







Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| President's Introduction..... | 6 |
| Chairperson's Message..... | 8 |
| 2019/2020 Highlights..... | 10 |
| Our Year in Numbers..... | 14 |
| Strategic Developments..... | 16 |
| Awards and Honours..... | 28 |
| Student Successes | 36 |
| Research and Innovation Impact..... | 48 |
| Faculty Successes..... | 68 |
| Global Engagement..... | 80 |
| Sporting Successes | 88 |
| Outreach and Engagement | 92 |
| Governance and Leadership..... | 112 |
| Annual Governance Statement (Appendix A)..... | 130 |
| Financial Report (Appendix B)..... | 132 |

Our Vision

We have an ambitious and challenging vision for the strategic development of our Institute:

AIT will be a technological university distinguished by outstanding learner experience, international focus, distinctive regional contribution and high quality impact of its staff, teaching, applied research and innovation.

Our Commitments

We are committed to the role we play within the Midlands region and nationally. We pursue our mission across our full range of activities and are focused on fulfilling our commitments, which encapsulate our priorities, ethos and values:

- AIT is a student-centred institution
- AIT delivers career-focused education and research
- AIT provides inclusive access to higher education
- AIT plays a regional, national and international role

Our Mission

We are proud of our distinct mission and role in the provision of higher education for the Midlands region and beyond. The mission statement encapsulates and reflects the Institute's core values.

To provide student-centred, career-focused education, training and applied research programmes for our diverse cohort of learners within a professional and supportive environment. We are fully committed to intensive engagement with regional business, enterprise and social communities while maintaining our global orientation.

Achieving Our Goals

Our strategic goals align with broader national goals including, those outlined in the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030.





THE  TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES

**GOOD
UNIVERSITY
GUIDE
2017**

INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY
OF THE YEAR
RUNNER-UP

THE  TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES

**GOOD
UNIVERSITY
GUIDE
2018**

INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY
OF THE YEAR

THE  TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES

**GOOD
UNIVERSITY
GUIDE
2020**

INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY
OF THE YEAR

President's Welcome

This has been a year of considerable growth and change for AIT. Late last year, we announced our intention to form Ireland's next technological university with our consortium partners, Limerick Institute of Technology. Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, work has continued at pace on the new university, and I am incredibly proud of all that has been achieved in such a short space of time.

We now stand on the cusp of making a submission for TU designation, which, once formalised, will trigger a chain of events that should see our transformative university in situ by September 2021. None of this would have been possible without our stakeholders, whose passion for this project has been its driving force. I would especially like to acknowledge the contributions of 200 staff across 20 working groups who have shaped the TU vision.

In addition to the strides we made towards TU designation, we also joined a new consortium, RUN-EU, as founding members. The consortium will form the basis of a new European university comprising multiple international partners. This exciting development stems from an EU-wide ambition to create a centralised European Education Area. The new European university will open new mobility pathways for staff, researchers and students, enabling the latter to obtain a qualification by combining studies in multiple EU countries. We expect the first work packages from this ambitious new project to be completed by 2024.

In other positive news, AIT was once again recognised as Ireland's top-ranked institute of technology in The Sunday Times Good University Guide and continues to enjoy the highest ISSE student response rate nationally. This considerable achievement is a credit to staff, whose student-centred ethos is the cornerstone of AIT's success.

The past year has been one of the most challenging for us all due to the impact of COVID-19 and a huge amount of work has been undertaken across all areas of academic, students supports and professional services to maintain the academic and student experience. Shoulder to the wheel staff worked in the spirit of common purpose to ensure students were fully supported through these challenging times.

I would like to highlight the work of Treasa Fox, counselling psychologist and head of our student counselling service, who developed Ireland's first student mental health and suicide prevention framework. The national framework, designed to improve third-level mental health services, was recently launched by Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to each member of our community: our staff, students, alumni and industry partners. Each of you have contributed significantly to the development of our institute over the past year and are instrumental in ensuring its continued success.

Warmest regards,



Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin,

President, Athlone Institute of Technology

Chairperson's Message

As the Chairperson of the Governing Body, I am delighted to present AIT's Annual Report for 2019-2020. This past year has once again proven extremely successful for the institute, which now stands on the cusp of technological university designation.

This TU ambition has not happened over night; under the leadership of the Executive Management and the Governing Body, we have been working to actualise our vision for the region: to create a university that will benefit all stakeholders. The Midlands will benefit from having a technological university on its doorstep, as it will enable it to achieve its potential and continue to grow in a balanced manner.

The new technological university will afford learners new opportunities that were previously unavailable in the region by delivering accessible "on-demand" education. As a catalyst for positive social change, the vision is to extend these opportunities to non-traditional learners through state-of-the-art online and blended educational delivery.

People are at the heart of AIT's success; their passion and dedication was once again recognised in this year's Good University Guide, which saw AIT named The Sunday Times "Institute of Technology of the Year 2020". This is the second time in just three years that AIT has been awarded the prestigious accolade, having previously held the overall title in 2018 and come runner-up in 2017.

Student satisfaction plays a critical role in these annual rankings, giving students an opportunity to feed directly into where their own university ranks. AIT has continually returned the best scores for learner satisfaction across the higher education sector. This is no small feat and down to the institute's student-centred approach, which takes on board feedback and uses it to continually improve the student experience.

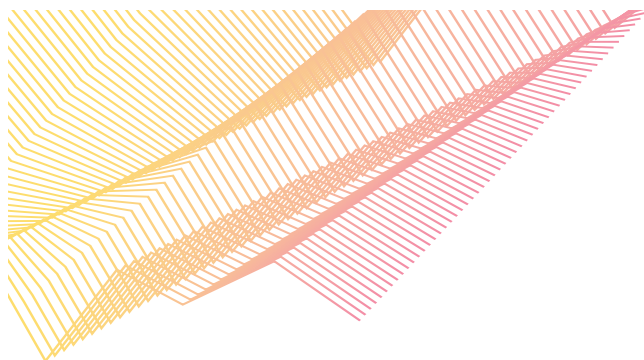
Athlone has a clear capacity for growth which, combined with its economic and educational profile, demonstrates its ability to be a driver of economic, social development and investment. AIT is key to unlocking this latent potential, which is vital for the economic and social development of the wider Midlands region.

In closing, I would like to thank the members of our Governing Body, whose dedicated work, support, oversight and shared ambition has contributed to AIT's continued success. The institute has gone from strength-to-strength, and I look forward to a new era being ushered in as Athlone becomes a university town next year.

Is mise le meas,



Chairperson, AIT Governing Body







2019/20 **Highlights**





1



2



12



11



10



9

1. The Sunday Times Institute of Technology of the Year 2020 (pg. 30)
2. Creating a New University (pg. 20)
3. Class of 2019 Conferred at AIT Graduation (pg. 32)
4. Scholarship of Excellence: Celebrating Student Achievement (pg. 44)
5. AIT and NUIG Explore PPE Decontamination Amid Global Shortage (pg. 52)
6. AIT Postgraduate Research Showcase Inspires Early-Stage Academics (pg. 54)



3



4

7. AIT Breathes New Life into Peatlands Bog with Aquaculture Research (pg. 56)

8. AIT Leads Global Effort to Tackle Plastic Pollution and Develop Next Generation Materials (pg. 58)

9. Global QoMEX Conference Comes to AIT (pg. 60)

10. AIT and NPD Group to Launch €1M Artificial Intelligence Lab (pg. 62)

11. APT Collaborates with Industry to 'Fast-track' PPE Production(pg. 64)

12. AIT Researchers Awarded €2 Million for Advanced R&D Equipment (pg. 66)



5



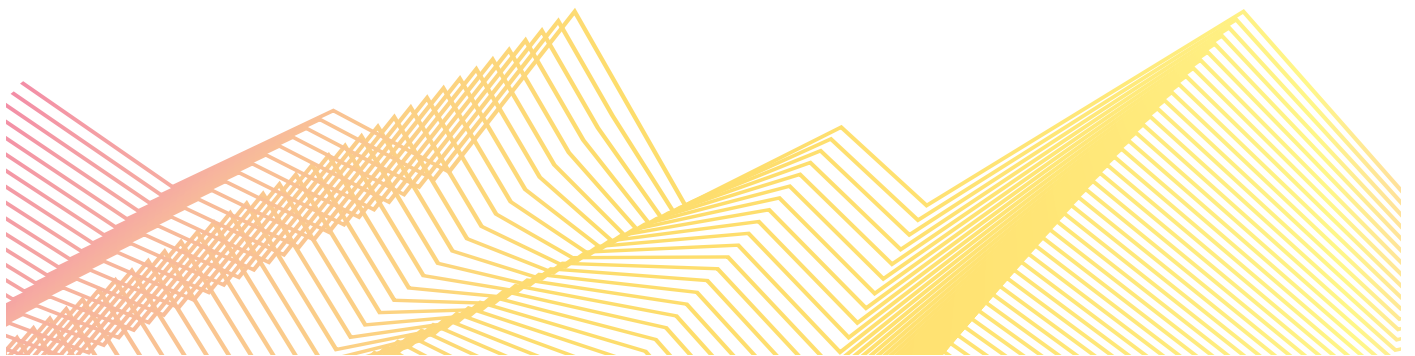
6



8



7



Our Year in **Numbers**





Undergraduate Students

5370

Postgraduate Taught Students

490



Postgraduate Research Students

158



International Students

594



50% Female

Gender Division



50% Male

Areas of Growth



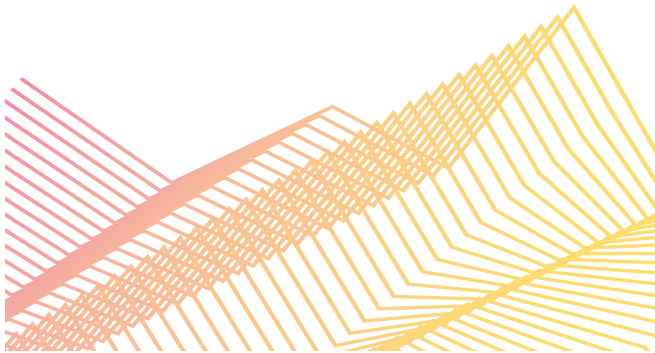
Part-Time
1393

(24% of student cohort)

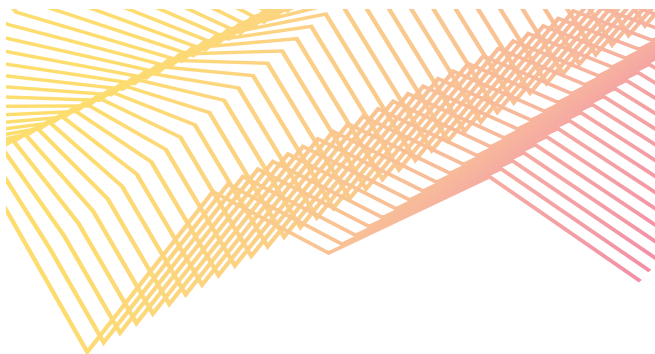


Online Distance Learning
912

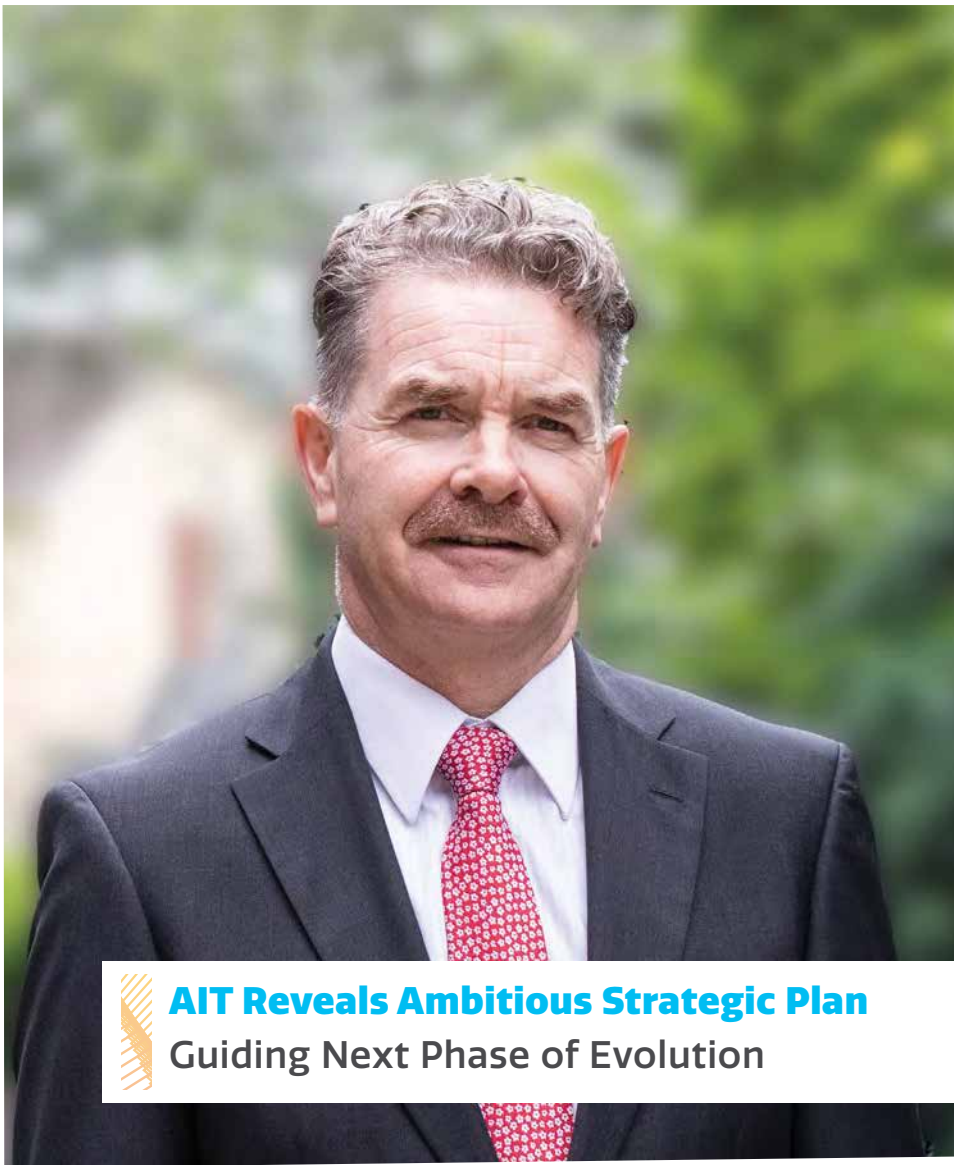
(15% of student cohort)



Strategic Developments







AIT Reveals Ambitious Strategic Plan Guiding Next Phase of Evolution

Athlone Institute of Technology welcomed Minister of State for Higher Education Mary Mitchell O'Connor to its multi-award-winning campus on 16 December 2019, to launch its ambitious Strategic Plan – A Technological University for the Region.

The five thematic areas set out in the plan, which encompass Learner Experience, Educational Provision, Research and Innovation, Engagement, and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, will guide the institute's next phase of evolution as it undergoes the transition to becoming Ireland's next technological university.

Commending the Midlands-based third-level institute, Minister Mitchell O'Connor said Athlone Institute of Technology had "built a reputation for excellence in higher education" and always put its students at the heart of its thinking.

The aim of every higher education institution is to empower and inspire its students and imbue them with the necessary skills, knowledge and creativity to contribute to society, she said, adding that Athlone Institute of Technology is a "shining light" in the technological higher education sector.

Its many successes, she noted, include being named Ireland's number one institute of technology for 2020 and 2018, and topping the list for student satisfaction nationally in the Irish Survey of Student Engagement for six consecutive years.

The Minister also congratulated the institute on its recent decision to partner with Limerick Institute of Technology to form a technological university - something she said has the potential to be "transformative for the Midlands and Mid-west regions."

President of Athlone Institute of Technology Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin said that Athlone Institute of Technology, as the sole higher education institute servicing the Midlands, plays a pivotal role in educating and upskilling the people in the region, and explained why achieving TU designation is so important.

"Our ambition for our institute and indeed our region has pushed us over the past few decades to grow stronger, collaborate better, and innovate further, ensuring that we reach our full potential for the benefit of our students, our staff and the wider community and region we live in."

Following the launch of Athlone Institute of Technology's Strategic Plan, Minister Mitchell O'Connor announced that Athlone Institute of Technology would receive €1.4 million to create a further 76 places in the college in 2020 and 2021.

The additional opportunities for students are being created thanks to Government investment of €24 million in the second round of funding under the Human Capital Initiative.

The new university and college places have been awarded to 22 higher education institutions following a competitive call for the expansion of existing courses in key skills areas.

The places are provided following applications under Pillar Two of the Human Capital Initiative, a key part of the Government's Future Jobs Ireland strategy and its focus on enhancing skills and developing and attracting talent.

Third-level institutions have been backed by Government to address key areas which have been identified as high priority enterprise skills needs such as science, engineering, ICT and professional construction.

For each extra place that is provided on target courses, higher education institutions will be allocated €2,500 in additional funding

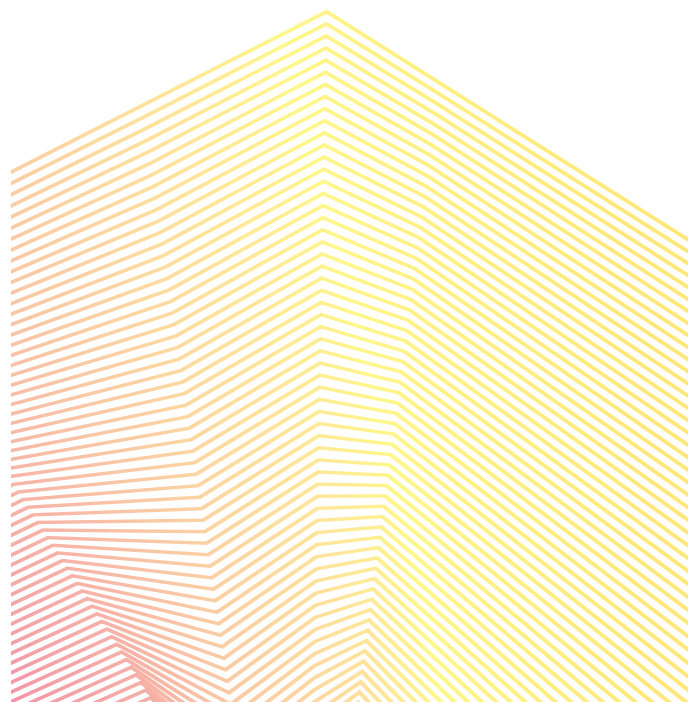
The Human Capital Initiative and government investment of more than €24 million at work – creating more and better opportunities for students on courses that help to answer challenges of the future.

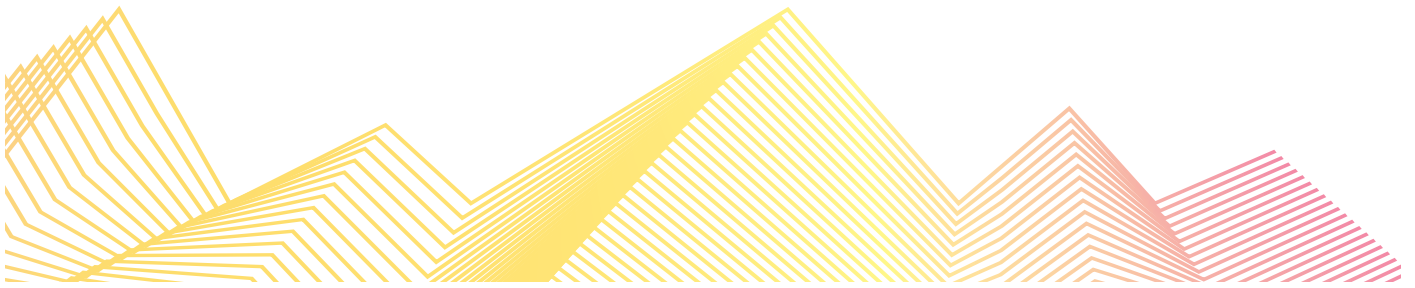
"At this time of year, when our Leaving Certificate students are deciding which courses to select for their CAO applications, I am delighted to be able to announce almost 3,000 additional places on 138 courses over the next two years."

"This generation will cope with more complex problems than any before them. Our students deserve the widest choice and the best opportunities to help prepare them for the future."

"I am determined that we will continue to develop our programmes and work with enterprise to ensure that our graduates are among the best prepared and equipped to meet our future challenges," Minister Mitchell O'Connor added."

“ Our ambition for our institute and indeed our region has pushed us over the past few decades to grow stronger, collaborate better, and innovate further, ensuring that we reach our full potential for the benefit of our students, our staff and the wider community and region we live in. ”





AIT Welcomes Significant Investment Into the Technological University Sector



Earlier this year, Minister of State for Higher Education Mary Mitchell O'Connor announced an investment of €153 million into tertiary education in Ireland as part of a plan to transform the sector.

The funding, which was announced as part of Budget 2019, contained a comprehensive range of packages, including €90 million to facilitate the continued development of Ireland's emerging technological university sector, €60 million to launch the Human Capital Initiative, €3.3 million to promote excellence in research, and €2 million to support student mental health and well-being initiatives.

Spearheaded by Minister O'Connor, the funding packages will help address key issues in the sector and positively impact access to education, educational provision, student services and excellence in research.

Welcoming the transformational funding, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, President of Athlone Institute of Technology, said: "This funding will act as an impetus for a step change in higher education. Minister O'Connor has to be congratulated for not only driving forward change for the sector, but also allocating the funding necessary to support its evolving needs which will ensure that we are leading the charge in applied and impactful provision, research and academic excellence."

Professor Ó Catháin continued: "This strategic investment, which will result in a broadening of access and increased third-level participation, will also enable us to respond to changing learner profiles and the increased demand for lifelong education via the Human Capital Initiative."

"Additional funding of €3.3 million to promote excellence in research will strengthen the international competitiveness and visibility of our research capabilities. It will assist us in forming strategic European and global partnerships with industry and academia, which in turn will help develop and sustain our collaborative, cross-cutting research and further enhance our capacity to enrich social, civic and cultural engagement within our region and beyond."

“ This strategic investment, which will result in a broadening of access and increased third-level participation, will also enable us to respond to changing learner profiles and the increased demand for lifelong education. ”

AIT and LIT Confirm Move to Form **Technological University Consortium**

On Tuesday, 15 October, AIT confirmed that it was forming a consortium with LIT with a view to developing a new technological university (TU) for the Midlands and Mid-West.

The governing bodies of both institutions met and formally confirmed the formation of a new TU consortium - a key governance step opening the pathway to commence work on the new university.

It followed the announcement by Minister of State for Higher Education Mary Mitchell O'Connor that €90 million would be made available for the development of technological universities over the next three years.

Both institutions made a joint application for funding earlier this year to commence work on the TU consortium. A decision on this application is expected to be made by government in the near future.

President of Athlone Institute of Technology, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, welcomed the move calling it "transformative for the Midlands region."

"Athlone Institute of Technology is home to knowledge creators, innovators and leaders. It is a beacon of collaborative, cross-cutting research and an innovation partner of choice for both industry and academia – central to propelling Ireland's knowledge economy forward."

"We are an extremely ambitious institute and are fully committed to achieving technological university status – something which is of fundamental importance to the region and ensuring it reaches its potential for the benefit of students, staff and the wider community.

"Our partnership with Limerick Institute of Technology will play a pivotal role in helping us achieve our ambitious mission and our forward thinking partnership is key to unlocking the potential of both of our institutes and regions."

"This announcement will signal a unique, disruptive and coherent TU consortium. It positions the two institutions in a unique strategic collaboration that bridges our respective regional partners, maintaining a focus on impact and engagement while at the same time strengthening capacity."

"Underpinning our mission is the formation of partnerships with industry and academia which will help develop and sustain our collaborative, cross-cutting research and further enhance our capacity to enrich civic, social and cultural engagement while providing new and essential access and pathways for all learners."

LIT President Professor Vincent Cunnane added that the two institutes were now set on a trajectory towards achieving technological university designation.

"This approach allows us to develop a unique new technological university that will have a clear regional focus with a national and international outlook," he said.

"LIT and AIT's application is aimed at developing a new unique university with a strengthened regional focus that will benefit our staff, our students and the communities we serve."

AIT- LIT Consortium





AIT Welcomes €2 Million in Funding for AIT – LIT Consortium



Athlone Institute of Technology welcomed the announcement by Minister Joe McHugh and Minister Mary Mitchell O'Connor of €2 million in funding for the AIT-LIT consortium as part of the Government's investment in the progression and advancement of the technological university sector.

This funding further endorses the Government's support for the new AIT-LIT Consortium and the development a unique technological university for the Midlands and Mid – West. Minister Mitchell O'Connor noted that the formation of the consortium was an "exciting new development".

"I am delighted that Athlone Institute of Technology and Limerick Institute of Technology have decided to come together as a technological university consortium. This merging of their respective strengths and attributes will be transformative for the Midlands and Mid-west regions, for their communities, regional economies and will provide new and exciting pathways to higher education for students.

The emergence of the technological university sector is the single most important development in the higher education landscape of recent years and a very significant element of the national research agenda. The technological universities are pivotal in assisting in the delivery of national strategic priorities as outlined in Project Ireland 2040 and the National Development Plan 2018-2027.

These priorities relate to wider higher education access, the provision of research-informed teaching and learning, to increasing regional development and socio-economic progress. Technological Universities are anchors in their communities, acting as a catalyst for local and regional economies as employers, and also as incubators for industry and technology," Minister Mitchell O'Connor explained.

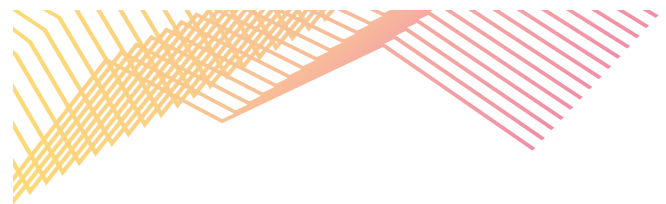
Welcoming the funding, President of AIT, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin said that this funding will act as a catalyst in expediting the AIT-LIT application for technological university status.

"Delivering a technological university is of fundamental importance to leveraging our respective regions and ensuring they continue to grow and prosper for the betterment of the communities that live, raise families and work within them."

“ Delivering a technological university is of fundamental importance to leveraging our respective regions and ensuring they continue to grow and prosper for the betterment of the communities that live, raise families and work within them. ”

This funding will facilitate the building of research capacity, increase the number of staff with cutting-edge technical and research-based skills and continue our efforts to upskill our talented workforce and supply industry with a talent pipeline of work-ready graduates. In doing so, it will further our status as a leader in applied education, industry-focussed research and innovation output - all of which is regionally impactful.

"The relationship between the ambition of our consortium and the success of the industry in our region is at the forefront of our priorities in order to maintain, develop and evolve contemporary and relevant educational, training and research provision," Professor Ó Catháin said.





New Technological University Moves One Step Closer as AIT - LIT Consortium Announces Project Management Structure

Further progress was made on a new technological university (TU) with the announcement that the project management structure of the AIT-LIT Consortium was being put in place and project directors appointed.

President of AIT Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin announced the appointment of Vice President Academic Affairs & Registrar, Dr Niall Seery, as project director for AIT on a new AIT - LIT Consortium project management structure. Dr Terry Twomey, Vice President Academic Affairs & Registrar in Limerick, has been named the LIT project director.

A procurement process to appoint a project facilitator, who will be central in forming the structure of the new TU, also begun.

Prof Ó Catháin said: "This is an exciting development for our technological university consortium with LIT. The project management structure and appointment of the project directors will play pivotal roles in driving forward our application towards creating a new technological university."

"This phase involves working through an agreed set of work packages covering a number of central areas including teaching and learning, research and innovation, and professional services. I wish both Dr Seery and Mr Twomey all of the best in their new roles as project directors."

"The AIT-LIT Consortium aims to develop a contemporary, vibrant and impactful technological university, a higher education institute that reflects the educational demands and economic needs of the regions and communities we serve, nationally and globally."

"Underpinning this is the formation of strategic European and global partnerships with academics which will further develop and sustain our collaborative, cross cutting research and further enhance our capacity to enrich civic, social and cultural engagement while providing new and essential access and pathways for all learners."

AIT-LIT Consortium to Form a European University with International Partners

The AIT - LIT Consortium joined a new, education alliance intended to increase collaboration between Europe's university as founding members.

The European Universities Network is part of an EU-wide ambition to create a centralised European Education Area and will enable students to obtain a degree by combining studies in multiple EU countries.

The network, which is expected to increase the competitiveness of European universities, will be integral to promoting the kinds of future and advanced skills necessary for social transformation across the European Union.

Under the new European Universities initiative, the AIT and LIT Consortium will join its RUN-EU (Regional University Network - European Union) partners in creating one of several new European universities capable of transcending languages, borders, and disciplines. The first work packages from the ambitious project are expected to be completed by 2024.

An important step forward in AIT and LIT's internationalisation strategy, membership of the European Universities initiative aligns closely with the consortium's aims to develop a technological university (TU) which reflects the educational demands and economic needs of Ireland's Midlands and Mid-West.

The goal of the new TU is to provide new opportunities and access pathways to learners with the view to sustaining prosperity and industrial growth across Ireland. This will be achieved through practical, experiential learning, strong industry engagement and applied, high-TRL research, and a global mindset.

"Membership of the European Universities initiative will aid us in achieving our technological university mission by enabling us to leverage international best practice, increase student and staff mobility while facilitating joint degree and research programmes," explained Prof Ciarán Ó Catháin, President of AIT.

"Internationalisation has always been at the heart of our educational approach, as it provides opportunities for growth and learning and gives our student body a well-rounded, holistic educational experience. We are looking forward to continuing to collaborate with like-minded higher education institutes across Europe, who see, as we do, the value in sharing knowledge for the benefit of all."

This was a sentiment echoed by the President of LIT, Prof Vincent Cunnane, who added: "I am very pleased with the success of RUN-EU in being selected as a European university in what was a highly competitive call. With institutions right across the EU bidding for selection, the success of RUN-EU represents a new direction for higher education in Europe.

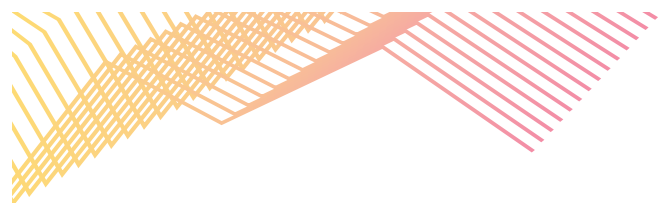
"Indeed, the selection of RUN-EU is not just a recognition of the standing of technological higher education, but also a recognition of role of regions in the EU's future. As we move towards TU status, this is a clear endorsement of our approach."

Welcoming the news, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris remarked on "the greater internationalisation of our higher education system" and the "huge benefit" to both society and the economy.

"The success of our HEIs in this call further underlines Ireland's commitment to the future of the EU and demonstrates that our higher education system is part of and working with the best in Europe.

"It bodes very well for the future experience of our students, academics, and researchers, as it will provide many more opportunities to experience international education and other cultures and to build alliances and partnerships as well as friendships for the longer term," he said.

The RUN-EU network consists of Polytechnic of Leiria (Portugal), Polytechnic of Cávado and Ave (Portugal), Limerick Institute of Technology (Ireland), Athlone Institute of Technology (Ireland), Széchenyi István University (SZE) (Hungary), Häme University of Applied Sciences HAMK (Finland), NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences



(Netherlands), and FH Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences (Austria).

AIT-LIT Consortium **Awarded €5 Million** to Progress TU Bid

The AIT-LIT Consortium received a major funding boost to assist in its progression towards achieving technological university (TU) status.

The consortium was awarded a further €5 million from the Higher Education Innovation and Transformation Fund to help actualise its ambition.

The news was announced by Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris as part of a multi-million euro investment into the higher education landscape.

Minister Harris called the creation of TUs a “key commitment” for Government and said they would deliver “significant advantages to national priorities in relation to access, research-informed teaching and learning, as well as supporting enterprise and regional development.”

“This is welcome news and demonstrates confidence in our forthcoming application for TU designation,” said AIT President Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin. “It is an important juncture in our journey as we prepare to create a new

“ Achieving TU status will enable us to connect knowledge creation with industry partnerships to grow and support collaboration, ultimately helping attract investment through a strong talent pipeline of graduates. ”

entity capable of sustaining social, economic and industrial growth across the region.”

Echoing this sentiment, LIT President Professor Vincent Cunnane called the landmark funding “another important step on the road to a new TU for Ireland’s Midlands and Mid-West.”

“This funding will help us to build on the significant progress made by the consortium on foot of last year’s €2 million landscape funding, and allows for deepening interactions, particularly around research attainment, academic endeavours and system-wide integration,” he explained.

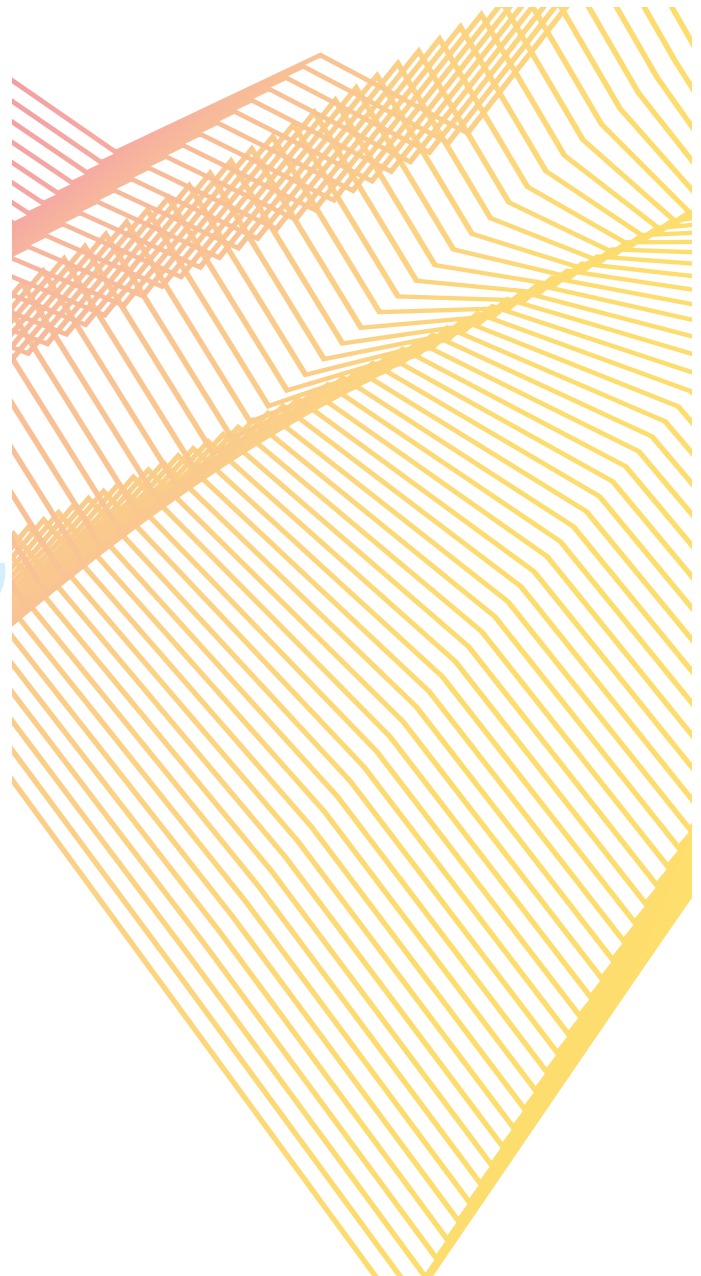
The development of technological universities represents a radical re-structuring of the Irish higher education landscape.

As anchor institutions in their respective regions, technological universities will drive and support social, cultural and economic development, as well as deliver an enhanced student experience and range of options to learners.

Overseeing the progress of projects awarded under the fund, Dr Alan Wall, CEO of the Higher Education Authority, explained that the body would be closely monitoring awardees “to ensure continued growth in momentum and the tangible delivery of results from this investment.”

A significant body of work has been undertaken on the TU project since the formation of the AIT – LIT Consortium in October of last year.

The consortium has engaged in an extensive stakeholder consultation process, with partners drawn from academic,





industry and public life helping to shape the direction of the new TU.



State-of-the-Art STEM Facility Gets Green Light at AIT

Plans to build a largescale, state-of-the-art STEM facility at AIT have progressed as a Government-approved higher education building programme moves to tender.

The new three-storey STEM building planned for AIT will span a floor area in excess of 65,000 square feet and create capacity for more than 1000 additional students and 70 staff.

Funded by the Public Partnership Programme, the cutting-edge STEM building will feature an entrance plaza, tiered seating, cutting-edge science labs and equipment, lecture theatres and classrooms.

The additional academic, industry and research capabilities provided will further enhance AIT’s campus as it moves towards achieving technological university designation in partnership with Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT).

“This is a significant and hugely positive development for AIT, as it will enable us to meet increased industry demand for STEM programmes and graduates – especially in high growth areas like pharma, biopharma and microbiology,” explained Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, President of AIT.

“Our technological university mission is to future proof higher education through experiential learning, strong industry engagement and applied, high-TRL research and to provide new opportunities and access pathways to learners with the goal of sustaining prosperity and industrial growth

across the Midlands and, indeed, Ireland. This exciting new development further enables that mission.”
Speaking at the announcement, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris stressed that higher education has “an essential role to play in driving recovery across Ireland’s regions and in preparing for the opportunities and challenges of a changing economy.”

“The new infrastructure to be delivered under this programme will enhance the campus environment for students and staff, and support strengthened partnerships with industry,” Minister Harris said.

“The buildings will have a strong focus on supporting practice-based learning, including laboratories, workshops and studios. They will also have significant flexibility to adapt to changing teaching and learning needs, and to support hybrid and remote learning.”

The STEM facility planned for AIT is one of 11 major infrastructure projects to be delivered under Project Ireland 2040 – a national plan dedicated to future-proofing Ireland’s economy in a regionally balanced manner.

The contract type envisaged is a Design-Build-Finance-Maintain (DBFM) contract. The successful tenderer for each of the bundles will construct the buildings using private finance and will then operate and maintain the buildings over a period of 25 years.



ENGINEERING

Disabled Access

Pedestrian Connection

Wildflower meadow

SHED BUILDING G376

Service Area

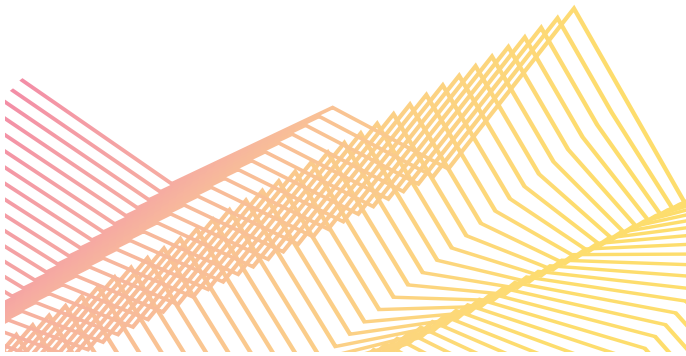
STEEL BUILDING

Seating

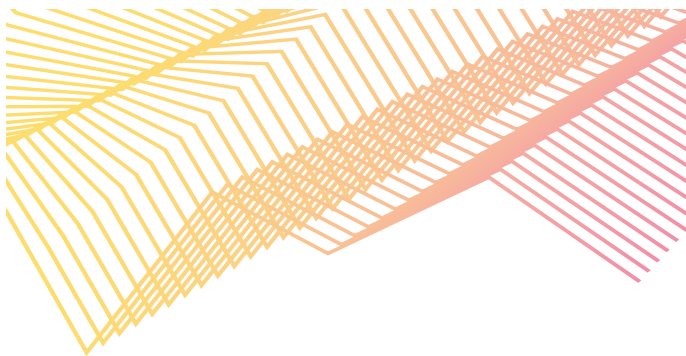
Upper Plaza

Lower Plaza

LIBRARY



Awards & Honours



THE TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES
UNIVERSITY
OF
TECHNOLOGY
YEAR
UP

THE TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES
GOOD
UNIVERSITY
GUIDE
2020
INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY
OF THE YEAR

THE TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES
GOOD
UNIVERSITY
GUIDE
2018
INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY
OF THE YEAR





AIT Named **The Sunday Times Institute of Technology of the Year 2020**

For the second time in three years, AIT has taken the top spot in Ireland's higher education league table.

Athlone Institute of Technology has been named The Sunday Times 'Institute of Technology of the Year 2020' in Ireland's official league table, which benchmarks the country's 19 third level institutions, after topping the national rankings once again.

This is the second time in just three years that the multi-award-winning institute has secured the prestigious accolade, having previously been awarded the overall 'Institute of Technology of the Year' in 2018, and the 'Institute of the Year Runner-Up' in 2017.

This news follows a year of considerable success for the Midlands-based third-level institute, who earlier this year announced its intention to form a technological university with Limerick Institute of Technology.

The TU announcement, which has received tremendous support from government and the local community, is expected to be transformational for the Midlands region and will provide new and innovative pathways for all learners.

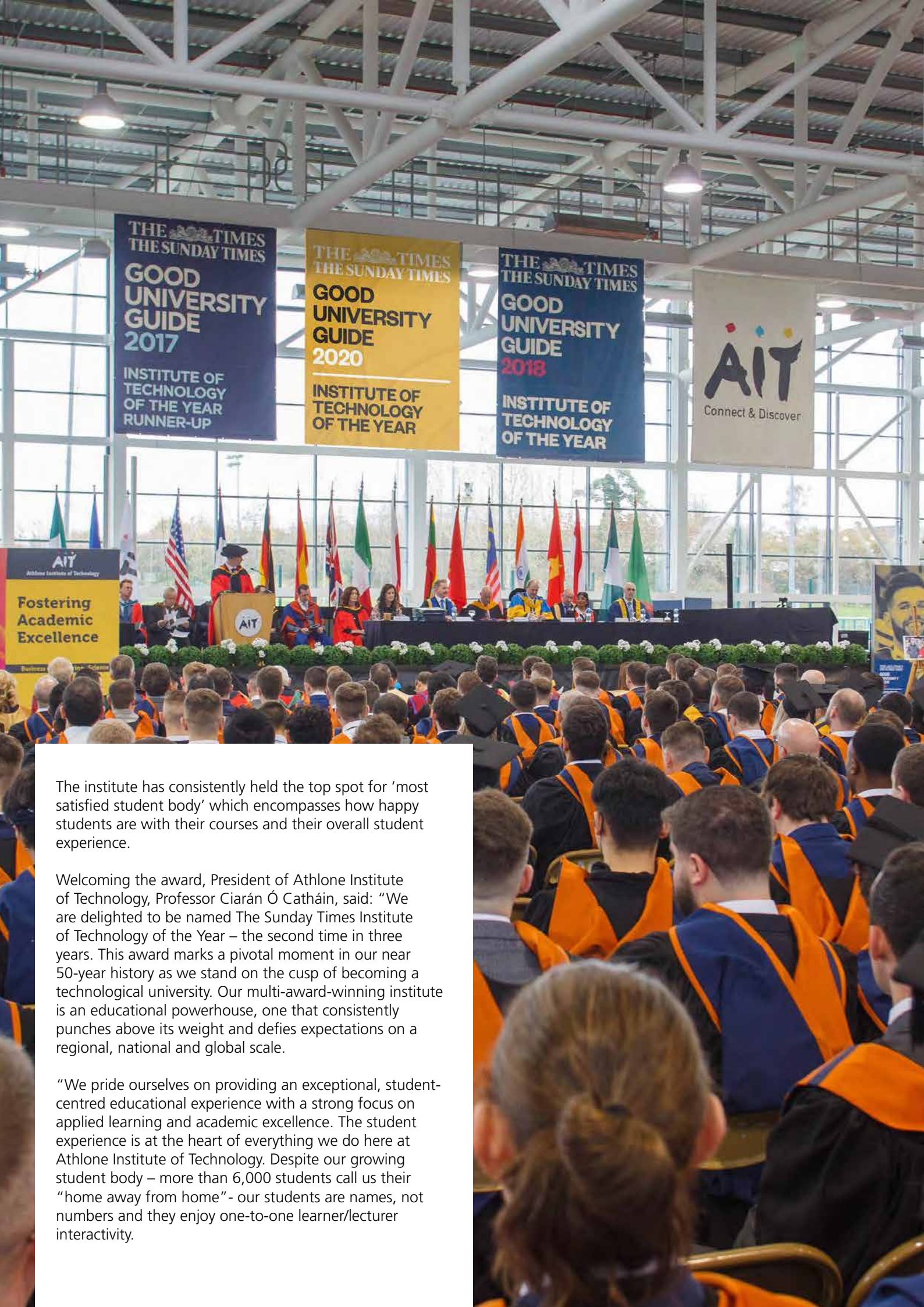
According to Alastair McCall, editor of The Sunday Times Good University Guide: "It seems highly likely that AIT will form Ireland's second technological university in the coming months, testimony to the critical role it already plays in the regional economy and its ambitions to be a national and international player.

