in Electronic Engineering
	Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Sustainable Civil Engineering
	Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Electronic Engineering
	Bachelor of Engineering in Building Services Engineering
	Bachelor of Engineering in Civil Engineering
	Bachelor of Engineering in Electronic Engineering
	Bachelor of Engineering in Manufacturing Engineering
	Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering
	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Construction Management and Engineering
	Higher Certificate in Electronic Engineering
	Higher Certificate in Mechanical Engineering
Date of accreditation or last review	2012
Date of next review	2019 (deferred)

2. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	
Name of body:	Bord Altranais agus Cnáimhseachais na hÉireann NMBI - Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc (Hons) General Nursing BSc (Hons) Intellectual Disability Nursing BSc (Hons) Psychiatric Nursing
Date of accreditation or last review	
Date of next review	

3. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	
Name of body:	Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Architecture (Honours)
Date of accreditation or last review	2014
Date of next review	2019 (deferred)

4. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	
Name of body:	Psychological Society of Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	BA (Hons) in Psychology BA (Hons) International in Psychology
Date of accreditation or last review	2018
Date of next review	2024

5. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	King's Inns (Approved qualification to sit the entrance exam)
Name of body:	Kings Inns
Programme titles and links to publications	BA (Hons) in Law BA (Hons) in Legal Studies with Business LL.B. (Hons) degree
Date of accreditation or last review	2008 to 2014 (depending on programme)
Date of next review	No set accreditation period set by the PRSB. Ongoing engagement with PRSB Registrar maintained

6. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	
Name of body:	Teaching Council of Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Teaching in Further Education and Adult Education Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching in Further Education (P/T) Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching in Further Education (F/T)

Date of accreditation or last review	2012
Date of next review	No set accreditation period set by the PRSB. Ongoing engagement with PRSB Registrar maintained

7. **Type of arrangement** (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (Exemptions from sitting some CIMA exams)
Name of body:	
Programme titles and links to publications	BA (Hons) Finance & Investment BA (Hons) Accounting Bachelor of Business (Hons) Accounting B Business Studies (Economics & Finance) B Business Studies (Accounting) B Business Studies (Hons) Bachelor of Business (Hons) BA (Hons) International Business B Business Studies Ordinary Bachelor of Business BSc Retail Management B Business Studies (Marketing) Master of Business (Accounting)
Date of accreditation or last review	2019
Date of next review	2023

8. **Type of arrangement** (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	Chartered Accountants Ireland (Exemptions from sitting some CA Proficiency 1 (CAP1) exams)
Name of body:	Chartered Accountants Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Business (Honours) Accounting Stream BA (Honours) Accounting BA (Honours) Finance & Investment HDip in Business in Accounting
Date of accreditation or last review	2019
Date of next review	2024

9. **Type of arrangement**	Certified Public Accountants Institute (CPA) (Exemptions from sitting some CPA exams)

(PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	
Name of body:	Certified Public Accountants Institute (CPA)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA (Hons) in Accounting BBS (Hons) 4 years (Accounting Stream) BBS (Ord) BBS (Ord) in Financial Services BA (Hons) in General & Corporate Administration Higher Diploma (Level 8) in Business in Accounting Higher Certificate in Business Masters in Accounting
Date of accreditation or last review	
Date of next review	No set accreditation period set by the PRSB. Ongoing engagement with PRSB Registrar maintained

10. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (Qualification exemptions on programme/module completion)
Name of body:	Certified Public Accountants Institute (CPA)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA (HONS) ACCOUNTING BA FINANCE & INVESTMENT BACHELOR OF BUSINESS (HONOURS) ACCOUNTING BACHELOR OF BUSINESS (HONOURS) ECONOMICS AND FINANCE BACHELOR OF BUSINESS (HONOURS) HRM, MANAGEMENT OR MARKETING HIGHER CERTIFICATE IN BUSINESS STUDIES
Date of accreditation or last review	
Date of next review	No set accreditation period set by the PRSB. Ongoing engagement with PRSB Registrar maintained