"A twin focus on the needs of regional business and a growing student body has paid handsome dividends. Twice the national average number of students responds to the annual survey of student satisfaction, making AIT's sector-leading results all the more remarkable. Students here know they are on to a good thing – and they want to tell as many people as possible about it."

He also credited the institute's plans for a €25m STEM building which will provide capacity for an additional 1000 students to meet increased demand for programmes such as pharma, biopharma and microbiology as a reason for the reward, remarking it "reflects its confidence in its future."

Further solidifying its reputational prowess is Athlone Institute of Technology's continued success in the Irish Survey of Student Engagement, which was included in The Sunday Times Good University Guide rankings for the first-time last year.

Our multi-award-winning institute is an educational powerhouse, one that consistently punches above its weight and defies expectations on a regional, national and global scale.



The institute has consistently held the top spot for 'most satisfied student body' which encompasses how happy students are with their courses and their overall student experience.

Welcoming the award, President of Athlone Institute of Technology, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, said: "We are delighted to be named The Sunday Times Institute of Technology of the Year – the second time in three years. This award marks a pivotal moment in our near 50-year history as we stand on the cusp of becoming a technological university. Our multi-award-winning institute is an educational powerhouse, one that consistently punches above its weight and defies expectations on a regional, national and global scale.

"We pride ourselves on providing an exceptional, student-centred educational experience with a strong focus on applied learning and academic excellence. The student experience is at the heart of everything we do here at Athlone Institute of Technology. Despite our growing student body – more than 6,000 students call us their "home away from home" - our students are names, not numbers and they enjoy one-to-one learner/lecturer interactivity.

Class of 2019 Conferred at AIT Graduation Ceremonies

Over 1770 students graduated from Athlone Institute of Technology at its autumn conferring ceremonies on Thursday, 31 October and Friday, 1 November. Over the course of two days and four graduation ceremonies, 1601 undergraduate and 161 postgraduate students, four master by research students and five PhD candidates were conferred with awards.

Within the Faculty of Engineering and Informatics, four PhDs were awarded to Brian Dillon, Kieran Flanagan, Michael Hopkins and Romina Pezzoli. Within the Faculty of Science and Health, Emma Murphy was conferred with a PhD for her groundbreaking investigation into medicinal mushrooms and how they could be harnessed to treat antimicrobial resistance.

Other awards handed out over the course of Athlone Institute of Technology's conferring ceremonies, included 'Student of the Year'. Within the Faculty of Engineering, Simas Damanauskas received the prestigious accolade, while Amy Kirwan received the award within the Faculty of Business and Hospitality.

In the Faculty of Science and Health, Sara Redmond took home the award and from the Faculty of Continuing, Professional, Online and Distance Learning, the award went to Mairead Devaney. Maeve Farrell, a student ambassador and Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Bioveterinary Science graduate, received The Patricia Kearney Memorial Award.

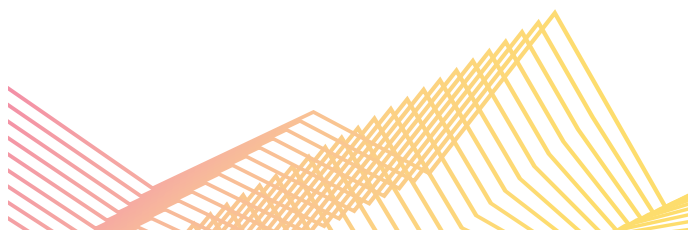
The conferring of degrees remains a highlight in the academic calendar and is a day of significant celebration that speaks to the achievement of graduates and to the commitment and excellence of management, faculty and staff.

In his graduation address, AIT President, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin commented on the nature of success and said it comes to those who know themselves, their strengths, their values and how they best perform. "We live in an age of unprecedented opportunity. If you have ambition and know how, you can rise to the top of your chosen profession, regardless of where you started out from."

He also commented on the institute's recent announcement of the formation of a new technological university for the Midlands. "Our ambition and vision for our institute and our region has pushed us over the past few decades to grow stronger, collaborate better, and innovate further, ensuring that we reaching our full potential for the benefit of our students, our staff and the wider community and region we live in.

"The emergence of our new technological university will play a pivotal role in helping us achieve our ambitious vision. It will help develop and sustain our collaborative, cross cutting research and further enhance our capacity to enrich civic, social and cultural engagement, while providing new and essentials access and pathways for all learners."

During the ceremony Professor Ó Catháin announced that AIT had emerged as Ireland's top-ranked institute of technology for the second time in just three years. He called it "a magnificent achievement" that marks a pivotal moment in the institute's near 50-year history and credited staff with helping win the award.







AIT wins National Hygiene Partnership Food Safety Award for Colleges for Second Consecutive Year

Athlone Institute of Technology was awarded The National Hygiene Partnership's 'Food Safety Training Award for Colleges' for the second consecutive year.

The award recognises the Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure's promotion of food hygiene excellence within its courses, as well as its ongoing commitment to promoting food safety across the hospitality sector and local catering and food processing industries at both a regional and national level.

According to Dr Anthony Johnston, Head of Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Studies at Athlone Institute of Technology, his staff, particularly food processing, technology, and safety management lecturer John Harding, were integral to achieving this award.

"Our lecturers, John especially, have continuously driven and promoted the food safety agenda throughout the Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Studies. John has helped raise food safety standards throughout the catering, hospitality and retail sectors and believes food safety and consumer confidence in the ability to adequately maintain it, to be one of the key issues facing the tourism and hospitality industry today."

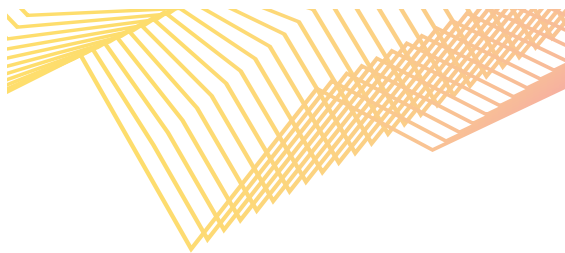
James Gumley, a recent graduate of Athlone Institute of Technology's Bachelor of Arts in Culinary Arts degree, also congratulated his former lecturer. The now product developer with Manor Farm, Co Cavan credits Mr Harding's National Hygiene Partnership's Management of Food Hygiene programme with giving him a "distinct competitive advantage when seeking employment".

The National Hygiene Partnership, which represents the food safety training requirements of its thirteen member organisations, launched the 'Food Safety Training Award for Colleges' in 2017 in response to a wider participation of colleges in its management of food safety training programme.

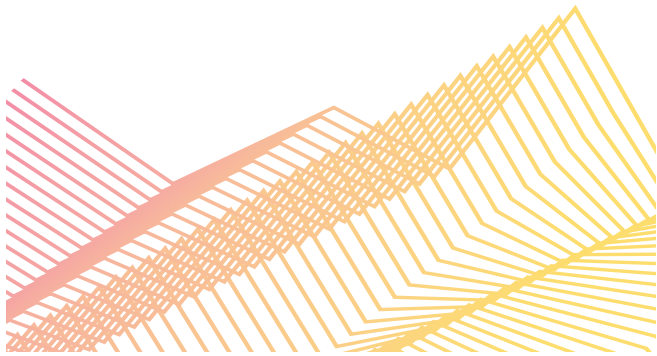
The National Hygiene Partnership Management, of which Athlone Institute of Technology is a member, is drawn from representatives from government agencies and industry representative bodies with an interest in and responsibility for the promotion of food safety. Mr Harding

also sits on the technical group of the National Hygiene Partnership.

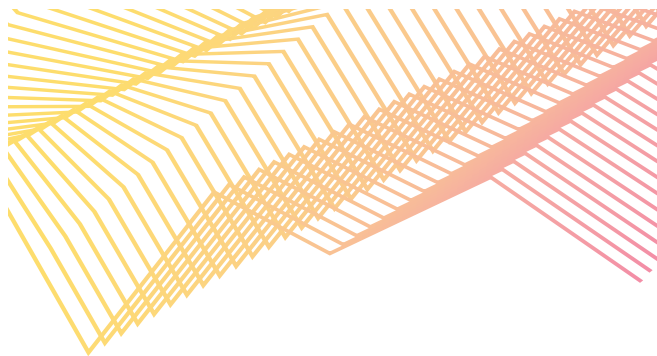
When presenting this award Rtd. Comdt. Paul Logan, Chairperson of the National Hygiene Partnership, thanked Mr Harding for his ongoing dedication and continued support in the promotion of food safety to the catering and hospitality sectors both locally and nationally.







Student Successes







Sport and Health Science Students Receive Awards for Outstanding Scholarship

Thirty-one students across Athlone Institute of Technology's Department of Sport and Health Science were recognised for their outstanding academic achievement at an annual ceremony intended to celebrate high achieving students in the company of their peers, friends and families.

Among those receiving commendations were students from the Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Sports Science with Exercise Physiology, the Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Athletic and Rehabilitation Therapy, the Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Nutrition with Health Science, and the Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Physical Activity and Health Science.

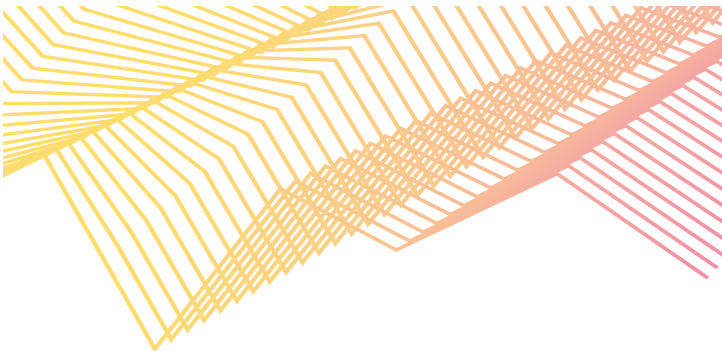
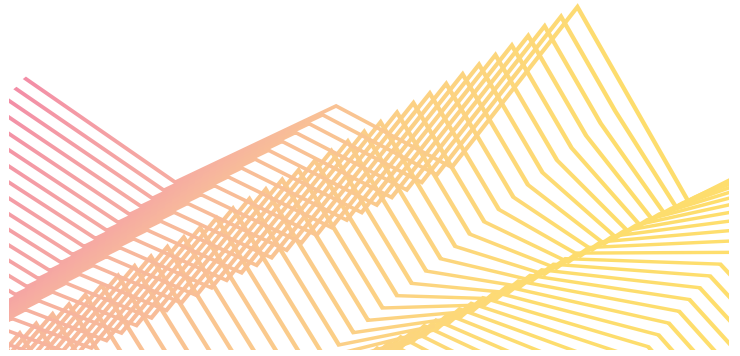
To be eligible for the award, all awardees are required to achieve 70% + cumulative grade average throughout their enrolment – which equates to a first-class honours.

Dr Aoife Lane, who heads the Department of Sport and Health Science at AIT, called the honour roll an important tradition that recognises the highest level of scholarly achievement across all years of study and said it is reflective of both the engagement and work ethic of students and the contribution of faculty.

AIT President Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, also commended the high achieving students on their outstanding scholarship and encouraged them to consider pursuing a master's degree by research or a PhD following the attainment of their undergraduate degree.

He reaffirmed AIT's commitment to giving its students every possible opportunity to succeed - ultimately ensuring the continued prosperity of the Midlands region - and told students that the institute would waive fees for those interested in attaining a master's degree by research or a PhD and offer them a yearly stipend to help cover their living expenses.

Facilitating and rewarding excellence in academia throughout the student lifecycle is a positive and important affirmation for the students themselves, faculty and indeed the wider institute.





**AIT Culinary Arts Student Crowned
Knorr Chef of the Year**

A second-year culinary arts student studying at Athlone Institute of Technology was crowned the winner of the prestigious Knorr Professional Student Chef of the Year 2020 competition.

Maria Dunne, who works as a commis chef at Kilkea Castle, impressed the competition judges with her use of fresh, local ingredients to produce a starter and main course that fit this year's theme: '2020: The Future of Foods'.

Using ingredients from the Knorr Professional Future 50 Foods Report, as well as food items that she foraged herself from An Ghrian Glas Farm in Co Westmeath, Maria created two dishes inspired by driving positive environmental change.

Maria cooked up a storm in the kitchen, kicking things off with her own unique take on garlic mushrooms with a garlic purée and foraged greens for starters.

She followed this up with a ling and spelt dish which comprised of confit ling, Dunany organic spelt, cauliflower purée, lemon foam, wakame and An Ghrian Glas Farm greens.

"It's such an honour to receive this award. This competition gives chefs of the future a platform to make a name for themselves before heading out to the workforce," Maria, who was highly commended for her display of creativity and sustainability in the kitchen, said, adding: "I want to thank everyone for the opportunity, especially my lecturers."

Congratulating Maria on her accomplishment, Dr Anthony Johnston, the head of Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure at AIT, said: "Maria is an outstanding student and has represented us at Food on the Edge in Galway, received the Dean's award for high academic achievement in a non-award year, and is working in Kilkea Castle. To top all that off, in the summer she is going to Russia representing Ireland in a ploughing competition. We're all extremely proud."

It's such an honour to receive this award. This competition gives chefs of the future a platform to make a name for themselves before heading out to the workforce.



Life and Physical Sciences Students Make Academic Honour Roll

Athlone Institute of Technology's Department of Life and Physical Sciences recently held an awards ceremony celebrating the academic success of its high achieving students.

Fifty students across seven programmes achieved a GPA of 70% - meeting the threshold for the award which is intended to acknowledge academic excellence throughout the student lifecycle.

Among those receiving commendations were students studying veterinary nursing, bioveterinary science, microbiology, biotechnology, pharmaceutical science, toxicology, and applied science.

Dr Nuala Commins, who heads the Department of Life and Physical Sciences, presented students with an engraved silver medal and certificate in recognition of their academic achievements.

She said that the students' commitment to their subject area, work ethic and resilience was evident and asked them to reflect upon the help and support that they received from friends, family and faculty – all of which contributed to their academic success.

Speaking at the event, President of Athlone Institute of Technology, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, commended students on their achievements and talked about the importance of recognising academic accomplishment during the student lifecycle.

He also encouraged students to consider pursuing postgraduate research upon successful completion of their undergraduate education, and said his plan was to invest further in postgraduate studies as AIT transitions into Ireland's second technological university.

An additional commendation was awarded to students Ciara Fitzpatrick and Justyna Twardoch in recognition of their respective exceptional results in the academic year 2018/19.

Carnival Celebrations Give AIT Students a Taste of Brazil



Students got a taste of Brazil on Monday, 2 February at AIT's colourful Brazilian Carnival, an annual celebration which marks the first signs of spring and gives students an insight into different cultural practices and traditions.

Organised by the AIT International Office, the event formed part of a broader Cultural Celebration Week designed to celebrate AIT's diverse student population, which represents 66 nations around the globe.

Among the events scheduled was a Brazilian food tasting, which gave students an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the country's traditional culinary confections. Aside from expanding their palate, students also learned some South American dances - namely forro and samba.

Speaking at the event, AIT President Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin remarked on the importance of events like the Brazilian Carnival in educating Irish and international students about other culture's customs and traditions.

He added that Ireland has become a very popular destination among Brazilian university students in recent years, with more than 2000 Brazilian students choosing to study here through the Science without Borders programme.

Now defunct, Science without Borders was an initiative by the Brazilian government to send students overseas to study at some of the world's best higher education institutions. The programme was funded by CAPES, a Brazilian agency dedicated to promoting research collaboration globally.

Over the last number of years, AIT has hosted 109 Brazilian students from 50 universities and 21 different states in Brazil. The students undertook a variety of programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level, including civil engineering, forensic toxicology, nutrition, and nursing. There are currently 12 PhD students from Brazil studying within AIT's Materials, Software or Bioscience Research Institutes.

Ongoing initiatives to attract Brazilian students to study in Irish HEIs are supported by HEA, Enterprise Ireland, the Embassy of Ireland in Brazil, THEA and the Department of Education and Skills. AIT has participated in several education exhibitions and events in Brazil with the support of government agencies and departments.



AIT Mechanical Engineering Students **Develop Ireland's First Electric Race Car**



Students at Athlone Institute of Technology are developing the country's first electric race car.

They plan to achieve this by using an electric motor used in the development of the Tesla Roadster with a converted Jaguar X-type.

Using an electric motor as an alternative to a combustion engine could eliminate fossil fuels from the sport of motor racing, thereby lessening its environmental impact.

Students in the third and final year of their BEng in Mechanical Engineering degree are working on the project – many of whom are keen motor enthusiasts.

In addition to engineering and fabrication work, the students will be expected to look at design, stress analysis of parts, efficiency studies and emission level studies.

Once the car is completed it will be brought to Mondello Park for testing. The aim of the project is to impress upon students the practical relevance to the theoretical aspect of their degree.

“The high level of practical content on our courses greatly improves the learning and understanding of the theoretical aspects,” said Breda Lynch, head of Department of Polymer, Mechanical and Design.

“The strategy we use for teaching and learning delivers engineers that are confident solving real-world problems and are in demand.”

According to Ms Lynch, this is the first of several exciting future projects in areas such as sensor technology and autonomous vehicles which have cross discipline threads within the institute.

We are currently conducting extensive research in areas such as the light weighting of polymeric materials, sensor technology, autonomous vehicles, AR/VR and have established strong links with companies interested in this space.

Prior to the commencement of the project, each student was expected to manage costs in relation to the purchasing of parts. They also improved their communication skills when dealing with vendors and procurement departments.

In addition to the practical aspects and technical aspects of the projects, students complete literature reviews and prepare presentations as part of their ongoing assessment.

The car will be aimed at Future Classics Race Series and featured in Retro Classics Magazine.

The project has caught the interest of companies and has been supported by Westward Scania, Dessault Systems Solidworks, Corcoran Crash repairs and Smyth Gates.



Academic Achievement Celebrated at Scholarship of Excellence Ceremony

Athlone Institute of Technology bestowed Scholarships of Excellence upon eleven high-achieving first-year students at a recent award ceremony.

Students from Athlone Community College, Moate Community School, Ballymahon Vocational School, Our Lady's Bower, Oaklands Community College, Tullamore College, St Joseph's Community and St Mary's Secondary School were among those to receive awards.

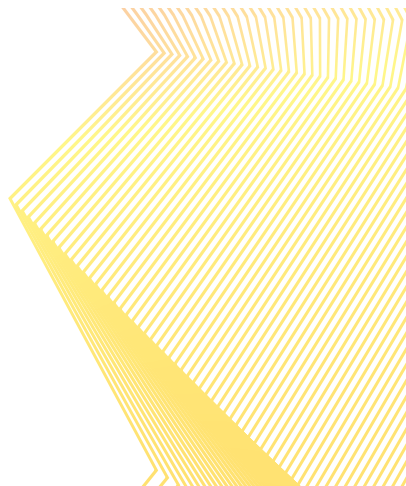
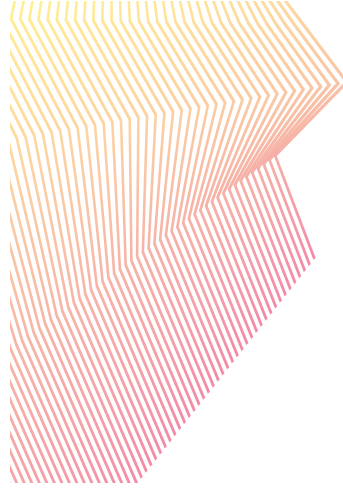
Inaugurated in 2017, Scholarships of Excellence acknowledge the academic endeavours of incoming first-year students. They are given to students who achieve in excess of 500 points in their Leaving Certificate examinations.

To mark their achievement, each recipient is awarded a bursary of €500 and a comprehensive gym membership which gives them access to the institute's state-of-the-art sporting and leisure facilities for the academic year. This year, recipients' respective schools were also honoured with a plaque commemorating the award.

Speaking at the ceremony, Athlone Institute of Technology's President, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, commended the Scholarship of Excellence recipients for their diligence and commitment to their studies, and said he hoped that the award would encourage them to maintain that same level of commitment moving forward.

He also asked that students take a moment to recognise and give credit to their parents, teachers, principals and guidance counsellors all of whom have "played an integral role in nurturing and assisting you in your academic development to date."

Following the Scholarship of Excellence award ceremony, the celebrations continued in the institute's hospitality department training restaurant – a state-of-the-art culinary facility supervised by a Michelin star chef – where recipients and their guests were treated to a gourmet meal.





Social Sciences **Students Make Academic Honour Roll**

Athlone Institute of Technology's Department of Social Sciences recently held an honours list ceremony celebrating the academic success of its high achieving students.

Fifty-five students across four programmes received a cumulative grade point average of 70% - meeting the threshold for the special award which is intended to acknowledge academic excellence throughout the student lifecycle.

Among those receiving commendations were students from the Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Applied Psychology, the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Social Care Practice, the Bachelor of Arts in Early Years Care and Education and the Bachelor of Arts in Applied Social Studies.

Dr Oliver Hegarty, who is the Head of Department of Social Sciences at Athlone Institute of Technology, said the honours list was extremely "meaningful to students" and that it encouraged students to excel in their field of study.

"When we first launched the initiative in 2018, it was met with an incredibly positive response from staff and students alike. Those who achieved the award last year said it motivated them to sustain a high level of academic engagement and commitment to their studies to ensure that they met the threshold for this year's list, while those that fell shy of the award said the honours list was the single biggest motivator to improve academically," he explained.

This was echoed by Dr Don Faller, the institute's Dean of Faculty of Science and Health, who said he hoped it would encourage recipients to maintain the same level of commitment to their studies throughout the remainder of their degrees.

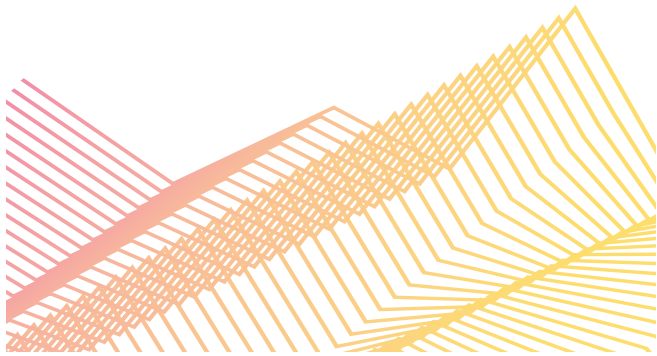
Dr Ashling Jackson, a senior lecturer in the Department of Social Sciences, congratulated the students and called the award a "significant achievement."

The honours list ceremony now forms an integral part of our academic calendar and provides a wonderful opportunity to celebrate student accomplishment throughout the student lifecycle.

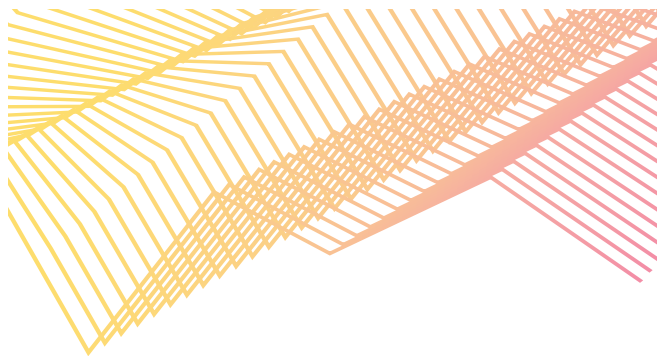
Presiding over the ceremony was AIT President Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, who commended the high achieving students on their scholarship and encouraged them to consider pursuing postgraduate research upon completion of their undergraduate degrees.

Reaffirming the institute's commitment to giving its students every possible opportunity to succeed - ultimately ensuring the continued prosperity of the Midlands region – Professor Ó Catháin told attendees that the institute would aid those interested in attaining a master's of research or a PhD by waiving fees and offering a yearly stipend to help offset living expenses.





Research & Innovation Impact





AIT Researcher Uses **Augmented Reality to 'Cure'** Walk Abnormalities



An AIT PhD candidate is exploring the use of Augmented Reality (AR) to cure people of walk abnormalities which, if left untreated, can lead to “wear and tear” arthritis and serious injuries.

Thiago Braga Rodrigues AIT, a Brazilian biomedical engineer studying at Athlone Institute of Technology, is flipping traditional rehabilitation therapies on their head with an innovative technology-led approach that empowers patients.

“Traditionally, patients are given guided feedback in a clinical setting which requires the presence of an expert to inform the rehabilitation or re-training. It can also necessitate patient travel many times to and from a clinic,” he explains.

As a complimentary therapy, Mr Braga Rodrigues is using AR smart glasses to help patients correct their walk abnormalities. His goal is to help patients better understand and react to feedback so that they can improve their gait in the comfort of their own home.

AR is an immersive mixed-reality technology, synonymous with apps like Instagram and Snapchat, which superimposes static and moving images on a real-world environment.

Mr Braga Rodrigues has adapted the technology so that patients wearing smart glasses see a series of projected circles in their field of vision; if their legs are correctly aligned as they walk, the centre-aligned circle flashes blue. The objective is to try to keep the circle blue for the duration of each session.

This real-time visual feedback, powered by AR, is proving an effective method of gait rehabilitation as it significantly reduces the number of knee misalignments which in turn reduces injury incidence.

Feedback is critical to all types of rehabilitation and is a powerful tool for motor skill learning. It helps patients process, organise, and interpret sensory perceptual information required to perform or learn a skill.

With AR feedback, visual cues are what prompt a patient to adjust their gait, whereas with haptic feedback, vibrations are delivered directly to the leg that the patient needs to change.

Mr Braga Rodrigues' research, which is also concerned with users' Quality of Experience (QoE), found that patients also favoured AR more highly than haptic feedback as they found it easier to adjust their gait when seeing cues than they did from feeling them.

The AIT researcher says that the technology's potential is only starting to be explored. "The potential of AR as a portable, wearable and visual piece of technology is under-researched and certainly worth investigating further," he explains. "It has a wide range of applications and is capable of augmenting human performance in a variety of ways."

Now in the final write-up phase of his research, Mr Braga Rodrigues has just had his paper on the use of immersive mixed reality technology in correcting walk abnormalities accepted to one of the world's leading scientific journals. The PhD candidate calls the PLOS One publication his "greatest achievement" to date.

I'm using AR in combination with a wearable sensor system to detect specific gait variables and process them to gain an understanding of a patient's gait within typical threshold values.

According to his PhD supervisor Dr Niall Murray, who is a leading researcher in the field of immersive technologies and a Science Foundation Ireland Funded Investigator in ADAPT and CONFIRM, this is a "significant milestone" for Thiago as he enters the final stages of his postgraduate studies.

"Having a paper accepted to a multidisciplinary journal like PLOS One with its impact factor and H5 index is a great achievement," he says, adding: "The fact that PLOS One is an open access journal also means that his research will be easily accessible to the research community and general public."

Pioneering in its approach, the academic journal makes papers available to the public for free immediately upon publication. This open access model has been lauded for breaking down barriers to knowledge dissemination and ensuring equal access to information.

"The open access model is important as it makes research available to the scientific community in a timely, open manner," Mr Braga Rodrigues explains. "I am delighted to have my first Quality of Experience (QoE) paper published in PLOS One."

The PhD candidate, whose research is funded by the Irish Research Council of Ireland, came to Athlone Institute of Technology from Harvard Medical School, USA, where he studied biomechanics and bioinformatics.



"The PhD structure and the modules I undertook throughout the duration of my studies have really helped me further my academic career and enhance my skillset," Mr Braga Rodrigues says.

"I'm extremely grateful to my supervisors, Dr Niall Murray (AIT), Dr Ciarán Ó Catháin (AIT) and Prof. Noel O'Connor (DCU), for their unending support, guidance and expertise."

Soon to be graduating with his doctorate, Mr Braga Rodrigues has taken up a post as a lecturer within the Faculty of Engineering and Informatics at Athlone Institute of Technology.

Thiago Braga Rodrigues' paper, entitled A Quality of Experience assessment of haptic and augmented reality feedback modalities in a gait analysis system, is now available.



AIT and NUIG Explore PPE Decontamination Amid Global Shortage

As the world grapples with a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE), Irish academics are exploring eco-sustainable solutions to decontaminate used masks...

Researchers and clinicians from Athlone Institute of Technology and NUI Galway joined forces to tackle the global shortage of N95 masks, gloves, and other personal protective equipment (PPE) desperately needed by frontline workers and other healthcare professionals.

Offering protection from coronavirus, PPE needs to be carefully removed and disposed of after each use to prevent the spread of the highly infectious disease. Due to its material composition, PPE is extremely heat sensitive and not intended for reprocessing.

Conscious of this, Professor Neil J Rowan, Director of the Bioscience Research Institute at Athlone Institute of Technology, and John Laffey, Professor of Anaesthesia and Intensive Care Medicine at NUI Galway and Galway University Hospitals, set out to explore new ways to decontaminate PPE without destroying it.

“A key priority is making sure our frontline healthcare workers have the PPE they need to be protected against COVID-19. Unfortunately, the combination of supply chain challenges and unprecedented levels of global demand means that some hospitals are now facing PPE shortages,” explained Professor Laffey.

“Reprocessing of PPE using novel decontamination approaches is essential to protecting our frontline workers. Of course, these novel approaches must be assessed and validated to ensure that they are safe and effective to meet regulatory requirements,” he added.

These eco-sustainable solutions, which were recently published in leading environmental journal STOTEN, harness the power of vaporised hydrogen peroxide (VH₂O₂) to neutralise COVID-19 and other contagions. Use of this gas was FDA-authorized for decontaminating N95 masks.

Professors Rowan and Laffey’s research indicates demand has overtaken supply for vital PPE where there is a critical shortage for frontline healthcare workers. What is proposed are best solutions to ensure supply including provision for reprocessed PPE that would be safe and fit for purpose during this COVID-19 crisis.

“A pandemic foists untold and unexpected demands on society that includes provision or contingency planning for reprocessing PPE. The majority of existing in-house hospital and adjacent minimal processing technologies, as used in food industry, will not be effective for reprocessing PPE,” explains Professor Rowan, who is also an adjunct professor at NUI Galway’s School of Medicine.

These eco-sustainable solutions, which were recently published in leading environmental journal STOTEN, harness the power of vaporised hydrogen peroxide.

“However, review of best evidence suggests that VH₂O₂ and possibly UV irradiation technologies for deploying within healthcare environment can be used to fill this gap and will be paramount to ensuring the safety of our healthcare workers during this public health emergency.”

Their vital research is being supported by ‘INSPIRE’, a programme led by Professors Martin O’Halloran and John Laffey, and composed of academics, clinicians and scientists from University Hospital Galway, the BioInnovate Programme and the Translational Medical Device Lab at NUI Galway, CÚRAM, the SFI Centre for Research in Medical Devices, GMIT and Athlone Institute of Technology’s Software Research Institute and Applied Polymer Technology gateway.

Leading Microbiologist: 'Think in Fives' to Help Combat COVID-19

Dr Andy Fogarty, who lectures in the Department of Life and Physical Sciences at Athlone Institute of Technology, says that COVID-19 has five possible entry routes into the body: the eyes, nostrils and mouth. "It cannot penetrate the skin, just the mucous membranes," he explains.

The coronavirus, which derives its name from its crown-like spikes of glycoproteins, is incredibly small - approximately 30 million times smaller than the human body. "Five hundred million COVID19 viruses would fit atop a full stop," Dr Fogarty says.

Minimalist in design, coronaviruses consist of just one piece of genetic code, a protein coat and an outer layer of fat. This outer coating is what makes hand hygiene so crucial in the fight against COVID-19. "Just 20 seconds of thorough handwashing can dissolve the fat layer protecting the virus, much like washing-up liquid and a greasy pan," he explains.

A Midlands-based microbiologist has urged people to "think in fives" to protect themselves from coronavirus (COVID-19).

According to the Tullamore man, around 80% of people who contract the virus will experience mild symptoms, 14% will experience severe symptoms and a further 6% will become critically ill. "The virus is particularly serious for the elderly, those with underlying medical conditions and the immunocompromised. We need to slow down the spread of transfer so that critical care facilities are available for those who need it," Dr Fogarty stresses.

While there is limited evidence of asymptomatic transmission, it is possible for someone to shed the virus and spread it before exhibiting symptoms. Therefore, social distancing is vital to reducing the spread. "Even if a person has no symptoms today, they may have tomorrow, so it is difficult to say when they contracted the virus," Dr Fogarty explains.

He recommends that people avoid touching their faces, especially when in an area of higher potential exposure: "People know to avoid someone who is coughing but still touch their face with their fingers which may have picked up the virus from a surface such as a door handle or tap, so imagine that your hands have coal dust on them, and you don't want to get it on your face."



Children and young adults that contract the virus generally exhibit mild symptoms, but may transfer the virus to older, more vulnerable people. With that in mind, Dr Fogarty recommends talking to them about the things that they can do to help stop the spread.

Remarking on the incredible work being carried out by front-line medical staff, including GPs, hospital workers, directors of public health, laboratory staff and pharmacists, Dr Fogarty adds: "These people are the unsung heroes in the battle against COVID-19."



AIT Postgraduate Research Showcase Inspires Early Stage Academics

“Strive for progress, not perfection” was a key takeaway from AIT’s postgraduate research showcase

Athlone Institute of Technology held its biannual postgraduate research showcase earlier this year highlighting the scope of high quality and impactful postgraduate research taking place across its three research centres.

Now in its second year, the seminar acts as a vehicle for early stage academics to showcase their latest research developments in the company of their supervisors, peers and prospective postgraduate students while gaining presenting experience in a supportive environment.

Throughout the day, attendees enjoyed networking opportunities and heard inspiring talks from other academics and library staff about postgraduate research careers, publishing and surviving the oft-dreaded viva.

Among those speaking at the seminar was Evert Fuenmayor, a doctoral candidate within a hair’s breadth of completing his PhD.

The 29-year-old Venezuelan researcher stressed the importance of ‘striving for progress, not perfection’ explaining that there was no point sitting around waiting for inspiration to strike.

“Perfection is a state of acceptance, not a lack of flaws. It’s vital that you make yourself sit down and write – it doesn’t have to be perfect, it just needs to be consistent,” he explained as he detailed the highs and lows of his own journey through academia.

Evert, whose fascinating PhD research concerns the mass production of polypharmacy pills – single tablets containing multiple prescriptions – using 3-D printing technology, offered current and prospective students some practical advice about the common pitfalls to avoid.

According to the doctoral candidate, setting unrealistic (self-imposed) expectations with respect to publishing and an intense fear of failure can induce “a sense of paralysis” – a feeling of being unable to progress in one’s research.

He stressed the importance of being able to take constructive criticism on board and see it not as a reflection of personal or professional failure but as an opportunity for growth and learning. The real shame, he said, comes from stagnation.

“ Undertaking postgraduate research is challenging and can at times be quite an insular experience. It’s easy to forget that many of the people around you have overcome or are also dealing with similar struggles. ”

With this in mind, he extolled the virtues of events like Athlone Institute of Technology’s research showcase, which remind the research community that they are indeed a community working towards a common goal and purpose.

“I hope that it will encourage people to look across the room and start a conversation about their work and make them curious about the work of others, that’s a recipe for innovation,” he added.

Interspersed between keynote talks were three ‘Poster Madness’ sessions during which attendees were treated to a range of fun and informative poster presentations across the institute’s core research areas.

To encourage attendees to check out the full poster presentations, which were set up outside the institute’s Douglas Hyde Theatre, the postgraduate researchers were challenged with piquing the audience’s interest with an elevator-style pitch – the premise of which was to communicate their core research idea in precisely 60 seconds or less.

“It was fantastic to see the quality and diversity of applied scientific research being presented by our postgraduate student population,” Dr Therese Montgomery, a lecturer in the Department of Life and Physical Sciences and chair of the bioscience ‘Poster Madness’ session, enthused.

“Events such as this help to foster a sense of community between our three research centres, inspire and motivate early stage academics and provide a rich breeding ground for inter-disciplinarian research collaboration across the institute, as well as showcasing our research talent to the wider undergraduate community.”

This was a sentiment echoed by Dr Niall Murray, a lecturer and researcher in the area of immersive technologies, who called the showcase a wonderful opportunity for the entire postgraduate research community to meet and discuss ongoing research activities, foster multidisciplinary collaborations and provide an awareness of the existing and evolving research landscape within the institute.





AIT Breathes New **Life into Peatlands Bog** with Aquaculture Research

New research looking at the use of cutaway peatland and poor agricultural land for freshwater fish production is underway at Athlone Institute of Technology.

A team of researchers led by Professor Neil J Rowan, Director of AIT's Bioscience Research Institute, is investigating the use of naturally occurring microalgae to help mitigate disease and improve fish health in freshwater fish farms.

This intensive sustainability initiative, which is being carried out in partnership with Bord na Móna as part of its move away from peat harvesting, is expected to 'breathe life back into the bog' through improved production efficiencies and management of farmed fish in new inland fisheries.

Aquaculture, the breeding, rearing, and harvesting of fish, is now the fastest growing food sector globally due to a rapidly increasing population. It is estimated cultured fish will make up 62% of the fish consumed by people by 2030.

"There are, however, limitations with traditional aquaculture approaches, such as a lack of available freshwater and space for expansion of existing facilities," Professor Rowan explained.

"The advances being made in the use of cutaway peatland and poor agricultural land for freshwater fish farming will enable us to meet increased demand for sustainable food production."

Peatland-based aquaculture differs from traditional aquaculture in that it harnesses water from rivers and lakes, whereas the traditional system must consider the environmental impact of expansion and possible threats from potential pollutants in raw, untreated wastewater such as agricultural run-off.

The researchers, among them Dr Emma Jane Murphy, a lead postdoctoral researcher within Athlone Institute of Technology's Bioscience Research Institute, will harness the power of microalgae using real-time technologies.

“ We will be conducting the first studies on novel extraction of immune-stimulating bioactives and nutrients from these microalgae to see if they can be used to support a healthy fish population. ”

According to Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, President of Athlone Institute of Technology, this cross-cutting eco-innovation project “highlights the great strides our world-leading researchers are making on a global stage in terms of addressing pressing societal challenges.”

He also said that it served as a further testament to the institute’s role as a driver of growth and innovation within the Midlands.

“Aligned with the Regional Enterprise Plan 2020, the research will ensure that the Midlands is well positioned to address the challenges posed by Ireland’s transition to a low-carbon economy and renewable energy while harnessing the potential for sustainable food production and growth of these industries.”

Aquaculture, the breeding, rearing, and harvesting of fish, is now the fastest growing food sector globally due to a rapidly increasing population. It is estimated cultured fish will make up 62% of the fish consumed by people by 2030.

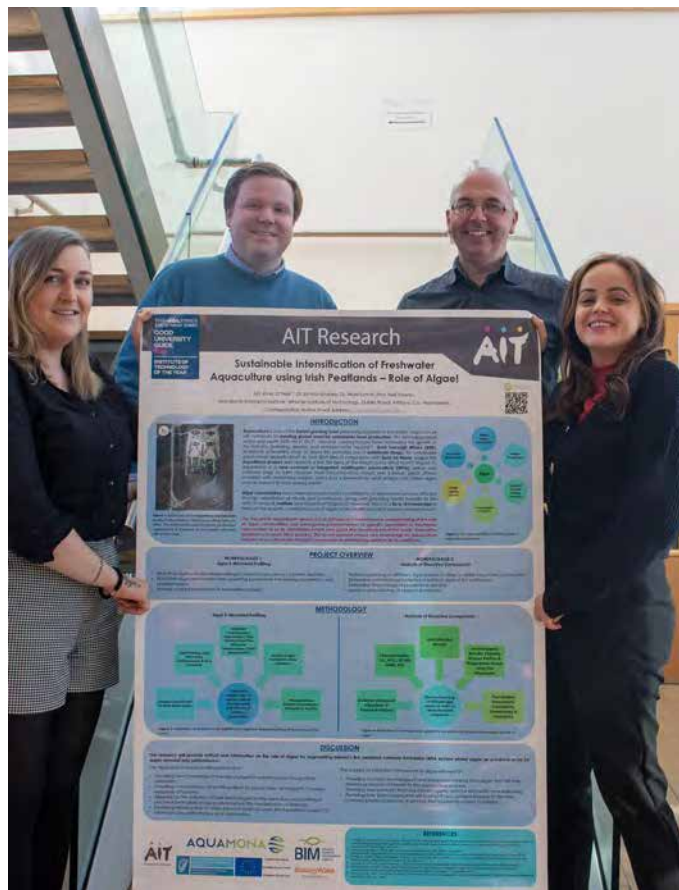
Mr Damien Toner, who is an aquaculture technical specialist with Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), said Bord Na Móna, in conjunction with BIM, has further expanded use of cutaway bogs in order to develop Ireland’s first integrated recirculation process for high value fish production holding European perch and rainbow trout using organic principles.

“This low-cost, environmentally-friendly aquaculture applied research will aid the development of new eco-innovations and contribute to Ireland’s position as a leading innovator in aquaculture that will underpin production efficiency and sustainability leading to increased competitiveness globally,” he explained.

Peatland-based aquaculture will also provide jobs for workers - ultimately helping preserve rural communities in the Midlands.

The AQUAALGAE+ initiative is strongly aligned with Ireland’s FoodWise2025 policy that seeks to grow food exports by 85% to €19bn by 2025.

The project is part funded by the Irish Government and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund under the Knowledge Gateway Scheme and administered by BIM, Ireland’s Seafood Development Agency.





AIT Leads Global Effort to Tackle Plastic Pollution and Develop Next Generation Materials

Researchers from Athlone Institute of Technology's Materials Research Institute are spearheading a major pan European Chinese research effort aimed at tackling plastic pollution - a global crisis of prodigious proportions.

The Horizon 2020 research innovation project, dubbed BioICEP (Bio Innovation of a Circular Economy for Plastic), will seek to develop sustainable, environmentally friendly alternatives to traditional petroleum-based plastic.

Several innovative booster technologies are at the core of this solution - accentuating, expediting, and augmenting mixed plastics degradation to levels far in excess of those current achievable.

Global production and consumption of plastic has grown exponentially in recent decades. Since the 1950s, approximately 8.3 billion tonnes of the material have been produced - 60% of which has ended up in landfill or the natural environment.

Researchers believe that it will take hundreds, if not thousands, of years for bacteria and the enzymes that they produce to evolve to a point where they can break down the long chains of molecules that compose plastic. As a result, the accumulation of plastic is causing serious problems in the environment.

According to Dr Margaret Brennan Fournet, a foremost authority on materials science and leader of project BioICEP, there are microplastics in the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat. Scientists have even found them in remote mountain ranges.

"People may need to start using monitors, not just to measure air quality, but to measure the level of microplastics in the atmosphere - similar to how Geiger counters are used to measure radiation," she said.

"It's been suggested that people are ingesting a credit card-sized amount of plastic every week. These scientific results are only starting to come out now and every few months we're hearing new, even more staggering results."

Using an innovative triple action process, Dr Brennan Fournet and the BioICEP team will attempt to accelerate the degradation of traditional plastic and turn it into biopolymers, which can be used as natural biodegradable replacement plastics.

"In essence, we'll be tackling in the mixed plastic waste at one end, treating it with bacteria and enzymes, recovering the molecules, fermenting them, and turning them into new bioproducts," she explained.

In many respects, plastic's strength is its weakness. Its sheer versatility and high resource efficiency have enabled innovations across many sectors, allowing for the development of new products and solutions.

Plastic has completely revolutionised how food is bought, stored, and consumed. For example, beef that has been vacuum packed in multilayer plastic can last up to 45 days on the shelf. By extending the shelf life of food, food waste is kept to a minimum.

"It is near-impossible to buy food to feed your family in the supermarket without encountering some form of plastic," Dr Brennan Fournet said. "Its myriad applications and low production costs has ensured its indispensability to modern living."

With dependency on petroleum-based plastic showing no sign of abating, the race is on to create viable, ecological alternatives that won't negatively impact companies' bottom line or affect the consumer adversely.

"Our ultimate goal is not to change consumer behaviour as this alone isn't sufficient to solve the problem. Instead, we're trying to target manufacturers and give them a better option that won't cost more and isn't harmful to the environment," she explained.

It is not just individuals who are looking for ecological solutions to the global plastic pollution crisis either. With more than one million plastic bottles being produced every minute, soft drinks manufacturers are under pressure to make their packaging more sustainable.

“ Global production and consumption of plastic has grown exponentially in recent decades. Since the 1950s, approximately 8.3 billion tonnes of the material have been produced – 60% of which has ended up in landfill or the natural environment. ”

Companies like Coca-Cola have already started incorporating recycled PET, a plastic resin and member of the polyester family, into their packaging. Their goal is to make 100% of their packaging recyclable by 2025.

While other plastic substitutes, such as glass or sugarcane, are available to manufacturers, they can be significantly more expensive to produce and energy intensive to transport - resulting in a higher net carbon footprint.

According to the Athlone-based researcher, plastic is in need of a total rebrand: "It isn't public enemy number one – or at least it doesn't have to be. At the end of the day, we're extremely reliant on it – there's no escaping that. We do, however, need to be more considered in our approach to how we make and recycle it."

While bioplastics research is still emerging and as of yet most materials don't contain the performance properties required to ensure that they can be fully biodegraded, project BioICEP is still a much-needed step in the right direction.

"These new plastics are not going to cause the problems that traditional petroleum-based plastics have caused because they will be easy to break down and recycle post use," Dr Brennan Fournet finished.

The €5 million project, which will span four years, commencing in February 2020, will be led by Athlone Institute of Technology, a third-level institute in the heart of Ireland with a significant expert knowledge base and strong industry connections.

"Our researchers have long been at the forefront of plastics research and development and have been working on solutions to the global crisis of plastic pollution for more than 10 years in association with Enterprise Ireland," Dr Declan Devine, director of the Materials Research Institute at AIT, explained.

The BioICEP approach to tackling mixed plastic waste has the potential to circumvent many of the current challenges associated with plastic packaging materials which will be essential in resolving current environmental damage.

"Only two projects got selected for funding across Europe for the plastics bio-degradation EU-China call in 2019, BioICEP was one of them," Dr Sergio Fernandez-Ceballos, National Delegate and Contact Point for Horizon 2020 Industrial Technologies in Enterprise Ireland, said, adding: "This success is reflective of the talent and focus of Ireland's research and innovation community, punching above its weight in this very relevant area."

Two other Irish third-level institutes are partnering on the project: Trinity College Dublin and Limerick Institute of Technology. Nine countries - totalling 15 partners - have been selected to participate in the pan European Chinese research collaboration, each of whom represent different mixed plastic pollution environments.





AIT Researcher Brings **Global QoMEX Conference** to Athlone

A global conference dedicated to multimedia and user experience took place digitally at Athlone Institute of Technology this year, attracting speakers from around the world and blue-chip sponsorship from companies like Netflix, Deuchte Telekom and YouTube.

More than 320 participants from 40 countries participated in this year's QoMEX (Quality of Multimedia Experience) conference - among them academics from top universities and representatives from Google, Bell Labs, Xperi, Samsung and Huawei.

QoMEX, now in its twelfth year, is a vehicle for leading experts from academia and industry to present and discuss current and future research in the areas of multimedia quality, quality of experience (QoE) and user experience (UX).

People's experiences of new and emerging technologies are shaping the world. Where once multimedia technologies were entirely focussed on gaming and entertainment, they are now being applied to education and healthcare, among other sectors.

"QoE research focuses on a user's experience with technology. It is defined as the degree of delight or annoyance of a person whose experience involves an application, service or system," explained Dr Niall Murray, conference co-chair and lecturer in the Department of Computer and Software Engineering at Athlone Institute of Technology.

Take Zoom, Google Meet, WebEX or Skype for example. Many people who had never heard of these applications are now relying on them for work. Thanks to COVID-19, they have also become a new medium for sharing social events from birthdays to family quizzes.

“ The quality of the ‘Lockdown’ experience would be quite different without access to video calls and streaming services like Netflix and YouTube. ”

Due to COVID-19, Dr Murray and his colleagues were forced to pivot and run the large-scale conference they'd been planning for two years online instead. As an academic with a software engineering background, Dr Murray had the expertise to make it work.

He also received huge support from PhD students and colleagues Conor Keighrey, Thiago Rodrigues, Debora Salgado, Amit Hirway, Adrielle Moraes, Xue Er Chung, Sowmya Sowmya and Dr Ronan Flynn, all of AIT, along with UCD's Dr Andrew Hines, Helard Becarra and Pheobe Sun.

"Like everyone else, we had to adapt and innovate rapidly to turn a face-to-face conference event in Athlone into a fully digital online event," said Dr Andrew Hines, conference co-chair and Director of Research, Innovation

and Impact at the School of Computer Science, UCD. “Thankfully, the hard work of the organising team and the presenters made for an engaging conference with a high quality of experience.”

QoMEX 2020 attracted sponsorship from major players in the entertainment and technology sectors, including Netflix, Youtube, Bitmovin and Deutsche Telekom. According to Dr Murray, securing support from international blue-chip companies like these reflects the importance these companies place on researching users’ QoE.

“The importance of QoE to industries from entertainment and communications to healthcare is reflected in the sponsors and attendees. The financial support for these events is crucial for its viability and we were delighted to have their association with the conference,” Dr Murray enthused.

Dr Murray and his team also had the support of indigenous software/ICT companies like Neueda and Sidero – both of whom are extremely supportive of Athlone Institute of Technology’s innovations in the area of software/ICT and emerging technologies.

“This was a demonstration of their commitment to the development of a technical ecosystem in Athlone and the Midlands Region more generally. The enthusiasm and willingness of Paul Madden, Managing Director of Neueda, and John Mee, CEO of Sidero, to help these efforts was very welcome, and I want to thank them both,” the Roscommon native said.

Athlone Institute of Technology, through its undergraduate and postgraduate offerings in software engineering, robotics, augmented and virtual reality, and artificial intelligence, is developing a talent pipeline of work-ready graduates for industry.

The institute works with a number of industry partners, including Robotics and Drives, an Irish robotics and automation company who are using AR and VR for training, system design, configuration and robotic control, in the area of new and emerging technologies.

“Expertise in these fields in Ireland is growing and developing at a rapid pace across the various different industries, universities and IoTs. Industry collaborators and agencies like Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) are enabling this through our national research centres: ADAPT, CONFIRM, CONNECT and INSIGHT,” Dr Murray noted. “I would like to personally thank colleagues in SFI’s ADAPT and CONFIRM who helped us organise the conference”

Athlone Institute of Technology has 15 master’s/PhD students working in the area of emerging technologies across a broad range of topics - health, education, tourism and smart manufacturing. These students are proudly supported through the AIT President’s Doctoral Scholarship and through the Irish Research Council, CONFIRM and ADAPT.





Athlone Institute of Technology has partnered with a global market research firm to launch a million-euro ICT research technology lab.

The lab, which will develop, test and optimise artificial intelligence strategies for real-time market analysis, is being established in partnership with The NPD Group, which has been operating in Athlone for 10 years.

“Our close working relationship with The NPD Group has given us a practical insight into the kinds of technical challenges faced by multinational market analysis companies,” explains Dr Enda Fallon, who heads the Department of Computer and Software Engineering at Athlone Institute of Technology.

According to Dr Fallon, who is also the founder of the Software Research Institute at Athlone Institute of Technology, such collaborations create “rich opportunities” for undergraduate and postgraduate students.

The formation of the research lab exemplifies how close collaboration between the academic institution and industry can create both commercial and academic benefit, the former Ericsson software engineer adds.

The NPD Group, which is headquartered in Long Island, New York, opened its global IT and operations centre in Athlone in 2010. Dermot Ainsworth, the general manager of The NPD Group, Athlone, credits the “deep talent pool of well-educated and multilingual people” as a key influencing factor in the decision to relocate.

“ We have a demonstrated track record of engagement with industry and this collaboration serves to further illustrate what can be achieved through our close links with local companies. ”

The NPD Group, which operates in 26 countries and is a leading provider of consumer and retail market research solutions globally, has already undertaken a series of projects in artificial intelligence and data analytics.

Welcoming the formation of the ICT research lab, Dr Sean Lyons, Dean of Faculty of Engineering and Informatics at Athlone Institute of Technology, said: “We have a demonstrated track record of engagement with industry and this collaboration serves to further illustrate what can be achieved through our close links with local companies.”

The ICT technology lab will employ 10 staff and PhD students.



ATHLONE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY EAST



Arran Chemical Company Backs **Green Chemistry PhD Project** at AIT

AIT has teamed up with an Athlone-based fine chemical company to investigate greener and more economical alternatives to chemical production methods.

Arran Chemical Company, which is a member of the Almac Group and has a premises in Monksland Industrial Estate, is supporting the four-year, industrial PhD project.

The research will be undertaken by Hong Ann Gan, a recipient of AIT's President's Doctoral Scholarship (2020). Originally from Malaysia, Hong recently completed a Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Medicinal Chemistry and Chemical Biology at UCD, achieving a first-class honours degree.

Hong will be jointly supervised by Dr Sean Reidy and Dr Noreen Morris, both chemistry lecturers at AIT, in collaboration with Professor Tom Moody and Dr Peter Cairns of Arran Chemical Company and Almac.

Commencing in October 2020, the project will attempt to uncover "greener alternatives to chemical production methods for the synthesis of oxidative products" – an under resourced and under studied area. The project is expected to produce technology of interest to both the pharmaceutical and fine chemical industry.

"We are delighted to be supporting AIT once again and look forward to working together over the next four years," Professor Tom Moody commented. "Almac will supply the college with all the necessary biocatalysts needed for this investigation and, of course, guidance and expertise from our specialists in this field."

According to Dr Sean Reidy, the project has the exciting prospect of exposing both the student and supervisors to new and exciting areas of research. "A collaboration with Arran Chemical Company, an established global chemical company with a wealth of experience which works with clients globally, will raise the profile of AIT as a base of R&D excellence and lead to further opportunities for collaborative research in the future," he explained.

AIT and Arran Chemical Company have carried out a wide variety of projects on the synthesis and separation of chiral amines, with this being the second PhD research project to come from the unique academia - industry collaboration.

The first project, initiated last summer and focused on the use of biocatalysis in the asymmetric synthesis of chiral amines and diamines, is being undertaken by Tullamore-native Lauryn Bracken as part of her PhD studies. Lauryn is a recipient of AIT's President's Doctoral Scholarship (2019).



APT Collaborates with Industry to 'Fast-Track' PPE Production

Applied Polymer Technologies (APT), an Enterprise Ireland-funded Technology Gateway hosted by the Materials Research Institute at Athlone Institute of Technology, teamed up with industry to develop personal protective equipment (PPE) for frontline healthcare workers.

APT, which was set-up to support Ireland's €2 billion polymer industry, has donated a state-of-the-art injection moulding machine to Total Plastic Solutions, a Limerick-based company, who are using it to mass produce face visors for HSE staff.

The Total Plastic Solutions team is using the Zhafir Zeres Haitian injection moulding machine, which was originally supplied to APT by DG Systems, to "fast-track" the development of these visors. The visors will help protect wearers from COVID-19.

Sam Foley, who owns Total Plastic Solutions, explains: "The initial prototypes were 3D printed items, but as expediency was key to the struggle, we (Abbey Moulding Contractors Ltd and Total Plastic Solution Ltd) dedicated our team to design and build an injection moulding tool to enable production volumes of the visors to be produced at our site in Dromcollogher, Co Limerick.

"The process, from concept through tool design and build to producing high volumes, took 10 days. I would like to thank Danny Gleeson and the staff of DG Systems and APT for providing the moulding machine and associated equipment on short notice."

Engineering is a key component in the design and manufacture of many of the critical devices needed in the fight against COVID-19. AIT and APT continues to support the industry during this period with the supply of services and manufacturing equipment as requested.

Danny Gleeson, who is the managing director at DG Systems, added: "DG Systems is delighted to support this vital initiative by providing the necessary moulding and ancillary equipment to progress this project to fruition. Protecting frontline workers in these extraordinary times is paramount and we are more than happy to play our part."

Virtual Speech and Language Therapy Could Help Stroke Victims Find Words

A researcher from AIT's Software Research Institute is exploring how immersive technologies, such as augmented and virtual reality (AR/VR), can be used to help stroke victims find words.

Conor Keighrey, a PhD candidate, is applying these technologies to healthcare with the goal of helping people with aphasia, a type of language impairment brought on by stroke, recover their speech.

Using a game development engine, the Ballinasloe-native has created a multimedia speech and language assessment capable of testing semantic memory – a type of long-term memory that stores general information about the world.

The speech and language assessment, which is ordinarily paper-based, manifests as a virtual speech and language therapist who examines users' ability to understand image and word pairings.

Delivered through AR and VR headsets and a hand-held tablet device, users are shown a sequence of images, such as an eye, and asked to match it to its bedfellow - in this case a pair of glasses.

When users select the correct answer, they hear positive affirmations from the virtual speech and language therapist. With VR, the user is fully immersed in the experience; with AR, information is superimposed on a real-world environment.

Curious to understand users' experiences of these immersive technologies more fully, the PhD candidate decided to measure their physiological responses during the virtual speech and language therapy.

"As part of the experimental methodology, I captured and reported physiological measures of stress, such as electrodermal activity and heart rate, and application interaction events to gain significant insight into user performance," he says.

In the future we may be able to use VR to transport students to a virtual classroom environment where they can interact with visual content as they learn about science and history.

His findings were recently published in IEEE Transactions on Multimedia - the world's leading journal for multimedia research - and suggest that AR and tablet users benefit most from the experience.

"These results demonstrate how embracing new and emerging technologies can unlock a variety of untapped metrics which can deliver a more holistic overview of assessment performance to a speech and language pathologist," he explains.

According to the 33-year-old Galway man, the transformative potential of immersive technologies in how we acquire skills and experience, and explore hard-to-grasp concepts, is starting to be recognised.

"The importance of these technologies has never been greater. Students across the world are utilising e-learning platforms and video conferencing rooms to attend lectures due to the current COVID-19 pandemic," he says.

"In the future we may be able to use VR to transport students to a virtual classroom environment where they can interact with visual content as they learn about science and history."

He's quick to note that the power of AR shouldn't be underestimated either. "Some universities are using AR headsets to assist in the training of future nurses and doctors," he explains. "These devices can be used to provide an interactive and immersive experience of human anatomy alongside lectures."

"Conor's research has contributed fundamental knowledge in user perceptual quality of multimedia experiences," says supervisor Dr Niall Murray, who is a leading researcher in the field of immersive technologies and a Science Foundation Ireland Funded Investigator in the ADAPT and CONFIRM centres.

"Getting a paper published in the top ranked multimedia journal in the world is a huge achievement and a testament to the quality of research ongoing in Athlone Institute of Technology. The peer review process for IEEE Transactions on Multimedia is incredibly stringent."

"This is a significant milestone for Conor as he enters the final stages of his PhD. I look forward to supporting him in the next steps of his career and would like on behalf of his co-supervisor Dr Ronan Flynn and myself to congratulate him on this fantastic achievement."

An early access version of his paper, entitled "A Physiology-based QoE Comparison of Interactive Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality and Tablet-based Applications" is available on IEEE Xplore and the AIT Research Repository (Open Access).



AIT Researchers **Awarded €2 Million** for Advanced R&D Equipment

APT and COMAND are two of the most successful centres of R&D excellence working with industry nationally.

Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) researchers have received €2 million from Enterprise Ireland's Capital Fund for highly specialist equipment this past year.

Building on the phenomenal success of their previous application, researchers recently secured an additional €830,000 for cutting-edge research and development equipment for the institute's two Enterprise Ireland technology gateways - APT and COMAND.

APT, which provides polymer technology solutions for companies in the medical, composite, recycling and pharmaceutical sectors and is housed within AIT's Materials Research Institute, was awarded the bulk of the funding, €600,000.

The equipment, which has applications in the pharmaceutical and packaging industries, consists of a planetary roller extruder, a 3D solid imaging system and a scanning thermal microscope with nano thermal analysis capabilities.

The funding will further enable Athlone Institute of Technology to address the needs of Ireland's €2 billion plastics industry through world-class consultancy, upskilling, and new research and development techniques.

"This funding will help us to support companies interested in trying out cutting-edge technologies and novel polymer techniques - all of which advances our industrial partners' own innovation agendas," Dr Noel Gately, APT gateway manager, explained.

"On top of that, these state-of-the-art technologies will also be used to upskill companies - whether that be through short term training courses, master's degrees or PhDs - where they feel there is a need or a gap in their knowledge."

The significant funding received from Enterprise Ireland this past year is a huge endorsement of the work that our researchers are carrying out in support of local and national industry.

Welcoming the funding, Dr Ian Major, a principle investigator within the Materials Research Institute, said: “Planetary extrusion compounding is a new addition to our services and will enable us to produce new compounds from heat-sensitive polymers - such as bio-sourced bioplastics.

“These new compounds can then be used in the production of biodegradable packaging and other green products. The technology can be also be utilised in other sectors, including medical and pharma, where heat-sensitive polymers are important materials.”

“ **The funding will further enable AIT to address the needs of Ireland’s €2 billion plastics industry through world-class consultancy, upskilling, and new research and development techniques.** ”

Gavin Keane, a research design engineer with CISD - the design arm of the Materials Research Institute, was also successful in the funding application for state-of-the-art R&D equipment.

The new 3D printing system, funded by Enterprise Ireland, will play a vital role in design, prototyping, and manufacturing services within AIT. Our design team is delighted with this opportunity to continue to grow at pace and offer our customers faster turnaround times in the newest materials 3D printing has to offer.

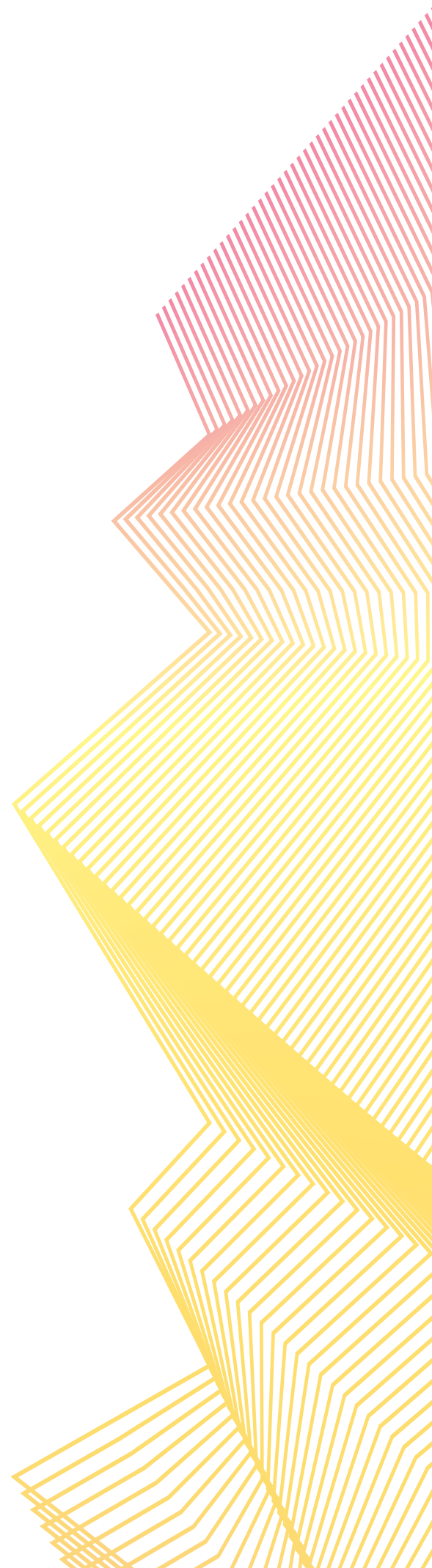
“The significant funding received from Enterprise Ireland this past year is a huge endorsement of the work that our researchers are carrying out in support of local and national industry,” added Dr Declan Devine, Director of the Materials Research Institute.

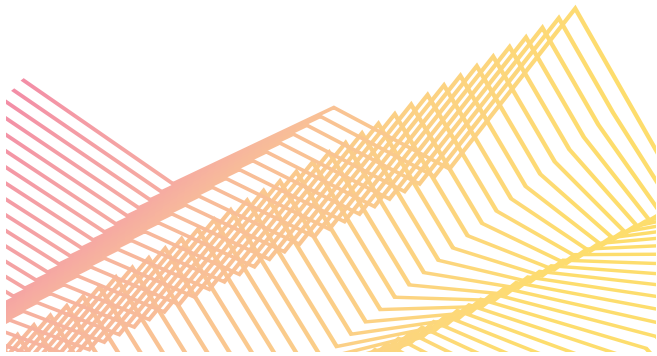
“Specifically, the scanning thermal microscope funded under the current call will enable us to offer unique testing capabilities in the fields of food packaging and the analysis of pharmaceutical solid dispersions.”

COMAND, which is an open access point for industry and is located within AIT’s Software Research Institute, has also been awarded €240,000 in capital funding to facilitate the purchase of an immersive extended reality (XR) suite with user experience sensing capabilities.

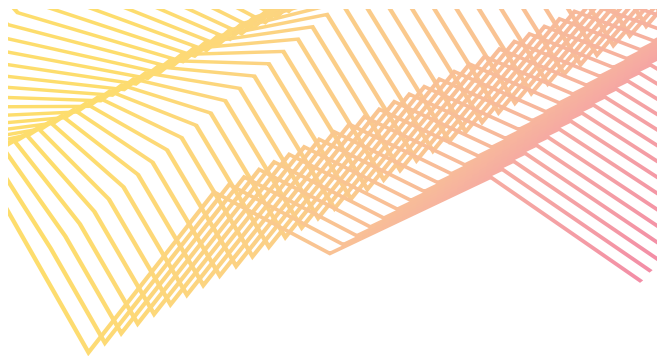
According to Dr Niall Murray, a leading researcher in the field of immersive technologies and a lecturer at AIT, the XR suite will allow for “understanding” via sensing in health, education, tourism, and manufacturing.

Dr Murray, who is also a Science Foundation Ireland-funded investigator in the ADAPT and CONFIRM national research centres, says the cutting-edge technology will be of huge benefit to both industry and postgraduate students studying at the college.





Faculty Successes





AIT Launches Food Business and Technology Degree to Service Rapidly Growing Sector.

Midlands' food manufacturing sector is "crying out for graduates"

Athlone Institute of Technology developed the Midlands' first food business and technology degree to meet demand for graduates in the exciting, multidisciplinary area of food processing and manufacturing – a rapid growth sector with more jobs than graduates to fill them.

Combining food science and technology, the new four-year programme will prepare graduates for largescale production environments, such as the type found in Panelto Foods in Co. Longford or Carroll's Cuisine in Tullamore – two of the largest employers in the region.

"The scale of food production in places like Panelto is enormous - they manufacture 35,000 loaves of bread per hour! Similarly, Carroll's Cuisine supplies ham to some of Ireland's largest supermarkets - Lidl, Aldi and Dunnes Stores. These are the companies our graduates will segue into – the industry is crying out for them," Dr Anthony Johnston, who heads AIT's hospitality department, explained.

Graduates from this new, cutting-edge food science degree will be in high demand across a vast swathe of the Irish food manufacturing sector.

Nationally, food processing and manufacturing employs 42,000 people with Ireland's wider agri-food sector pulling in an annual turnover in excess of €26 billion. For the past two decades, food ingredients have driven growth in the industry with exports more than doubling from €5.6 billion to €12.6 billion. This makes it one of the most important indigenous manufacturing sectors, a sector which is projected to grow by 23,000 jobs by 2025.

Despite food manufacturing being one of the largest employers across the Midlands, with tens of thousands of people working in dairies, bakeries, meat producers and in additive production, no such third level food-related course exists locally necessitating students to travel to Cork or Dublin

"We developed this degree in recognition of the growing needs of the region's food manufacturing sector with the view to supplying them with a talent pipeline of graduates versed in manufacturing automation and food science, but also equipped with strong marketing, accounting and leadership skills," Dr Johnston said.

Work placement will form an integral part of the food business and technology degree, ensuring that graduates enjoy a smooth transition from studying to work and are 'industry-ready'. The work placement component of the degree will be split into two – an initial three-month stint followed by a later six-month placement - and will act as a gateway for industry to both identify and recruit talent.

Nationally, food processing and manufacturing employs 42,000 people with Ireland's wider agri-food sector pulling in an annual turnover in excess of €26 billion.

Incorporating three strands: food processing, technology business management and professional development, the degree will cover areas like food factory design, processing engineering, food security, quality management and food safety, with classes delivered on campus in a variety of settings, including laboratories, kitchens, IT suites and lecture halls.

Graduates of this programme can expect to carve out careers in all areas of food manufacturing, including business management, operations management, technology, processing and new product development – bringing a new product from conception to execution - and will achieve strong managerial level salaries.

"The programme might suit someone coming from a farming background, someone who has grown up around the food industry and has a familiarity with and an interest in food. The skills gleaned from this programme are transferable and would be hugely beneficial to someone looking to work in large food manufacturing companies or, indeed, interested in pursuing their own entrepreneurial journey," Dr Johnston finished.

Praising the institute's industry-focussed approach to education, Cyril Brody, head of technical for Carroll's Cuisine, said: "We're delighted to collaborate with Athlone Institute of Technology in developing the Midlands' first food technology and business degree.

The Irish agri-food sector is growing exponentially and as one of the largest employers in the region, we require a steady stream of industry-ready graduates. Graduates from this new, cutting-edge food science degree will be in high demand across a vast swathe of the Irish food manufacturing sector."



Renewed Interest in Culinary Arts Programmes to Offset Chef Shortage

Ninety students elected to study culinary arts at Athlone Institute of Technology this September - enrolling across a range of Springboard+ courses, part-time and full-time undergraduate courses, professional development pastry and bread-making and sugar craft courses.

According to Dr Anthony Johnston, who heads the Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure at AIT, this renewed interest in culinary arts programmes will help address local industry needs and the skills shortage in the Midlands region.

“As the sole provider of hospitality and tourism education in the Midlands, we are responsible for producing a high calibre talent pipeline of chefs and other hospitality staff who go on to work in some of the country’s finest hotels and restaurants.

“Unfortunately, many of Ireland’s most prestigious and widely acclaimed hotels and restaurant are being forced to recruit directly from abroad to find suitably qualified staff because there simply isn’t enough Irish graduates to fill these positions.

“We’ve taken steps to address the skills and labour shortage through a series of initiatives designed to incentivise students to pursue a career in the hospitality and tourism industry. We’ve received tremendous support from local employers in this endeavour, but we still have a way to go,” Dr Johnston explained.

One such employer that supported the institute in its efforts to offset the skills and labour shortage is the Radisson Blu who sponsored a series of scholarships valued at €1,000 for incoming first-year students.

“They wanted to pinpoint and nurture up-and-coming talent within the hospitality and tourism industry so that they could secure talent for employment in their hotels. This ensured that they got access to the best people early on – it was an incredibly progressive initiative,” Dr Johnston explained.

Other initiatives, such as Springboard+, contributed to the enrolment of 75 students across a range of free training courses in culinary skills and food and beverage operations earlier this year.

“This year, Athlone Institute of Technology was awarded significant funding to provide hospitality courses and we hope to continue this momentum into the future to ensure we can attract and retain the best hospitality talent in the region,” Dr Johnston said.

Currently, in excess of 8,400 people are employed in the hospitality and tourism industry in the Midlands, a number that’s growing year-on-year thanks to tourism stimulus initiatives such as Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands and Ireland’s Ancient East. That number is expected to rise to nearly 10,000 by 2020, thanks to Centre Parcs Longford Forest, the largest private tourism development in the history of the state.

Technology Impacting Legal Practice Seminar



Legal practitioners and academics at the forefront of technological change and innovation in Ireland delivered a series of talks in AIT intended to update students and fellow practitioners on evolving skill requirements and new career opportunities in the legal profession. Speakers explored the relationship between technology and the bar, a traditionally conservative institution that has been slow to adopt new technological tools. Technology and transparency in litigation as a form of legal aid was also discussed.

Following the talks, attendees engaged in a workshop to determine how legal educators should react to technological disruption in legal services. "It's imperative that we respond to changes happening across the sector and adapt our educational provision accordingly to ensure we're adequately equipping our students with the skills needed for the jobs of the future," Alison Hough, barrister and law lecturer at Athlone Institute of Technology explained.

"Technology can be used to enhance legal practitioner's work and is changing the job of the lawyer in many respects. In the UK for example, most legal practices are using artificial intelligence, smart contract technology and e-discovery whereas in Ireland it is only the big firms that have offices abroad that have adopted new technologies. A roundtable discussion detailing the needs of legal practitioners will be immensely helpful in determining which computer science modules or additional legal skills training we need to add to the curricula."

This event was funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

Data Analytics MSc Students Take a Trip to Microsoft's Irish Headquarters

A group of students from the full-time Master of Science in Data Analytics programme visited Microsoft's headquarters in Dublin. The students enjoyed a particularly informative and lively presentation from Martin Perry, group manager, who is responsible for reporting and analytics services. During his presentation, Martin spoke about the need not only for digital literacy, but also data literacy, topic of particular significance for these students.

After a tour of the campus, Stephen Howell, academic lead and accessibility evangelist for Microsoft, made a presentation detailing some of the work being undertaken at Microsoft in Dublin, in addition to speaking about career options.

Head of Department of Accounting and Business Dr Trevor Prendergast commented that visiting industry giants such as Microsoft affords students the opportunity to extend their learning beyond the classroom and to gain an insight into real-world applications of data analytics. In addition, it also gave students an insight into career possibilities that are available to them once they graduate.





AIT Students Collaborate with Industry on Live Digital Marketing Projects

Athlone Institute of Technology once again partnered with Midlands-based companies to help them fill their digital marketing resource gaps using final year students' knowledge of cutting-edge digital marketing methods as part of an innovative 'live' capstone project.

The hugely successful initiative gives the students the chance to work with real businesses, helping them set and achieve strategic digital marketing goals all the while gaining invaluable, hands-on, industry-relevant experience.

"We designed this programme with the digital needs of industry firmly in mind. There is a significant skills gap and not enough technically adept graduates to drive the digital needs of businesses forward," Louise Murray, marketing lecturer at Athlone Institute of Technology, explained.

The digital marketing capstone project, which is run over two semesters, tasks students with bringing an idea quite literally 'from conception to execution' with full buy-in from their client. To support this process and feed and inform the formulation of their digital marketing strategy, students will undertake a variety of practical and theoretical modules.

Mark Lynch, a recent graduate of the Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Digital Marketing programme who worked with Henshaw Eyewear – an up-and-coming eyewear brand worn by Shawn Mendes among other celebrities, credits the capstone project with giving him the edge when it came to applying for jobs.

"Working with a real business - helping them set and achieve strategic digital marketing goals – gave me invaluable, industry-relevant experience to add to my portfolio. It gave me huge confidence that I'd been equipped with the skills, competencies and experience necessary to carve out a successful career in digital marketing," the now inbound marketing associate with Dot Dynamic in Co Longford, said.

This year, 10 companies, out of a pool of 70, participated in the programme. Among them, Alexion Pharmaceuticals, McGargles Beer (River Rye Brewing Company), Neueda Technologies, Shannonside FM, Athlone Golf Club, Kingsize Big and Tall, Seery's Cash and Carry, the Hodson Bay Group, Athlone Chamber of Commerce and Steripack Ireland.

"We're delighted to team up with Athlone Institute of Technology to enhance our digital marketing activities and amplify our communications. The digital marketing capstone project is a really fresh, innovative idea that allows students to gain that industry-relevant experience while still at college and in return offers high-quality solutions to local businesses," Alejandro Muñoz Espiago, Director of Technology with SteriPack Ireland, said.

The project, which is split into two phases, sees students develop and implement a digital marketing strategy from scratch - with support from experienced digital marketing and business lecturers. In semester one, students extensively research their partner company and carry out an analysis of their current digital marketing activity after which point, they begin implementing their digital marketing strategy.

Cambridge Fellow Delivers Guest Lecture to Pharmaceutical Science Students

Dr Coyne is world renowned for his use of fragment-based drug discovery for the treatment of infectious disease.

A Cambridge fellow and alumnus of Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) returned to his alma mater to deliver the first in a series of exciting guest lectures to final-year pharmaceutical science students.

Dr Anthony Coyne, who graduated from AIT in 1996 with a degree in analytical chemistry, covered the intricacies of green, sustainable chemistry and the use of water in organic chemical reaction.

The guest lecture, delivered via Zoom Education, detailed the pros and cons of using water as a solvent and the benefit to industry in terms of cost, environmental issues, safety issues, and scale up.

Dr Coyne is a Fellow of Christ's College at the University of Cambridge and a senior research associate focussed on drug discovery.

Upon graduating from AIT, Dr Coyne went on to complete a PhD in synthetic organic chemistry at NUI Galway before working in industry and then embarking on an exciting career in academia.

"Anthony is world renowned for his work on the use of fragment-based drug discovery seeking treatment for infectious diseases," explained Jim Roche, lecturer in pharmaceutical sciences at AIT.

Every year, AIT invites speakers who have gone on to achieve a positive impact within the pharmaceutical industry to participate in an annual seminar series for the module Contemporary Issues in Pharmaceutical Sciences.

"These seminars represent the ultimate inspiration for current students," Mr Roche said. "They get to witness first-hand (and get to question) graduates who themselves are always appreciative of the framework of cross-sectional theoretical and practical knowledge they were grounded within while studying at AIT."

"It is absolutely superb to see a former student reach such lofty heights in his career. Both lecturers and students benefited hugely from Dr Coyne's lecture on synthetic organic chemistry," remarked Dr Noreen Morris, an organic chemistry lecturer in AIT. "It was really interesting to be the student and not the lecturer for a change!" she added.

The Contemporary Issues in Pharmaceutical Sciences module aims to match students' transferable skills with current demand in the jobs market and within the research community in AIT and beyond, principally through guest lectures from industry experts, regulatory specialists and those with advanced academic attainments.

Professor Tom Moody, the Vice President of Technology Development and Commercialisation at global pharmaceutical company ALMAC, will be giving a guest lecture as part of the seminar series later this semester.

Previous speakers include Dr Barbara Cooper of Jazz Pharmaceuticals, Dr Helen Hamilton from Abbot Longford, Gráinne Ryan of Alexion, and Aaron McKeown (formerly of the Marine Institute).

Students Learn to 'Restart a Heart' and Save a Life with the Irish Heart Foundation



AIT teamed up with the Irish Heart Foundation to teach students and staff how to restart a heart and save a life at a free 'Hands for Life' CPR training. The event was part of a global initiative to raise awareness of CPR.

CPR is a lifesaving skill that involves pressing hard and fast on a person's chest and can double, if not triple, their chance of survival. People who are trained in CPR - an easy skill to learn - are 10 times more likely to respond and assist in the event of an emergency.

"The time between an incident occurring and emergency help arriving is critical and knowing how to react could save a life. Most cardiac arrests happen at home, so the chances that you will be using your CPR skills on family or friends is high," Lisa Hanlon, Healthy Campus co-ordinator at AIT, explained.

Echoing the importance of attending one of the training sessions, Brigid Sinnott, Resuscitation Manager with the Irish Heart Foundation, said: "Every day, 13 people in Ireland die from a cardiac arrest. Colleges are an ideal setting to educate young adults and local communities in CPR and reduce the incidences of death from cardiac arrest. CPR is a lifesaving skill that everyone can learn."

Four training sessions were held throughout the day in the MPH building, with each one accommodating 90 people.

Industry-Driven MSc in Data Analytics is Bridging the Skills Gap in Ireland

Today's digital economy is characterised by the generation and commodification of one key intangible asset - data. Every second, massive quantities of data are being produced via a wide range of connected devices - from mobile phones to smart cars to medical devices.

These devices act as a conduit through which startling insights into human behaviour can be revealed. Making sense of this data has become increasingly important to organisations and businesses who employ wide scale data collection techniques as a way of gaining strategic and competitive advantages in the online advertising space.

While the principles of data analytics emerged from the field of computer science and mathematics, the range of uses to which it can be put are only beginning to be realised.

"Big data era is characterised by not only the volume of data but the sheer velocity at which it is generated. Making sense of and deriving value from this data is a key skill in demand in this new data-driven economy," Trevor Prendergast, who is head of the Department of Accounting and Business Computing at AIT, said.

Internationally, demand for data analysts is also on the rise with projected demand of 28% expected by 2020.

The global data economy is growing at an exponential rate with approximately 2.5 quintillion bytes of data being produced daily. This number is likely to double every two years with the emergence of new technologies and devices driven by Moore's Law.

As far as Mr Prendergast is concerned, this makes data a more valuable commodity than oil. "Just like oil, data needs to be extracted, refined and stored to generate value but unlike oil, data originates from a surprisingly vast array of sources.

The axiom, value is determined by scarcity, is therefore turned on its head. In the digital network economy, value is instead determined by the economics of abundance," he explained.

Demand for suitably qualified graduates is soaring at home and abroad to the extent that data analytics is one of the few areas where demand for graduates is exceeding supply.

The Irish Government has positioned Ireland as the Big

Data Capital of Europe, the express intention of which is to create significant employment opportunities. Internationally, demand for data analysts is also on the rise with projected demand of 28% expected by 2020.

In response to this skill gap, Athlone Institute of Technology has developed an industry-focussed, contemporary master's programme designed to furnish graduates with the skills and aptitudes necessary to excel in the emerging field of big data and data analytics.

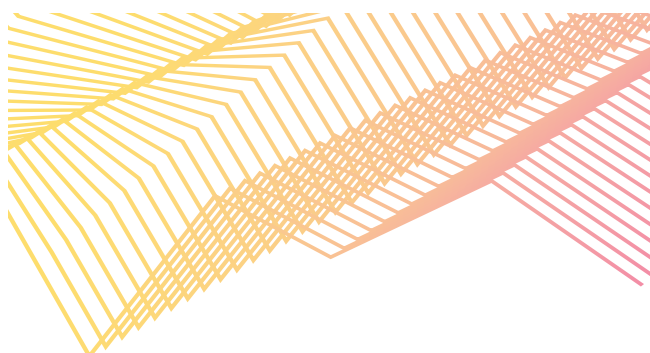
The two-year, part-time programme will introduce students to a range of skills and software in the areas of data manipulation and management, techniques to manage this data and ultimately, analytics methodologies that can elicit meaningful insights from large data sets.

AIT has developed an industry-focussed, contemporary master's programme designed to furnish graduates with the skills and aptitudes necessary to excel in the emerging field of big data and data analytics.

The Master of Science, which commenced in January 2020, is open to graduates from a wide array of cognate disciplines, including those with an engineering, science or business background. Classes are delivered online, with the occasional workshop hosted on-campus.

The programme will see students develop their skills in areas, including database technologies, data manipulation languages including SQL and the R programming language, programming for Big Data, statistics and probability and the interpretation of data.

Students will also be required to undertake a practical data analytics project and associated thesis. The ultimate goal of the programme is to provide industry with data-savvy practitioners capable of gleaning insights from vast quantities of data for the purposes of operational and strategic decision making.





AIT science graduates were awarded top prizes at a recent national science conference dedicated to promoting undergraduate STEM research across the technological higher education landscape.

Westmeath native Carina Hardy, a recent Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Toxicology graduate, was named 'Best Oral Presenter' at the national Science Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE) conference for her investigation into the role mitochondrial toxicity plays in adverse drug reactions.

Ms Hardy's research, which was supervised by Dr Neasa Kinsella, a distinguished toxicologist and now retired lecturer from Athlone Institute of Technology's Department of Life and Physical Sciences, was noted as having 'potentially profound' implications for future drug discovery and development.

Another recent graduate, Emma Kane, was also awarded one of the top four prizes at the SURE conference for her investigation into the iodine intake of women of childbearing age.

Ms Kane, whose research was supervised Dr Patricia Heavey, the course co-ordinator of Athlone Institute of Technology's Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Health Science with Nutrition, discovered that many women were not meeting their dietary recommendation for iodine, despite it being essential for health - especially during pregnancy.

SURE gives recent graduates the opportunity to showcase the key skills they developed through their final year research project, such as data analysis, critical thinking, problem solving, scientific writing and science communication, evidence of which is consistently demanded by both industrial and academic employers.

Low dairy intakes and the increased popularity of milk alternatives and vegan diets could be the culprit, she revealed. The Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Health Science with Nutrition graduate was awarded 'Best Poster Presentation Runner-up' for her efforts.

The hugely successful SURE conference is Ireland's first national conference dedicated to the enhancement of scientific practice, training and research excellence at undergraduate level across the technological higher education sector.

According to then Minister of State for Higher Education Mary Mitchell O'Conner, who attended the conference, the SURE Network is a "shining example" of what can be achieved when the sector works together to share experiences and build capacity.

A recent Ibec report listed communication and literacy skills among the most important graduate attributes that employers look for. The success of the SURE conferences demonstrate that Athlone Institute of Technology graduates have these skills in abundance.

She said the strength of the SURE Network is due to the institutional partnerships upon which it is formed and stressed its importance in continuing to highlight the depth and breadth of research taking place at undergraduate level.

The minister also pointed to the transformation happening across the sector with institutes of technology applying to become technological universities. She said she believes it will present "exciting opportunities for research and innovation" going forward.

Dr Therese Montgomery, a lecturer in the Department of Life and Physical Sciences at Athlone Institute of Technology and chair of the national SURE Curriculum committee, also commented: "SURE gives recent graduates the opportunity to showcase the key skills they developed through their final year research project, such as data analysis, critical thinking, problem solving, scientific writing and science communication, evidence of which is consistently demanded by both industrial and academic employers.

"Based upon the success of this year's conferences, it is clear that the undergraduate students across the technological education sector are generating applied research of sufficiently high quality to impact upon human health and the environment, laying the foundations for future research funding initiatives and publication through the SURE Undergraduate Research Experience Journal."

Dr Anne Marie O'Brien, who along with Dr Montgomery, lecturers in the Department of Life and Physical Sciences at Athlone Institute of Technology and co-organised the inaugural SURE conference last year, added:

Nine other recent graduates of Athlone Institute of Technology were selected to present their final year research at this year's SURE conference which took place across three venues simultaneously - TU Dublin, IT Carlow and IT Sligo.

Presentation topics were incredibly varied, ranging from the toxicity of common food additives, aspirin stability, the environmental impact of intense dairy farming, and the impact of the sugar tax, to the development of novel delivery systems for folic acid, and the development of novel ecotoxicological tests for the detection of fresh water pollutants.



AIT Retains Prestigious APS Accreditation for Pharmaceutical Sciences

AIT has retained its prestigious Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences (APS) accreditation – a quality mark it received in 2018 for its Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Pharmaceutical Sciences.

The accreditation has been reaffirmed and extended until 2023 when it will be reviewed again by the APS Board. The third level institute is currently the only provider in Ireland to have been awarded such prestigious accreditation and the second globally.

“Having this prestigious accreditation reaffirmed and extended is a testament to the quality of the curriculum and the hard work and dedication of our academics, each of whom has worked tirelessly to create a comprehensive, rigorous programme of study and an intellectually stimulating learning environment for students,” said Dr Don Faller, Dean of the Faculty of Science and Health at AIT.

The unique multidisciplinary programme, which covers chemical-based and next-generation biotech-based therapeutics and their formulation into safe and effective medicines of high and durable quality, is enjoying increasing attention from both Irish and international students.

Students explore new generation technologies, such as nano-encapsulation and stimuli-sensitive polymers, to determine which are most suitable for drug delivery.

Using sophisticated apparatus and instrumentation, graduates of the four-year degree develop the skills and competence required to enter the pharmaceutical industry.

There are significant employment opportunities for suitably qualified graduates from this programme - particularly in the Midlands, which is a locus for many pharma and healthcare companies.

In its initial assessment of the four-year honours degree, the APS accreditation panel commended the programme's practical and professional skills modules and noted the positivity and enthusiasm espoused by currently enrolled students.

The BSc (Hons) in Pharmaceutical Sciences is also recognised for professional graduate admission to the Institute of Chemistry of Ireland (GradICI), the professional body representing chemists in Ireland.

The Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences (APS) is an esteemed UK-based professional membership body for pharmaceutical scientists.

AIT Nutrition and Health Science Degree Receives Seal of Approval

AIT has received prestigious Association for Nutrition (AfN) programme accreditation for its Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Nutrition and Health Science.

The honours bachelor's degree, which emphasises experiential learning and is unique in its dual focus, is one of only four AfN-accredited programmes offered throughout the Republic of Ireland.

From September 2020, students who enter the nutrition and health science programme will be eligible to apply for direct entry to the UKVRN as Registered Associate Nutritionists (ANutr).

“We are delighted that the BSc (Hons) in Nutrition and Health Science has been accredited by the Association for Nutrition,” Dr Patricia Heavey, a registered nutritionist and programme coordinator, enthused.

“This is a strong nutrition science programme, and students can be assured that under the guidance of registered nutritionists, they are gaining the relevant knowledge, skills and competencies that are integral to the nutrition profession.

Our past graduates have gone on to pursue careers in nutrition communication, public health, the health sector, health promotion, research, food industry and organisational bodies.”

The BSc (Hons) degree takes a synergistic approach to nutrition and health science, providing students with a greater understanding of the vital role of nutrition in public health and health promotion initiatives.

The degree is based on the scientific and academic principles of biology, biochemistry, social and public health aspects of human nutrition, as well as encompassing emerging issues such as biotechnology, food sustainability and security.

The Association for Nutrition (AfN) is an international body which holds a register of competent, qualified nutrition professionals who meet its standards for scientific, evidence-based nutrition.

The AfN programme accreditation is a quality mark awarded to degree programmes that meet the high standards required by the AfN - which defines and advances standards of evidence-based practice across the field of nutrition.



AIT Awarded €6 Million to Provide Flexible Upskilling Opportunities

AIT was awarded €6 million in Springboard+ and HCI funding to deliver a wide range of free or partially funded upskilling opportunities to learners across the Midlands Region.

More than 900 places were available to prospective learners looking to upskill, change career or return to employment, with courses distributed across AIT's four facilities: Engineering and Informatics, Science and Health, Business and Hospitality and Continuing, Professional, Online and Distance Learning.

Of the funding, €4 million was allocated for this year, with a further €1.1 million designated for 2021 and 2022, respectively.