9.2   Collaborative Provision

Section C (RCP) of the WIT Quality manual, Collaborative Provision, collates and describes all the academic regulations of the Institute relating to collaborative programmes, including transnational programmes and joint awards, both undergraduate and postgraduate. This 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. WIT has entered into collaborative provision, joint and double degrees, following the QQI policy entitled *Policy and Criteria for the Delegation of Authority to the Institutes of Technology to make Higher Education and Training Awards (including Joint Awards).* The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended) defines 'joint award' as a single award made jointly by two or more awarding bodies. The Act also defines a 'linked provider' as a provider that is not a designated awarding body but enters into an arrangement with a designated awarding body under which arrangement the provider provides a programme of education and training that satisfies all or part of the prerequisites for an award of the designated awarding body. QQI's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes, and Joint Awards (2012) defines collaborative provision as a process that occurs where two or more providers are involved by formal agreement in the provision of a programme of higher education and training.

WIT has entered into joint and double degrees, which are listed on the on the WIT website. Current agreements in place include:

The first table indicates the total number of collaborative provision arrangements in place.

Type of arrangement	Total number
Joint research degrees	0
Joint/double/multiple awards	3
Collaborative programmes	6
Franchise programmes	0
Linked providers (DABs only)	0

Details are provided in the following of collaborations that were ongoing during the reporting period. Links are provided to publications related to the arrangement, such as memoranda of agreement, alongside details of the arrangement.

1. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Double degree
Name of body (/bodies):	Munich University of Applied Sciences.
Programme titles and links to publications	BA (H) in International Business (link)
Date of last review	2019
Date of next review	2024

2. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Double BSc degree
Name of body (/bodies):	Nanjing University of Information Science & Technology (NUIST)
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc in Software Systems Practice (link)
Date of last review	2021
Date of next review	2026

3. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Joint degree
Name of body (/bodies):	École Supérieure de Commerce, Bretagne, Brest.
Programme titles and links to publications	Master of Science in International Business/Master of Business in Internationalisation (link)
Date of last review	2017
Date of next review	2022

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

4. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Collaborative provision
Name of body (/bodies):	Social Justice Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	MA in Social Justice and Public Policy (link)
Date of last review	2016
Date of next review	2019 (being renewed)

5. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Collaborative provision
Name of body (/bodies):	Teagasc
Programme titles and links to publications	Various educational programmes (link)
Date of last review	2017
Date of next review	2022

6. Collaborative provision	Collaborative provision

(Type of collaborative provision)	
Name of body (/bodies):	WLR FM and Beat 102-103
Programme titles and links to publications	Certificate in Radio Broadcasting and Presenting (link)
Date of last review	2014
Date of next review	2019 (deferred)

7. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Collaborative provision
Name of body (/bodies):	Nemeton TV
Programme titles and links to publications	Higher Diploma in Arts in Television Production, which is co-delivered by WIT with Nemeton TV (link)
Date of last review	2021
Date of next review	2024

9.3   Articulation Agreements

WIT currently has no articulation agreements as outlined by the IHEQN Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision, where an **articulation agreement** may be defined as a process whereby all students who satisfy academic criteria on one programme are automatically entitled (on academic grounds) to be admitted with advance standing to a subsequent stage of a programme of a degree awarding body. These arrangements are subject to a formal agreement between the parties.

Articulation agreements - Total number	0

Waterford Institute of Technology

2021

Annual Quality Report (Institution)
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2019-2020

PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Part B of the AQR documents and captures Internal QA (IQA) activities, developments and enhancements undertaken by WIT **during the reporting period** and their **impact**. WIT therefore will demonstrate in Part B how plans set out in the previous AQR submission were progressed during the reporting period – including plans linked to strategic objectives. Part B is an opportunity for self-reflection and critical evaluation of the effectiveness of QA activities over the reporting period, both what worked well and what did not work well. This reflection should consider impact measures, using both quantitative and qualitative evidence (metrics, benchmarks and feedback/judgement) in how they led to specific QA improvements and enhancement.

The following sections are divided up as follows:

Section 1 pertains to internal quality assurance implementation and developments since the previous reporting period.

Section 2 deals with institutional analysis of IQA enhancements and impacts including activities undertaken in respect of academic integrity, and the enhancements and impacts resulting from same.