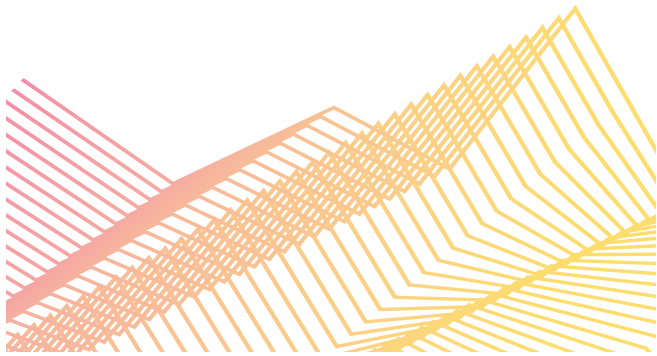
According to AIT President Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, this “significant amount” further demonstrates “AIT’s relevance to the upskilling requirements of the Midlands Region” and its role in “driving Ireland’s knowledge economy forward”.

The places are available across all levels of the national framework of qualifications, ranging from certificate (level 6), higher diploma (level 8) and postgraduate diploma (level 9) to graduate conversion diploma (level 9) and master’s degree (level 9).

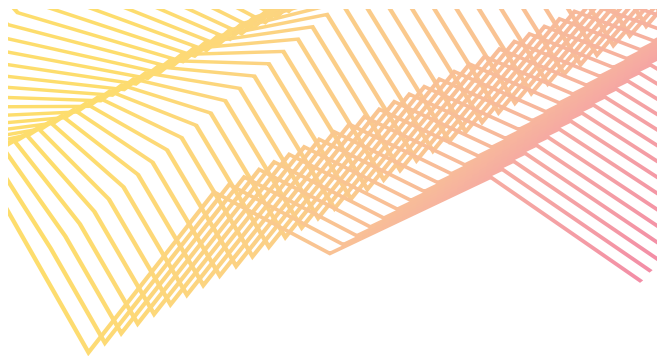
The funding will facilitate the delivery of 30 Springboard+ and seven HCI programmes; the HCI funding, which is spread across three years, is specifically for graduates looking to upskill in a new area of work through a postgraduate diploma.

AIT’s undergraduate and postgraduate course offering is developed in consultation with regional and national stakeholders. This is facilitated through the Midlands Industry and AIT Academic Collaboration Group and ensures that AIT is producing a talent pipeline of graduates equipped with the requisite skills and competencies to meet the growing needs of industry.

He continued: “Our objective is to continually improve our delivery channels, enabling a greater number of learners to access relevant and timely education while also enjoying the student experience - albeit remotely.”



Global Engagement



ersiti Kuala Lumpur



Run-EU Project Launches **Promoting Cooperation across Higher Education**

A new higher education network intended to increase cooperation between universities and institutes across Europe has launched.

The network, dubbed 'RUN-EU', will promote future and advanced skills necessary for social transformation across the European Union and give students the opportunity to obtain double/multiple degrees within the framework of a joint training programme.

A diverse range of teaching and learning actions will also be developed which will provide students with different international programmes (short-term and e-learning). International cooperation projects in the area of research and development will also be implemented.

RUN-EU will also promote the economic, social, cultural and sustainable development of the regions covered by the network, providing the necessary skills so that students, researchers and regional agents can successfully face the challenges of the future.

Eight higher education institutes have been selected to participate in the programme, among them Athlone Institute of Technology and Limerick Institute of Technology – who recently announced their intention to form Ireland's next technological university.

According to Dr Sean Lyons, Dean of Faculty of Engineering and Informatics at Athlone Institute of Technology, the consortium marks "an important step forward" in AIT's internationalisation strategy, forming deep thematic relationships with other higher education institutions across Europe who are also committed to delivering long lasting regional impacts.

"The RUN EU Initiative will enable AIT and LIT, our technological university consortium partners, to leverage international best practice, enable student and staff mobility while facilitating joint research and undergraduate programmes," he added.

"Our goal, as Ireland's next technological university, is to reflect the educational demands and economic needs of the communities we serve and cultivate a talent pipeline furnished with the skills and competencies necessary to succeed in today's expeditious innovation economy," explained Michelle McKeon Bennett, Dean of Faculty of Business and Hospitality, Athlone Institute of Technology.

"Partnerships, such as Run-EU, will aid us in achieving our technological education mission and provide new, exciting opportunities for all learners – including studying abroad, the benefits of which have been shown to greatly improve employment prospects, and for staff, teaching abroad boosts professional development."

An agreement was signed at the launch of the RUN-EU network which will govern the creation of the network and establish the lines of action of its alliance.

RUN-EU is an exceptional opportunity for like-minded regionally-based institutions across Europe to collaborate for the benefit of the regions they serve. In many ways, the transformation of Irish and European society can be most deeply felt in its regions and in regional cities.

"These are the locations where the effect of increased mobility and sustained regional development can most readily impact on everyday life. Through this project, the collaboration between LIT and AIT can produce a dividend for the development of both regions and provide us with some advantages in national and international contexts."

The RUN-EU launch event was attended by the Portuguese Secretary of State for Science, Technology and Higher Education, João Sobrinho Teixeira, by the Ambassador Pedro Lourtie, Deputy Permanent Representative of Portugal to the European Union, by the diplomatic representatives from Ireland, Hungary, Finland, the Netherlands and Austria, and also had the participation of some accredited assistants of the European Parliament.

The eight participating colleges include: Polytechnic of Leiria (Portugal), Polytechnic of Cávado and Ave (Portugal), Limerick Institute of Technology (Ireland), Athlone Institute of Technology (Ireland), Széchenyi István University (SZE) (Hungary), Häme University of Applied Sciences HAMK (Finland), NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences (Netherlands), and FH Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences (Austria).



Professor Ó Catháin Launches Joint Institute in Wuxi to Cater for Engineering Students

AIT President Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin and Director of Asia Jack Meng celebrated the launch of a new joint institute with Wuxi Institute of Technology at a state dinner in China.

Speaking at the dinner, Professor Ó Catháin said he looked forward to forging closer ties with Wuxi Institute of Technology and congratulated them on reaching their milestone 60th anniversary. He called it an “exciting time for higher education in both Ireland and China” as a greater number of students make use of their educational passport and consider studying abroad for all or part of their degree.

He added that Wuxi and Athlone have much in common and that he could see the potential to extend the co-operation between the two institutes to programmes in the areas of business, hospitality and tourism with the view to growing their respective tourism sectors.

He expressed his confidence in the success of the new joint institute with Wuxi Institute of Technology, explaining that Athlone Institute of Technology has a demonstrated track record of successfully delivering modules across joint bachelor’s degree programmes with other Chinese institutes.

“We have consistently enjoyed one of the highest approval ratings among Irish higher education institutes for Ministry of Education-approved bachelor’s degree programmes in China and have more than 1,800 students registered across our joint programmes with our partner institutes.”

Currently, AIT has six approved programmes across a range of disciplines, including software engineering, mechanical engineering, pharmaceutical sciences, graphic design, hotel management and civil engineering.

The first intake of students in the new joint institute will study computer engineering, mechanical engineering, mechatronics, and software engineering degree programmes.

“ We have consistently enjoyed one of the highest approval ratings among Irish higher education institutes for Ministry of Education-approved bachelor’s degree programmes in China and have more than 1,800 students registered across our joint programmes with our partner institutes. ”



**Education Mission: Canada's MacEwan University Students
Take a Trip to AIT**

A group of students and academics from MacEwan University in Edmonton, Canada visited Athlone Institute of Technology to learn about contemporary social care practices in Ireland and explore possible research synergies as part of an on-going educational co-operation agreement.

Currently enrolled in MacEwan University's BA (Hons) in Child and Youth Care, the 24 students attended a series of lectures with their Irish counterparts and participated in a range of activities associated with Athlone Institute of Technology's Applied Social Studies in Social Care programme.

Among the topics covered was the Irish child welfare and protection system – which provided fodder for a thoughtful discussion between Canadian and Irish students about the differences and similarities of their respective jurisdictions from a preventative perspective.

Students also considered the concept of social exclusion and discussed the value in hearing individual stories about disadvantage. Students were encouraged to listen to the experiences of marginalised individuals, so that they understand how to better support them in a social care context.

The Canadian students joined their Irish counterparts in exploring storytelling and its therapeutic uses, such as its potential to build attachments and help in the healing process. The workshop resulted in the students producing a collaborative poem which expressed their feelings on issues of great importance to them.

Over the course of their trip, the Canadian students also attended a lecture on disability and the importance of promoting inclusion. Wolfensberger's theory of Social Role Valorisation was discussed, which points to how people with disabilities are at risk of being devalued in society, and what can be done to counteract it.

“ We highly value our partnership with the Child and Youth Care Department in MacEwan University and look forward to building on mutual research interests to further consolidate the relationship. ”

Elsewhere, Caroline Nevin, a Traveller health worker with Westmeath Community Development Ltd. delivered a compelling guest lecture on the history of Travellers, Traveller culture and Traveller experiences of discrimination in Ireland. She spoke about her own heritage, describing how her strong family network is a hallmark of Traveller culture.

Accompanied by Dr Harman Murtagh, a local historian, the Canadian students rounded out their trip with a tour of Birr Castle. They learned about the famous Leviathan telescope and the pioneering discoveries of the Parsons family. “Our discussions were very fruitful, particularly our exploration of potential research synergies,” explained Oliver Hegarty, Head of Department of Social Sciences at Athlone Institute of Technology.

“We expect to see an increase in research activity over the next 3-5 years as plans to become a technological university, in collaboration with Limerick Institute of Technology, move at great pace.”

According to Dr Ashling Jackson, a senior lecturer within the department, the annual international visit provides a wonderful opportunity for Irish and Canadian students to interact and discuss their closely linked disciplines: social care and child and youth care. “We highly value our partnership with the Child and Youth Care Department in MacEwan University and look forward to building on mutual research interests to further consolidate the relationship,” she said.

“ We expect to see an increase in research activity over the next 3-5 years as plans to become a technological university, in collaboration with Limerick Institute of Technology, move at great pace. ”

Staff and students from MacEwan University have been making educational trips to AIT since 2010. The arrangement also promotes the bilateral movement of staff between Athlone and Edmonton and has given rise to a number of teaching exchanges in recent years. This year, as part of the MacEwan University visit, Dr Shemine Gulamhusein presented to the MA in Child and Youth Studies students on Diversity and Child and Youth Care in Canada, sharing invaluable and thought-provoking insights on Canadian experiences.

As part of its internationalisation strategy, Athlone Institute of Technology plans to increase the bilateral flow of students and staff between itself and its many partner universities around the world. According to Director of International Relations, Mary Simpson, studying abroad provides ample opportunity for students to improve their language skills, experience new cultures, and enhance their employment prospects.

An international experience gives students a competitive edge when applying for jobs following graduation. AIT students are interested in learning more about practices in the Canadian education system and such partnerships with MacEwan University will promote outward mobility of students when considering study abroad on international placement opportunities.

AIT Celebrates Chinese New Year 2020

Athlone Institute of Technology celebrated Chinese New Year on Thursday, 23 January with more than 400 students enjoying Asian cuisine, music and dance to mark the Spring Festival, which begins tomorrow Saturday, 25 January 2020.

Each Chinese New Year is characterised by one of 12 animals which appear in the Chinese zodiac. This year is the Year of the Rat which occupies the first position in the Chinese zodiac. People born in the Year of the Rat are thought to be clever, quick thinking and successful in their activities.

There are 180 Chinese students at AIT during academic year 2019-20 with visiting faculty and researchers from Chinese partner universities. Members of the Chinese Students Society and Asian Society introduced their customs to celebrate the Chinese New Year to students on campus. Restaurant staff at AIT prepared a range of Chinese cuisine for students to enjoy.

Addressing the students Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, President of Athlone Institute of Technology said: "AIT has long standing relationships with universities in China and we are delighted to celebrate the Chinese New Year with students from these partner universities in Athlone. Our students and staff enjoy learning about Chinese traditions during the Spring Festival. Ireland, like China, places strong emphasis on the family and people coming together to share their cultures during festival periods."

AIT has built long term relationships with Chinese partner universities in recent years in the areas of computer and software engineering, mechanical engineering, civil engineering, design, pharmaceutical science, hotel management, business and accounting.

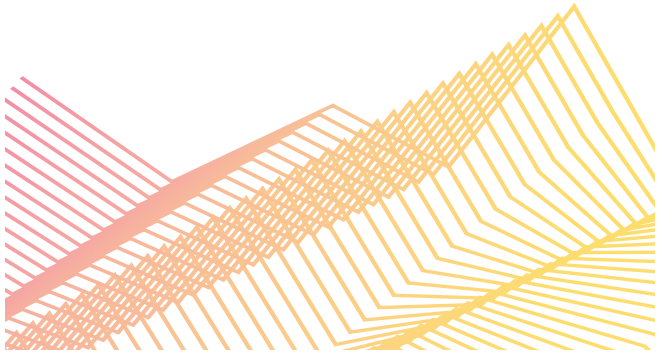
The universities with which it is associated are: Beijing University of Technology, Beijing; Capital University of Economics and Business, Beijing; Dongbei University of Finance and Economics; East China University of Technology, Southeast University, Capital University of Physical Education, Chaohu University, Luoyang Institute of Science and Technology and Jiangnan University, to name but a few.

Academic staff from the Faculties of Business and Hospitality, Engineering & Informatics and Life and Physical Sciences have visited these universities during the past year to discuss study abroad programmes.

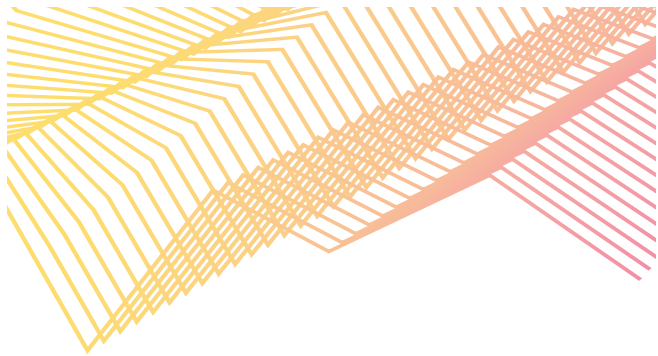
AIT students who wish to complete placement or semester abroad can choose one of these partner universities in China. Programmes are taught in English and students will have the opportunity to become familiar with Chinese culture and business.



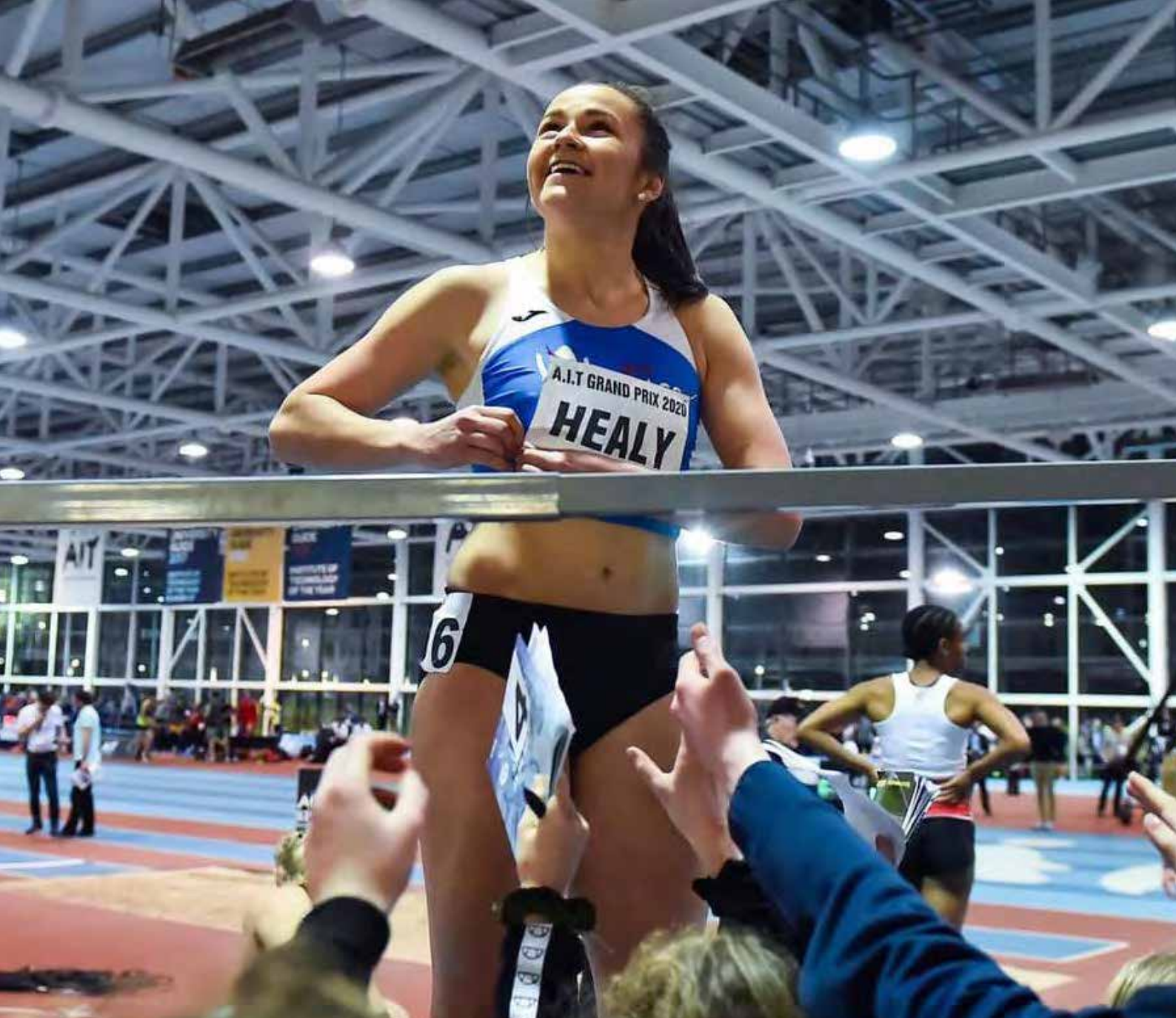




Sporting Successes







Phil Healy Smashes 17-Year-Old Irish Record at AIT Grand Prix 2020

All eyes were on home crowd favourite Phil Healy (IRE) as she led the line in the Hodson Bay Group Women's 200m at this year's AIT Grand Prix.

Healy ran a lightening time of 23:10 - the fastest run by a European athlete this season. In doing so, she broke an Irish record held for 17 years by Ciara Sheehy. Healy beat off stiff competition from national 200m champion Jessica Bianca-Wessoly (GER) who achieved a time of 23.71.

In a feat of incredible endurance, crowd pleaser and Irish Olympian in the making Ciara Mageean broke her own stadium record, which was set in 2014, and an impressive personal best with a time of 8:48:27.

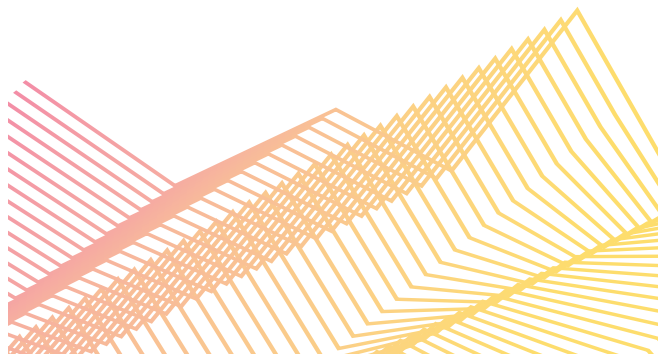
Mageean was pushed hard throughout the TG4 Women's 3000m by Rosie Clarke (GBR), a sub 8.55 athlete in her own right, with Clarke achieving a time of 8:49:49. Britain's Beth Kidger claimed third place with a time of 9:18:53.

Irish favourite Thomas Barr faced a tough race against three time World and European Indoor champion Pavel Maslak (CZE) and last year's winner and Euro Indoor Championship bronze medallist Tony Van Diepen (NED). Maslak started strong until the last bend when Van Diepen came up from the outside to clinch first place with a time of 46:17.

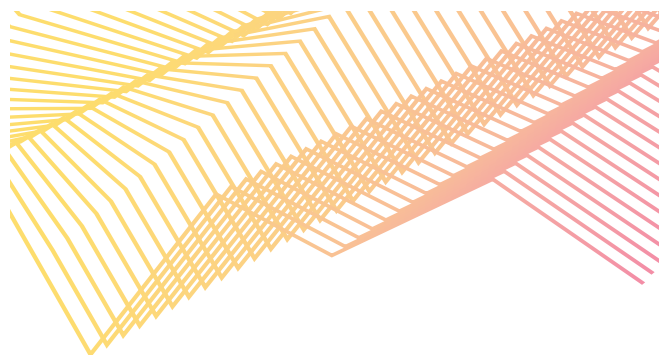
In his first outing of the season, Barr pushed hard on the last bend of the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Men's 400m finishing third with a time of 46:44 – a personal best – which bodes well for his first race in an Olympic year



AIT INTERNATIONAL GRAND PRIX



Outreach & Engagement







AIT Skills@Work Programme to Prepare Students for Working World

AIT has made a commitment to assist, encourage and inspire senior cycle students at Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa, Clara, by providing them with valuable first-hand insight and experience of the working world.

As part of the newly established partnership, 5th Year students will take part in the Skills@Work programme, where volunteer AIT employees will give them an insight into the world of work through a range of sessions including site visits, 'Day in the Life' employee presentations, CV preparation and mock interviews.

Students will also be encouraged to develop their teamwork and presentation skills through these interactive sessions. The partnership is an initiative of Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI), leading advisers in sustainability and CSR.

"It is important that students get an opportunity to engage with people working in their locality, and to broaden their horizons in terms of the training and career opportunities that exist within their communities. They will meet positive people and hear their life stories, why they chose their career and what ongoing development they are pursuing," said Michelle McKeon-Bennet, a past pupil of Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa and the Dean of Faculty of Business and Hospitality at Athlone Institute of Technology.

"This programme is beneficial for the future of these students, but also for the employees of Athlone Institute of Technology who get an opportunity to develop their presentation and communication skills, whilst making a valuable contribution to the lives of young people in the community".

During the year, employees of Athlone Institute of Technology will model the real-life skills required in the workplace, such as team work, communication and presentation skills.

They will run 'A Day in the Life' session, to assist the students in recognising the value of completing their education and help them explore possible career paths. The students will also be brought on a site visit to AIT and witness the many career opportunities that exist in the education and training sector.

Speaking about the partnership programme Roger Geagan, principal of Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa, added: "This programme gives students an opportunity to visualise themselves working in different environments and possibly pursuing careers not previously considered. It broadens horizons, helping students to view their future in terms of a career as opposed to just a job and to think outside the box, as well as looking at traditional areas. It improves students' confidence, helps students feel proud of their school and themselves, and it encourages them to dwell on their strengths"

Funded by the Department of Education and the participating businesses, The Schools' Business Partnership (SBP) has matched 225 post primary schools in Ireland with a local business to date.

AIT TALENT Project is Sending Teachers Back to School

An international education project intended to promote collaborative decision-making and problem-solving among students is sending educators back to school.

Project TALENT, which is funded by the European Commission's Erasmus+ programme, will see secondary school teachers from across Ireland, UK, Spain and the Netherlands learn and adopt a new, innovative learning approach called team-based learning (TBL).

TBL encourages students to take greater responsibility for their own learning and engage with learning materials outside the classroom in preparation for dynamic classroom interactions.

This contemporary approach has been shown to motivate and engage learners, while developing their confidence and transferable skills.

"With TBL, students undertake a variety of learning activities prior to class using specially prepared resources to essentially 'flip the class'", explained Nuala Harding, who leads Athlone Institute of Technology's Learning and Teaching Unit.

"Valuable in-class time is then spent working collaboratively in teams to apply knowledge and to solve various real-world issues, problems or challenges."

David O'Hanlon, who lectures in the institute's Faculty of Business and Hospitality, was an early adopter of this methodology and finds it extremely beneficial in developing students' critical thinking and collaborative capabilities.

"Students have the experience of working in a team for an extended period of time - usually one semester - which helps to develop the types of interpersonal and team-working skills that are highly sought after by employers and institutes of higher education alike," he said.

The approach has also been introduced in the institute's Faculty of Science and Health with educators believing the approach to offer a distinct advantage to both students and educators.

"Students come to class prepared for their session and can work on applying their knowledge in a way which actually brings further depth to their learning," Dr Anne Marie O'Brien, a lecturer in the faculty, explained.

Four Athlone-based secondary schools - Athlone Community College, Coláiste Chiarán, Our Lady's Bower and the Marist Secondary School - will avail of this innovative upskilling opportunity, which will facilitate the training of teachers in their respective schools.



"We are looking forward to bringing all the teachers together for the training events. We envisage that TALENT will build a community of TBL secondary school teachers across Europe who can support each other as they put this training into practice," Ms Harding added.

Acknowledging the role the Learning and Teaching Unit has played in securing €400,000 funding for the TALENT project, Athlone Institute of Technology President, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin said:

"TBL is a teaching approach that helps us achieve our mission of providing a high quality, student-centred educational experience. We look forward to engaging with schools and teachers across the Midlands and are delighted to deliver this exciting opportunity for them."

"The TALENT project will further enhance the excellent relationships we have fostered with secondary schools across the Midlands region and will help us in our TU ambition of continuing to be an international research partner of choice."

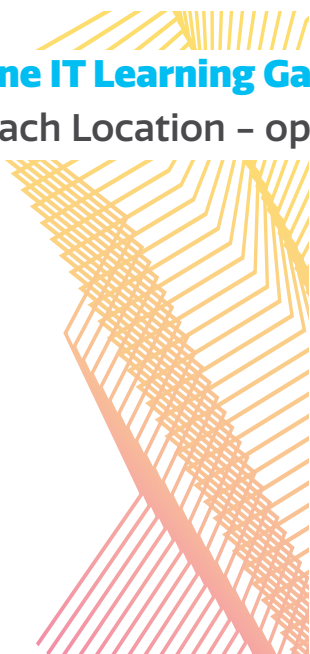
Ideally situated to facilitate this training, AIT has consistently been recognised in the Irish Survey of Student Engagement for its efforts in developing effective learning strategies that cater for a diverse range of students' needs.

The Midlands-based institute has been ranked number one nationally of all universities and institutes of technologies for six consecutive years, taking the top spot across seven of the survey's nine performance indicators - Collaborative Learning, Effective Teaching Practices, Student-Faculty Interaction and Learning Strategies.

"Athlone Institute of Technology is now leading the way in terms of adoption of TBL in Ireland - our staff have a proven track record in engagement with professional development and adopting innovative teaching and assessment strategies including TBL, Ms Harding finished.

Dr Simon Tweddell, who will be heading up the project on the University of Bradford's end, has said that introducing TBL has improved learning outcomes for students on many of their programmes and that he hopes to see the same impact in participating schools.

Athlone IT Learning Gate' - a Higher Education Outreach Location - opens in Mullingar



Athlone Institute of Technology and Westmeath County Council opened an 'Athlone IT Learning Gate' at the Mullingar e-Working Centre, ensuring higher education opportunities are available to those living and working in Mullingar and its surrounding regions.

The concept," he continued, "arose from student/lecturer feedback commenting that online/blended learning students were often meeting in hotel foyers for group work, that their local broadband wasn't good enough or that they had no quiet place to study or access their online classes.

The Athlone IT Learning Gate, a concept introduced by Dr Michael Tobin, Dean of Faculty of Continuing, Professional, Online and Distance Learning, seeks to formally establish a location/space where Athlone IT students and academic staff may meet and learn together in Mullingar, in this instance, through the provision of face to face, online or blended learning programmes.

However, all of this is now solved with this progressive partnership between Westmeath County Council and Athlone IT, where together they are opening the Athlone IT Learning Gate thereby resolving those issues for those living in Mullingar and its surrounding area.

The Athlone IT Learning Gate represents a space where Athlone IT lecturers may deliver their lectures online, where students may study and access the Athlone IT library online, where students may view their online lectures, meet to discuss projects, and/or complete group work based on the requirements of the programme they are taking with the Institute.



The objective is to enable students to study and work locally, yet have a learning space to go to that is warm, comfortable and ready to meet their needs. The Athlone IT Learning Gate is located in the e-Working Centre Mullingar, adjacent to the Westmeath County Council offices on Mount Street, Mullingar. Christine Charlton, Head of Enterprise, Local Enterprise Office, explained further that the "Mullingar e-Working Centre offers both hot-desking facilities and more long term solutions for individuals who require a quiet work space.

The e-Working Centre is suited to employees who are currently commuting long distances to work but would like to work closer to home. Additionally it is available for small or start up business owners." Dr Tobin added: "The space at the Mullingar e-Working Centre is ideally located and organised as a remote working hub with desks and offices already in place, enabling students to have some of the third level experience in Mullingar. Additionally, it minimises the necessity to travel to Athlone when attempting to seek out a quiet and professional space to work in."





AIT Counselling Service Partners with **24/7 Crisis Text Helpline**

AIT has partnered with Text 50808, a free, anonymous 24/7 text service, to provide a new mental health support for third-level students.

The crisis textline, which has been in development since March 2020, provides everything from a calming chat to immediate support for people going through a mental health or emotional crisis – big or small.

A recent USI National Report on Students and COVID-19 shows that almost 27% of students would use a text support service provided by the college, while 26% indicated that they would use a text support service facilitated externally.

Counsellors are hopeful that 50808 will attract these students, who can text anonymously in a way that feels safe for them - maybe as a first step to further support.

“Students who don’t feel comfortable talking about their problems can text “AIT” to 50808,” explained Treasa Fox, head of student counselling at AIT. “We are extremely pleased to be able to further support our student body through this partnership with 50808 and engage with them in a mode that feels familiar and comfortable to them.”

Text 50808 will return high level, anonymised data at the end of the year on the kinds of concerns facing students across the institute. This information will help AIT’s student counselling service plan for future services and better support its student body.

The partnership will also enable volunteers to signpost students to AIT’s student counselling service, where trained psychologists and counsellors provide emergency appointments daily, and during COVID-19 restrictions, provide daily phone in brief consultations with a counsellor.

“Text 50808 is available to everyone. While we are encouraging our students to use the AIT keyword, anyone can avail of the text support service by simply texting “Hello” to 50808. You may want to promote this service to family members and friends, it’s a really valuable resource for all,” Treasa Fox added.

Volunteers are supervised and supported by qualified mental health professionals.



Library Ireland Week, an annual event dedicated to celebrating libraries and the integral role they play in the community's civic, social, cultural and academic development, kicked off in Athlone Institute of Technology with an intriguing panel discussion featuring career consultant Sinéad English and Senator Marie Louise O'Donnell.

Organised by Athlone Institute of Technology's Library in conjunction with its Careers Office, the event focused on how 'Libraries Inspire the Way We Work' and the fundamental pillars underpinning student success - among them access to appropriate resources such as books and journals.

As knowledge brokers, we play a critical role in our students' academic development. The AIT Library represents the 'Third Space' for students and is a safe and neutral environment in which they can develop critical thinking and knowledge evaluation skills.

The event, which opened with a note from Athlone Institute of Technology's President, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin and careers officer Denise Dolan, was followed by an in-depth discussion about how work can define or limit us as a society. This portion of the discussion was led by Senator Marie Louise O'Donnell who recently published 'Irish Working Lives', a collection of vignettes of the working lives of ordinary people.

Sinead English, who is the Managing Director of Hilt Careers, was also in attendance to discuss her new book 'CV & Interview 101 – How to Apply and Interview for Jobs' in which she reviews the approaches, tactics and standards for students to adhere to when seeking gainful employment. Ms English's tips will help prepare entrants for the ever-shifting employment market and dynamic career opportunities.

Finally, Jane Burns, AIT's then institute librarian, discussed the ways in which the library engages with students, staff and researchers in terms of learning materials and resources, and the pivotal role it plays in regards to research outputs and impacts.

"Library Ireland is about raising awareness and engaging the wider community. As knowledge brokers, we play a critical role in our students' academic development. The AIT Library represents the 'Third Space' for students and is a safe and neutral environment in which they can develop critical thinking and knowledge evaluation skills.

"Working in consultation with our academic partners, we provide the print and electronic resources to support students in completing assignments, learning about their subject areas of interest and to explore beyond the reading list."

"Librarians are communicators and facilitators of communication. The AIT Library is a place where everyone finds a voice in their understanding of their studies, their campus life and their place in the world. We're extremely connected to the curriculum and are firmly committed to helping students succeed in their chosen disciplines," Jane explained.

Minister Kevin 'Boxer' Moran Supports Launch of AIT Recycling Initiative

Athlone Institute of Technology launched a brand-new eco-initiative with the intention of educating students, staff and the wider community about the circular economy and responsible consumption of plastic.

Dubbed 'AIT Green Team', the new plastic bottle collection and recycling scheme was launched with the help of Minister of State Kevin 'Boxer' Moran who stressed the importance of 'appropriately sorting and recycling the material used to make clear plastic' for the benefit of the environment.

The material to which Minister Moran refers is Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET), a strong and lightweight plastic often used in the production of food and beverage packaging. Despite this, consumer awareness of its value remains low. According to Dr Noel Gately, who is the Manager of Enterprise Ireland's Applied Polymer Technology Gateway (housed in Athlone Institute of Technology), plastic is actually an incredibly valuable material that, when designed and disposed of properly, can be recycled again and again to make new products.

"The clear plastic soft drinks bottles used by brands like Coca Cola, Fanta or Pepsi – they are all highly recyclable and can be reprocessed into new products. It's imperative that we start viewing plastic as a natural resource," he explained.

Per inhabitant, Ireland is one of the top producers of plastic waste in the EU, with the majority of its waste being exported at a very low cost, landfilled or incinerated, as is the case in most European countries. "This is devastating for the environment and for the economy and by shipping this material out of the country or landfilling, the potential to upcycle the material is lost," Dr Gately added.

With this in mind, Athlone Institute of Technology has installed a special Repak recycling facility to collect post-consumer PET and partnered with Shabra, a company that has transformed the Irish recycling landscape through the reprocessing of plastic waste film and post-consumer bottles. For every tonne of plastic waste collected, Shabra has agreed to make a significant contribution to the institute's Student Hardship Fund.

"We're delighted to collaborate with them on this project, which we hope will help educate our staff and students - as a microcosm of Irish society - about sustainable plastic packaging solutions and being more responsible in our consumption of plastic," Dr Declan Devine, Director of Athlone Institute of Technology's Materials Research Institute, said.

"As we move towards a circular economy, where design and production must fully respect reuse, repair and recycling needs, it is imperative that we raise awareness of sustainability. We're also extremely thankful to our industry partner Teleflex for supporting us in this endeavour and helping incentivise staff and students to recycle by sponsoring prizes."

A leader in polymer research and innovation since the 1970s, Athlone Institute of Technology has made meaningful strides in plastics recycling research and development. It is currently spearheading a €5 million H2020 research project - Bio Innovation of a Circular Economy for Plastics (BioCEP). Led by Dr Margaret Brennan Fournet, a lead researcher in the institute's Materials Research Institute, the project is aimed at reducing the burden of plastic waste in the environment.



3Set Delivers Ireland's First Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework



Ireland's first student mental health and suicide prevention framework aimed at improving the provision of student mental health services was launched by Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris.

The new national framework will help higher education institutes identify where further improvements for student mental health are needed, provide good practice guidance and resources, and help standardise approaches across the country.

The project, supported by the HEA Transformation and Innovation Fund, was developed in collaboration with students, mental health specialists and academics under the aegis of the SynthSCS project team from AIT - a 3Set work package.

3Set is a collaborative higher education project led by Trinity College Dublin and supported by University College Dublin and Athlone Institute of Technology, aimed at addressing increasing demand for student mental health services in higher education.

According to Treasa Fox, a counselling psychologist at Athlone Institute of Technology and SynthSCS project lead, the framework is key to identifying gaps in the suicide prevention in higher education, thereby improving student mental health services nationally.

"This framework emphasises that to effectively address higher education student mental health needs and prevent suicides we must adopt a whole system approach," she explained. "Mental health and suicide prevention among students is not the responsibility of any one unit or department; it is a whole-of-campus responsibility."

For the past 18 months, the SynthSCS project team has been investigating student mental health interventions and suicide prevention on campuses, innovative inter-agency collaborations, and international best practice guidance with the view to collating and categorising information and resources for use across Ireland's higher education institutions.

Dr Deirdre Flynn, 3Set project lead and the director of counselling at Trinity College Dublin, says that the new national framework will provide a valuable resource for all HEIs to review and develop their mental health services for students.



"We know students are a high-risk group for mental health difficulties because of their age. Research tells us that almost 75% of serious mental health conditions emerge between the ages of 15 and 25," she explained. "This is an especially timely document given the enormous pressure students are facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic."

At the launch, Minister Harris expressed concern at the impact of COVID-19 on young people's mental health and stressed the importance of the framework in helping colleges to identify and respond to gaps in student mental health services.

"The number one health issue for young people in Ireland today remains concerns or worries around their mental health. These concerns have been compounded by the isolation and uncertainty brought forward by the COVID-19 pandemic," he said.

"Mental health has been defined by the World Health Organization as 'a state of wellbeing in which the individual recognises their own abilities and is able to cope with normal daily stresses in life. This framework builds on this premise and encourages our HEIs to act in nine specific areas – to lead, collaborate, educate, engage, identify, support, respond, transition and improve'."

The launch of the national framework coincides with World Mental Health Day - the theme of which is Mental Health for All – Greater Investment – Greater Access.

AIT Special Subject Workshops Prepare Leaving Certificate Students for Exams

More than 300 secondary school students from across the Midlands attended subject specific Leaving Certificate revision workshops organised by Athlone Institute of Technology's Faculty of Engineering and Informatics.

The workshops, which were practical in nature and designed to assist students in their preparation for their Leaving Certificate exams, focussed on two special subject areas: Engineering and Construction Studies.

Participants attended a series of lecturer and laboratory demonstrations covering a wide variety of topics, including Building Information Modelling, Water Quality, Hydraulics, U Values and Concrete Testing, Polymer Physics, Automation to Control and Polymer Processing.

An exciting keynote presentation detailing the special topic in the Leaving Certificate Engineering Technology paper – in this instance the basic principles underpinning the operation and application of autonomous vehicle technology – was also delivered.

"Our fun, practical workshops are designed to give students a robust understanding of special subject areas and provide support to teachers across the second level education sector," Breda Lynch, who heads the institute's Department of Polymer, Mechanical and Design, said.

"The workshops also act as a vehicle to prepare students for the transition to third level education by treating them as if they are undergraduate students – from the material delivery, to giving them access to our state-of-the-art laboratories and even letting them experiment with our cutting-edge equipment first-hand," she explained. "This gives them a flavour of what is on offer and helps them in their CAO decision-making process."

This was a sentiment echoed by Joe Lawless, the institute's Head of Department of Civil Engineering and Trades, who added: "STEM education is of vital importance to shaping the future of Irish society and the careers of the next generation of leaders – something these workshops help facilitate."





AIT Hosts 5th **National Research Ethics Conference**

AIT Hosted Ireland's annual Research Ethics Conference themed 'Ethics of Health Promotional Campaigns' at its Engineering and Informatics facility. The national conference, now in its fifth year, was attended by representatives from the Royal College of Surgeons, Ulster University and Trinity College Dublin.

Among those scheduled to speak at the event was Professor David Smith, an Associate Professor of Healthcare Ethics at the Royal College of Surgeons (RCSI). Professor Smith, who is also the Director of the MSc in Healthcare Ethics and Law (RCSI), and lectures on the topic of healthcare ethics at Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, the College of Anaesthetists and the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, discussed public health and the ethical issues that can arise.

Mary Kirwan, a barrister who specialises in healthcare ethics and law, was also in attendance to discuss the relationship between public health and data. Ms Kirwan lectures at the RCSI at undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral level, and is the legal lead with the Royal College of Physicians basic and higher specialist training programmes.

The barrister also acts as legal adviser to a number of academic and hospital clinical ethics and research ethics committees, works across a number of different organisations and hospitals - including Trinity College Dublin - and lectures in the Honorable Society of Kings Inns.

The third keynote address was delivered by Desmond O'Neil, Professor of Medical Gerontology at Trinity College Dublin, consultant geriatrician at Tallaght University Hospital and Director of the RCPI/RSA National Office for Traffic

Medicine. Professor O'Neil, whose research interests include ageing and the neurosciences, discussed an ongoing challenge for the healthcare professions - ethical articulation. Authoring more than 400 peer-reviewed papers and book chapters, he is one of the most widely published clinicians in Ireland on clinical ethics in peer-reviewed journals.

Finally, Dr Katie Liston, who is a senior lecturer in the social sciences of sport at Ulster University, discussed the interplay between sports ethics, health and gender. Dr Liston, whose doctoral research focussed on sport and gender in Ireland, is a former all-Ireland and all-star Gaelic games player with national and international representation in rugby and soccer. In recent years, her research interests have expanded to sport and health (including concussion, pain, and injury) and sport and identity (including gender and national identity).

Keynote addresses were followed by a panel discussion and question and answer session chaired by Dr Mary McDonnell-Naughton, a founding member and Chairperson of the Athlone Institute of Technology's Research Ethics Committee.

AIT Biology Revision Days **Helps 200+ Students** Prepare for Leaving Cert Exams

Athlone Institute of Technology's Department of Life and Physical Sciences hosted a series of Biology revision days designed to assist senior cycle students in their preparation for their Leaving Certificate examinations.

More than 200 secondary school students from across the Midlands - accompanied by their teachers - participated in the practical, hands-on workshops which covered many of the mandatory experiments on the Leaving Certificate Biology curriculum.

After being assigned their own working space, participants were given a detailed course manual which included concise descriptions, illustrations and key exam questions. Over the course of the day, students carried out a wide variety of experiments in the institute's state-of-the-art laboratories and documented and interpreted their own results.

Among the laboratory experiments conducted was an investigation into the effect of temperature and pH on enzyme activity, completion of food tests, use of the microscope to examine both animal and plant cells, demonstration of the osmotic effect, preparation of alcohol from yeast, immobilisation of enzymes and extraction of DNA .

Upon visiting the workshops and meeting the students and their school representatives, Dr Don Faller, who is Athlone Institute of Technology's Dean of Faculty of Science and Health, remarked on the energy levels and enthusiasm and said the quality of learning was clearly evident.

A number of postgraduate students, technical and administrative staff from the Department of Life and Physical Sciences assisted academics in the delivery of the Biology revision workshops.

Head of Department Dr Nuala Commins expressed her gratitude to those that facilitated and participated in the programme and remarked on how great it was for Athlone Institute of Technology to be in a position to offer Leaving Certificate students quality revision programmes within their own region. Initiatives such as this are instrumental in ensuring the future matriculation of students into STEM degrees and ultimately careers.





Record Number of Exhibitors Attend AIT Career and Further Study Expo

On Thursday, 17 October, AIT held its annual Career and Further Education Expo with the goal of connecting Ireland's leading employers with its talent pipeline of students and recent graduates.

More than 70 exhibitors from a broad cross section of industry attended this year's event, among them Abbott, Alexion Pharmaceuticals, Almac Group, RBK, Johnson and Johnson Vision, Neueda Technologies, Centre Parcs Longford Forest Park, Harmac Medical Products, Ericsson, PPD, Medtronic, Sidero, Teleflex, and Boston Scientific.

"Students and recent graduates were given the opportunity to network with some of the country's largest employers - many of whom count a significant number of AIT alumni among their ranks," Denise Dolan, Careers Officer at Athlone Institute of Technology, said. "Over the course of the fair, they learned about the jobs of the future, graduate programmes, internships, and even further study opportunities."

She continued: "As an institute, we pride ourselves on being finely attuned to the needs of industry and have worked tirelessly to provide our students with the best educational experience. In service of this, we have fostered close links with industry (both multinational and indigenous) to inform our programme offerings and to provide prime placement opportunities for our students.

"This relationship is symbiotic in that work placement provides our industry partners with a gateway for identifying and recruiting talent, while we feed industry a steady pipeline of highly qualified, work-ready graduates. It's no accident that our students enjoy a 95% employability rate within six months of graduating."



With the goal of matching students and recent graduates with employers throughout the year, Athlone Institute of Technology's Careers Office has launched a brand new 'AIT Careers Connect' website which will help manage contact with students, graduates and employers more efficiently. AIT Careers Connect enhances the student experience, maximizing career readiness and improving employability outcomes.

"With our new AIT Careers Connect, students can book a 15 minute appointment with a career development adviser, book a CV or application review, book their place at an event, view graduate job vacancies, graduate programme, ask a question or sign up for email alerts," Mrs Dolan explained. "Employers can also use it to advertise student or graduate job vacancies and book to attend our events or recruitment fairs.



AIT Future Jobs and Skills Event to Prepare Midlands for Transition to Circular Economy

We are moving into an era whereby design and production must fully respect reuse, repair and recycling needs – is the Midlands ready for it?

Athlone Institute of Technology hosted a ‘Future Jobs and Skills for a Circular Economy’ event on Tuesday, 29th October with the goal of preparing the Midlands for Ireland’s transition to a circular economy.

We’re moving into an era whereby design and production must fully respect reuse, repair and recycling needs, and the value of products, materials and resources will be maintained in the Irish economy for as long as possible – is the Midlands ready for it?

Are there skills shortages in the repair, refurbishment and retail sectors that are blocking this transition? If so, what can be done to overcome these skill gaps?

Eastern Midlands Regional Waste Office, Chartered Institute of Waste Management and Community Reuse Network of Ireland are inviting members of the public to join them in asking these questions and in finding solutions.

The ‘Future Jobs and Skills for a Circular Economy’ event highlighted skills gaps in jobs and skills base needed for prevention, reuse and repair in Ireland – and determined what can be done to surmount them.

According to Dr Michael Tobin, Dean of Faculty of Continuing, Professional, Online and Distance Learning at Athlone Institute of Technology, the conference came at an ideal time for the Midlands and Irish economy.

A leader in research and innovation, the Midlands-based institute ranks number one across the technological higher education landscape and addresses national and research priorities through impactful knowledge creation and transfer.

This event aids us in identifying many of the skills required, enabling us to develop innovative, flexible programmes capable of re-skilling and up-skilling those interested in working in this area. The net result is new business and working opportunities for the Midlands region and beyond.

Athlone Institute of Technology has made meaningful strides in plastics recycling research and development. It is currently spearheading a €5 million H2020 research project - Bio Innovation of a Circular Economy for Plastics (BioICEP).

Led by Dr Margaret Brennan Fournet, a lead researcher in Athlone Institute of Technology’s Materials research institute and part-time lecturer in the faculty of Engineering and Informatics, the pan European-Chinese collaboration was formed to reduce the burden of plastic waste in the environment and involves 12 partners from eight countries.

The countries have been selected to represent different mixed plastic pollution environments, with specific partners selected which have the expertise and facilities to carry out the necessary technical innovations. Several innovative booster technologies are at the core of this solution accentuating, expediting, and augmenting mixed plastics degradation to levels far in excess of those current achievable.

“The Future Jobs and Skills meeting provides a platform for people to discuss current and future skills gaps that exist in reuse/repair as we transition to the circular economy, while also talking about education and training supports that are available to address these skills needs,” John Costello, Midlands Regional Skills Manager, added.

The event is sponsored by the Eastern Midlands Regional Waste Office, Chartered Institute of Waste Management and Community Reuse Network of Ireland.

“ This event aids us in identifying many of the skills required, enabling us to develop innovative, flexible programmes capable of re-skilling and up-skilling those interested in working in this area. The net result is new business and working opportunities for the Midlands region and beyond. ”



Athlone Springs Hotel Sponsorship of AIT Sports Teams a “Natural Fit”

Athlone Springs Hotel, which forms part of the Só Hotels Group, is proudly sponsoring Athlone Institute of Technology’s men and women’s soccer and hurling teams for the academic year 2019/2020.

Pat McDonagh, the owner of the Só Hotels Group, called the sponsorship a “natural fit” given his “strong ties” with third level institutes throughout the country.

Mr McDonagh, who is also the founder and owner of Supermac’s - a major Irish fast food franchiser - said his support of sporting teams was a source of great pride for both himself and his wife, Una.

Since adding the Athlone Springs Hotel to his portfolio, the Irish businessman and former school teacher said that he’s been overwhelmed by the support that he has received from the local community and stressed his desire to give back and “assist in whatever way we can.”

Welcoming the sponsorship, President of Athlone Institute of Technology, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, said: “I’d like to thank Pat McDonagh and the Athlone Springs Hotel for kindly sponsoring our sports teams, and proudly attaching their name to ours. I expect this partnership will prove fruitful for all involved in the coming weeks and months as our talented players represent AIT on a national and local level.

Pat has always been incredibly supportive of our award-winning institute and his generosity has already led to the rebranding of our men and women’s hurling and soccer jerseys.”

“ I’d like to thank Pat McDonagh and the Athlone Springs Hotel for kindly sponsoring our sports teams, and proudly attaching their name to ours. I expect this partnership will prove fruitful for all involved in the coming weeks and months as our talented players represent AIT on a national and local level. ”

“Green Deal – Gearing Up for New Ways to Work”

Mairead McGuinness, an Irish MEP and Vice President of the European Parliament, presented on the future changes in employment in the context of a greener Europe at an event sponsored and hosted by Athlone Institute of Technology.

Ms McGuinness is the European Parliament’s first vice-president - having been elected in January 2017 and re-elected in July 2019 - and is widely regarded to be an expert on European affairs.

The Drogheda woman is a staunch defender of EU interests and is a member of the parliament committee overseeing the Brexit process and the chair of the working group looking at the administrative consequences of Brexit.

Ms McGuinness is also member of the Parliament’s Committees on Agriculture and Rural Development, the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, and Constitutional Affairs, which she joined in 2004.

Since then, she has worked on CAP reform and has defended the position of farmers in the food supply chain – most recently in achieving new EU legislation to tackle unfair trading practices.

She was a lead negotiator for the EPP Group on medical devices legislation, guaranteeing increased standards in patient safety and encouraging industry to innovate.

Prior to becoming an MEP, Ms McGuinness was a well-known journalist, broadcaster and commentator.

Following the talk, attendees had a chance to participate in a facilitated discussion. The event, organised by the Midlands Region of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), took place on Monday, 24th February .



GPA and WGPA Members Eligible for Master's Degree of Choice at AIT

Members of the Gaelic Players Association (GPA) and Women’s Gaelic Players Association (WGPA) are now eligible to apply for a fully funded master’s degree of their choice at Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT), thanks to the extension of an agreement between the IoT and sporting bodies.

The progressive partnership, which builds upon a memorandum of understanding signed in 2018, is intended to provide GPA and WGPA players with the skills they need to progress their careers and ensure they continue to thrive both on and off the field of play.

“We have had a number of scholarship announcements in recent weeks and we’re delighted to be able to continue that trend in Athlone,” said Ciarán Barr, head of finance and operations for the GPA, at the launch of this year’s programme.

“AIT has been a big supporter of inter-county players and we’re delighted to be able to extend that relationship. These scholarships will have a hugely positive impact on the lives of players.”

This was a sentiment echoed by Dr Aoife Lane, who heads the Department of Sport and Health Science at AIT. “We recognise the positive influence elite sports people can have on the wider college environment and are proud to support inter-county players with this announcement,” she said.

“Education is a vital cog in the wheel of the development of players. It helps them to be the best they can be off the pitch as well as on it. We’re delighted to continue this relationship with the GPA and WGPA.”

Westmeath footballer Rachel Dillon and Offaly camogie player Mairéad Teehan – both postgraduate students at AIT – were among those who attended the launch, as was Kieran Martin, a Westmeath footballer and GAA development officer for AIT.



AIT launched a comprehensive student sexual health service to meet the needs of its growing student population – 61% of whom are aged 18-24 and are classified as ‘high risk’ for STIs.

The innovative nurse-led service will be overseen by a consultant specialist in genitourinary medicine and used as a model of best practice for community-based healthcare across the technological higher education and primary care sector.

Funded by the Sláintecare Integration Fund, the service will reduce the substantial medical, non-medical and economic costs associated with sexually transmitted infection and address the general upward trend in STI notifications, the greatest burden of which falls among those aged under 25 and men who have sex with men.

“ The successful Sláintecare Integration Fund projects demonstrate how innovative thinking can bring about meaningful and long-lasting change to health and social care in Ireland. ”

The pioneering sexual health service will be delivered directly to students in the context of the campus community, ensuring equitable access in familiar surroundings which promotes patient comfort and ultimately prevents and reduces the burden of sexually transmitted infections.

“We’re geographically disadvantaged in that we don’t have a hospital in Athlone and these kinds of specialised services are typically provided in a hospital setting,” Institute Nurse and Health Centre Co-ordinator Laura Tully explained.

“The majority of our feeder counties are also without a comprehensive sexual health service so if students don’t have a service back home or at college, well then they don’t have a service.

Conscious that many STIs don’t have symptoms, Nurse Tully set up an asymptomatic ‘mini-screening’ clinic service for Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea in 2015 to counteract rising incidences of sexually transmitted infections in Athlone. In line with national trends, the number of cases detected had soared.

As Athlone and the Midlands region are completely underserved, students with confirmed infection or present symptoms of infection are required to travel to either Portiuncula Hospital in Ballinasloe or Midlands Regional Hospital in Mullingar, to receive specialised treatment.

“Working on the frontline, I was seeing that 90% of students being referred to specialist clinics with respect to their sexual health weren’t attending for a variety of reasons. Students have reported distance, travel time, the expense of travel, and timing of the clinics as impediments to attending and receiving treatment. This has given rise to a major public health concern as STIs are significant public health issue,” Nurse Tully explained.

What was happening then was that students were presenting inappropriately to the acute care system. Local out of hours GPs were inundated which is just not the right place or time so this service on a community campus will undoubtedly result in a reduction on the burden on acute care services and ultimately reduce the future healthcare needs of the community.

The successful Sláintecare Integration Fund projects demonstrate how innovative thinking can bring about meaningful and long-lasting change to health and social care in Ireland. These projects show how joined-up thinking and working in partnership can help us reach Sláintecare’s goals of shifting the majority of care to the community, reducing waiting lists and improving experiences for patients and staff across the health and social care system in Ireland.

The service will ensure that students can access comprehensive and age-appropriate sexual health education and /or information and will have access to appropriate prevention and promotion services which will ultimately encourage the development of a healthy sexuality throughout life; enhance people’s lives and relationships; reduce negative outcomes such as STIs and crisis pregnancies, and create an environment that supports sexual health and wellbeing.

The service will be delivered in line with the aims of the HSE National Sexual Health Strategy (2015-2020) and the Healthy Ireland Framework (2013-2025).

“ The pioneering sexual health service will be delivered directly to students in the context of the campus community, ensuring equitable access in familiar surroundings which promotes patient comfort. ”



AIT Launches Virtual CAO Hub for Prospective Students

The CAO Hub is a 'one-stop-shop' for course and college life-related information.

AIT has launched a virtual CAO Hub to provide support and guidance to prospective students and their parents as they navigate the CAO decision-making process.

As part of the initiative, the institute ran a series of virtual open days throughout April and May, covering core disciplines across its academic schools. The virtual open days took place live on Facebook, Instagram or Pubble.

CAO applicants and their parents had an opportunity to ask questions in real-time and learn more about the multi-award-winning institute, its 65+ industry-focussed CAO courses, world-class academic and sporting facilities, prime placement opportunities and more.

"We've moved all of our engagement with prospective students, parents and guidance counsellors online via our virtual CAO Hub," explains Daniel Seery, student recruitment officer at Athlone Institute of Technology.

"Our campus may be closed but we are still available to assist in the CAO decision-making process. We can talk students through our undergraduate courses and steer them in the right direction in relation to student supports, scholarships, accommodation, and lots more.

“We're on hand to put their minds at ease and help students make the transition to third level education. We are all in this together.”

Prospective students and their parents will also get the chance to hear from current students, graduates, lecturing and support staff through a variety of subject area-specific podcasts, vodcasts and blogs.

Another feature of the CAO Hub, AIT Decoded is a brand-new podcast series aimed at decoding third level education. This fun, student-friendly podcast delves into the student experience and features interviews with current students and lecturers.

We're were very mindful that Leaving Certificate students and their parents had endured a lot of uncertainty this year and we wanted to reassure them that we will continue to offer support and guidance during this difficult time. "We're on hand to put their minds at ease and help students make the transition to third level education. We are all in this together."

The CAO Hub also features a student ambassador blog series which offers insight into the experiences of current students. Topics range from the benefits of work placement, exams and other forms of assessment, to college life and what supports are in place for students struggling to cope.

Prospective students can even take a virtual tour of Athlone Institute of Technology's award-winning campus to get a flavour for its state-of-the-art sporting and academic facilities.

AIT Celebrates **National Workplace Wellbeing Day** with Virtual Coffee Morning

Athlone Institute of Technology celebrated National Workplace Wellbeing Day remotely with a virtual coffee morning designed to promote staff physical and mental health amid the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Organised by the Institute's HR Department, the #TogetherApart coffee morning was one of a series of online activities that took place throughout the day to celebrate staff and help the campus community stay connected.



"The health and wellbeing of our employees is paramount during this difficult time and while working from home has become the new norm for most of us over the past few weeks, we are conscious that this also brings its own challenges," said Liam Brennan, HR Manager at Athlone Institute of Technology.

Among the activities available to staff were a series of free online workout videos from AIT Sport. The full body dumbbell workout, which is suitable for all fitness levels, proved especially popular. In lieu of dumbbells, staff were encouraged to get creative and use water bottles.

Lisa Hanlon, co-ordinator of AIT Healthy Campus, recorded a video demonstrating a series of chair-based exercises to help staff who are working from home stay mobile and reduce the risk of muscle or joint pain.

After working out, staff were treated to some delicious recipes for homemade brown bread, chocolate eclairs and banana bread.

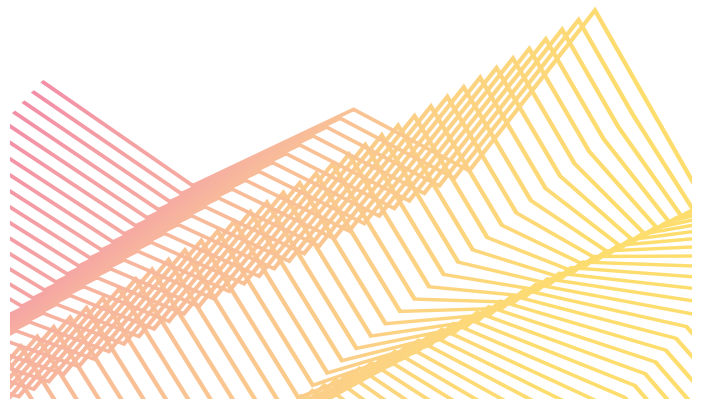
They were also encouraged to share pictures of their furry friends – just looking at an image of an animal can reduce stress and anxiety, resulting in improved concentration, scientists have found.

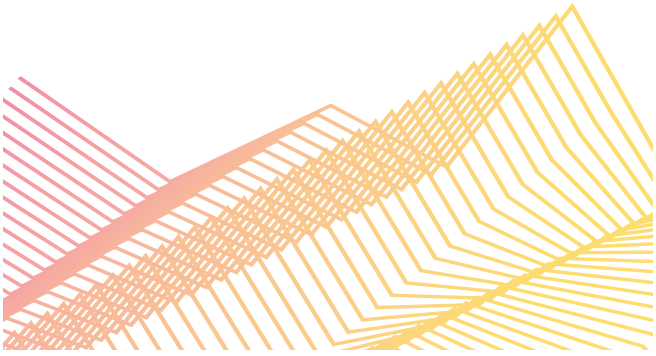
Staff also availed of free online Mindfulness classes taught by Susan Keane, a wellbeing consultant with IBEC's KeepWell Mark. Mindfulness, as a form of meditation, has been shown to decrease stress and anxiety and promote a sense of overall wellness.

Staff also benefitted from a wellness presentation which covered everything from herbal teas to aid sleep and digestion, to essential oils, food, yoga and meditation.

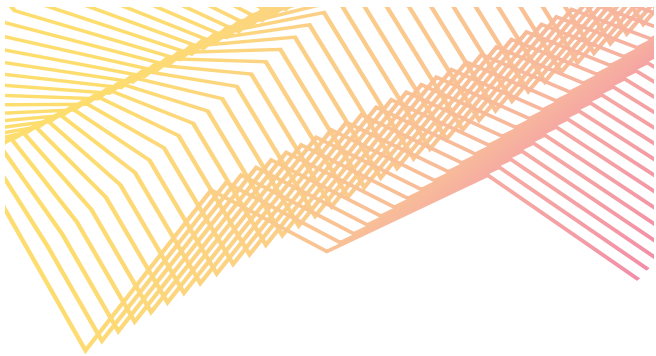
"COVID-19 has presented unique challenges for each of our staff members – many of whom are balancing working from home with caring for family, friends and neighbours," said Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, President of Athlone Institute of Technology.

The health and wellbeing of our employees is paramount during this difficult time and while working from home has become the new norm for most of us over the past few weeks, we are conscious that this also brings its own challenge.

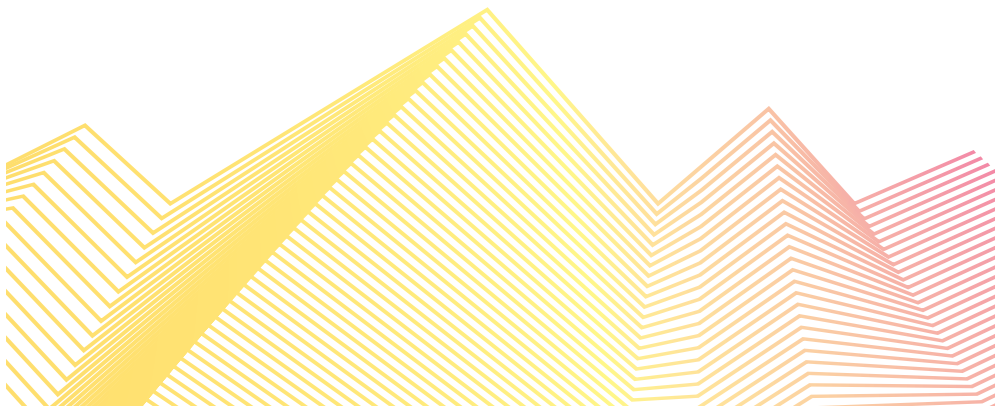




Governance & **Leadership**







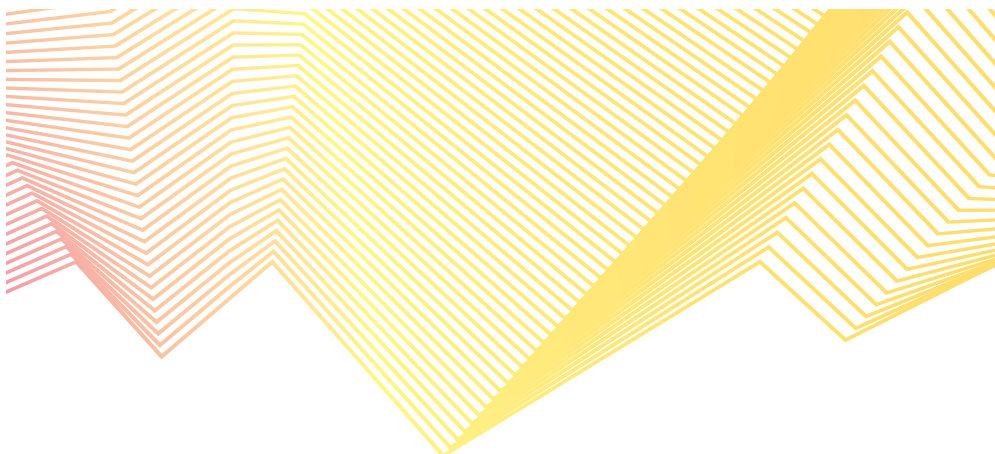
Equality Statement

Athlone Institute of Technology believes in equality, diversity and inclusion and strives for EDI to be at the heart of all we do; promoting and enhancing a culture where diversity is celebrated and everyone is treated fairly regardless of gender, age, race, disability, ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation, civil status, family status, or membership of the travelling community.

Athlone Institute of Technology is committed to fostering and maintaining a safe environment of respect and inclusion for staff, students and members of the communities we serve. As part of our continued commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, AIT strives to create an environment in which all people can thrive, be respected and valued for their unique perspectives and contributions, achieve their fullest potential without prejudice and have a real opportunity to participate and contribute.

Our Institute will reflect our commitment to equality, educational opportunity, social justice, ethical behaviour and academic freedom. We will achieve this by:

- Ensuring fair and inclusive access to our facilities, programmes, resources and services.
- Ongoing development of policies and procedures that are inclusive and equitable.
- Identifying barriers to equality, diversity, inclusion and full participation and addressing any imbalances in practice that arise.
- Provision of integrated and accessible services and information in accessible formats.
- Widening participation and facilitating access to programmes by learners from under-represented groups.
- Advancing and building our workforce by assessing hiring practices and performance review procedures to attract, retain and develop talented staff from diverse backgrounds.



Governance

Governing Body

The composition of the Governing Body is determined by, the Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992 and 1994. Governing Body is collectively responsible for leading and directing the Institute's activities and fulfils key functions, including: reviewing and guiding strategic direction and major plans of action, risk management policies and procedures, annual budgets and business plans, setting performance objectives, monitoring implementation and Institute performance, and overseeing major capital expenditure and investment decisions. The Governing Body acts on a fully informed and ethical basis, in good faith, with due diligence and care, and in the best interest of the Institute, having due regard to its legal responsibilities and the objectives set by Government.

Ex-Officio Members as per Section 4 of the 1992 Act 1st September 2019 - 31st March 2020

Mr Frank Ryan [Chairperson Section 2(a)]

Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin [President, Section 2(b)]

Governing Body Members as per Section 4 of the 1994 Act 1st September 2019 - 31st March 2020

Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b)

Mr Pat Gilmore

Cllr Kathleen Shanagher

Cllr Tom Farrell

Ms Celine Kearney Medforth

Mr Denis Magner

Cllr Pat O Toole

Under Section 4(1)(c)

Mr Kevin McLoughlin (from 11th December until 5th February 2020)

Ms Brigid Delamere

Under Section 4(1)(d)

Mr James Keane

Under Section 4(1)(e)

Mr John Devine (from 11th December)

Ms Áine Daly (from 11th December)

Under Section 4(1)(f)

Ms Geraldine Talty

Under Section 4(1)(g)

Mr Matt Hamilton

Ms Colette Ryan

Mr Liam Rattigan

Ms Natasha Kinsella (until 18th September 2019)

Mr John Foley

Corporate Secretary

Mr Bill Delaney

Ex-Officio Members as per Section 4 of the 1992 Act from 1st April 2020 – 31st August 2020

Mr Liam Rattigan [Chairperson Section 2(a)]

Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin [President, Section 2(b)]

Governing Body Members as per Section 4 of the 1994 Act 1st April 2020 – 31st August 2020

Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b)

Mr Peter Roche (from October 2020)

Cllr Kathleen Shanagher (from 11th September 2020)

Cllr Frankie Keena

Ms Clare Claffey

Mr Colm Harte

Cllr Pat O Toole

Under Section 4(1)(c)

Mr Brendan Kelly

Ms Brigid Delamere

Under Section 4(1)(d)

Ms Dymphna Fitzgerald

Under Section 4(1)(e)

Mr John Devine (until 17th June 2020)

Mr Niall Naughton (from 11th September 2020)

Ms Áine Daly

Under Section 4(1)(f)

Ms Geraldine Talty

Under Section 4(1)(g)

Mr James O Meara

Ms Colette Ryan

Mr Liam Rattigan

Ms Anna Connaughton

Mr John Foley

Corporate Secretary

Mr Bill Delaney

Code Compliance and Statement of Agreement with the HEA

Athlone Institute of Technology confirms that it has formally documented and reached agreement with the HEA, on its adaptation of and compliance with the requirements of the THEA Code of Governance for Institutes of Technology. This compliance includes both the internal practices and procedures of AIT and the external relations with Government, the Minister of Education & Skills and the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

Strategic Plan, Annual Programmes and Budget

The Institute's Governing Body has formally undertaken an evaluation of actual performance, by reference to the Institutes Strategic Plan and Budget and has subsequently approved an Annual Programme and Budget for the Institute.

Governing Body Operation, Reserved Functions and Decisions Delegated to Management

The Institutes Governing Body are collectively responsible for leading and directing the Institute's activities in compliance with the THEA Code of Governance. It fulfils key functions including; reviewing and guiding strategic direction and major plans of action, risk management policies and procedures, annual budgets and business plans, setting performance objectives, monitoring implementation and Institute performance, and overseeing major capital expenditure and investment decisions. All functions and decisions that are not specifically listed within the Code of Governance (Code of Governance Appendix B, Reserved Functions, Statutory

Functions and Regulatory Requirements), are functions and decisions of management.

Annual Report and Financial Statement

The Governing Body has reviewed and approved the Annual Report, Annual Governance Statement and Financial Statement and considers the Financial Statement to be a true and fair view of the Institute's financial performance and its financial position at the end of the year. Governing Body affirms that they have conducted a self-assessment evaluation of its own performance and that of the Audit and Risk Committee, the details of which are outlined in Appendix A – 'Institute's Annual Governance Statement'.

A full detailed copy of accounts can be found through our website: [link to website and financial accounts once approved](#)

Public Spending Code

The Chairman of the Institute's Governing Body confirms in our Annual Governance Statement that AIT adheres to the relevant aspects of the Public Spending Code and that the Governing Body has ensured robust and effective systems and procedures are in place in AIT to ensure compliance with the relevant principles, requirements and guidelines of the Public Spending Code.

Governing Body Meetings

During the period from 1st September 2019 to 31st August 2020 the Governing Body met on nine separate occasions the details of which are outlined in Appendix A – 'Institute's Annual Governance Statement'.

Risk Management

Governing Body approves the Institute's risk management framework and monitors its effectiveness. Approval and oversight of AIT's Risk Management Policy including structured and periodic reviews and updates to the Institute Risk Register by the Executive Management Team. This review includes an assessment of the description of principal risks, risk rating and associated mitigations for each of the risks set out in the Institute Risk Register.

Audit and Risk Committee

The Terms of Reference for the Audit and Risk Committee are set by the Governing Body of the Institute and include provision regarding:

- Membership
- Reporting Requirements
- Authority to investigate
- Meetings – timing, conduct and frequency
- Information requirements
- Value for money
- Governance and responsibilities regarding:
 - Risk Management
 - Internal Control
 - Internal Audit
 - External Audit
 - Review of its own effectiveness

The Chairman of Governing Body is satisfied that the Audit and Risk Committee has discharged its role effectively and efficiently and has met the requirements with regard to frequency of meetings in this academic year, the details of the annual work plan and meetings are outlined in Appendix A – 'Institute's Annual Governance Statement'.

Membership of AIT Committees by Gender Academic Year - 2019 - 2020

| | Total | Male | Female |
|-------------------------------------|-------|----------|----------|
| Executive Management Team | 12 | 7 (58%) | 5 (42%) |
| Equality, Diversity & Inclusion | 10 | 4 (40%) | 6 (60%) |
| Academic Council | 29 | 14 (48%) | 15 (52%) |
| Academic Standards and Quality | 25 | 14 (56%) | 11 (44%) |
| Research, Innovation and Enterprise | 14 | 9 (64%) | 5 (36%) |
| Research Ethics | 12 | 4 (33%) | 8 (67%) |
| Professional Development | 12 | 5 (42%) | 7(58%) |

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Institute's Executive Management Team (EMT), chaired by the President, is a non-statutory committee of the Institute, whose role is to assist the President in the management of the Institute and in formulating Institute strategy and policy for approval by Governing Body. EMT meet on a fortnightly basis and any other times deemed necessary. A recording secretary is present at all meetings to record agreed actions.

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin (Chair)
 Mr Bill Delaney
 Dr Niall Seery (until April 2020)
 Ms Frances O' Connell (from April 2020)
 Mr John McKenna
 Dr Don Faller
 Ms Michelle McKeon-Bennett
 Dr Sean Lyons
 Dr Michael Tobin
 Mr Liam Brennan
 Ms Orla Thornton

Ms Mary Simpson
Ms Jane Burns (until March 2020)
Dr Johanna Archbold (from March 2020)

MANAGEMENT AND SENIOR STAFF

The Institute has four faculties: Business and Hospitality, Engineering and Informatics, Science and Health and Continuing, Professional, Online and Distance Learning, which in turn are further divided into departments to provide courses/programmes of study to students. Each faculty has a dean of faculty and relevant heads of department.

President
Technological University Project Director
Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar

Assistant Registrar
Vice President for Financial and Corporate Affairs
Vice President for Strategic Planning, Institutional Performance, Equality & Diversity
Dean of Faculty of Business and Hospitality
Head of Dept of Accounting and Business Computing
Head of Dept of Business and Management Studies
A/Head of Dept of Business and Management Studies
Head of Dept of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Studies
Dean of School of Engineering and Informatics
Head of Dept Special Projects
Head of Dept Civil Engineering and Trades
Head of Dept Computer and Software Engineering
Head of Dept Polymer, Mechanical and Design
Dean of Faculty of Science and Health
Head of Dept of Life and Physical Sciences
Head of Dept of Sport and Health Science
Head of Dept of Nursing and Health Sciences
Head of Dept of Social Science
Dean of Faculty of Continuing, Professional, Online and Distance Learning
Head of Dept of Lifelong Learning
Director of Marketing and Communications
Director of Enterprise and Innovation
Director of International Relations
Human Resource Manager
Finance Manager
Commercial Manager
Computer Services Manager
Estates Manager
Director of Environmental Health & Safety
Academic Affairs and Student Administration Manager
Institute Librarian

Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin
Dr Niall Seery
Dr Niall Seery
(until April 2020 thereafter Ms Frances O Connell)
Ms Jane Burns (from January 2020)
Mr Bill Delaney
Mr John McKenna

Ms Michelle McKeon-Bennett
Mr Trevor Prendergast
Mr Owen Ross (until January 2020)
Ms Alison Sheridan (from January 2020)
Dr Anthony Johnston
Dr Sean Lyons
Mr Marcus Rahilly
Mr Joe Lawless
Dr Enda Fallon
Ms Breda Lynch
Dr Don Faller
Ms Nuala Commins
Dr Aoife Lane
Dr Pearse Murphy
Mr Oliver Hegarty
Dr Michael Tobin

Mr Seadna Ryan
Ms Orla Thornton
Mr Michael Lonergan
Ms Mary Simpson
Mr Liam Brennan
Ms Betty Buckley
Mr Paul Coburn
Mr Rossa Coleman
Mr Cormac Cloonan
Mr Fergal Sweeney
Ms Mary Goode
Ms Jane Burns (until March 2020 thereafter
Dr Johanna Archbold)



Student Services Manager
Ms Sarah La Cumbre

Dr Sean Lyons
Ms Michelle McKeon Bennett
Dr Don Faller
Dr Michael Tobin
Mr Michael Lonergan
Ms Jane Burns
Dr Johanna Archbold (from March 2020)
Ms Cora Mc Cormack
Dr Anthony Johnston
Mr Brian O Ruairc
Dr Patricia Gunning
Ms Elaine Walsh
Dr Nuala Commins
Dr Sile O'Flaherty
Dr Patricia Heavey
Dr Therese Montgomery
Mr Seadna Ryan
Ms Karen Costello
Ms Colette Kelly
Mr Eoin Conway
Ms Breda Lynch
Mr Paul Dolan
Ms Martina Curran
Dr Ronan Dunbar
Ms Aine Daly
Mr John Devine

Academic Staff and Student Affairs

The Academic Council is the statutory body appointed by the Governing Body to assist in the planning, co-ordination, development and overseeing of the academic/educational activities of the institute. The academic council, and its sub-committees, protect, maintain and develop academic standards throughout the Institute and advise Governing Body on all relevant matters relating to academic standards. The Academic Council met eight times in 2019/2020 on the following dates:

September 27th 2019
October 25th 2019
November 8th 2019
December 13th 2019
February 14th 2020
March 27th 2020
May 15th 2020
June 18th 2020

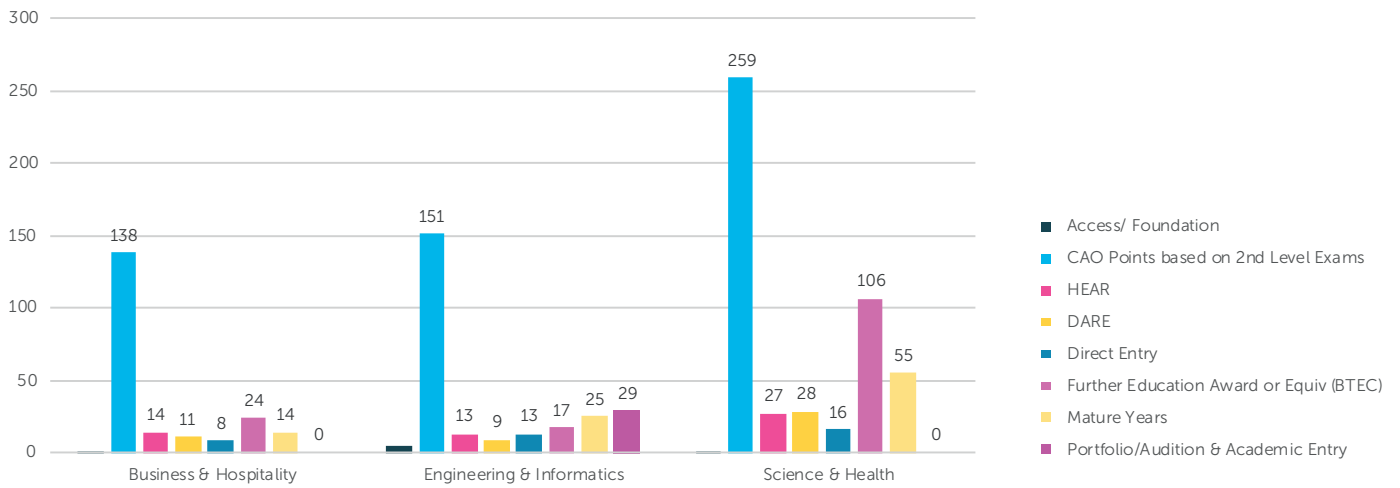
ACADEMIC COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin (Chair)
Dr Niall Seery

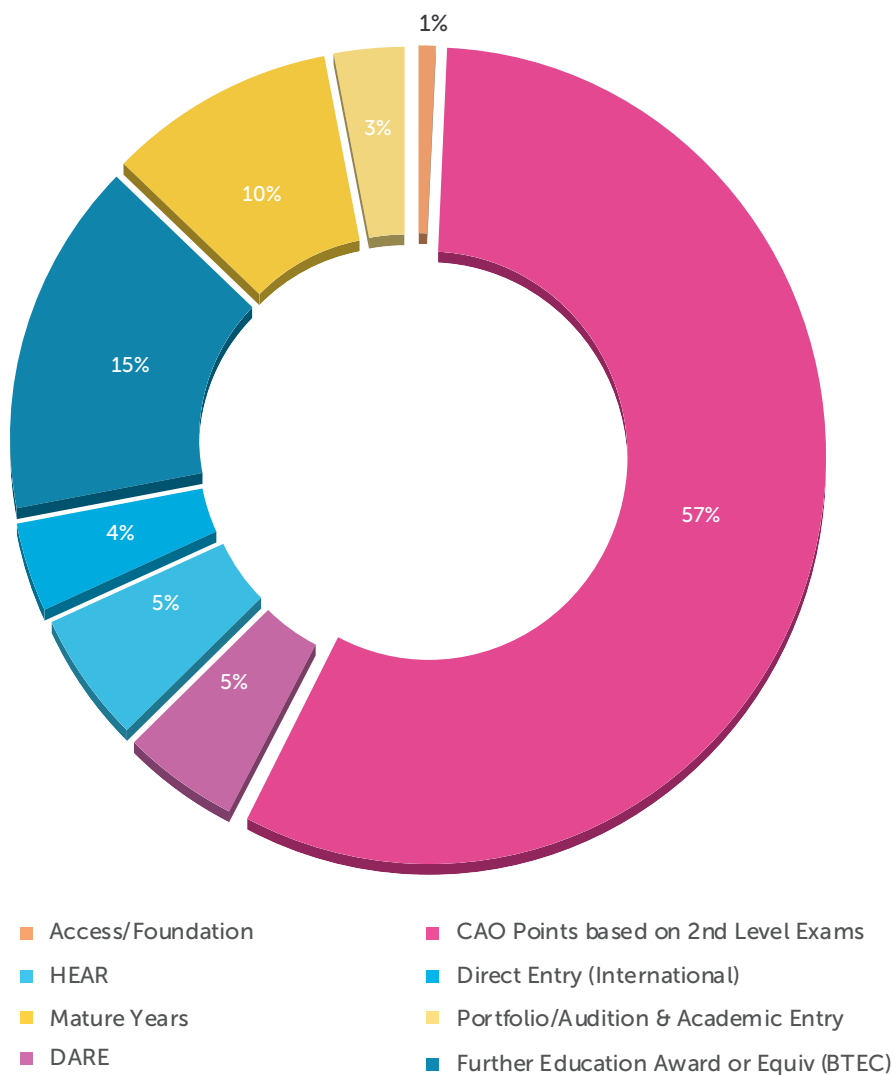
Summary of New Programme Proposals for the Academic year 2019/2020

| COURSE TITLE | EMT Approval | Academic Strategy & Quality Committee | External Panel Visit | Academic Council Approval |
|--|--------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND HOSPITALITY | | | | |
| Higher Diploma in Information Technology Level 8 | 29.04.2020 | 19.06.2020 | 19.06.2020 | 25.09.2020 |
| FACULTY OF ENGINEERING AND INFORMATICS | | | | |
| Certificate in Networks Infrastructure with Security Level 6 (Special Purpose Award) 20 credits Springboard Funded | | 19.06.2020 | 19.06.2020 | 25.09.2020 |
| BSc (Hons) in Digital Construction Management Level 8 | 19.05.2020 | 05.06.2020 | 19.06.2020 | 25.09.2020 |
| FACULTY OF CONTINUING, PROFESSIONAL, ONLINE AND DISTANCE LEARNING | | | | |
| Certificate in Procurement Level 6 (Special Purpose Award) 60 credits. Springboard Funded | 02.06.2020 | 19.06.2020 | 19.06.2020 | 25.09.2020 |
| Certificate in Financial Accounting and Payroll Level 6 (Special Purpose Award) 20 credits Springboard Funded | 02.06.2020 | 19.06.2020 | 19.06.2020 | 25.09.2020 |
| FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND HEALTH | | | | |
| Certificate in Caring for the Deteriorating Adult in the Acute Setting Level 6 (Special Purpose Award) 10 credits | 16.09.2020 | 11.09.2019 | October 2019 | 25.09.2020 |
| BSc (Hons) in Physical Activity and Health Sciences Level 8/ BSc Exercise & Health Science Level 7 (this was a reframing of the Level 8 and Level 7 programme to keep in line with semesterisation within the institute and also to address gaps in the course content, to provide prospective graduate with the most up to date knowledge and competencies that will best position them for employment and/or further study. | | 28.02.2020 | March 2020 Desk Review Exercise | |

Student Cohort by Entry Basis for Full-Time New Entrants for 2019/20 Academic Year



Entry Basis for AIT Academic Year 2019-20 as per 1st March 2020 SRS Data



Students by Degree Level and Gender Across AIT and in STEM Departments 2019/20

| Academic Year 2019/20 | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|------|--------|-------|----------|
| | Level | Male | Female | Total | Female % |
| ALL AIT | Undergraduate | 2591 | 2779 | 5370 | 52% |
| | Postgraduate Taught | 296 | 194 | 490 | 40% |
| | Postgraduate Research | 93 | 65 | 158 | 41% |
| AIT Total | | 2980 | 3038 | 6018 | 50% |
| STEM AIT | Undergraduate | 1671 | 1321 | 2992 | 44% |
| | Postgraduate Taught | 231 | 117 | 348 | 34% |
| | Postgraduate Research | 88 | 63 | 151 | 42% |
| STEM Total | | 1990 | 1501 | 3491 | 43% |
| AHSS AIT | Undergraduate | 920 | 1458 | 2378 | 61% |
| | Postgraduate Taught | 65 | 77 | 142 | 54% |
| | Postgraduate Research | 5 | 2 | 7 | 29% |
| AHSS Total | | 990 | 1537 | 2527 | 61% |
| % STEM AIT 2019/20 | | 67% | 49% | 58% | - |
| % STEM AIT 2018/19 | | 66% | 47% | 56% | - |

In 2019/20, AIT had a population of 6018 students. Females represented 50% of AIT students in 2019/20. Of the female cohort, 43% are in STEM which is unchanged from that of 2018/19.