Section 3 relates to IQA developments and plans for the next reporting period.

Section 4 provides an opportunity for institutions to illustrate IQA in action through case studies in relevant thematic areas.

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

The reporting period had two distinct phases, pre-COVID quality implementation and developments up to March 2020, and the response to COVID, the national lockdown, the introduction at short notice of remote teaching and assessment, the operation of the quality framework, especially including student engagement. COVID-19 provided a challenge to the continuing high quality operation of higher education in the Institute. WIT's quality framework 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 considers the framework's performance in the 2019-20 phase of 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. The Waterford Institute of Technology Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021 identifies 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 will have an impact on the evolution of quality assurance and enhancement systems in both Institutes. The Strategic Plan clearly also presents WIT's educational, research and regional ambitions and has defined Actions to achieve all goals. Each Action has been drawn up following extensive consultation with stakeholders and in light of the national drive for Higher Education Institution mergers and in the face of severe financial challenges over several years. All of this influences and shapes decision-making and the manner in which modernising and enhancement occur.

WIT has 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 the COVID-restricted period from March onwards 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. Maintaining the drive to the proposed Technological University through virtual engagements (ST-TU);

3. Accelerating developments in blended learning 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 in response to COVID, as well as maintaining 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 complexity with research students 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;

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.

Accountability, control and scrutiny were ensured through 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 a Dialogue Meeting, and maintaining transparency of all framework actions through publication on the Institute website.

In spite of the complexity and changing nature of the crisis, the Academic Council provided leadership in considering and approving the institute's academic direction through the early stages of the crisis and beyond into planning the future. 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 meetings are 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 review, internal reviews of new and modified programmes and eventually a scheduled Institutional Review (carried out online).

Finally, to ensure effective leadership in the coming years a number of progressive steps have been taken, including extending the term of the Academic Council by one year and the Minister for Further and Higher Education approving WIT's new Governing Body.

1.2   Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

This section provides an update on objectives/planned actions for the year as outlined in WIT's AQR of last year.

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR)	Update on Status
1	The Institutional Review was planned for May 2020	The Institutional Self-Evaluation Report and the Institute Profile documents were completed, approved by Governing Body and submitted to the expert panel for a May 2020 review. However, due to COVID the CINNTE Review was deferred and a new date arranged for November 2020
2	Progress the Technological University application with IT Carlow.	The joint submission will be made in Q2 of 2021.
3	Final School Review completion	The final School reviewed in the WIT School Review cycle was the School of Humanities review, which was completed in the reporting period.

1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Agenda Setting	Academic Council	Academic Quality	Research	Academic Planning	Teaching & Learning
	10/09/19				
01/10/19	08/10/19	17/09/19	17/09/19	01/10/19	01/10/19
05/11/19	12/11/19	15/10/19	15/10/19	22/10/19	22/10/19
03/12/19	10/12/19	19/11/19	19/11/19	03/12/19	03/12/19
14/01/20	21/01/20	07/01/20	07/01/20	14/01/20	14/01/20
04/02/20	11/02/20	04/02/20	28/01/20	28/01/20	04/02/20
10/03/20	24/03/20	03/03/20	03/03/20	10/03/20	10/03/20
05/05/20	12/05/20	05/05/20	28/04/20	28/04/20	05/05/20
02/06/20	09/06/20	02/06/20	19/05/20	19/05/20	02/06/20

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 1	27.03.20
Special AC Meeting 2	21.04.20
Special AC Meeting 3	05.05.20
Special AC Meeting 4	19.05.20
Special AC Meeting 5	02.06.20
Special AC Meeting 6	08.06.20
Special AC Meeting 7	16.06.20

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

AC Standing Committee Meeting 7	3.07.2020
AC Standing Committee Meeting 8	06.08.20
AC Standing Committee Meeting 9	11.08.20
AC Standing Committee Meeting 10	25.08.20

The Postgraduate Enrolment Group and the new Humanities & SoLLE Joint Research Committee held the following meetings.