Faculty Trends to 2019/20

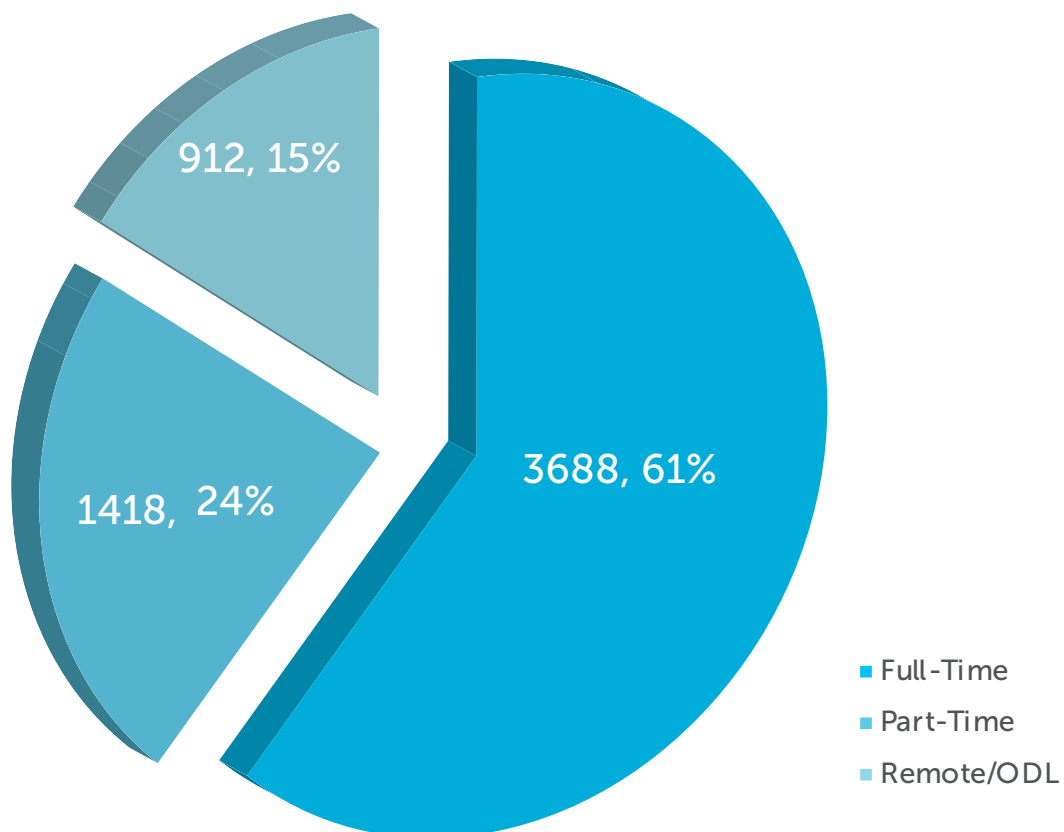
Student numbers by department 2016/17 to 2019/20 (including exam only)

| DEPARTMENT | March 2017 | March 2018 | March 2019 | March 2020 |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Accounting and Business Computing | 568 | 529 | 574 | 633 |
| Business and Management Studies | 673 | 613 | 659 | 714 |
| Civil Engineering and Construction | 117 | 127 | 148 | 171 |
| Lifelong Learning | 415 | 623 | 626 | 660 |
| Design | 112 | 109 | 134 | 134 |
| Electronic Computer Software | 534 | 497 | 425 | 674 |
| Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure | 351 | 377 | 338 | 316 |
| Social Sciences | 580 | 611 | 618 | 588 |
| Life and Physical Science | 485 | 498 | 550 | 579 |
| Sport and Health Sciences | 341 | 372 | 355 | 359 |
| Mechanical and Polymer | 244 | 262 | 334 | 435 |
| Nursing and Health Care | 367 | 415 | 463 | 479 |
| Trades | 174 | 192 | 263 | 276 |
| TOTAL STUDENTS AS PER MARCH | 4961 | 5225 | 5487 | 6018 |

Part-Time Students – Breakdown and Pertenages by Department and ODL

| Department | Full-Time | Part-Time | Online & Distance Learning | INSERVICE | Total | FT% | PT% | ODL% |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------------|-----------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Accounting & Business Computing | 207 | 243 | 158 | 25 | 633 | 33% | 42% | 25% |
| Business & Management Studies | 565 | 70 | 79 | - | 714 | 79% | 10% | 11% |
| Civil Engineering and Construction | 94 | 31 | 46 | - | 171 | 55% | 18% | 27% |
| Electronics & Informatics | 423 | 59 | 192 | - | 674 | 63% | 9% | 28% |
| Hospitality, Tourism & Leisure | 229 | 87 | - | - | 316 | 72% | 28% | 0% |
| Life and Physical Sciences | 477 | 102 | - | - | 579 | 82% | 18% | 0% |
| Lifelong Learning | - | 379 | 281 | - | 660 | 0% | 57% | 43% |
| Mechanical, Polymer & Design | 300 | 63 | 72 | - | 435 | 69% | 14% | 17% |
| Design | 132 | 2 | - | - | 134 | 99% | 1% | - |
| Nursing and Healthcare | 366 | 29 | 84 | - | 479 | 76% | 6% | 18% |
| Social Sciences | 552 | 36 | - | - | 588 | 94% | 6% | 0% |
| Sport and Health Sciences | 343 | 16 | - | - | 359 | 96% | 4% | 0% |
| Trades | - | 276 | - | - | 276 | 0% | 100% | 0% |
| Grand Total | 3688 | 1393 | 912 | 25 | 6018 | 61% | 24% | 15% |

Mode of Delivery 2019/20

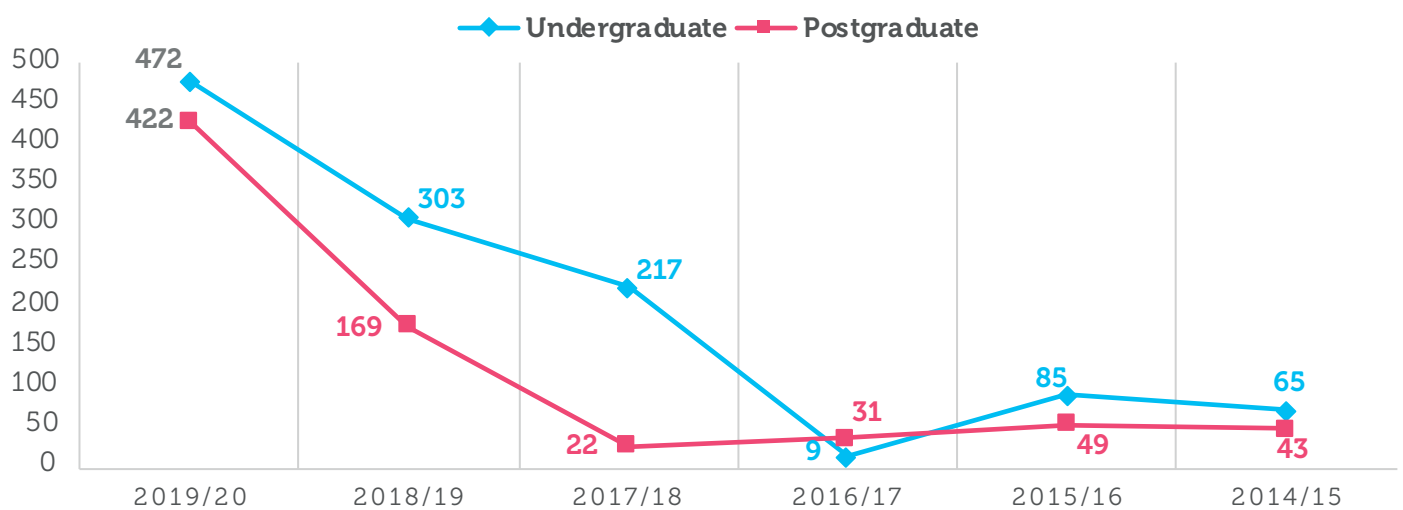


Springboard

| Department | 2019/20 | 2018/19 | 2017/18 | 2016/17 | 2015/16 | 2014/15 |
|---|------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Accounting Business Computing | 160 | 153 | - | 10 | 33 | 17 |
| Business Management Studies | 79 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Civil, Construction Engineering | 43 | 32 | - | 19 | 46 | 33 |
| Electronics, Computer and Software Engineering | 178 | 16 | 22 | 11 | - | - |
| Hospitality and Tourism | 54 | 12 | - | - | - | - |
| Lifelong Learning | 352 | 245 | 217 | - | 23 | 30 |
| Mechanical, Polymer and Design | 28 | 14 | - | - | 15 | 12 |
| Trades | - | - | - | - | 17 | 16 |
| Total Springboard & ICT at March SRS | 894 | 472 | 239 | 40 | 134 | 108 |

| Springboard/ICT Initiatives | Number of programmes | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| Undergraduate | 14 | 65 | 85 | 9 | 217 | 303 | 472 |
| Postgraduate | 13 | 43 | 49 | 31 | 22 | 169 | 422 |
| Total | 27 | 108 | 134 | 40 | 239 | 472 | 894 |
| % change on previous year | - | - | 24% | -70% | 498% | 97% | 89% |
| Numbers change on previous year | - | 108 | 26 | -94 | 199 | 233 | 422 |

SPRINGBOARD/ICT STUDENT NUMBERS TRENDING 2014/15 - 2019/20



Postgraduate Data

| FACULTY | 2015/2016 | 2016/2017 | 2017/2018 | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT | | | | | |
| Business and Hospitality | 84 | 99 | 91 | 221 | 210 |
| Engineering and Informatics | 85 | 83 | 52 | 45 | 173 |
| Science and Health | 99 | 48 | 68 | 58 | 51 |
| Lifelong Learning | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 56 |
| TOTAL | 268 | 230 | 211 | 331 | 490 |
| HIGHER DIPLOMA | | | | | |
| Business and Hospitality | 68 | 40 | 29 | 65 | 170 |
| Engineering and Informatics | 0 | 11 | 22 | 16 | 38 |
| Science and Health | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lifelong Learning | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 82 | 51 | 51 | 81 | 208 |
| RESEARCH | | | | | |
| Business and Hospitality | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Engineering and Informatics | 49 | 53 | 56 | 58 | 116 |
| Science and Health | 26 | 27 | 29 | 27 | 37 |
| TOTAL | 75 | 80 | 86 | 86 | 158 |
| TOTAL POSTGRADUATE | 425 | 361 | 348 | 498 | 856 |

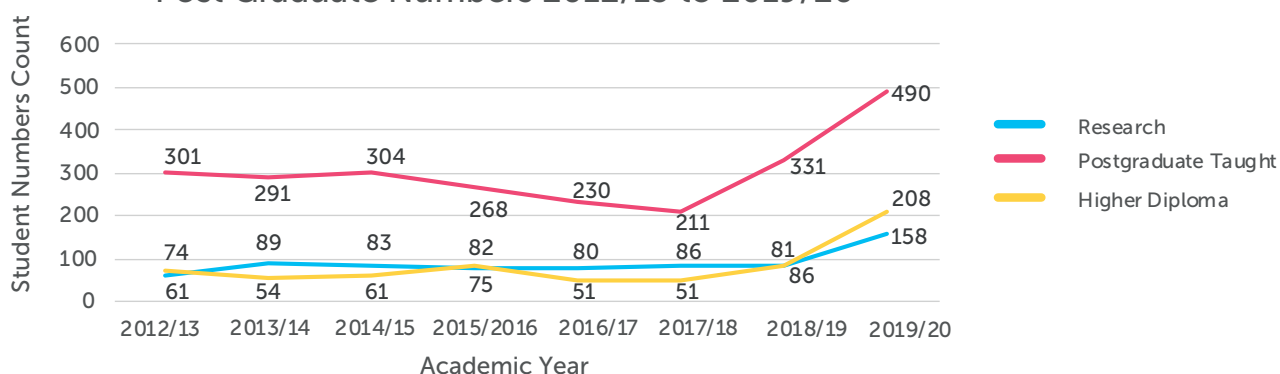
Breakdown of Postgraduate Student Body by Faculty Level

| FACULTY | 2015/2016 | 2016/2017 | 2017/2018 | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Level 10 | | | | | |
| Business and Hospitality | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Engineering and Informatics | 15 | 17 | 17 | 23 | 75 |
| Science and Health | 5 | 5 | 7 | 9 | 18 |
| TOTAL | 20 | 22 | 24 | 32 | 94 |
| Level 9 | | | | | |
| Business and Hospitality | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Engineering and Informatics | 34 | 36 | 39 | 35 | 41 |
| Science and Health | 21 | 22 | 22 | 18 | 19 |
| TOTAL | 55 | 58 | 62 | 54 | 64 |

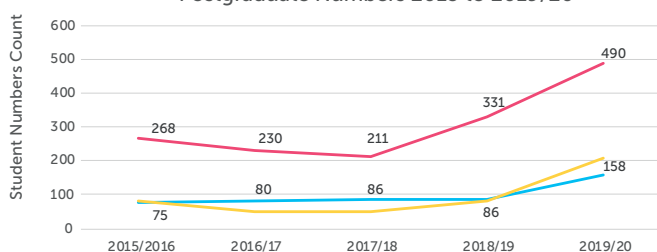
Postgraduate Analysis

| Faculty | March 2013 2012/13 | March 2014 2013/14 | March 2015 2014/15 | March 2016 2015/16 | March 2017 2016/17 | March 2018 2017/18 | March 2019 2018/19 | March 2020 2019/20 |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Research | | | | | | | | |
| Business & Hospitality | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Engineering & Informatics | 29 | 54 | 53 | 49 | 53 | 56 | 58 | 116 |
| Science & Health | 30 | 34 | 29 | 26 | 27 | 29 | 27 | 37 |
| Research Total | 61 | 89 | 83 | 75 | 80 | 86 | 86 | 158 |
| Postgraduate Taught (Master's, PG Diploma & PG Cert) | | | | | | | | |
| Business & Hospitality | 72 | 80 | 101 | 84 | 99 | 91 | 221 | 210 |
| Engineering & Informatics | 81 | 124 | 130 | 85 | 83 | 52 | 45 | 173 |
| Science & Health | 124 | 69 | 69 | 99 | 48 | 68 | 58 | 51 |
| Lifelong Learning | 24 | 18 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 56 |
| Postgraduate Taught Total | 301 | 291 | 304 | 268 | 230 | 211 | 331 | 490 |
| Higher Diploma | | | | | | | | |
| Business & Hospitality | 74 | 47 | 52 | 68 | 40 | 29 | 65 | 170 |
| Engineering & Informatics | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 22 | 16 | 38 |
| Science & Health | 0 | 7 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lifelong Learning | 0 | 0 | 9 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Higher Diploma Total | 74 | 54 | 61 | 82 | 51 | 51 | 81 | 208 |
| Total Postgraduate | 436 | 434 | 448 | 425 | 361 | 348 | 498 | 856 |

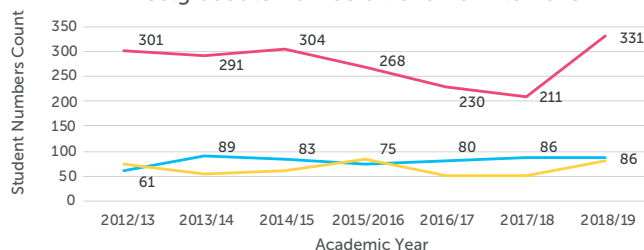
Post Graduate Numbers 2012/13 to 2019/20



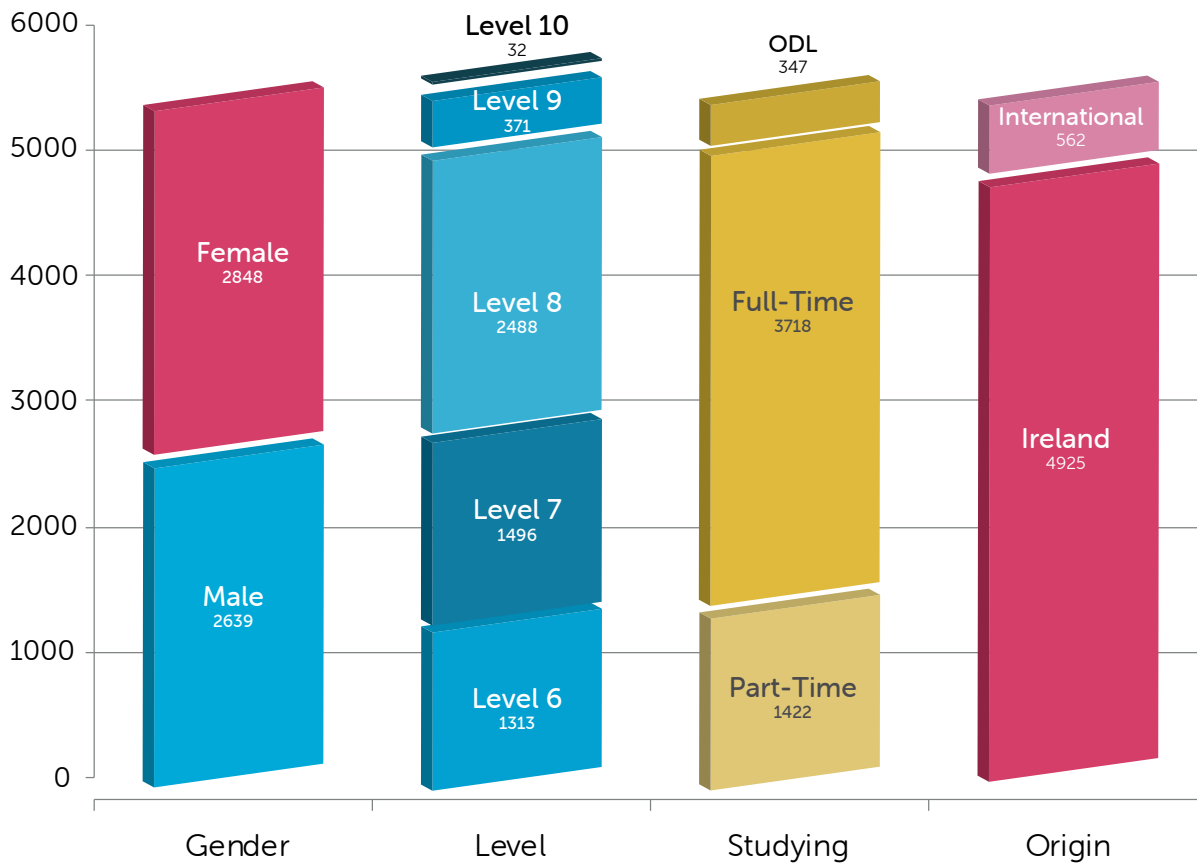
Postgraduate Numbers 2015 to 2019/20



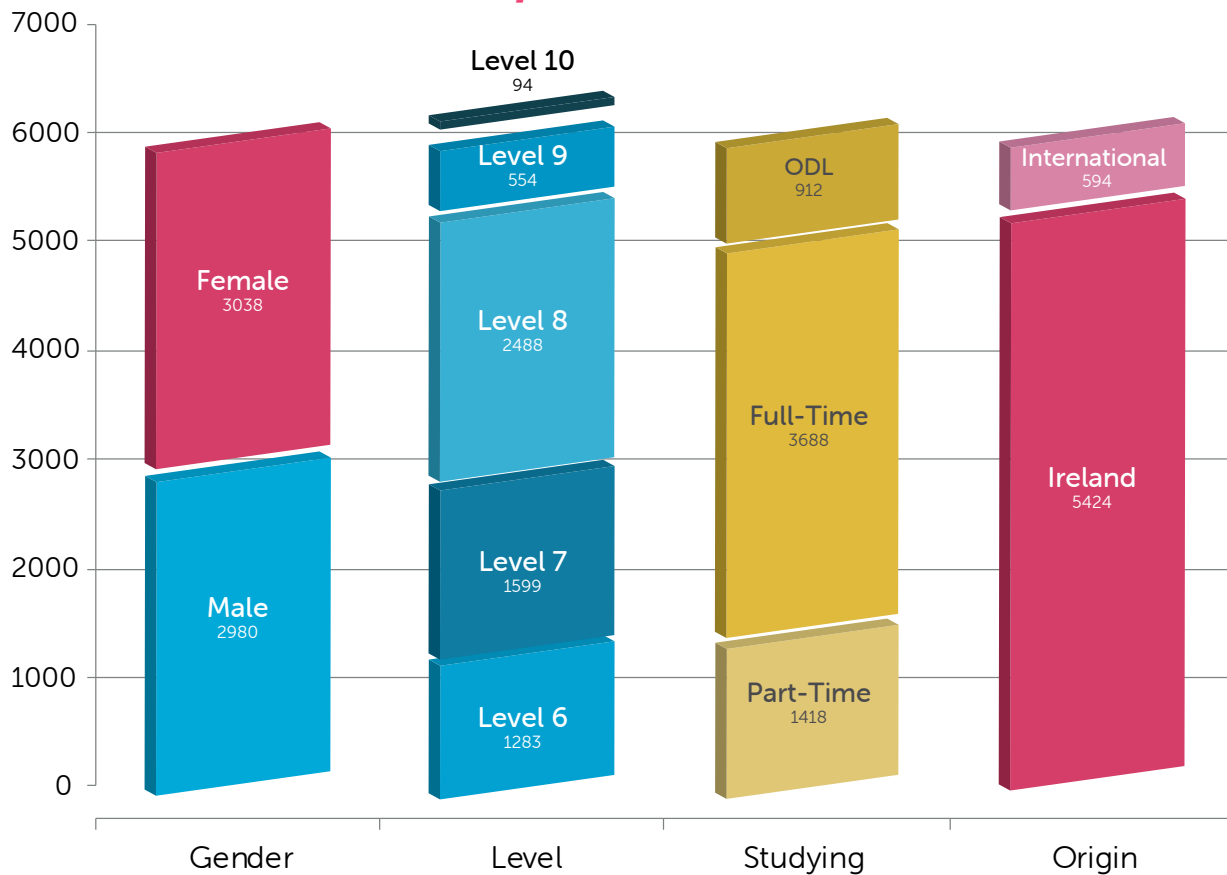
Postgraduate Numbers trend 2012 to 2018



PROFILE OF STUDENTS 2018/2019



PROFILE OF STUDENTS 2019/2020



INTERNATIONALISATION

| Internationalisation 2017/2018 | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----|------------|-------|
| | Full-Time | Part-Time | ODL | In Service | Total |
| International – EU | 29 | 16 | 2 | - | 47 |
| International – Non-EU | 276 | 31 | - | 2 | 309 |
| Erasmus Incoming (EU and Non-EU) | 120 | 0 | - | - | 120 |
| Other Exchange (EU and Non-EU) | 18 | 0 | - | - | 18 |
| Total | 443 | 47 | 2 | 2 | 494 |
| % International | 12% | 4% | - | - | 10% |

| Internationalisation 2018/2019 | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----|------------|-------|
| | Full-Time | Part-Time | ODL | In Service | Total |
| International – EU | 73 | 5 | 1 | - | 79 |
| International – Non-EU | 339 | 17 | 2 | - | 358 |
| Erasmus Incoming (EU and Non-EU) | 124 | 0 | - | - | 124 |
| Other Exchange (EU and Non-EU) | 1 | 0 | - | - | 1 |
| Total | 537 | 22 | 3 | - | 562 |
| % International | 15% | 2% | - | - | 11% |

| Internationalisation 2019/2020 | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----|------------|-------|
| | Full-Time | Part-Time | ODL | In Service | Total |
| International – EU | 51 | - | 2 | - | 53 |
| International – Non-EU | 393 | 32 | 1 | - | 426 |
| Erasmus Incoming (EU and Non-EU) | 109 | - | - | - | 109 |
| Other Exchange (EU and Non-EU) | 5 | 1 | - | - | 6 |
| Total | 558 | 33 | 3 | - | 594 |
| % International | 10% | 3% | - | - | 10% |

STAFF NUMBERS

In 2019/2020 AIT had a total of 598 staff members (54% Female)

Staff 2019/2020 by Gender and Category

| Category | 2019/2020 | | | |
|----------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | Female | Male | Total | % Female |
| Academic | 148 | 148 | 296 | 50% |
| Research | 13 | 45 | 58 | 22% |
| Professional/Support | 163 | 81 | 244 | 67% |
| Total | 324 | 274 | 598 | 54% |

Academic Staff Breakdown Across STEM and NON STEM by Gender

| Category | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | | | |
|----------|----------|---------|------|-------|----------|
| | % Female | Female | Male | Total | % Female |
| STEM | 43% | 81 | 108 | 189 | 43% |
| NON STEM | 65% | 67 | 40 | 107 | 63% |

Academic STEM Staff Breakdown by Faculty and Gender

| Faculty | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| | % Female | Female | Male | Total | % Female |
| Engineering and Informatics | 21% | 21 | 79 | 100 | 21% |
| Science and Health | 70% | 55 | 23 | 78 | 71% |
| Business and Hospitality | 47% | 5 | 6 | 11 | 45% |
| Total | 43% | 81 | 108 | 189 | 43% |

*Business includes academics delivering on Computing, Analytics and Digital Marketing

Academic Staff by Grade Profile

| | 2018/2019 | | 2019/2020 | |
|--------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| | Total | % Female | Total | % Female |
| Assistant Lecturer | 68 | 60% | 72 | 58% |
| Lecturer | 206 | 49% | 206 | 49% |
| SL1 (Teach) | 3 | 33% | 3 | 33% |
| SL2 (HoD) | 11 | 27% | 11 | 27% |
| SL3 (DoF) | 4 | 25% | 4 | 25% |

STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND PARTICIPATION

A total of 44,707 students nationally responded to the 2020 studentsurvey.ie (formerly known as ISSE), representing a national response rate of 31%. AIT's response rate of 68%, achieved via a strong partnership approach between the Quality Office, Academic Staff and the Students' Union, continues to be the highest across all HEIs, by a considerable margin. In 2019 there was an increase in participation of 3.4% on 2018, with a total of 1802 (1779 in 2018) first and final year responses. The trend continued in 2020 with a total of 1,192 undergraduate students from first and final years participating in the survey.

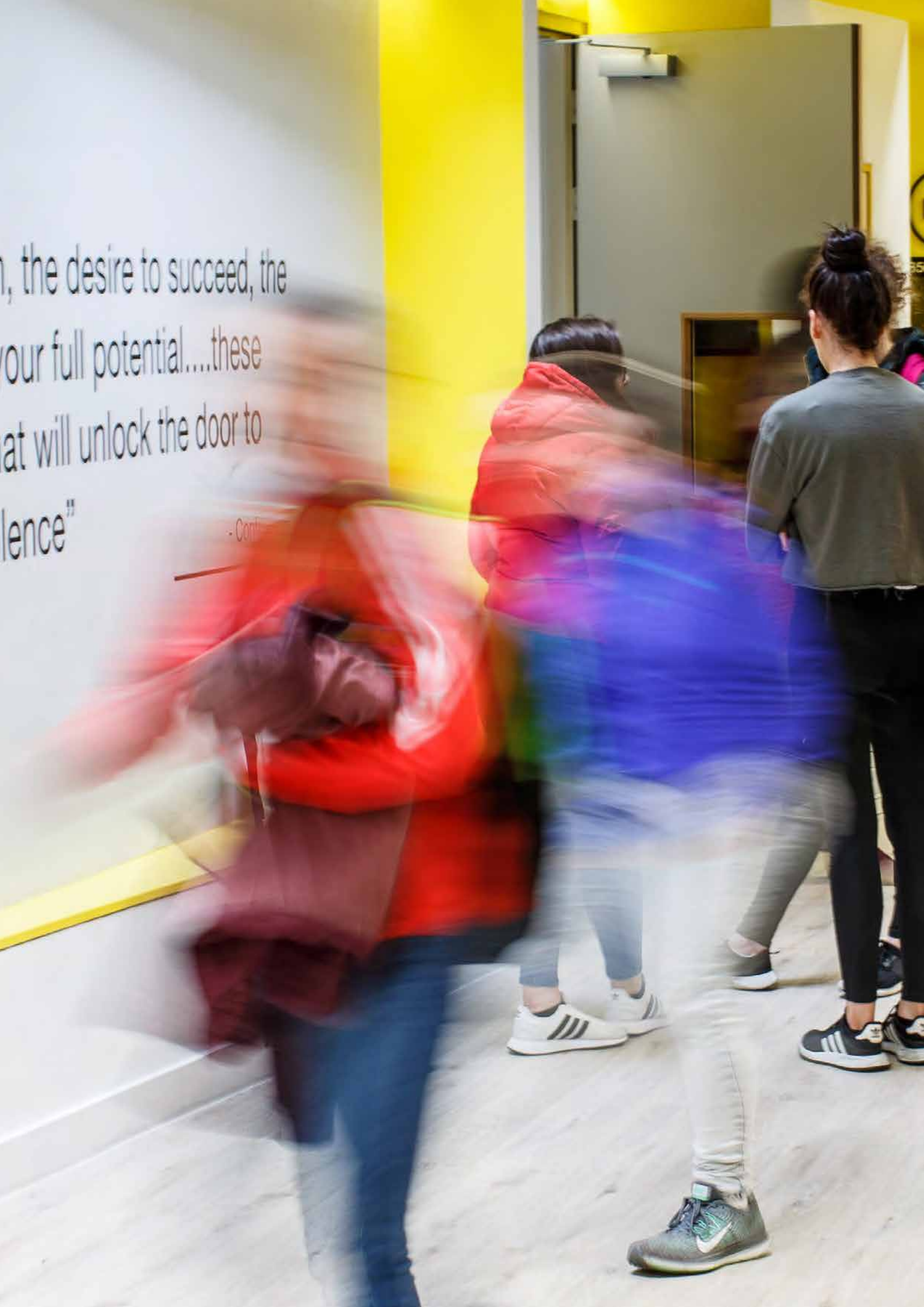
Completion Rates Table

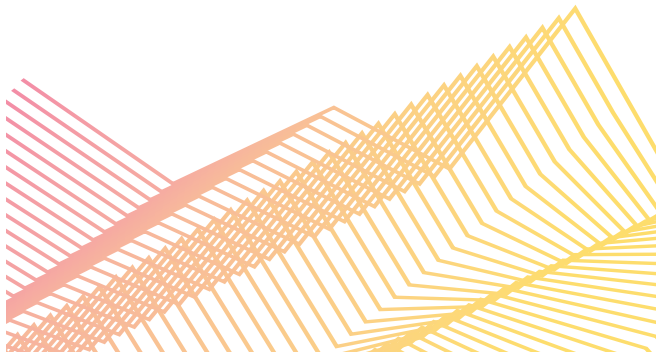
| Year | National Response Rate | AIT Response Rate |
|------|------------------------|-------------------|
| 2018 | 28% | 65% |
| 2019 | 35% | 68.5% |
| 2020 | 31% | 68% |

The results for AIT continue to be positive with 85.9% of students choosing good/excellent when asked about their educational experience at AIT. This is very positive showing that students value the interactions with their lecturers, the quality of educational provision; teaching and opportunities afforded to them. Students in AIT have shown appreciation that they have a platform to have their voices heard.

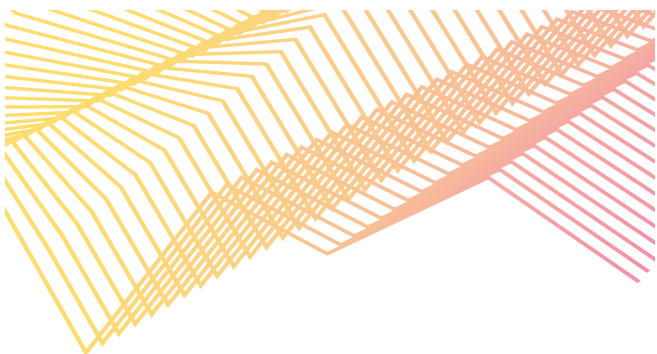
n. the desire to succeed, the
our full potential....these
at will unlock the door to
"ence"

-Cont





Annual Governance Statement (Appendix A)





Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

1. Code of Conduct for Members (Section 2.11.4(i) – IoTC)

The Institute confirms that a Code of Conduct for Members has been put in place and implemented and includes clear conflict of interest and ethics in public office policies.

2. Code of Conduct for Employees (Section 2.11.4(i) – IoTC)

The Institute confirms that a Code of Conduct for Employees has been put in place and implemented and includes clear conflict of interest and ethics in public office policies.

3. Financially significant developments (Section 2.11.4(ii) – IoTC)

(i) No financially significant developments affected the Institute in the past financial year including the establishment of subsidiaries or joint ventures and acquisitions and major issues likely to arise in the short to medium term.

(ii) The Institute had one external independent investigation into an internal matter during 2019/20. This investigation is complete. The expenditure amount incurred to August 2020 is €35,381. Progress on the investigation was monitored by Management. There are no other external investigations or enquiries on internal matters to report up to August 2020. Governing Body has oversight of expenditure. Spending is compliant with procurement requirements.

(iii) Expenditure on external consultancy/adviser fees paid to external parties providing advisory services of any nature:

| | |
|---|---------------------------|
| Professional Fees - Legal | €103,662.99 |
| Professional Fees - Audit | €35,000.00 |
| Professional Fees - Internal Audit | €44,112.02 |
| Professional Fees – Building Services | €47,892.94 |
| Professional Fees – Financial Services | €35,293.78 |
| Professional Fees – Mentoring | €24,126.50 |
| Professional Fees – Marketing | €7,604.00 |
| Professional Fees – Computer | €49,112.67 |
| Professional Fees – Research | €108,392.31 |
| Professional Fees – Other | €50,680.90 |
| Total per Financial Statements 2019/20 (Note 10) | <u>€505,878.11</u> |

(iv) There was one significant commercially sensitive development in the preceding 12 months. AIT terminated a building contract in July 2020. Governing Body were advised on the matter. The matter has proceeded to a conciliation process as provided under a Public Works Contract. The conciliation is still ongoing. No other commercially sensitive developments are foreseen for the rest of the year.

(v) There are no financing arrangements attaching to any joint venture or other similar arrangements.

- (vi) The aggregate cost to the Exchequer of the arrangements outlined in section v above – This is not applicable.
 - (vii) Confirmation of financial position of the Institute.
The draft financial statements for 2019/20 report an Institute annual operating surplus of €3.96m for the financial year end August 19/20. Revenue reserves as at 31/08/2020 are €5.1m. (Note: Funding application for COVID-19 expenditure totalling €725k up to the 31st August 2020 has been submitted to the HEA and is provided for in this draft financial statement.)
- 4. Pay (Sections 2.6.1 and 2.11.4(iii) – IoTC)**
- (i) The Institute affirms that Government policy on pay is being complied with.
 - (ii) The Institute confirms that no severance payments were made during the year.
 - (iii) The Institute confirms that it has in place arrangements for ensuring that external work undertaken by employees does not impact upon the performance of core contracted duties.
- 5. Financial reporting (Section 2.11.4(iv) – IoTC)**
- (i) The Institute affirms that all appropriate procedures for financial reporting are being carried out.
 - (ii) AIT is reporting through the medium of the annual financial statements, the specific disclosures required by the Code of Governance for the Institutes of Technology with reference to the State Code.
- 6. Off Balance Sheet Transactions (Section 1.9 (ii) BFRR)**
- There have been no off balance sheet transactions during the year other than as identified within the Financial Statements and/or reported to the C&AG.
- 7. Trusts and Foundations**
- The Institute confirms that information on the Foundation is disclosed by way of note in the 2019/20 Financial Statements.
- 8. Internal audit (Section 2.11.4(iv) – IoTC)**
- (i) The Institute affirms that all appropriate procedures for internal audit are in place and are being reported to the Audit & Risk Committee and the Governing Body. The Internal Auditors, -Deloitte Ireland LLP were appointed by way of a public tender conducted on behalf of the sector. The function operated in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Governance and the Audit & Risk Committee Terms of Reference and Annual Workplan. The Internal Auditors report directly to the Audit and Risk Committee. An annually approved plan has been agreed between the Internal Auditor and the Audit and Risk Committee.
 - (ii) Total number of Internal Audit reviews undertaken in the period
There were 6 Internal Audit reviews undertaken in 2019/20
 - (iii) Report titles of completed reviews
 - Internal Audit Estates Report

- Draft Review of the Human Resources Function (targeted)
- Internal Audit 2018/19 – Draft GDPR Review
- Internal Audit Self-Assessment Code of Governance review
- Internal Audit Review of Financial Aspects of Internal Control Framework 2019/20
- Review of Oversight of the Student Union

9. Procurement (Section 2.11.4(iv) and (ix) – IoTC & Section 8.20 & 8.16 – SC)

- (i) Procurement Procedures:** The Institute confirms that it is in compliance with current procurement rules and guidelines as set out by the Office of Government Procurement (“OGP”) and the Education Procurement Service (“EPS”) and all appropriate procedures for procurement have been developed, published to all staff and are being carried out.
- (ii) Procurement Non-Compliance:** The Institute confirms that procedures are in place to detect non-compliance with procurement procedures and confirms that a contracts database/listing for all contracts/payments in excess of €25,000 is in place to identify non-competitive procurement.
- (iii) Corporate Procurement Plan:** The Institute has a Corporate Procurement Plan (CPP) approved by Governing Body and Multi Annual Procurement Plan (MAPP) in place with the sectoral template issued by EPS and is remitted annually to the EPS.
- (iv) Office of Governance Procurement:** The Institute confirms that it is using the services and frameworks of the OGP, and of the EPS, wherever applicable.
- (v) Details of Non-Competitive Procurement:** During the 2019/20 year one (1) instance arose where the Institute procured goods and services without full compliance with national and EU procurement guidelines. The Institute is working towards full compliance with all relevant guidelines for the procurement activity. Details of non-compliance have been reported to the Audit and Risk Committee and are outlined in the table below. Non-compliant procurement for 2019/20 amounted to - €25,277.00

10. Asset disposals (Section 2.11.4(iv) – IoTC)

The Institute affirms that all appropriate procedures for asset disposals are being carried out.

11. Management of Capital Projects (Section 2.11.4(v) – IoTC)

The Institute confirms that the Guidelines for the Appraisal and Management of Capital Proposals are being adhered to where appropriate.

The institute affirms that its policies and procedures in the management of capital projects are compliant with the relevant principles, requirements and guidelines of the Public Spending Code and the Capital Works Management Framework.

12. Travel policy (Section 2.11.4(vi) – IoTC)

The Institute confirms that Government travel policy requirements are being complied with in all respects.

- 13. Guidelines on Achieving Value for Money in Public Expenditure (Section 2.11.4(vii) – IoTC)**
The Institute confirms that the Guidelines on Achieving Value for Money in Public Expenditure as set out in the address by the Minister for Finance of 20 October 2005 and communicated to the Institutes are being followed.
- 14. Tax laws (Section 2.11.4(viii) – IoTC)**
The Institute affirms that, to the best of its knowledge, it has complied with its obligations under the tax laws in operation during 2019/20.
- 15. Legal Disputes (Section 8.48 – SC & Section 1.9 (xiv) BFRR)**
The Institute had no legal disputes involving other State bodies during the year.
- 16. Confidential Disclosure Faith Reporting – Protected Disclosures Act 2014 (Section 3.1.1.17 – IoTC)**
- (i) The Institute confirms that it has a Protected Disclosures policy in place in accordance with the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 which was approved by the Governing Body on 11th March, 2015.
 - (ii) The Institute has published the 2019 annual report required under the Act.
 - (iii) The Institute had no protected disclosures under the Policy/Act during the 2019/20 period.
- 17. Governing Body meetings (Section 4.9 – SC)**
There were nine (9) meetings of the Governing Body held in 2019/20. Please see attached schedule of Governing Body meetings and attendance. The Governing Body met without members connected to the Institute present 18 September 2019 and 05 February 2020.
- 18. Audit and Risk Committee meetings (Section 4.9 – SC & Section 1.13 – ARCG)**
There were four (4) Audit and Risk Committee meetings held in 2019/20. Please see attached details and attendance schedule of Audit and Risk Committee meetings.
- 19. Review of Governing Body performance (Section 4.6 – SC)**
- (i) The Institute confirms that the Governing Body conducted a self-assessment of its performance in 2019/20 which concluded on 28 February 2020.
 - (ii) The Institute confirms that the last external review was concluded on **25th October, 2017**. The GB will conduct the next self-assessment review of its own performance on 03 February 2021.
- 20. Salary of President (Section 1.4(iv) – BFRR)**
The Institute confirms that the gross salary paid to President of AIT for the financial year 2019/20 was €157,560.96.
- 21. Data provided to HEA**
- (i) The Institute confirms that data in respect of student numbers issued to the HEA is accurate and conforms to the requirements of the reporting templates.



- (ii) The Institute confirms that data in respect of staff numbers issued to the HEA is accurate and conforms to the requirements of the reporting templates.

22. The Framework for Promoting Consent in Higher Education

The Institute confirms that the Institution has applied institutional processes which will support achievement of the objectives of the Framework for Promoting Consent and Preventing Sexual Violence in Higher Education.

23. Child Protection Policy

The Institute confirms that an appropriate Child Protection Policy is in place and has been updated for the provision of the Children First Act 2015.

24. Disability Act 2005

The Institute confirms that the Institution is meeting its obligations under the Disability Act 2005.

25. Fees and expenses (Section 2.10 – RS & Section 1.10(vii) - BFRR)

The Institute confirms that fees and/or expenses paid to members of Governing Body are in accordance with the guidelines from the Department of Finance, and are presented in the Institute's Annual Report. Details of aggregate fees and/or expenses paid to external Governing Body members during 2019/20 are attached.

26. Subsidiaries and interests in external companies (Section 1.9(xvi) & 1.11 – BFRR)

(i) **Compliance with terms and conditions of consent of establishment:** The Institute confirms that any subsidiary of the institution (or subsidiary thereof) continues to operate solely for the purpose of which it was established, remains and continues to remain in full compliance with the terms and conditions of the consent under which it was established.

(ii) **Code of governance for trading subsidiaries:** The Institute confirms that its subsidiary companies (College Support and Services CLG and AIT Sportsco Ltd.) have adopted an appropriate Code of Governance. Annual Financial Statements, Statements of Internal Control, Management Letters, and Internal Audit reports are reviewed and approved by the respective Boards of Directors and reviewed by AIT's Audit & Risk Committee and the Governing Body.

(iii) The Institute has an interest in Empower Eco CLG which was formed on 22 September 2020.

27. Intellectual Property (IP) and Conflict of Interest

(i) **A statement confirming that the Institute has in place a single IP policy, published on its website, which:**

- Reflects the National IP Management Requirements of the national IP Protocol
- Clearly sets out all IP processes and researcher obligations
- Includes a clear description of IP commercialisation decision-making processes
- Includes a clear dispute resolution process



- Describes revenue share mechanisms
 - Describes potential for conflicts of interest and directs researchers to the relevant sections of the HEI's Conflict of Interest Policy
 - The policy is published on its external website
- The single IP policy was approved by AIT Governing Body on 19th, June 2019.

(ii) A statement confirming that the Institute has in place a single Conflict of Interest Policy, published on its website

The single Conflicts of Interest policy was approved by AIT Governing Body on 19th, June 2019. The Conflicts of Interest policy is published on AITs website.

(iii) Confirmation that the Governing Body reviews all IP commercialisation and conflicts of interest on an annual basis

The IP Policy and the Conflicts of Interest Policy provide for an annual review by Governing Body.

(iv) Summary details of all major commercialisation of intellectual property, including spin-out companies

| Date | Instrument | Company | Technology | Details |
|-----------|------------|---------------------------------|--|--|
| 05 Feb 20 | Assignment | Teleflex Medical Europe Limited | Development of a urethral model for testing novel medical devices. | This Assignment (2019-002) arose from an AIT – Teleflex Co-funded Masters in Research (2017-0048). IDF 2019-002. |

28. HEA Principles of Good Practice in Research in Irish Higher Education Institutions

The institute affirms that the Institute commits to the key characteristics of good research practice as set out in the HEA Framework.

29. General governance and accountability issues

There are no other governance and accountability issues that the Institute wishes to bring to the attention of the HEA.

Statement of Internal Control

30. Governing Body responsibility for system of internal control (THEA Code – Appendix I, Statement of Internal Controls Paragraph 1)

The Governing Body acknowledges its responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal control is maintained and operated by the Institute and for putting in place processes and procedures for the purpose of ensuring that the system is effective.

31. Reasonable assurance (THEA Code – Appendix I, Statement of Internal Control Paragraph 2)



The system can only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions are authorised and properly recorded, and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or would be detected on a timely basis.

32. Review of the Statement of Internal Control (Governing Body and Audit and Risk Committee) (THEA Code – Appendix I, Statement of Internal Control Paragraph 3, Sub-Paragraph iv)

The Institute confirms that as part of its governance process, the Annual Governance Statement and Statement of Internal Controls (AGS/SIC) is reviewed and approved by the Governing Body. The Audit & Risk Committee and the Governing Body reviewed the (pre-audit) AGS/SIC 2019/20 on 23rd November, 2020 and 09th December, 2020 respectively.

33. Review of the Statement of Internal Control (External Auditors) (Section 2.7 – SC)

As part of the external audit conducted by the Comptroller and Auditor General, the Statement of Internal Control is reviewed by the Institute's External Auditors.

34. Key procedures put in place designed to provide effective internal control

(i) Appropriate Control Environment (THEA Code – Appendix I, Statement of Internal Control Paragraph 3, Sub-Paragraph vi):

The operation and effectiveness of the internal controls are reported to the Audit & Risk Committee by the Institute's management, and by the Audit & Risk Committee to the Governing Body. The Statement of Internal Control is provided annually to the Comptroller & Audit General as part of the audit process. The Internal Auditors (PwC) attended the Audit & Risk Committee meetings on the 02nd October 2019 and 27th November 2019. Deloitte Ireland LLP were then awarded the internal audit contract and attended meetings on 11th March 2020 and 05th June 2020.

As a result of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic several operational procedures were modified by Athlone Institute of Technology in order to support business continuity requirements. These procedures have enabled effective continuation of all services while at the same time maintaining an effective control environment. Athlone Institute of Technology is satisfied that effective controls have been maintained through all relevant transaction cycles. In relation to academic provision the deployment of agreed emergency remote teaching structures and processes has ensured that a blended education delivery model has been maintained to the required and approved academic standards.

The Governing Body has taken steps to ensure an appropriate control environment is in place by:

- identifying the principal risks to the achievement of policies, aims and objectives, evaluating the nature and extent of those risks, and managing the risks efficiently, effectively and economically.
- Clearly defining management responsibilities
- Developing procedures and regulations which are reviewed regularly and are documented, implemented and up to date.



- Establishing formal procedures through various committee functions to monitor the activities and safeguard the assets of the organisation, such as the Audit and Risk Committee.
- Developing a strong culture of accountability across all levels of the organisation.

(ii) Business Risks (THEA Code – Appendix I, Statement of Internal Control Paragraph 3, Sub-Paragraph vii):

AIT has developed processes to identify and evaluate business risks. This is achieved in a number of ways including:

- Developed an annual workplan to facilitate Governing Body oversight of the key activities and processes in place to manage operations effectively.
- Developed and approved a strategic plan and strategic compact with the HEA
- Implementation of an Internal Control Framework.
- The institute management prepared and presented the Operational Programme and Budgets to the ARC and the Governing Body in March 2020. Management present a financial update to ARC and the Governing Body showing actual results year to date against budget. Significant financial developments are advised to the Governing Body if and when they arise. The on-going academic, operational and financial impact of COVID-19 on AIT has been assessed and advised to the Governing Body.
- Regular reviews by the Governing Body and its committees of periodic and annual financial reports which indicate financial performance against forecasts.
- Setting targets to measure financial and other performances.
- Clearly defined capital investment control guidelines.
- Identifying key risks, risk owners and controls to mitigate these risks.

AIT has undertaken the following actions in line with our Risk Management Policy:

- Adopted a Risk Management Policy on the 20th June , 2018.
- Governing Body training by PWC on 27th May 2020
- Maintained and reviewed a risk register to facilitate the on-going reporting and monitoring of risk issues by the responsible managers in the Institute including formal review at the ARC on 11th March 2020
- Institute Strategic Risk Register and Risk Appetite approved by Governing Body – 13th May 2020.

(iii) Information Systems (THEA Code – Appendix I, Statement of Internal Control Paragraph 3, Sub-Paragraph viii):

AIT has implemented a number of Management Information Systems to provide a means of comparing actual results to targets and forecasts. These systems include:

- Financial Management – Agresso
- Human Resources and Payroll Management – CoreHR
- Travel and Expenses – CoreHR
- Student Administration – Banner



- Resource Allocation – Power BI and SSRS
- Timetabling – Syllabus

(iv) Financial Implications of Major Business Risks (THEA Code – Appendix I, Statement of Internal Control paragraph 3, Sub-Paragraph ix):

Procedures are in place for addressing financial implications of major business risk which include the following:

- the institute operates an Internal Control Framework (ICF), which identifies required financial controls and financial risk implications. The ICF sets out key compliance and control activities and procedures, processes and actions in place to address compliance and financial risk implications;
- the control procedures and activities include: a defined organisation structure including roles, responsibilities and segregation of duties, preparation of annual operating budget and review of actual performance against budget during the financial year, procedures for the prevention and detection of fraud and process and procedures for financial control over income (capital and recurrent grants and fees), accounts receivable, accounts payable, payroll and personnel, travel and expenses, operating expenses, fixed assets, capital projects, bank and cash, prepayments and accruals and provisions.
- compliance with the ICF is subjected to annual review by the internal auditors (Deloitte) as part of the annual review of Internal Financial Controls (IFC). The review of IFC for 2019/20 was completed by the internal auditors and presented to the Audit and Risk Committee on 05th June, 2020. Following review and recommendation of approval by the ARC, the ICF report was approved by the Governing Body of 17th June, 2020.

(v) Monitoring the Effectiveness of the Internal Control System (THEA Code – Appendix I, Statement of Internal Control Paragraph 3, Sub-Paragraph x)

The Governing Body's monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the Institute Executive and Management who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework, the Audit and Risk Committee, Internal Auditor and comments made by the Comptroller and Auditor General in his management letter. AIT has an outsourced internal audit function, which is in accordance with the Internal Audit Terms of Reference approved by the Governing Body and the Code of Governance of Irish Institutes of Technology.

AIT's Audit and Risk Committee met on four (4) occasions during the 2019/20 academic year as per attached schedule of Audit & Risk Committee meetings and attendance. The ARC completed the annual internal audit workplan as per attached.