Enrolment Group meetings	Humanities & SoLLE Joint Research Committee meetings
29th November, 2019	20th November, 2019
10th January, 2020	4th December, 2019
31st January, 2020	15th January, 2020
13th March, 2020	12th February, 2020
1st May , 2020	22nd April, 2020
29th May, 2020	20th May, 2020
19th June, 2020	3rd June, 2020
21st August, 2020	17th June, 2020

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.

1.4   Internal Monitoring and Review

1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

WIT prepared for an 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	Intended for April 2020, but deferred to November 2020	Institutional Self-Evaluation Report and Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Supplemental Report which have been published on the WIT website Link

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels 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	5	0	0	0	1	4	0
of those:							
On-site processes	4	0	0	0	0	4	0
Desk reviews	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Virtual processes	0	0	0	0	0		0
Average panel size for each process type*	5	0	0	0	1	5	0

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

(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	Female	Other, or unspecified			UK, incl. NI	Other European	Outside of Europe	Similar	Different
Chair	4	1	3	0	4	0	0	0	0	4	0
Secretary	4	0	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	4	0
Academic/Discipline Specific	7	3	4	0	0	7	0	0	0	4	3
Student Representative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
QA	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Teaching & Learning	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
External Industry /Third Mission	7	6	1	0	0	7	0	0	0	-	-

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

There were a number of Internal Quality Assurance developments and enhancements in the reporting period, primarily in response to the COVID-19 lockdown, the move to 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 was tested greatly by COVID-19 and this report will include some evidence of the proper functioning of the Framework in the changed environment.

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. In relation to the first national lockdown, with extremely unfortunate timing, the WIT Governing Body held its final meeting on February 26th, 2020, to complete its term of office. The Body's membership of external stakeholders, as well as learners and staff, would have been in many respects ideal to consider the complex demands on the Institute that were posed by the pandemic. In the period up to the appointment of a new Governing Body in September 2020, the President and Vice President for Corporate Affairs held a series of scheduled formal meetings with the Chairman of the Governing Body who remained in situ as normal.

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 captured in **Error! Reference source not found.** 1.3.1. Council made a number of key decisions to enable the Institute to continue to offer a high-quality experience to all students. These key decisions include:

- Changing delivery from face-to-face to online.
- Changing the approved delivery modes of a module, other than migrating the approved modes to an online environment.
- Providing alternative options to placement or study abroad modules / semesters.
- Approving possible 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 2020-21.
- Developing a mitigation process to empower programme boards to offer enhanced progression opportunities.

Regulatory Framework

The WIT regulatory framework was crucial to the successful negotiation of the national lockdown and the completion of the 2019-20 academic year. Even prior to the national lockdown the WIT regulatory framework operated in an ever-increasing, complex environment that must provide for effective policies

and procedures, not anticipating the nature and extent of the complexity that subsequently ensued. Detail on the actual operation of the framework in this section. For now, it is simply worth reiterating that during the national lockdown 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. There is also an ever-increasing complexity with research students connected to industry projects and obligations of research funding structures.

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 period of national lockdown and beyond. Accountability, control and scrutiny were ensured through reporting, QA3 and ISSE student surveys, Programme and School Boards, new programme and programme change panel reviews, postgraduate vivas, meeting QQI in a Dialogue Meeting, submitting programme information for the new Irish Register of Qualifications and maintaining transparency through publication on the WIT website. In spite of the complexity and changing nature of the crisis and the interregnum period for the Governing Body, the Institute Executive Board and Academic Council provided leadership in considering and approving the Institute's direction through the early stages of 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 review, internal reviews of new and modified programmes and of course preparation of this Institutional Review supplementary document.

Financial Governance

The Institute has not been insulated from the negative impact on finances caused by Covid-19's business disruption and uncertainty. The full financial effect on the Institute is still under scrutiny, complicated by the evolving expectations for operating in a compliant and safe manner. Naturally there was also an income reduction during the academic year 2019/20, triggered by the closure of the Institute buildings

during the national lockdown, the need to conclude the second semester online, 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 preparation for the new academic year (2020-21) has created a need for a 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. Extra financial support and commitments from the Exchequer have been crucial in the successful pivoting of provision. This move has been underpinned through the acquisition on a large scale of additional ICT and network infrastructure, 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