The internal audit reports provide a review and formal report on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Institute's system of internal control and financial controls, with recommendations for improvement where necessary.



The ARC provided an annual report for 2019/20 to the Governing Body and expressed its opinion that AIT has adequate risk management and internal control systems in place such as to be an acceptable source of assurance to the Governing Body.

35. Annual Review of effectiveness of internal control (THEA Code – Appendix I, Statement of Internal Control Paragraph 3, Sub-Paragraph i)

The Governing Body completed a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control for the year ended 31 August 2020 on 09th December, 2020.


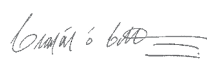
36. Weaknesses in internal control (THEA Code – Appendix I, Statement of Internal Control paragraph 3, Sub-Paragraph ii) Disclosure of details regarding instances where breaches in control occurred:

One instance of procurement non-compliance arose during 2019/20 and is outlined in the table below. Details of procurement non-compliance in respect of 2019/20 were identified and reported to the Audit & Risk Committee in the Annual Report on Procurement 05 October 2020.

37. Description of the action taken to correct weaknesses (THEA Code – Appendix I, Statement of Internal Control Paragraph 6)

Details of procurement non-compliance in respect of 2019/20 were identified and reported to the Audit & Risk Committee in the annual Report on Procurement 2019/20. Corrective action has been taken in that expenditure is monitored to ensure non compliance does not re-occur.

| Area of non-compliance or weaknesses in internal control | Actions to be taken to attain compliance or correct weaknesses | Due date |
|--|--|----------|
| Elwood Office Interior Ltd | Drawdown from OGP Framework, or run AIT tender process | Q1 2021 |

| | |
|--|---|
| Chairperson: Mr. Liam Rattigan |  Digitally signed by Liam Rattigan DN: cn=Liam Rattigan, o=Athlone Institute of Technology, ou=Chairperson AIT Governing Body, email=lrattigan@rbk.ie, c=IE |
| President: Prof. Ciarán O Catháin |  Digitally signed by Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin DN: cn=Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, o=Athlone Institute of Technology, ou=President, email=cocathain@ait.ie, c=IE |
| Name of Institute: | Athlone Institute of Technology |
| Date: | 16 th June, 2021 |



Attachments

AIT Audit & Risk Committee Meetings and Attendance 2019/20
AIT Governing Body Meetings and Attendance 2019/20
AIT Governing Body Expenses 2019/20
AIT Audit and Risk Committee Annual Workplan 2019/20

AIT Audit & Risk Committee Meetings and Attendance 2019/20



Audit and Risk Committee Meetings and Attendance 2019/20

| Audit & Risk Committee Members | Meeting 1 | Meeting 2 | Meeting 3 |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | 02/10/2019 | 27/11/2019 | 11/03/2020 |
| Ryan, Colette (Chair) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Kennedy, Colin | Apologies | Apologies | ✓ |
| Reidy, Martin | ✓ | Apologies | ✓ |
| O'Toole, Pat | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Feeney, Brian | ✓ | ✓ | Apologies |
| Medforth, Celine | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

New Committee formed in April 2020

| Audit & Risk Committee Members | Meeting 4 |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| | 05/06/2020 |
| Ryan, Colette (Chair) | ✓ |
| Foley, John | ✓ |
| Vacant * | - |
| O'Toole, Pat | ✓ |
| Feeney, Brian | ✓ |
| Dolan, Tina | ✓ |

* Position filled October 2020



AIT Governing Body Meetings and Attendance 2019/20

AIT Governing Body Meetings and Attendance 2019-2020

September 2019 – June 2020

| | | Special Meeting | | | | | |
|------------------|-----------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------------------------|
| | | 18/09/2019 | 11/10/2019 Special Meeting | 23/10/2019 | 11/12/2019 | 05/02/2020 | March Special meeting by e-mail |
| Ryan | Frank | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Ó Cathain | Ciaran | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Delamere | Brigid | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Keane | James | Apologies | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Kinsella | Nathasha | ✓ & Resigned at this meeting | | | | | |
| Rattigan | Liam | ✓ | apologies | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Ryan | Colette | Apologies | apologies | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Talty | Geraldine | Apologies | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Gilmore | Pat | ✓ | ✓ | apologies | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Shanagher | Kathleen | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Magner | Denis | Apologies | apologies | Absent | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Farrell | Tom | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| O'Toole | Pat | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | apologies | ✓ |
| Foley | John | ✓ | apologies | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Hamilton | Matt | ✓ | Absent | Absent | apologies | ✓ | |
| Kearney Medforth | Celine | ✓ | apologies | ✓ | apologies | ✓ | ✓ |
| McLoughlin | Kevin | | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| SU Daly | Aine | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| SU Devine | John | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

New Committee formed in April 2020

| May-June 2020 | | | | |
|----------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| | | 13/05/2020 | 27/05/2020 | 17/06/2020 |
| | | 1st meet | Training | |
| Claffey | Clare | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Connaughton | Anna | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Delamere | Brigid | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Fitzgerald | Dympna | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Foley | John | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Harte | Colm | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Keena | Frankie | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Kelly | Brendan | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| O'Catháin | Ciaran | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| O'Meara | James | ✓ | | ✓ |
| O'Toole | Pat | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Rattigan | Liam | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Ryan | Collette | ✓ | apologies | ✓ |
| Talty | Geraldine | ✓ | apologies | ✓ |
| Shanagher | Kathleen* | | | |
| Students Union | | | | |
| Daly | Aine | ✓ | apologies | ✓ |
| Devine | John | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

*Kathleen Shanagher appointed September 2020

AIT Governing Body Expenses 2019/20

| Governing Body Expenses 2019/20 (1 September 2019 - 31 August 2020) | | | | |
|--|-----------|----------|------------------------|------------|
| Governing Body Member | | Expenses | Fees (interviews etc.) | Total Paid |
| Farrell* | Tom | 151.35 | 1800 | 1951.35 |
| Foley | John | 622.92 | 0 | 622.92 |
| Gilmore* | Pat | 420.81 | 300 | 720.81 |
| Hamilton* | Matt | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Kinsella | Natasha | 108.12 | 0 | 108.12 |
| Kearney Medforth* | Celine | 233.27 | 450 | 683.27 |
| Magner* | Denis | 91.24 | 0 | 91.24 |
| O'Toole | Pat | 279.04 | 2700 | 2979.04 |
| Rattigan | Liam | 0 | 1650 | 1650 |
| Ryan | Colette | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ryan* | Frank | 645.97 | 0 | 645.97 |
| Shanagher | Kathleen | 352.07 | 1650 | 2002.07 |
| Talty | Geraldine | 0 | 300 | 300 |
| New Committee formed April 2020 | | | | |
| Claffey ** | Clare | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Connaughton ** | Anna | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Harte ** | Colm | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Keena ** | Frankie | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| O'Meara ** | James | 106.98 | 350 | 456.98 |

*GB member up to April 2020 when new committee was formed

**Joined in April 2020 as part of new committee



AIT Audit and Risk Committees Annual Workplan 2019/20

AIT AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE ANNUAL WORK PLAN 2019/20

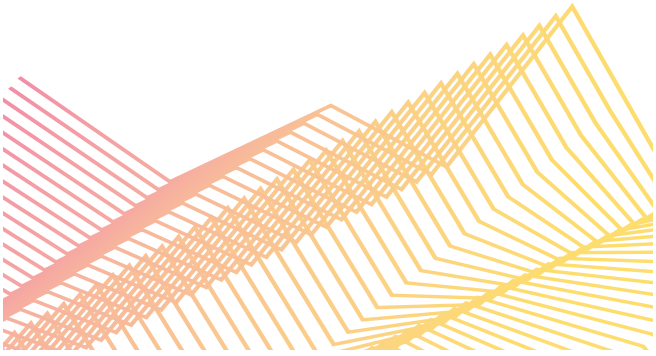
| Meeting Number | Meeting Date | Annual Work Plan |
|----------------|---|---|
| 1 | 2 nd October, 2019 rescheduled (to GB meeting of 23 rd October, 2019) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Report of the Audit & Risk Committee 2018/19 to GB • Procurement Report 2018/19 • Internal Audit (PwC)* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal Audit Estates Report - Draft Review of the Human Resources Function (targeted) - Draft GDPR Review 2018/19 - Draft Findings Follow Up Review - Terms of Reference • AOB |
| 2 | 27 th November, 2019 (to the GB meeting 11 th December, 2019) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declaration of Conflict of Interest with agenda items • Budget and Financial Update • Review of Policies/Procedures for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Purchasing, Control and Disposal of Fixed Assets - Travel & Subsistence Expenses - Purchasing - Tendering • Draft Annual Governance Statement 2018/19 (Pre Audit) • Internal Controls Framework – Version 2.1 updated • C&AG Draft Audit Report and Management Letter 2017/18 with AIT Response • Reports of Subsidiary Companies with Financial Statements and SIC 2018/19 • Internal Audit (PwC)* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draft Findings Follow Up Review - Internal Audit Self- Assessment Code of Governance review - ARC – Terms of Reference – Duration of Appointment for ARC members update - Role of Secretary of ARC to Governing Body • AOB |
| 3 | 11 th March, 2020 (to GB meeting of 25 th March, 2020) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Audit Update (Deloitte) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AIT Draft IA Plan - AIT IFC – Draft Planning Memorandum - AIT Student Union Review - Draft Planning Memorandum - AIT – IA presentation template - AIT – IA report template • Operational Programme & Budgets (OPB) 2020 • Review of Internal Control Framework: Research and Commercial Contracts 2019/20 • Risk Management: Risk Register Review and Risk Appetite • Capital Projects and Facilities Management – Terms of Reference • Review of Policies/Procedures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hospitality provision within the institute • HEA Governance Review Report with supplementary AIT Management response • Annual Review of ARC Effectiveness • AOB |
| | | New ARC committee appointed |
| 4 | 5 th June, 2020 (rescheduled) (to GB meeting of 17 th June, 2020) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARC Terms of Reference review • Budget and Financial Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk Management – Covid-19 Update • Draft AIT Consolidated Financial Statements 2018/19 • Draft Letter of Representation 2018/19 • C&AG Audit Completion Memorandum 2018/19 presented by C&AG** • Draft Annual Governance Statement 2018/19 (Post Audit) • Draft AIT Compliance Statement 2018/19 • Internal Audit (Deloitte)** <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal Audit Report – Review of Financial Aspects of Internal Control Framework 2019/20 - Internal Audit – Review of Oversight of the AIT Students Union - Internal Audit – Update with reference to internal audit work plan • Review of Policies/Procedures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Procedure for Student Fees |



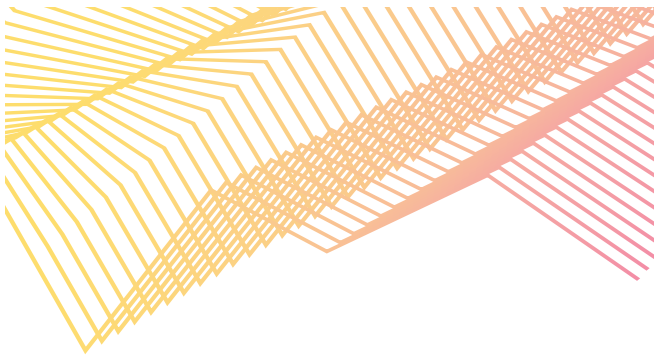
| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• TU Update• Draft Audit & Risk Committee Annual Work Plan 2020/21• Declaration of Members Interests• AOB |
|--|--|--|

* Internal Auditor in attendance.

** ARC is afforded the opportunity to meet with the C&AG and the Internal Auditor privately without any member of AIT staff present.



Financial Report (Appendix B)





ATHLONE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY



CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
for the Year Ended 31 August 2020

CONTENTS

- 1. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE STATEMENT..... 3-10**
- 2. STATEMENT ON SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROLS..... 11-14**
- 3. REPORT FROM THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL..... 15-17**
- 4. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 18-42**

1. Corporate Governance Statement

Governing Body

The Governing Body was established under the Regional Technical Colleges Acts 1992 to 2001 and additional functions were assigned under the Institutes of Technology Act 2006. The Governing Body is accountable to the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and is responsible for ensuring good governance. The Governing Body is collectively responsible for leading and directing the Institute's activities and fulfils key functions, including: reviewing and guiding strategic direction and major plans of action, risk management policies and procedures, annual budgets and business plans, setting performance objectives, monitoring implementation and Institute performance, and overseeing major capital expenditure and investment decisions. The Governing Body acts on a fully informed and ethical basis, in good faith, with due diligence and care, and in the best interest of the Institute, having due regard to its legal responsibilities and the objectives set by Government.

Strategic Plan, Annual Programmes and Budget

The Institute's Governing Body has formally undertaken an evaluation of actual performance, by reference to the Institute's Strategic Plan and Budget and has subsequently approved an Annual Programme and Budget for the Institute.

Compliance with Public Spending Code

The Chairperson of the Institute's Governing Body confirms that Athlone Institute of Technology adheres to the relevant aspects of the Public Spending Code and that the Governing Body has ensured robust and effective systems and procedures are in place to ensure compliance with the relevant principles, requirements and guidelines of the Public Spending Code including guidelines for achieving value for money.

Management of Capital Projects

Athlone Institute of Technology confirms that its policies and procedures in the management of capital projects are compliant with the relevant principles, requirements and guidelines of the Public Spending Code and the Capital Works Management Framework.

Governing Body Meetings

During the period from 1st September 2019 to 31st August 2020 the Governing Body met on 9 separate occasions on the following dates:

| Figure 1.1 | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Schedule of Governing Body Meetings and Governing Body Member's Attendance | | | |
| September 2019 – March 2020 | | | |
| GB Members | Role | Number of Governing Body meetings attended | Number of Governing Body meetings during the year |
| Frank Ryan | Chairperson | 6 | 6 |
| Ciarán O Catháin | Ex Officio Member | 6 | 6 |
| Brigid Delamere | Under Section 4(1)(c) | 5 | 6 |
| James Keane | Under Section 4(1)(d) | 5 | 6 |
| Natasha Kinsella | Under Section 4(1)(g) | 1 resigned at first meeting | 6 |
| Liam Rattigan | Under Section 4(1)(g) | 5 | 6 |
| Colette Ryan | Under Section 4(1)(g) | 4 | 6 |
| Geraldine Talty | Under Section 4(1)(f) | 4 | 6 |
| Pat Gilmore | Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b) | 5 | 6 |
| Kathleen Shanagher | Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b) | 6 | 6 |
| Denis Magner | Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b) | 3 | 6 |
| Tom Farrell | Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b) | 5 | 6 |
| Pat O'Toole | Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b) | 5 | 6 |
| John Foley | Under Section 4(1)(g) | 5 | 6 |
| Matt Hamilton | Under Section 4(1)(g) | 2 | 6 |
| Celine Kearney Medforth | Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b) | 4 | 6 |
| Kevin McLoughlin* | Under Section 4(1)(c) | 2 | 2 |
| Students Union | | | |
| Áine Daly | Under Section 4(1)(e) | 3 | 6 |
| John Devine | Under Section 4(1)(e) | 3 | 6 |

*Kevin McLoughlin appointed 31st October 2019. Resigned February 2020

New Committee formed in April 2020

| Figure 1.1 | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Schedule of Governing Body Meetings and Governing Body Member's Attendance | | | |
| May 2020 – June 2020 | | | |
| GB Members | Role | Number of Governing Body meetings attended | Number of Governing Body meetings during the year |
| Liam Rattigan | Interim Chairperson, April 2020 | 3 | 3 |
| Prof Ciarán O Catháin | Ex Officio Member | 3 | 3 |
| Brigid Delamere | Under Section 4(1)(c) | 2 | 3 |
| Dympna Fitzgerald | Under Section 4(1)(d) | 3 | 3 |
| John Foley | Under Section 4(1)(g) | 3 | 3 |
| Colm Harte | Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b) | 3 | 3 |
| Frankie Keena | Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b) | 3 | 3 |
| Brendan Kelly | Under Section 4(1)(c) | 3 | 3 |
| Anna Connaughton | Under Section 4(1)(g) | 3 | 3 |
| James O' Meara | Under Section 4(1)(g) | 2 | 3 |
| Pat O'Toole | Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b) | 3 | 3 |
| Clare Claffey | Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b) | 3 | 3 |
| Colette Ryan | Under Section 4(1)(g) | 2 | 3 |
| Geraldine Talty | Under Section 4(1)(f) | 2 | 3 |
| Kathleen Shanagher* | Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b) | 0 | 0 |
| Peter Roche** | Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b) | 0 | 0 |
| Students Union | | | |

| | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|---|
| Áine Daly | Under Section 4(1)(e) | 2 | 3 |
| John Devine | Under Section 4(1)(e) | 3 | 3 |
| Students Union 1st meeting 16/09/20 | | | |
| Áine Daly | Under Section 4(1)(e) | 1 | 1 |
| Niall Naughton | Under Section 4(1)(e) | 1 | 1 |

**Kathleen Shanagher appointed September 2020*

** Peter Roche appointed October 2020*

Governing Body Expenses 2019/2020

| Governing Body Expenses 2019/20 (1 September 2019 - 31 August 2020) | | | | |
|--|-----------|----------|------------------------|------------|
| Governing Body Member | | Expenses | Fees (interviews etc.) | Total Paid |
| Farrell* | Tom | 151.35 | 1,800.00 | 1,951.35 |
| Foley | John | 622.92 | 0.00 | 622.92 |
| Gilmore* | Pat | 420.81 | 300.00 | 720.81 |
| Hamilton* | Matt | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Kinsella | Natasha | 108.12 | 0.00 | 108.12 |
| Kearney Medforth* | Celine | 233.27 | 450.00 | 683.27 |
| Magner* | Denis | 91.24 | 0.00 | 91.24 |
| O'Toole | Pat | 279.04 | 2,700.00 | 2,979.04 |
| Rattigan | Liam | 0.00 | 1,650.00 | 1,650.00 |
| Ryan | Colette | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Ryan* | Frank | 645.97 | 0.00 | 645.97 |
| Shanagher | Kathleen | 352.07 | 1,650.00 | 2,002.07 |
| Talty | Geraldine | 0.00 | 300.00 | 300.00 |
| New Committee formed April 2020 | | | | |
| Claffey ** | Clare | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Connaughton ** | Anna | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Harte ** | Colm | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Keena ** | Frankie | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| O'Meara ** | James | 106.98 | 350.00 | 456.98 |

*GB member up to April 2020 when new committee was formed

** Joined in April 2020 as part of new committee

Risk Management

The Governing Body approves the Institute's risk management framework and monitors its effectiveness, approval and oversight of Athlone Institute of Technology's Risk Management Policy including structured and periodic reviews and updates to the Institute Corporate Risk Register by the Executive Management Team. This review includes an assessment of the principal risks, risk rating and associated mitigations for each of the risks set out in the Institute Corporate Risk Register.

Audit and Risk Committee

The Terms of Reference for the Audit and Risk Committee are set by the Governing Body of the Institute and include provision regarding:

- Membership
- Reporting Requirements
- Authority to investigate
- Meetings – timing, conduct and frequency
- Information requirements
- Value for money
- Governance and responsibilities regarding:

- Risk Management
- Internal Control
- Internal Audit
- External Audit
- Review of its own effectiveness

The Chairperson of Governing Body is satisfied that the Audit and Risk Committee has discharged its role effectively and efficiently and has met the requirements with regard to frequency of meetings in this academic year. See figure 1.3 below for details of meetings held during the year.

Other Committee Meetings

See figure 1.3 below for details of meetings held during the year.

| Figure 1.3 | | | |
|--|----------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Audit and Risk Committee Meeting | | | |
| September 2019 – March 2020 | | | |
| <i>Committee Members (to include External Members where appropriate)</i> | Committee Name | Number of Committee meetings attended | Number of Committee meetings during the year |
| Colette Ryan (Chair) | ARC | 3 | 3 |
| Colin Kennedy | ARC | 1 | 3 |
| Martin Reidy | ARC | 3 | 3 |
| Pat O'Toole | ARC | 3 | 3 |
| Brian Feeney | ARC | 2 | 3 |
| Celine Kearney Medforth | ARC | 3 | 3 |

New Committee formed in April 2020

| Figure 1.3 | | | |
|--|----------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Audit and Risk Committee Meeting | | | |
| April 2020 – August 2020 | | | |
| <i>Committee Members (to include External Members where appropriate)</i> | Committee Name | Number of Committee meetings attended | Number of Committee meetings during the year |
| Colette Ryan (Chair) | ARC | 1 | 1 |
| John Foley | ARC | 1 | 1 |
| Kenny O'Brien* | ARC | - | - |
| Pat O'Toole | ARC | 1 | 1 |
| Brian Feeney | ARC | 1 | 1 |
| Tina Dolan | ARC | 1 | 1 |

**Kenny O'Brien appointed October 2020*

Performance Evaluation of the Governing Body and its Committees

The Governing Body conducted a self-assessment of its own performance and the performance of its committees during 2019/20 which was concluded on 28 February 2020. The Governing Body utilised the self-assessment evaluation questionnaire contained within the THEA Code of Governance for this purpose. The last external review that was carried out on the Governing Body and its committee's performance was on 25th October 2017.

General Governance and Accountability Issues

Athlone Institute of Technology can confirm that there are no governance and accountability issues that the Institute wish to bring to the attention of the Minister for Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science and the Higher Education Authority 'HEA'.

Asset Disposals

Athlone Institute of Technology can confirm there were no disposals of assets or grants of access to property or infrastructure for commercial arrangements with third parties above the threshold of €150,000 which have not been subject to auction or competitive tendering process during the financial year.

Commercially Significant Developments affecting the Institute

Athlone Institute of Technology can confirm that there was one commercially significant development that affected the Institute in the preceding year. AIT terminated a building contract in July 2020. The Governing Body were advised on the matter. As provided in the capital works contract the matter will proceed to conciliation. There are also, to the Institute's knowledge, no major issues likely to arise in the short to medium term that will affect the Institute.

Summary of all Off-Balance Sheet Transactions of the Institute

Athlone Institute of Technology confirms there were no off-balance sheet financial transactions.

Code of Conduct for Members and Employees

Athlone Institute of Technology can confirm that a Code of Conduct for both Members and Employees has been implemented. This includes clear conflict of interest and ethics in public office policies.

Compliance with Government Policy on Pay of the President and Institute Employees

Athlone Institute of Technology can confirm that the Institute has complied with its obligations under the Government policy on the pay of the President and all other Institute employees.

Please also refer to financial statement's disclosure note 9.

Statement of Compliance

The Chairperson of Athlone Institute of Technology confirms that Government Pay Guidelines are being complied with in respect of such appointees who serve on the Governing Body and any subsidiaries of the Institute.

Confidential Disclosure Reporting - Protected Disclosures Act 2014

The Governing Body confirm that procedures for Confidential Disclosure Reporting have been implemented in Athlone Institute of Technology. These procedures allow employees, in confidence, to raise concerns about possible irregularities in financial reporting or any other matters, as well as ensuring that meaningful follow-up of matters raised this way takes place. The Confidential Disclosure Reporting in place at Athlone Institute of Technology is in line with the Protected Disclosures Act 2014.

The Governing Body also confirm that the annual report, as required under section 22(1) of the Act has been published.

The Institute had no protected disclosures under the Policy/Act during the 2019/20 period.

Tax Laws

Athlone Institute of Technology can confirm that the Institute has complied with its obligations under tax law.

Please also refer to financial statement's disclosure note 11.

Legal Disputes

A breakdown of the legal costs/settlements is included in the financial statement's details below. Athlone Institute of Technology has no legal disputes involving other State Bodies.

Institute Subsidiaries

Athlone Institute of Technology has three subsidiaries which operate for the following purposes:

| Subsidiary name | Year of establishment | Purpose / function |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| CSS CLG | 1994 | Provision of Catering Services – AIT Campus |
| AIT SportsCo Ltd | 2010 | Provision of Sport Facilities and Gym |
| AIT Training International | 2013 | To carry on the Business of an Investment holding company. |

These subsidiaries continue to operate solely for the purpose for which they were established, they remain in full compliance with the terms and conditions of the consent under which they were established.

An appropriate Code of Governance is in place with respect of trading subsidiaries, with annual statements provided to the Governing Body and the Governing Body has received a formal report of compliance from the Chairperson of the Board of each subsidiary.

Please refer to the financial statement's disclosure note 14 for additional detail.

Intellectual Property (IP) and Conflict of Interest

- (i) The Institute confirms that the Institute has in place a single IP policy, published on its website, which reflects the National IP Management Requirements of the National IP Protocol
- (ii) The Institute confirms that the Institute has in place a single Conflict of Interest Policy, and that this is published on its website

The Institute confirms that the Governing Body reviews all IP commercialisation and conflicts of interest on an annual basis.

Gender balance, diversity and inclusion

Athlone Institute of Technology recognises the importance of diversity and inclusion for all staff and students of the Institute. To that regard the Institute has implemented a number of initiatives aimed at further promoting an inclusive environment, including:

- Created Equality, Diversity and Inclusion 'EDI' office with Vice-President responsible for all Equality issues within AIT. Appointed EDI Officer to support and assist VP in the promotion of an inclusive environment within AIT.
- AIT is actively engaging in the Athena SWAN Bronze award process. To this end has convened a Self-Assessment Team (SAT), with staff from all areas of the Institute.
- Appointed dedicated Athena SWAN staff resource to Institute HR department.
- As part of Athena SWAN process the Institute has created an EDI committee (chaired by the President) to oversee EDI activities within the Institute.
- An EDI policy and Gender Identity & Expression policy are approved by Governing Body and are operational within the Institute.

With respect to the membership of the Governing Body, while the Institute can, and has, engaged in the appointments process, the appointment decisions are made by the Minister. As at 31st August 2020, the Governing Body had 7 (44%) female and 9 (56%) male members. The Governing Body therefore meets the Government target of a minimum of 40% representation of each gender in the membership of boards of state bodies.

Please refer to Figure 1.1 for the listing of Governing Body members and their roles.

Travel and Subsistence

Athlone Institute of Technology confirms that Government travel policy requirements are being complied with in all respects.

| | 31/08/20 €'000's | 31/08/19 €'000's |
|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Domestic Travel | 232 | 333 |
| International Travel | 197 | 329 |
| Total | 429 | 662 |

Hospitality Expenditure

| | 31/08/20 €'000's | 31/08/19 €'000's |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| Staff Events | - | - |
| Student Events (excluding costs associated with conferring) | - | - |
| Other External | 21 | 26 |
| Total | 21 | 26 |

Legal Costs/Settlements

| | 31/08/20 €'000's | 31/08/19 €'000's |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Professional Fees | 104 | 121 |
| Settlements | | |
| Total | 104 | 121 |

During the year additional legal costs and settlements were paid by the Institute's Insurance Company.

Consultancy fees

| | 31/08/20 €'000's | 31/08/19 €'000's |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| Professional Fees: Legal | 104 | 121 |
| Professional Fees: Tax and financial advisory | 77 | 70 |
| Professional Fees: Public relations/marketing | 8 | 8 |
| Professional Fees: Pensions and human resources | 2 | 1 |
| Professional Fees: Building and related services | 48 | 158 |
| Professional Fees: Other | 232 | 144 |
| Total | 471 | 502 |

Annual Report and Financial Statements

The Governing Body has reviewed and approved the Annual Report and Financial Statement and considers the Financial Statement to be a true and fair view of the Institute's financial performance and its financial position at the end of the year.

Governing Body Responsibilities

The Institutes of Technology Acts 1992 to 2006 require the Institute to prepare Financial Statements in such form as may be approved by the Higher Education Authority and to submit them for audit to the Comptroller and Auditor General. In preparing these Financial Statements, the Institute is required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently.
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- Prepare Financial Statements on the going concern basis, unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Institute will continue in operation.
- Disclose and explain any material departures from applicable accounting standards.

The Governing Body is responsible for keeping adequate accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Institute and which enables it to ensure that the Consolidated Financial Statements comply with the Institutes of Technology Acts 1992 to 2006.

The Institute is also responsible for safeguarding its assets and for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Chairperson:

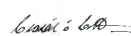
Mr. Liam Rattigan



Digitally signed by Liam Rattigan
DN: cn=Liam Rattigan,
o=Athlone Institute of
Technology, ou=Chairperson AIT
Governing Body,
email=lrattigan@rbk.ie, c=IE

President:

Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin



Digitally signed by Professor
Ciarán Ó Catháin
DN: cn=Professor Ciarán Ó
Catháin, o=Athlone Institute
of Technology,
ou=President,
email=cocathain@ait.ie, c=IE

Date:

16th June, 2021

2. Statement on System of Internal Controls

Athlone Institute of Technology

Statement on System of Internal Controls

Scope of Responsibility

On behalf of the Governing Body of Athlone Institute of Technology we acknowledge our responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal controls is maintained and operated in the Institute and for putting in place processes and procedures for the purpose of ensuring that the system is effective. This responsibility reflects the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016) as encapsulated by the THEA Code of Governance for Institutes of Technology.

Purpose of the System of Internal Controls

The system of internal controls is designed to manage risk to an acceptable level rather than to eliminate it. The system can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions are authorised and properly recorded, and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or detected in a timely way.

The system of internal controls, which accords with guidance issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, has been in place in Athlone Institute of Technology for the year ended 31 August 2020 and up until the date of approval of the financial statements.

Annual Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Control

The Governing Body conducted an annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control for the year ended 31 August 2020 on 9th December 2020.

Disclosure of Breaches in Internal Control, Weakness in Internal Control and Material Losses or Frauds, Statement on System of Internal Controls Statement on System of Internal Controls, Statement on System of Internal Controls

No breaches or weaknesses in internal control were identified which required disclosure in the Institute's Statement of System of Internal Controls.

Review of Statement on System of Internal Control

We confirm that the Statement of System of Internal Control is reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee and the Governing Body to ensure it accurately reflects the control system in operation during the reporting period.

Appropriate Control Environment

The Governing Body has taken steps to ensure an appropriate control environment is in place by:

- Clearly defining management responsibilities.
- Developing procedures and regulations which are reviewed regularly and are documented, implemented and up to date.
- Establishing formal procedures through various committee functions to monitor the activities and safeguard the assets of the organisation, such as the Audit and Risk Committee.
- Developing a strong culture of accountability across all levels of the organisation.
- Establishing procedures for reporting significant control failures and ensuring corrective action is taken.
- Adopting and adhering to the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies as encapsulated by the THEA Code of Governance for Institutes of Technology.
- Ensuring the control environment includes an active Audit and Risk Committee, internal audit function and regular reporting to the Governing Body on financial results.

Business Risks

Athlone Institute of Technology has developed processes to identify and evaluate business risks. This is achieved in a number of ways including:

- Developing an Essential Activities & Process Model to facilitate management and the Governing Body in identifying the key activities and the processes in place to manage its operations effectively.
- Adoption of a Risk Management Policy.
- Identifying key risks, risk owners and the controls to mitigate these risks.
- Developing annual and longer term targets and reporting on results achieved.
- Implementation of an Internal Control Framework.
- A comprehensive budgeting system with an annual budget which is reviewed and agreed by the Governing Body.
- Regular reviews by the Governing Body and its committees of periodic and annual financial reports which indicate financial performance against forecasts.
- Setting targets to measure financial and other performances.
- Clearly defined capital investment control guidelines.

Information Systems

Athlone Institute of Technology has implemented a number of Management Information Systems to provide a means of comparing actual results to targets and forecasts. These systems include:

- Financial Management – Agresso
- Human Resources and Payroll Management – CoreHR & CorePayroll
- Travel and Expenses – CoreHR
- Student Administration – Banner
- Resource Allocation – Power BI and SSRS
- Timetabling – Syllabus.

Financial Implications of Major Business Risks

Athlone Institute of Technology employs a range of actions to reduce the potential for fraudulent activity. Athlone Institute of Technology's internal control policy framework includes written policies and procedures requiring transactions to be properly authorised and providing for sufficient segregations of duties.

Compliance with Procurement Rules and Guidelines

One weakness in relation to compliance with procurement rules and guidelines were identified and €25,277 of expenditure was incurred where the procedures employed did not comply with the guidelines. The following are the actions and timelines taken by the Institute in order to address the non-compliance with procurement rules and guidelines:

Action: Drawdown from OGP framework, or run AIT tender process

Timeline: Q1 2021


Review of the Effectiveness of the Internal Control System

We confirm that Athlone Institute of Technology has procedures to monitor the effectiveness of its risk management and control procedures. The Governing Body's monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the Institute Executive and Management who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework, the Audit and Risk Committee, Internal Auditor and comments made by the Comptroller and Auditor General in his management letter.

As a result of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic several operational procedures were modified by Athlone Institute of Technology in order to support business continuity requirements. These procedures have enabled effective continuation of all services while at the same time maintaining an effective control environment. Athlone Institute of Technology is satisfied that effective controls have been maintained through all relevant transaction cycles. In relation to academic provision the deployment of agreed emergency remote teaching structures and processes has ensured that a blended education delivery model has been maintained to the required and approved academic standards.

Athlone Institute of Technology has an outsourced internal audit function, which is in accordance with the Internal Audit Terms of Reference approved by the Governing Body and the THEA Code of Governance of Irish Institutes of Technology.

Signed on behalf of the Governing Body of Athlone Institute of Technology


 Digitally signed by Liam Rattigan
DN: cn=Liam Rattigan, o=Athlone
Institute of Technology,
ou=Chairperson AIT Governing
Body, email=l.rattigan@rbk.ie,
c=IE

16th June, 2021

Mr. Liam Rattigan

Date

Chairperson

 Digitally signed by Professor Ciarán Ó
Catháin
DN: cn=Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin,
o=Athlone Institute of Technology,
ou=President, email=cocathain@ait.ie, c=IE

16th June, 2021

Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin

Date

President

3. Report from the Comptroller and Auditor General



Ard Reachtaire Cuntas agus Ciste Comptroller and Auditor General

Report for presentation to the Houses of the Oireachtas

Athlone Institute of Technology

Opinion on the financial statements

I have audited the financial statements of Athlone Institute of Technology for the year ended 31 August 2020 as required under the provisions of the Institutes of Technology Acts 1992 to 2006. The financial statements comprise

- the consolidated and institute statement of comprehensive income
- the consolidated and institute statement of changes in reserves and capital account
- the consolidated and Institute statement of financial position
- the consolidated statement of cash flows, and
- the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In my opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the group and of the Institute at 31 August 2020 and of the income and expenditure of the group and of the Institute for the year then ended in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 102 — *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland*.

Basis of opinion

I conducted my audit of the financial statements in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) as promulgated by the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions. My responsibilities under those standards are described in the appendix to this report. I am independent of the Institute and have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the standards.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Report on information other than the financial statements, and on other matters

The Institute has presented certain other information together with the financial statements. This comprises the corporate governance statement and the statement on the system of internal controls. My responsibilities to report in relation to such information, and on certain other matters upon which I report by exception, are described in the appendix to this report.

I have nothing to report in that regard.

Seamus McCarthy
Comptroller and Auditor General

29 June 2021

Responsibilities of Governing Body members

The members of the Governing Body are responsible for

- the preparation of financial statements in the form prescribed under the Institutes of Technology Acts 1992 to 2006
- ensuring that the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance with FRS102
- ensuring the regularity of transactions
- assessing whether the use of the going concern basis of accounting is appropriate, and
- such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Responsibilities of the Comptroller and Auditor General

I am required under the Institutes of Technology Acts 1992 to 2006 to audit the financial statements of the Institute and to report thereon to the Houses of the Oireachtas.

My objective in carrying out the audit is to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement due to fraud or error. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with the ISAs, I exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. In doing so,

- I identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements whether due to fraud or error; design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks; and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- I obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the internal controls.
- I evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures.

- I conclude on the appropriateness of the use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, on whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Institute's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Institute to cease to continue as a going concern.
- I evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

Information other than the financial statements

My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information presented with those statements, and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with my audit of the financial statements, I am required under the ISAs to read the other information presented and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or with knowledge obtained during the audit, or if it otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

Reporting on other matters

My audit is conducted by reference to the special considerations which attach to bodies in receipt of substantial funding from the State in relation to their management and operation. I report if there are material matters relating to the manner in which public business has been conducted.

I seek to obtain evidence about the regularity of financial transactions in the course of audit. I report if there is any material instance where public money has not been applied for the purposes intended or where transactions did not conform to the authorities governing them.

I also report by exception if, in my opinion,

- I have not received all the information and explanations I required for my audit, or
- the accounting records were not sufficient to permit the financial statements to be readily and properly audited, or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records.

4. Financial Statements

Consolidated and Institute Statement of Comprehensive Income

Year ended 31 August 2020

| | Note | 2020 | | 2019 | |
|---|------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | | Consolidated 31/08/2020 €000s | Institute 31/08/2020 €000s | Consolidated 31/08/2019 €000s | Institute 31/08/2019 €000s |
| Income | | | | | |
| State Grants | 3 | 24,221 | 24,221 | 20,433 | 20,433 |
| Tuition Fees and Student Contribution | 4 | 20,607 | 20,607 | 18,198 | 18,198 |
| Research Grants & Contracts | 5 | 5,110 | 5,115 | 5,710 | 5,715 |
| Student Support Funding | 7 | 464 | 464 | 581 | 581 |
| Other Income | 8 | 5,749 | 3,916 | 6,319 | 3,834 |
| Amortisation of Deferred Capital Grants | 19 | 3,392 | 3,231 | 3,080 | 2,919 |
| Interest Income | | 2 | 2 | 9 | 9 |
| Deferred Pension Funding | 24 | 14,273 | 14,273 | 12,182 | 12,182 |
| Total Income | | 73,818 | 71,829 | 66,512 | 63,871 |
| Expenditure | | | | | |
| Staff Costs | 9 | 41,440 | 40,650 | 38,840 | 37,875 |
| Retirement Benefit Cost | 24 | 14,273 | 14,273 | 12,182 | 12,182 |
| Other Operating Expenses | 10 | 10,224 | 9,598 | 11,083 | 10,205 |
| Depreciation | 13 | 3,999 | 3,348 | 3,682 | 3,033 |
| Total Expenditure | | 69,936 | 67,869 | 65,787 | 63,295 |
| Surplus/(Deficit) before other gains and losses | | 3,882 | 3,960 | 725 | 576 |
| Experience gains/(losses) on retirement benefit obligations | 24 | (722) | (722) | 4,823 | 4,823 |
| Reduction in pension liabilities arising from retirements in the year | 24 | 3,038 | 3,038 | 8,801 | 8,801 |
| Changes in assumptions underlying the present value of retirement benefit obligations | 24 | 5,575 | 5,575 | (27,236) | (27,236) |
| Total actuarial (losses)/gains in the year | | 7,891 | 7,891 | (13,612) | (13,612) |
| Adjustment to deferred retirement benefits funding | 24 | (7,891) | (7,891) | 13,612 | 13,612 |
| Total comprehensive income/(loss) for the year | | 3,882 | 3,960 | 725 | 576 |

The Consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.


Notes 1-28 form part of these financial statements.

Signed on behalf of the Governing Body


Digitally signed by Liam Rattigan
DN: cn=Liam Rattigan, o=Athlone
Institute of Technology, ou=Chairperson
AIT Governing Body,
email=lrattigan@rbk.ie, c=IE

Chairperson, Mr. Liam Rattigan

Date 16th June, 2021


Digitally signed by Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin
DN: cn=Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, o=Athlone Institute
of Technology, ou=President, email=cocathain@ait.ie,
c=IE

President, Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin

Date 16th June, 2021

Consolidated and Institute Statement of Changes in Reserves and Capital Account

Year Ended 31 August 2020

| | Note 19 Consolidated Deferred Capital Grants €000s | Note 19 Institute Deferred Capital Grants €000s | Note 20 Consolidated Capital Development Reserve €000s | Note 20 Institute Capital Development Reserve €000s | I & E Consolidated Revenue Reserves €000s | I & E Institute Revenue Reserves €000s | Consolidated Total €000s | Institute Total €000s |
|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Opening Balance at 1 September 2019 | 76,000 | 74,110 | 267 | 267 | 15,573 | 3,367 | 91,840 | 77,744 |
| Surplus for the Year before Appropriations | - | - | - | - | 3,882 | 3,960 | 3,882 | 3,960 |
| Amortisation of Deferred Capital Grants | (3,392) | (3,231) | - | - | - | - | (3,392) | (3,231) |
| State Grant Allocated to Capital | 4,009 | 4,009 | - | - | - | - | 4,009 | 4,009 |
| Transfer to Capital Development Reserve | - | - | 2,224 | 2,224 | (2,224) | (2,224) | - | - |
| Movement for the Period | 617 | 778 | 2,224 | 2,224 | 1,658 | 1,736 | 4,499 | 4,738 |
| Balance at 31 August 2020 | 76,617 | 74,888 | 2,491 | 2,491 | 17,231 | 5,103 | 96,339 | 82,482 |

Opening Balance at 1 September 2018

| | Note 19 Consolidated Deferred Capital Grants €000s | Note 19 Institute Deferred Capital Grants €000s | Note 20 Consolidated Capital Development Reserve €000s | Note 20 Institute Capital Development Reserve €000s | I & E Consolidated Revenue Reserves €000s | I & E Institute Revenue Reserves €000s | Consolidated Total €000s | Institute Total €000s |
|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Opening Balance at 1 September 2018 | 76,705 | 74,654 | 202 | 202 | 14,913 | 2,856 | 91,820 | 77,712 |
| Surplus for the Year before Appropriations | - | - | - | - | 725 | 576 | 725 | 576 |
| Amortisation of Deferred Capital Grants | (3,080) | (2,919) | - | - | - | - | (3,080) | (2,919) |
| State Grant Allocated to Capital | 2,375 | 2,375 | 65 | 65 | (65) | (65) | 2,375 | 2,375 |
| Transfer to Capital Development Reserve | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Movement for the Period | (705) | (544) | 65 | 65 | 660 | 511 | 20 | 32 |
| Balance at 31 August 2019 | 76,000 | 74,110 | 267 | 267 | 15,573 | 3,367 | 91,840 | 77,744 |

Notes 1-28 form part of these Financial Statements

Signed on behalf of the Governing Body

Liam Rattigan
Digitally signed by Liam Rattigan, Institute of Technology, Athlone, Ireland, DN: cn=Liam Rattigan, o=Athlone Institute of Technology, ou=Chairperson, c=IE
GoverningBody;email=l.rattigan@ait.ie; c=IE

Chairperson, Mr. Liam Rattigan

Date 16th June, 2021

Date 16th June, 2021

President, Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin

Ciarán Ó Catháin
Digitally signed by Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, DN: cn=Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, o=Athlone Institute of Technology, ou=President, email=cocathain@ait.ie, c=IE

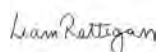
Consolidated and Institute Statement of Financial Position

Year Ended 31 August 2020

| | Note | 2020 | | 2019 | |
|--|------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | | Consolidated 31/08/2020 €000s | Institute 31/08/2020 €000s | Consolidated 31/08/2019 | Institute 31/08/2019 €000s |
| Fixed Assets | | | | | |
| Property, Plant & Equipment | 13 | 86,821 | 75,170 | 86,738 | 74,460 |
| | | <u>86,821</u> | <u>75,170</u> | <u>86,738</u> | <u>74,460</u> |
| Current Assets | | | | | |
| Inventory | | 20 | - | 10 | - |
| Receivables | 15 | 3,652 | 3,665 | 3,201 | 3,168 |
| Cash and Cash Equivalents | 16 | 17,037 | 14,586 | 11,361 | 9,401 |
| | | <u>20,709</u> | <u>18,251</u> | <u>14,572</u> | <u>12,569</u> |
| Less Payables: amounts falling due within one year | 17 | (11,025) | (10,922) | (9,086) | (9,061) |
| | | <u>9,684</u> | <u>7,329</u> | <u>5,486</u> | <u>3,508</u> |
| Net Current Assets | | | | | |
| Total Assets less Current Liabilities | | <u>96,505</u> | <u>82,499</u> | <u>92,224</u> | <u>77,968</u> |
| Less Payables: amounts falling due after more than one year | 18 | (166) | (17) | (384) | (224) |
| | | | | | |
| Provision for Amounts & Charges: | | | | | |
| Retirement Benefits | | | | | |
| Retirement Benefits Obligations | 24 | (227,334) | (227,334) | (218,989) | (218,989) |
| Deferred Retirement Benefit Funding Asset | 24 | 227,334 | 227,334 | 218,989 | 218,989 |
| | | <u>96,339</u> | <u>82,482</u> | <u>91,840</u> | <u>77,744</u> |
| Total Net Assets | | | | | |
| Deferred State Capital Grants | 19 | 76,617 | 74,888 | 76,000 | 74,110 |
| | | | | | |
| Unrestricted Reserves | | | | | |
| Income & Expenditure Reserve | | 17,231 | 5,103 | 15,573 | 3,367 |
| Capital Development Reserve | 20 | 2,491 | 2,491 | 267 | 267 |
| | | | | | |
| Total | | <u>96,339</u> | <u>82,482</u> | <u>91,840</u> | <u>77,744</u> |

Notes 1-28 form part of these Financial Statements

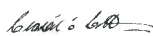
Signed on behalf of the Governing Body



Digitally signed by Liam Rattigan
DN: cn=Liam Rattigan, o=Athlone
Institute of Technology,
ou=Chairperson AIT Governing
Body, email=lrattigan@rbk.ie, c=IE

Chairperson, Mr. Liam Rattigan

Date 16th June, 2021



Digitally signed by Professor Ciarán Ó
Catháin
DN: cn=Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin,
o=Athlone Institute of Technology,
ou=President,
email=cocathain@ait.ie, c=IE

President, Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin

Date 16th June, 2021

Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows

Year Ended 31 August 2020

| | 2020 Year Ended 31/08/2020 €000s | 2019 Year Ended 31/08/2019 €000s |
|--|---|---|
| Cash Flows from Operating Activities | | |
| Excess of expenditure over income | 3,882 | 725 |
| Depreciation of fixed assets | 3,999 | 3,682 |
| Amortisation of deferred capital grants | (3,402) | (3,080) |
| Decrease in stock | (10) | 2 |
| (Increase) in receivables | (451) | (748) |
| Increase in payables | 1,721 | 1,081 |
| Interest income | (2) | (9) |
| Capital grants received | 4,009 | 2,375 |
| Net Cash Inflow/(Outflow) from Operating Activities | 9,746 | 4,028 |
| Cash Flows from Investing Activities | | |
| Payments to acquire property, plant & equipment | (4,072) | (2,571) |
| Net Cash Flows from Investing Activities | (4,072) | (2,571) |
| Cash Flows from Financing Activities | | |
| Interest received | 2 | 9 |
| Net Cash Flows from Financing Activities | 2 | 9 |
| Net (Decrease)/Increase in Cash Equivalents in the Year | 5,676 | 1,466 |
| Cash and Cash Equivalents at 1 September | 11,361 | 9,895 |
| Cash and Cash Equivalents at 31 August | 17,037 | 11,361 |

Notes 1-28 form part of these Financial Statements

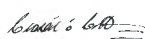
Signed on behalf of the Governing Body



Digitally signed by Liam Rattigan
DN: cn=Liam Rattigan, o=Athlone
Institute of Technology,
ou=Chairperson AIT Governing
Body, email=lrattigan@rbk.ie, c=IE

Chairperson, Mr. Liam Rattigan

Date 16th June, 2021



Digitally signed by Professor Ciarán
Ó Catháin
DN: cn=Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin,
o=Athlone Institute of Technology,
ou=President,
email=cocathain@ait.ie, c=IE

President, Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin

Date 16th June, 2021

Athlone Institute of Technology

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 August 2020

1. Significant Accounting Policies

The accounting policies which are considered material in relation to the financial statements are summarised below. They have been applied consistently throughout the year to the preceding year.

a. General Information

The primary objective of the Institute is to provide third level education and other associated activities.

b. Basis for Accounting

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, and in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and comply with applicable Financial Reporting Standards 102 issued by the Financial Reporting Council and promulgated for use in Ireland by Chartered Accountants Ireland and with the requirements of the Higher Education Authority.