On July 28th there was a significant development in the process leading to the merger with IT Carlow and subsequent application to the Minister for Technological University status for the merged body. That day saw the appointment of Mr. Tom Boland, former Chief Executive of the Higher Education Authority (HEA), as Programme Executive Director for the Technological University for the South East of Ireland (TUSEI). Eight project streams have since started, 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 is currently divided into three phases:

- Initial Set-up, Orientation, Pre-panel Phase (completes at the end of October 2020)

- Phase 2: Panel Visit to Designation Day – 1 January 2022
- Post Designation Day Phase

The WIT regulatory framework has been refined over many years and was central to the effective Institute response to COVID-19. The national lockdown, remote working and the return to operations, albeit with social distancing and other health and safety measures, all represented unforeseen tests of the framework. The framework proved to be robust in the face of these extraordinary tests, continuing to operate successfully in approvals of new programmes and programme modifications, conducting assessments including postgraduate student research vivas, in panel evaluations, reporting, monitoring performance and external examining. The Institute maintained a transparent approach to reinforce QA and to inspire public confidence, which means that all review panel reports are posted on the Institute's website, as is the Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report (AIQR), to publish the Institute's quality assurance framework and quality enhancement initiatives.

Quality Assurance Framework during COVID-19

The operation of the Institute's Quality Assurance Framework under COVID-19 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.

The assessment of postgraduate research students continued throughout this period. These included 11 vivas (6 WIT PhD, 2 QQI PhD and 3 QQI DBA) and 17 oral defenses for transfer/confirmation were all successfully completed. There were also 3 research Masters thesis submissions, with their results processed on time in the Autumn exam session. The examination process was ongoing for a number of candidates at the beginning of the national lockdown, and between March and June 9 PhDs (2 WIT PhDs and 7 QQI PhDs) satisfactorily completed their amendments to conclude their research, so that their results were processed on time at the June exam boards.

Programme Reviews by External Panels (all held remotely, but process to be completed in the 2020-21 academic year)

Programme	Date
BA (H) in Early Childhood Studies	14.05.20
10-Credit Level 9 Special Purpose Award, Certificate in Palliative Care for Healthcare Professionals	17.06.20
10-Credit Level 9 Special Purpose Award Certificate in Enhancement of Respiratory Care Skills (Intellectual Disabilities)	29.06.20
HDip Production Management for Digital Animation	01.07.20
20-Credit Level 9 Special Purpose Award Certificate in Quality Management & Quantitative Data	10.07.20
Bachelor of Business (H) in Business Information Systems	15.07.20
20-Credit Level 6 Special Purpose Award Certificate in Food and Beverage Operations	23.07.20

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 Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and QA3 surveys, covering their own development, their engagement with the Institute academically and as users of our support services.

Policy Development

Academic integrity has been tested considerably in recent times, with the proliferation of essay mills and contract cheating. The Institute recognised challenge to academic integrity has increased by the adoption of more continuous and remote assessment and has chosen to respond in several ways, beginning with a clear communication through an academic policy of what defines academic integrity and why it is to be cherished and protected by all Institute stakeholders. WIT expects the public to have confidence in the

quality of its education and in its graduates, not alone during the recent crisis, but in perpetuity. There are already systems in place to prevent, deter and detect breaches of academic integrity, especially plagiarism, but it is acknowledged that there is now also a need for robust means of remotely assessing work.

The Institute is also represented on the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) and made a detailed submission to NAIN's forthcoming Guidelines document.

Academic Measurement, Reporting and Publication

Measurement, reporting and publication are key aspects of good academic governance. Throughout the COVID-19 period the Institute has continued to meet reporting requirements, for example in submitting the Annual Institute Quality Review and meeting QQI in the Biennial Dialogue Meeting. The Institute also published 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. Three Institute-wide surveys have been carried out and their reports published, the Irish National Digital Experience (INDEx) survey, the Irish Survey of Student Engagement/studentsurvey.ie (ISSE) and the QA3 programme survey.

Emergency Remote Learning and Teaching

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. The Institute responded in many ways, including decisions and guidance from the Academic Council, and through enhanced support from Computer Services and from the Centre for Technology-Enhanced Learning (CTEL).

Academic Council decided on the manner in which assessment would occur to complete Semester 2 and for repeating students and on appropriate mitigation measures that Programme Boards could apply for students who wished to progress in or from their programmes. Council also approved the publication of guidelines for programme boards wishing to implement changes for the 2020-21 academic year and guidelines for online teaching.

Emergency Remote Teaching required an immediate and sustained response in the Institute's Virtual Learning Environment, Moodle. Since March, Moodle has been available throughout, with100% Moodle Uptime. Unsurprisingly, Moodle Traffic increased, up to 157% in the March-May period compared with similar months in 2019.

Academic delivery in the Institute has developed since the national lockdown was invoked. Academic staff moved online at short notice in March, leading to the majority delivering the remainder of their programme under the Emergency Remote Teaching. However, with more advance notice of the nature of

teaching in the current academic year and a delayed start to the new academic year, academic staff have used the time well in preparing their online offering. The daily average of just under 60,000 Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle) pageviews in the March-May period has since been exceeded in September 2020, where the resumption of classes saw the number of pageviews soar to new records of over 200,000.

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

The Institute are represented on the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) established by QQI in this reporting period (November 2019). NAIN will issue guidelines on Academic Integrity and the Institute's Academic Integrity policy will be guided by these.

A part-time Research Integrity Officer has been appointed, reporting to the Vice President for Research, Innovation and Graduate Studies.

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. The Institute responded in many ways, including decisions and guidance from the Academic Council, and through enhanced support from Computer Services and from the Centre for Technology-Enhanced Learning (CTEL).

Academic Council decided on the manner in which assessment would occur to complete Semester 2 and for repeating students and on appropriate mitigation measures that Programme Boards could apply for students who wished to progress in or from their programmes. Council also approved the publication of guidelines for online teaching and guidelines for programme boards wishing to implement changes for the 2020-21 academic year.

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 response to COVID-19 included a delegation of responsibility to Programme Boards in relation to students progressing while carrying credits. Programme Boards were empowered to permit students to progress carrying more than the usual 10 credit maximum, subject to the Board being confident in the wisdom of each decision and to the Board informing the student of the challenge posed by carrying those modules.

TU application

WIT will continue to work in the Academic Year 2020-21 on the Technological University application with IT Carlow. The TU project will include the development of a merge change programme, along with an audit of current institute numbers, processes and practices. The joint submission is planned for the coming academic year.

Institutional Review

The deferred Institutional Review will take place in November of the coming academic year. The Institute is looking forward to engaging with the external panel of experts, to confirm the performance of QA in WIT and 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.

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.
2.0	COVID-related (PB changes)	
3.0	Student Engagement	

3.2   Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

The Institutional Review and external panel review of the merger/Technological University application are the reviews planned for the upcoming academic year (2020-2021).

3.2.1   Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

The Institutional Review is an opportunity to consider the Institute in light of the multitude of changes since the previous review and is a key step in advance of the proposed merger with IT Carlow and application to establish a new Technological University.

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Institutional Review	November 2020	2010
TU/merger panel review	June 2021	N/A

3.2.2   Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

If successful, the new Technological University will be reviewed within 18 months of formation.

4.0   Additional Themes and Case Studies

The previous AQR for academic year 2018-19 highlighted the co-creation of a Students' Charter by the WIT Students' Union and the Academic Council Planning committee, which was adopted by the Governing Body, published widely and incorporated in academic regulations. This Charter set the established benchmark for behaviour and expectations.

In another similar initiative, both parties developed a COVID-19 Student Charter, which describes the responsibilities and commitments of the student body, WIT and WITSU and explained what education would look like in WIT in the COVID-19 era and can be found on the WIT website (link).

The charter particularly highlights the need for strong communication links to all parties. From the closure day on March 12th, the institute consistently engaged with WITSU and listened to ideas, challenges concerns. The charter strongly commits also to consultation on key decision-making throughout and a parity of esteem whereby both parties felt free to propose ideas, as well as highlighting issues.

Adapting learning to a COVID-19 era was difficult, but it helped considerably to do so in a manner that was collaborative and engaging.