The functional currency under FRS 102 for Athlone Institute of Technology is considered to be Euro because that is the currency of the primary economic environment in which the Institute operates. The Consolidated Financial Statements are also presented in Euro. Foreign operations are included in accordance with the policies set out below.

c. Basis of Consolidation

The Group financial statements consolidate the financial statements of the Institute and its subsidiary undertakings made up to 31 August 2020.

The results of subsidiaries acquired or sold are consolidated for the periods from or on the date on which control passed.

Where necessary, adjustments are made to the financial statements of subsidiaries to bring the accounting policies used into line with those used by the group. All intra-group transactions, balances, income and expenses are eliminated on consolidation.

d. Property, Plant and Equipment

(i) Land and Buildings

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost or valuation, net of depreciation and any provision for impairment. Depreciation is provided on all tangible fixed assets, other than investment properties and freehold land, at rates calculated to write off the cost or valuation, less estimated residual value, of each asset on a straight-line basis over its expected useful life, as follows:

| | |
|--------------------|----------|
| Freehold buildings | 50 years |
|--------------------|----------|

Residual value represents the estimated amount which would currently be obtained from disposal of an asset, after deducting estimated costs of disposal, if the asset were already of the age and in the condition expected at the end of its useful life.

(ii) Equipment

From 1 September 2009, equipment costing less than €3,000 per individual item is written off to the income and expenditure account in the year of acquisition. Where individual items of equipment purchased are below the capitalisation limit (€3,000) and the total purchase invoice is in excess of the limit, these items are individually capitalised in the normal way. All other equipment is capitalised at cost. Capitalised equipment is depreciated on a straight-line basis over its useful economic life as follows:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Fixtures & Fittings including Prefabs | 10 years |
| Computer equipment | 3 years |
| Plant & Machinery | 10 years |
| Equipment | 5 years |
| Motor Vehicles | 5 years |

All equipment funded from Research Grants and Contracts is depreciated over the life of the assets in line with the policy for all other Fixed Assets.

e. Joint Venture Undertakings (Where applicable)

Athlone Institute of Technology did not have investments in joint venture undertakings during the financial year.

f. Inventory

Inventory is stated at lower of cost and net realisable value.

g. Impairment of assets

Assets, other than those measured at fair value, are assessed for indicators of impairment. If there is objective evidence of impairment, an impairment loss is recognised in profit or loss as described below.

Financial Assets

For financial assets carried at amortised cost, the amount of an impairment is the difference between the asset's carrying amount and the present value of estimated future cash flows, discounted at the financial asset's original effective interest rate.

For financial assets carried at cost less impairment, the impairment loss is the difference between the asset's carrying amount and the best estimate of the amount that would be received for the asset if it were to be sold at the reporting date.

Where indicators exist for a decrease in impairment loss, and the decrease can be related objectively to an event occurring after the impairment was recognised, the prior impairment loss is tested to determine reversal. An impairment loss is reversed on an individual impaired financial asset to the extent that the revised recoverable value does not lead to a revised carrying amount higher than the carrying value had no impairment been recognised.

h. Taxation

a. Corporation Tax

As an exempt charity, the Institute is not liable for corporation tax or income tax on any of its charitable activities. It is registered for value added tax, but since the supply of education is an exempt activity on which no output tax is charged it is unable to recover input tax on the majority of its purchases. Certain research and commercial activities within the Institute falls into the VAT net, any input or output tax relating to these activities is returned to the Revenue by the Institute.

b. Deferred Taxation

In subsidiary companies, who do not hold a charitable status and are therefore liable to corporation tax, deferred taxation is recognised in respect of all timing differences that have originated but not reversed at the Statement of Financial Position date. Provision is made at the rates expected to apply when the timing differences reverse. Timing differences are differences between taxable profits and results as stated in the financial statements that arise from the inclusion of gains and losses in taxable profits in period's difference from those in which they are recognised in the financial statements.

A net deferred tax asset is regarded as recoverable and, therefore, recognised only when, on the basis of all available evidence, it can be regarded as more likely than not that there will be suitable taxable profits from which the future reversal of the underlying timing differences can be deducted.

i. Recognition of income

State Grants

Recurrent state grants from the Higher Education Authority and other bodies are recognised in the period in which they are receivable. Capital Grants from the Higher Education Authority or other state bodies received in respect of the acquisition or construction of Fixed Assets are treated as deferred State Capital Grants and amortised in line with the depreciation charged over the life of the assets.

Fee Income

Fee income is accounted for on an accruals basis.

Research Grants and Contracts

Income from research grants and contracts is matched to expenditure and included in the year the expenditure is incurred unless the grant has performance related conditions or restrictions associated with it. The most common classes of such transactions are set out below:

a. Donations with No Restrictions

Donations with no restrictions include amounts given to the Institute by way of cash or asset with no restriction as to how the donation should be used. Such donations are recorded in the Statement of Comprehensive Income on entitlement to the income.

b. Donations with Restrictions

Donations with restrictions are recorded within the Statement of Comprehensive Income on entitlement to the income. The restricted income received is held in the temporarily restricted reserve until such time that the expenditure is incurred in accordance with the restrictions.

c. Research grants from non-government sources

Income from grants from non-government sources is recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income when performance related conditions are met. If a restriction is in use but no performance related condition exists, the income is recorded in the Statement of Comprehensive Income when the Institute becomes entitled to the income.

Grants with unfulfilled performance related conditions are held as deferred income until such time as the conditions are met, at which point the income is recorded in the Statement of Comprehensive Income.

Grants with restrictions are recorded within the Statement of Comprehensive Income on entitlement to the income and subsequently retained within a restricted reserve until such time that the expenditure is incurred in line with the restriction.

Minor Capital Works

The Minister for Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science introduced a scheme to devolve responsibility to the Institute for summer and other Capital Works.

In all cases Minor Capital Works funding is matched to expenditure and included in the year the expenditure is incurred.

Income from Short-Term Deposits

All income from short-term deposits is credited to the income and expenditure account in the period in which it is earned.

j. Employee Benefits

a. Retirement Benefits

Pension entitlements of staff recruited prior to 1 January 2013 are conferred under a defined benefit pension scheme established under the Education Sector Superannuation Scheme 2015.

The scheme is operated on a Pay-as-You-Go basis, with superannuation deductions made from employees being retained by the Institute as an agreed part of its funding.

The Institute also operates the Single Public Service Pension Scheme ("Single Scheme"), which is the defined benefit scheme for pensionable public servants appointed on or after 1 January 2013 in accordance with the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012. Single Scheme members' contributions are paid over by the Institute to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER).

Pension costs charged to expenditure in the year reflect the benefits earned by current employees during the year and are shown net of staff pension contributions which, in respect of (i) the Education Sector Superannuation Scheme 2015, are retained by the Institute and (ii) the Single Scheme, are remitted to DPER. An amount corresponding to the pension cost is recognised as income to the extent that it is recoverable.

Pension liabilities represent the present value of future pension payments earned to date. The retirement benefit funding asset reflects the expectation that the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science will continue to pay pensions and retirement lump sums as they fall due.

Actuarial gains or losses arising on scheme liabilities are reflected in the Statement of Comprehensive Income and a corresponding adjustment is recognised in the retirement benefit funding asset.

The financial statements reflect, at fair value, the assets and liabilities arising from the Institute's pension obligations in respect of its current staff only and any related funding. The costs of providing pension benefits are recognised in the accounting periods in which they are earned by employees. Pension liabilities in respect of former employees who are in receipt of pensions are excluded because pension payments are charged to the appropriation account of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The reduction in liability arising from members who retire during the year is reflected as an experience gain. Retirement benefit scheme liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method.

Subsidiary staff are not part of the Public Sector scheme.

b. Short-Term Benefits

Short-term benefits such as holiday pay are recognised as an expense in the year, and benefits that are accrued at year end are included in the Payables figure in the Statement of Financial Position. There is no accrual for holiday pay for Academic staff at year end due to the nature of their contracts.

k. Foreign Currency

Transactions in foreign currencies are recorded at the rate of exchange at the date of the transaction. Monetary assets and liabilities denominated in foreign currencies at the Statement of Financial Position date are reported at the rates of exchange prevailing at that date.

l. Leases

The Institute held no assets under finance leases during the financial period.

m. Deferred State Capital Grants

Deferred State capital grants represent the unamortised value of accumulated funds from State sources used for the acquisition or construction of fixed assets.

Capital Grants from the Higher Education Authority or other State bodies received in respect of the acquisition or construction of fixed assets are treated as deferred State capital grants and amortised in line with the depreciation charged over the life of the assets.

n. Reserves

Capital Development Reserve

The capital development reserve represents funds set aside by the Institute for specified capital development purposes. Such funds arise from Student Registration Fees, non-state capital donations, banking facility fees and transfers from Revenue Reserves together with bank interest earned on these monies. Such funds shall be retained in the Capital Development Reserve Account provided the defined projects to which they are committed are in line with the Institute's Capital Development plan, have been approved by the Governing Body and are time phased and with estimates of costs.

2. Critical Accounting Judgements and Key Sources of Estimation

In the application of the Institute's accounting policies, which are described in note 1, the Governing Body are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised if the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods if the revision affects both current and future periods.

Critical Judgements in Applying the Institute's Accounting Policies

The following are the critical judgements, apart from those involving estimations (which are dealt with separately below), that the Governing Body has made in the process of applying the Institute's accounting policies and that have the most significant effect on the amounts recognised in the financial statements.

a. Going Concern

The COVID-19 crisis has created major business challenges for all third level institutions. The Institute is continually assessing the ongoing and projected financial and operational impact. The Institute has prepared projected cashflows to December 2021 together with revised budgets for 20/21 and 21/22 for submission to the HEA. These cashflows show clearly that the Institute is well equipped to deal with the operation and financial impact of COVID-19.

There is no material uncertainty regarding the Institute's ability to meet its liabilities as they fall due, and to continue as a going concern. On this basis, the Institute considers it appropriate to prepare financial statements on a going concern basis. Accordingly, these financial statements do not include any adjustments to the carrying value and classification of assets and liabilities that may arise if the Institute was unable to continue as a going concern.

b. Operational and Financial Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has created major business challenges for all third level institutions. The Institute continues to assess the ongoing and projected financial and operational impacts. The Chairperson of the Governing Body, conducted a review of the expected financial impact of COVID-19 and was satisfied that there is sufficient funding for the Institute to meet its liabilities as they fall due and to continue as a going concern. The Governing Body further considered this matter on the approval of the financial statements. On this basis the Institute considers it appropriate to prepare financial statements on a going concern basis. Accordingly, these financial statements do not include any adjustments to the carrying amounts and classification of assets and liabilities that may arise if the Institute was unable to continue as a going concern. The Governing Body will continue to monitor the evolving financial and operational impacts of COVID-19. The Institute has developed an operational plan for the 2020/21 academic year.

c. Provision for Doubtful Debts

The Institute makes an estimate of the recoverable value of trade debtors and other debtors. The Institute uses estimates based on historical experience in determining the level of debts, which may not be collected. These estimates includes such factors as the current rating of the debtor, the ageing profile of debtors and historical experience. The level of provision required is reviewed on an on-going basis.

d. Retirement Benefit Obligation

The assumptions underlying the actuarial valuations for which the amounts recognised in the financial statements are determined (including discount rates, rates of increase in future compensation levels and mortality rates) are updated annually based on current economic conditions, and for any relevant changes to the terms and conditions of the pension and post-retirement plans.

The assumptions can be affected by:

- (i) The discount rate, changes in the rate of return on high-quality corporate bonds
- (ii) Future compensation levels, future labour market conditions

e. Holiday Pay

The holiday pay accrual is calculated by reference to the days' holidays outstanding at the year end. Academic staff do not require an accrual at year end due to the nature of their contract.

f. Establishing Lives for Property, Plant and Equipment Depreciation Purposes

Long lived assets, consisting primarily of property, plant and equipment, comprise a significant portion of the total assets of the Institute. The annual depreciation charge depends on the estimated expected useful life of each type of asset and estimates of residual values. The Institute regularly reviews these expected useful lives and changes them as necessary to reflect generally accepted norms for the relevant category. Changes in expected useful lives can have a significant impact on depreciation charges for the period. Details of expected useful lives for all asset categories are included in Note 1.

3. State Grants

| | Allocated for Recurrent Expenditure €000s | Allocated for Capital Expenditure €000s | 2020 Total €000s | 2019 Total €000s |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|------------------------|------------------------|
| Recurrent Grant – HEA | 22,352 | (95) | 22,257 | 20,506 |
| Recurrent Grant – HEA Nursing | 680 | 24 | 704 | 636 |
| Recurrent Grant – Landscape Funding | 957 | - | 957 | - |
| Recurrent Grant – Covid | 155 | 571 | 726 | - |
| Capital Grant – HEA | 26 | 1,571 | 1,597 | 456 |
| Capital Grant – Minor Capital | 51 | 703 | 754 | 750 |
| Total 2020 | 24,221 | 2,774 | 26,995 | 22,348 |
| Total 2019 | 20,433 | 1,915 | 22,348 | 22,348 |

Included in the recurrent grant allocation from the HEA in 2020 an amount of €725,831 relates to funding specifically associated with meeting the extra costs incurred to response to COVID-19 while €1,000,000 relates to funding specifically for the TU process; the respective figures in the prior year are €0.

4. Tuition Fees and Student Contribution

| | 2020 | | | | 2019 | | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|--------|
| | Students WTE | State Funded | Non State Funded | Total | Students WTE | State Funded | Non State Funded | Total |
| | | €000s | €000s | €000s | | €000s | €000s | €000s |
| Fees paid by State | 3,439 | 4,833 | - | 4,833 | 3,126 | 3,224 | - | 3,224 |
| Fees paid by Other State Agencies | 24 | 99 | - | 99 | 28 | 86 | - | 86 |
| Non EU Fees | 362 | - | 3,025 | 3,025 | 293 | - | 2,615 | 2,615 |
| Fees paid by students or on behalf of students | 911 | - | 1,196 | 1,196 | 820 | - | 1,237 | 1,237 |
| Life Long Learning and other fees | 471 | 1,338 | 626 | 1,964 | 346 | 764 | 765 | 1,529 |
| Student Contribution inc repeat exam fees | | 5,491 | 3,999 | 9,490 | | 5,803 | 3,704 | 9,507 |
| | 5,207 | 11,761 | 8,846 | 20,607 | 4,613 | 9,877 | 8,321 | 18,198 |
| Student Numbers/Net Fee Income | | | | | | | | |
| | 5,207 | 11,761 | 8,846 | 20,607 | 4,613 | 9,877 | 8,321 | 18,198 |

Where necessary, the comparative figures have been recognised on the same basis as the current year figures.

The Higher Education Authority paid tuition fees in the year of €1,306,718 (2019: €1,227,047) for full-time Degree courses and €303,375 (2019: €335,250) for Higher Certificate and Ordinary Degree courses, the total costs of which are part funded by the European Social Fund.

The Higher Education Authority paid €946,433 (2019: €932,062) in respect of the tuition fee element for full time Nursing Degree courses the total costs of which are part funded by the European Social Fund.

The Higher Education Authority paid €3,615,070 (2019: €1,493,494) in respect of tuition fees for courses under the Springboard/ICT Skills initiative, the total costs of which are part funded by the European Social Fund.

Student Universal Support Ireland 'SUSI' paid student contribution fees €5,490,957 (2019: €5,651,084).

Student numbers are stated as whole time equivalents based on enrolled credits.

5. Research Grants and Contracts

| | 2020 Total €000s | 2019 Total €000s |
|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Income | | |
| State and Semi State | 5,300 | 5,017 |
| European Union | 144 | 236 |
| Industry | 763 | 858 |
| Other | 116 | 59 |
| Allocated to Capital | (1,213) | (460) |
| Total Income | 5,110 | 5,710 |
| Expenditure | | |
| Pay costs | 3,690 | 3,505 |
| Non Pay Costs | 1,842 | 1,830 |
| Total Expenditure | 5,532 | 5,335 |

Expenditure exceeds Income as both funding received under RFAM Top Slice of €432,887 and funding received under Landscape Funding of €332,593 are included under Note 3.

6. Analysis of State Derived Income

| Name of Grantor | 2020 | | 2020 | |
|---|------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| | Op Deferral 01/09/2019 €000s | Grant received €000s | CL Deferral 31/08/2020 €000s | I&E 2020 €000s |
| Note 3 – State Grant | | | | |
| Higher Education Authority Recurrent | (384) | 23,844 | 479 | 23,939 |
| Higher Education Authority Nursing | | 704 | | 704 |
| Higher Education Authority Capital | (35) | 3,324 | (937) | 2,352 |
| Total State Income | (419) | 27,872 | (458) | 26,995 |
| Allocated for Capital Expenditure | | | | (2,774) |
| | | | | 24,221 |
| Note 4 – Tuition Fees & Student Contribution | | | | |
| Higher Education Authority | 173 | 5,998 | | 6,171 |
| Student Universal Support Ireland | | 5,590 | | 5,590 |
| Total State Income | 173 | 11,588 | | 11,761 |
| Note 5 – Research Grants & Contracts | | | | |
| Teaching & Learning | 10 | 268 | (232) | 46 |
| Enterprise Ireland | 251 | 3,283 | 496 | 4,030 |
| Higher Education Authority | 122 | 35 | 3 | 160 |
| Environmental Protection Agency | 13 | | (1) | 12 |
| Institutes of Technology Ireland | | | | 0 |
| Athlone Institute of Technology | 213 | 2 | (32) | 183 |
| Health Research Council | | 362 | (90) | 272 |
| Irish Research Council | 19 | 250 | (61) | 208 |
| Science Foundation Ireland | (127) | 454 | (47) | 280 |
| Department of Agriculture | 1 | | (1) | 0 |
| BIM | (13) | | 85 | 72 |
| Marine Institute | | | | 0 |
| Other | 5 | 30 | 2 | 37 |
| Total State Income | 494 | 4,684 | 122 | 5,300 |
| Note 7 – Student Support Funding | | | | |
| Higher Education Authority | 145 | 410 | (149) | 406 |
| Higher Education Authority-Covid | | 272 | (272) | |
| Total State Income | 145 | 682 | (421) | 406 |
| Note 8 – Other Income | | | | |
| Higher Education Authority-IT | | 54 | | 54 |
| Higher Education Authority-Entrepreneurial | | 18 | | 18 |
| Total State Income | | 72 | | 72 |

7. Student Support Funding

| | Disabilities €000s | 2020 Student Assistance €000s | Total €000s | 2019 Total €000s |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--|----------------|------------------------|
| Balance at 1 September | 147 | 11 | 158 | 80 |
| Receipts | | | | |
| Higher Education Authority | 185 | 496 | 681 | 581 |
| Other | - | 132 | 132 | 78 |
| Amounts Applied | | | | |
| Pay Costs | 106 | - | 106 | 122 |
| Non Pay Costs | 56 | 302 | 358 | 459 |
| Total Expenditure | 162 | 302 | 464 | 581 |
| Capital | 22 | - | 22 | - |
| Balance at 31 August | 148 | 337 | 485 | 158 |

Funding is provided by the Higher Education Authority under the National Development Plan and is part funded by the European Social Fund.

8. Other Income

| | 2020 Total €000s | 2019 Total €000s |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Superannuation Deductions Retained | 1,727 | 1,656 |
| Rental of Facilities | 210 | 192 |
| Sundry Income | 1,058 | 1,080 |
| International Administration Fee | 409 | 447 |
| Road Safety Authority | 374 | 208 |
| Subsidiary Company Income | 1,971 | 2,736 |
| Net Outcome | 5,749 | 6,319 |

9. Staff Costs

| | 2020 No. of employees | 2019 No. of employees |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Teaching and Research | 378 | 358 |
| Technical | 38 | 39 |
| Central Administration and Services | 168 | 164 |
| | 584 | 561 |
| | 2020 €000s | 2019 €000s |
| Salaries and Wages | 37,031 | 34,480 |
| Overtime and Allowances | 176 | 184 |
| Employers PRSI | 3,450 | 3,216 |
| Subsidiary Companies salaries and wages | 783 | 960 |
| | 41,440 | 38,840 |

Key management compensation

For the purposes of this note, key management personnel in the Institute includes the Governing Body, President, Registrar, Secretary/Financial Controller, Heads of School and any other person on these salary grades. This also includes details of any staff on these grades seconded.

| | WTE | Salary €000s | Fees €000s | Allowances €000s | Post- Employment Benefits €000s | Termination Benefits €000s | 2020 Total Compensation €000s | 2019 Total Compensation €000s |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-----------------|---------------|---------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Governing Body Members | 12 | | 9 | 3 | - | - | 12 | 4 |
| President | 1 | 157 | - | - | - | - | 157 | 152 |
| Executive Management | 8 | 773 | - | - | - | - | 773 | 635 |
| Seconded Executive Management | 1 | 158 | - | - | - | - | 158 | 153 |
| | 22 | 1,088 | 9 | 3 | - | - | 1,100 | 944 |

Post-employment benefits of key management and the President

Nine members of the executive management team are members of the Institute pension scheme. The pension scheme is a defined benefit final salary pension arrangement with benefits and contributions defined by reference to current "model" public sector scheme regulations only.

One member of the executive management team is a member of single pension scheme. The Single Scheme is the occupational pension scheme for new entrant public servants hired since 1 January 2013. It is a defined benefit scheme with retirement benefits on career-average pay.

The President is a member of the Institute pension scheme and his entitlement does not extend beyond the terms of this scheme.

Termination payments

No termination payments were paid to any staff of the Institute.

Employee Benefits

The table below provides details of employees earning €60,000 or more in salary bands of €10,000:

| Salary Bands | | Consolidated Year Ended 31 August 2020 | Institute Only Year Ended 31 August 2020 | Consolidated Year Ended 31 August 2019 |
|--------------------|----------|---|---|---|
| From | To | | | |
| €60,000 | €70,000 | 51 | 51 | 40 |
| €70,001 | €80,000 | 41 | 40 | 45 |
| €80,001 | €90,000 | 153 | 153 | 119 |
| €90,001 | €100,000 | 26 | 26 | 39 |
| €100,001 | €110,000 | 12 | 12 | 4 |
| €110,001 | €120,000 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| €120,001 | €130,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| €130,001 | €140,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| €140,001 | €150,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| €150,001 | €160,000 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| >€160,001 | | | | |
| Grand Total | | 287 | 286 | 250 |

10. Operating Expenses

Analysis of other Operating Expenditure

| | Consolidated 2020 €000s | Consolidated 2019 €000s |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Materials and other consumables | 725 | 871 |
| Light, heat and power | 607 | 705 |
| Repairs and maintenance costs | 256 | 367 |
| Printed material, books and periodicals | 435 | 441 |
| Travel and subsistence | 429 | 662 |
| Printing, stationery, postage and other office expenses | 378 | 469 |
| Rent, rates and insurance costs | 387 | 426 |
| Recruitment, training etc. | 466 | 490 |
| Audit fees | 35 | 29 |
| Consultancy costs | 472 | 502 |
| Computer costs | 644 | 493 |
| General educational expenditure | 601 | 519 |
| Services to students | 766 | 436 |
| Student support | 353 | 450 |
| General maintenance and ground costs | 647 | 694 |
| Hospitality | 21 | 26 |
| Marketing and advertising | 305 | 380 |
| Equipment purchases and maintenance | 404 | 433 |
| Other expenses | 162 | 190 |
| Transport including buses and taxis | 30 | 84 |
| Student Scholarships and stipends | 1,080 | 1,011 |
| Movement in provision for bad debts | 33 | (2) |
| Refunds to outcentres | 72 | 174 |
| Ancillary activities | 916 | 1,233 |
| | 10,224 | 11,083 |

Other Operating Expenses include

Auditors Remuneration

| | 2020 | 2019 |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| | € | € |
| Audit of Institute by the C&AG | 35 | 29 |
| Internal Audit Services provided by a 3 rd Party | 41 | 50 |
| External Audit of Subsidiaries | 15 | 16 |
| Total | 91 | 95 |

11. Taxation

Athlone Institute of Technology and College Support and Services CLG. are exempt from Corporation Tax under a charitable status order.

AIT SportsCo Ltd has a liability of €0 for Corporation Tax for the year.

12. Financial Result for the year

| | 2020 | 2019 |
|---|--------------|------------|
| | €000s | €000s |
| Institute surplus for the year | 3,960 | 576 |
| *Surplus generated by subsidiaries and other undertakings | (78) | 149 |
| Surplus for the year | 3,882 | 725 |

Reconciliation to Note 14

| | 2020 | 2019 |
|--|-------|-------|
| | €000s | €000s |
| *Loss/Surplus generated by subsidiaries and other undertakings | (78) | 149 |
| Less | | |
| Amortisation of Deferred Capital Grants | (161) | (161) |
| Addback | | |
| Grant Income | 82 | 81 |
| Combined results of Subsidiaries as per Note 14 | (157) | 69 |

13. Property, Plant and Equipment

| Consolidated | Land & Buildings | Fixtures & Fittings | Computer Equipment | Plant & Machinery | Furniture & Equipment | Motor Vehicles | Assets in course of construction | Total |
|----------------------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| | €000's | €000's | €000's | €000's | €000's | €000's | | €000's |
| Cost | | | | | | | | |
| At 1 September 2019 | 109,953 | 7,521 | 4,682 | 2,173 | 13,427 | 607 | 8 | 138,371 |
| Additions in year | 879 | 180 | 1,200 | 212 | 1,217 | 55 | 342 | 4,085 |
| Transfer from AICC | - | - | - | - | 8 | - | (8) | - |
| Corrections | (148) | - | 34 | - | 34 | - | 148 | 68 |
| Disposals in year | - | (7) | (69) | (14) | (274) | - | - | (364) |
| At 31 August 2020 | 110,684 | 7,694 | 5,847 | 2,371 | 14,412 | 662 | 490 | 142,160 |
| Depreciation | | | | | | | | |
| At 1 September 2019 | 27,347 | 5,873 | 4,328 | 1,379 | 12,272 | 434 | - | 51,633 |
| Charge for year | 2,121 | 425 | 518 | 146 | 718 | 71 | - | 3,999 |
| Corrections | - | - | 26 | - | 32 | - | - | 58 |
| Eliminated on disposals | - | (5) | (69) | (3) | (274) | - | - | (351) |
| At 31 August 2020 | 29,468 | 6,293 | 4,803 | 1,522 | 12,748 | 505 | - | 55,339 |
| Net book value | | | | | | | | |
| At 31 August 2020 | 81,216 | 1,401 | 1,044 | 849 | 1,664 | 157 | 490 | 86,821 |
| At 1 September 2019 | 82,606 | 1,648 | 354 | 794 | 1,155 | 173 | 8 | 86,738 |

There were no lease commitments at 31 August 2020.

13. Property, Plant and Equipment in respect of prior year

| Consolidated | Land & Buildings | Fixtures & Fittings | Computer Equipment | Plant & Machinery | Furniture & Equipment | Motor Vehicles | Assets in course of construction | Total |
|----------------------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| | €000's | €000's | €000's | €000's | €000's | €000's | | €000's |
| Cost | | | | | | | | |
| At 1 September 2018 | 108,700 | 7,348 | 4,582 | 2,074 | 12,848 | 598 | - | 136,150 |
| Additions in year | 1,253 | 189 | 301 | 110 | 706 | 9 | 8 | 2,576 |
| Disposals in year | - | (16) | (201) | (11) | (127) | - | - | (355) |
| At 31 August 2019 | 109,953 | 7,521 | 4,682 | 2,173 | 13,427 | 607 | 8 | 138,371 |
| Depreciation | | | | | | | | |
| At 1 September 2018 | 25,236 | 5,435 | 4,154 | 1,252 | 11,854 | 370 | - | 48,301 |
| Charge for year | 2,111 | 454 | 375 | 135 | 543 | 64 | - | 3,682 |
| Eliminated on disposals | - | (16) | (201) | (8) | (125) | - | - | (350) |
| At 31 August 2019 | 27,347 | 5,873 | 4,328 | 1,379 | 12,272 | 434 | - | 51,633 |
| Net book value | | | | | | | | |
| At 31 August 2019 | 82,606 | 1,648 | 354 | 794 | 1,155 | 173 | 8 | 86,738 |
| At 1 September 2018 | 83,464 | 1,913 | 428 | 822 | 994 | 228 | - | 87,849 |

There were no lease commitments at 31 August 2019.

13. Property, Plant and Equipment (continued)

| Institute Only | Land & Buildings €000's | Fixtures & Fittings €000's | Computer Equipment €000's | Plant & Machinery €000's | Furniture & Equipment €000's | Motor Vehicles €000's | Assets in course of construction | Total €000's |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Cost | | | | | | | | |
| At 1 September 2019 | 95,505 | 5,718 | 4,612 | 2,068 | 12,174 | 607 | - | 120,684 |
| Additions in year | 879 | 180 | 1,199 | 212 | 1,194 | 55 | 342 | 4,061 |
| Corrections | (148) | - | 34 | - | 34 | - | 148 | 68 |
| Disposals in year | - | (7) | (24) | (14) | (40) | - | - | (85) |
| At 31 August 2020 | 96,236 | 5,891 | 5,821 | 2,266 | 13,362 | 662 | 490 | 124,728 |
| Depreciation | | | | | | | | |
| At 1 September 2019 | 24,540 | 4,456 | 4,264 | 1,305 | 11,225 | 434 | - | 46,224 |
| Charge for year | 1,763 | 283 | 513 | 136 | 582 | 71 | - | 3,348 |
| Corrections | - | - | 26 | - | 32 | - | - | 58 |
| Eliminated on disposals | - | (5) | (24) | (3) | (40) | - | - | (72) |
| At 31 August 2020 | 26,303 | 4,734 | 4,779 | 1,438 | 11,799 | 505 | - | 49,558 |
| Net book value | | | | | | | | |
| At 31 August 2020 | 69,933 | 1,157 | 1,042 | 828 | 1,563 | 157 | 490 | 75,170 |
| At 1 September 2019 | 70,965 | 1,262 | 348 | 763 | 949 | 173 | - | 74,460 |

There were no lease commitments at 31 August 2020.

13. Property, Plant and Equipment in respect of prior year

| Institute Only | Land & Buildings €000's | Fixtures & Fittings €000's | Computer Equipment €000's | Plant & Machinery €000's | Furniture & Equipment €000's | Motor Vehicles €000's | Assets in course of construction | Total €000's |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Cost | | | | | | | | |
| At 1 September 2018 | 94,252 | 5,550 | 4,518 | 1,969 | 11,567 | 598 | - | 118,454 |
| Additions in year | 1,253 | 184 | 295 | 110 | 691 | 9 | - | 2,542 |
| Disposals in year | - | (16) | (201) | (11) | (84) | - | - | (312) |
| At 31 August 2019 | 95,505 | 5,718 | 4,612 | 2,068 | 12,174 | 607 | - | 120,684 |
| Depreciation | | | | | | | | |
| At 1 September 2018 | 22,786 | 4,158 | 4,093 | 1,189 | 10,904 | 370 | - | 43,500 |
| Charge for year | 1,754 | 314 | 372 | 124 | 405 | 64 | - | 3,033 |
| Eliminated on disposals | - | (16) | (201) | (8) | (84) | - | - | (309) |
| At 31 August 2019 | 24,540 | 4,456 | 4,264 | 1,305 | 11,225 | 434 | - | 46,224 |
| Net book value | | | | | | | | |
| At 31 August 2019 | 70,965 | 1,262 | 348 | 763 | 949 | 173 | - | 74,460 |
| At 1 September 2018 | 71,466 | 1,392 | 425 | 780 | 663 | 228 | - | 74,954 |

There were no lease commitments at 31 August 2019.

14. Subsidiary Undertakings and Investments

Subsidiary Undertakings and Joint Ventures

The Institute holds an interest in the following subsidiaries and joint ventures:

| | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Name: | College Support and Services CLG |
| Registered Office: | Athlone Institute of Technology |
| % owned by Athlone Institute of Technology : | 100% |
| Activities: | Student Canteen |
| Loss for the year: | (€73,983) |
| Net Assets at statement of financial position date: | €2,642,130 |

| | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Name: | AIT Sportsco Ltd |
| Registered Office: | Athlone Institute of Technology |
| % owned by Athlone Institute of Technology : | 100% |
| Activities: | Indoor Sports Arena |
| Loss for the year: | (€83,348) |
| Net Assets at statement of financial position date: | €10,783,731 |

| | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Name: | AIT Training International Ltd |
| Registered Office: | Athlone Institute of Technology |
| % owned by Athlone Institute of Technology : | 100% |
| Activities: | Investment Holding Company |
| Result for the year: | Not trading |
| Net Assets at statement of financial position date: | €3 |

15. Receivables

| | Consolidated | | Institute | |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | 2020 | 2019 | 2020 | 2019 |
| | €000s | €000s | €000s | €000s |
| Research grants and contracts receivable | 2,009 | 1,637 | 2,009 | 1,637 |
| State grant receivable | 750 | 715 | 750 | 715 |
| Academic fees receivable | 99 | 107 | 99 | 107 |
| Provision for bad debts | (33) | (12) | (33) | (12) |
| Prepayments and accrued income | 619 | 459 | 613 | 452 |
| Other receivables | 208 | 295 | 227 | 269 |
| Total Receivables | 3,652 | 3,201 | 3,665 | 3,168 |

16. Cash and Cash Equivalents

| | Consolidated | | Institute | |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| | 2020 | 2019 | 2020 | 2019 |
| | €000s | €000s | €000s | €000s |
| Cash at bank including balances held on Short Term Deposit | 17,037 | 11,361 | 14,586 | 9,401 |
| Long term deposit | - | - | - | - |
| | 17,037 | 11,361 | 14,586 | 9,401 |

17. Payables: Amounts falling due within one year

| | Consolidated | | Institute | |
|---|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| | 2020 | 2019 | 2020 | 2019 |
| | €000s | €000s | €000s | €000s |
| Research grants and contracts in advance | 2,227 | 1,830 | 2,227 | 1,830 |
| Deferred income student support funding | 486 | 158 | 486 | 158 |
| Trade creditors | 816 | 533 | 801 | 597 |
| State grants received in advance | 1,209 | 297 | 1,209 | 297 |
| Other tax and social security | 1,163 | 1,083 | 1,160 | 1,065 |
| Other payables | 212 | 302 | 210 | 287 |
| Accruals | 2,002 | 1,398 | 1,983 | 1,383 |
| Fees received in advance | 2,289 | 3,219 | 2,289 | 3,219 |
| Other amounts received in advance | 414 | 59 | 350 | 18 |
| Amounts received in advance under lease agreement | 207 | 207 | 207 | 207 |
| Total Payables | 11,025 | 9,086 | 10,922 | 9,061 |

18. Payables: Amounts falling due after more than one year

| | Consolidated | | Institute | |
|---|--------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | 2020 | 2019 | 2020 | 2019 |
| | €000s | €000s | €000s | €000s |
| Other payables | 149 | 160 | - | - |
| Amounts received in advance under lease agreement | 17 | 224 | 17 | 224 |
| Total Payables | 166 | 384 | 17 | 224 |

19. Deferred State Capital Grants

| | Consolidated | | Institute | |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | 2020 | 2019 | 2020 | 2019 |
| | €000s | €000s | €000s | €000s |
| At 1 September | | | | |
| Opening Balance | 76,000 | 76,705 | 74,110 | 74,654 |
| State Capital Grants received in year | | | | |
| Allocated from State recurrent grant | 500 | 833 | 500 | 833 |
| Higher Education Authority | 22 | - | 22 | - |
| Higher Education Authority – Capital | 2,274 | 1,082 | 2,274 | 1,082 |
| Research Grants and Contracts | 1,213 | 460 | 1,213 | 460 |
| Total | 80,009 | 79,080 | 78,119 | 77,029 |
| Amortised to Income and Expenditure in year | | | | |
| Amortised in line with Depreciation | (3,400) | (3,077) | (3,239) | (2,916) |
| Amortisation on Assets Disposed during the year | (2) | (3) | (2) | (3) |
| Corrections | 10 | - | 10 | - |
| Total | (3,392) | (3,080) | (3,231) | (2,919) |
| At 31 August | | | | |
| Closing Balance | 76,617 | 76,000 | 74,888 | 74,110 |

20. Capital Development Reserve

| | Consolidated | | Institute | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| | 2020 | 2019 | 2020 | 2019 |
| | €000s | €000s | €000s | €000s |
| Opening Balance | 267 | 202 | 267 | 202 |
| Transfer from Student Development | 2,224 | 65 | 2,224 | 65 |
| Closing Balance | 2,491 | 267 | 2,491 | 267 |

21. Capital Commitments

| | Consolidated | | Institute | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| | 2020 | 2019 | 2020 | 2019 |
| | €000s | €000s | €000s | €000s |
| Contracted for but not provided | - | 641 | - | 641 |
| Authorised but not contracted | - | - | - | - |
| | - | 641 | - | 641 |

22. Related Parties

In the normal course of business, the Institute may enter into contractual arrangements with undertakings in which the Institute's Governing Body members are employed or otherwise interested. The Institute has adopted procedures in accordance with the Code of Governance of Irish Institutes of Technology 2019 in relation to the disclosure of interests by members of the Board and the Institute has complied with these procedures during the year.

23. Contingent Liabilities

Athlone Institute of Technology terminated a public works contract (PWC) for minor building and civil engineering works on 3rd July, 2020.

The matter has proceeded to a conciliation process as provided under the PWC. This conciliation process is still ongoing.

AIT Sportsco Ltd has a contingent liability to repay in whole or in part grants received from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport if certain conditions set out in the grant are not adhered to. The total amount received to date is €925,733.

24. Retirement Benefit Costs

(i) Staffing

Examination of records may identify changes to members' records in the future and these are reflected as past service costs (see (iii) below).

(ii) Description of Scheme

Institute Scheme

The pension scheme is a defined benefit final salary pension arrangement with benefits and contributions defined by reference to current "model" public sector scheme regulations. The scheme provides a pension (one eightieth per year of service), a gratuity or lump sum (three eightieths per year of service) and spouse's and children's pensions. Normal Retirement Age is a member's 65th birthday, and pre 2004 members have an entitlement to retire without actuarial reduction from age 60. Pensions in payment (and deferment) normally increase in line with general public sector salary inflation. Deductions from staff are retained by the Institute.

Single Scheme

New entrant staff, employed by the Institute after 1 January 2013 are members of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme in accordance with Public Sector Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Acts 2012. Deductions from staff salaries under the Single Scheme are transferred to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on a monthly basis in accordance with the Act.

The Single Scheme is the occupational pension scheme for new-entrant public servants hired since 1 January 2013. It is a defined benefit scheme, with retirement benefits based on career-average pay. The scheme generates pension credits and retirement lump sum credits for each scheme member. These money credits, known as “referable amounts”, accrue as percentages of pay on an ongoing basis. The referable amounts accrued each year are revalued annually until retirement in line with inflation increases (Consumer Price Index).

The annual pension awarded on retirement is the cumulative total of a scheme member’s pension referable amounts, and the retirement lump sum awarded is, similarly, the total of the scheme member’s lump sum referable amounts.

Valuation

The valuation used for FRS 102 disclosures has been based on a full actuarial valuation by a qualified independent actuary taking account of the requirements of the FRS in order to assess the scheme liabilities at 31 August 2020. On retirement members’ pensions are paid by the National Shared Services Office on behalf of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science the payments are charged to that Department’s appropriation account. Therefore, former employees of the Institute who are in receipt of a pension have been excluded from the valuation. The reduction in the liability arising from members who retired during the year is reflected as an experience gain and is separately identified in the liability reconciliation.

The principal actuarial assumptions used to calculate the components of the defined benefit cost for the year ended 31 August 2020 were as follows:

| | 31 August 2020 | 31 August 2019 |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Discount Rate | 1.10% | 0.90% |
| Inflation Rate | 1.40% | 1.30% |
| Salary Increases | 2.65% | 2.55% |
| Pension Increases | 2.15% | 2.05% |

The mortality basis adopted allows for improvements in life expectancy over time, so that life expectancy at retirement will depend on the year in which a member attains retirement age (age 65). The number of members in the Scheme and the number of deaths are too small to analyse and produce any meaningful Scheme-specific estimates of future levels of mortality. Average future life expectancy according to the mortality tables used to determine the pension liabilities are:

| | 31 August 2020 Years | 31 August 2019 Years |
|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Male aged 65 | 21.7 | 21.7 |
| Female aged 65 | 24.1 | 24.1 |

(iii) Analysis of total retirement benefit costs charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Income

| | 31 August 2020 €000s | 31 August 2019 €000s |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Current service cost | 11,802 | 10,873 |
| Past service (Gain)/Loss | 2,410 | (753) |
| Interest on retirement benefit scheme liabilities | 2,024 | 3,935 |
| Employee contributions/(benefits paid) | (1,963) | (1,873) |
| | 14,273 | 12,182 |

(iv) **Movement in net retirement benefit obligations during the financial year**

| | 31 August 2020 €000s | 31 August 2019 €000s |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Net retirement benefit obligation at 1 September | 218,989 | 191,322 |
| Current service costs | 11,802 | 10,873 |
| Interest costs | 2,024 | 3,935 |
| Reduction in pension liabilities arising from retirements in the year | (3,038) | (8,801) |
| Experience loss/(gain) on liabilities | 722 | (4,823) |
| Past service (gains)/losses | 2,410 | (753) |
| Change in actuarial assumptions | (5,575) | 27,236 |
| Net retirement benefit obligations at 31 August | 227,334 | 218,989 |
| Split between | | |
| SPSPS | 4,031 | 2,912 |
| ESS | 223,303 | 216,077 |

(v) **Deferred funding asset for retirement benefits**

The Institute is prescribed in S.I. No 581 of 2012 as a relevant authority for the purposes of the Single Scheme. It is the Institute's opinion (in accordance with Section 44 of the 2012 Act) that any liability in respect of the Single Scheme would be offset by an equivalent asset in respect of future state funding.

The Institute recognises amounts owing from the State for the unfunded deferred liability for retirement benefits relating to the Education Sector Superannuation Scheme 2015 on the basis of the set of assumptions described above and a number of past events. These events include the statutory basis for the establishment of the retirement benefit scheme, and the policy and practice currently in place in relation to funding public service pensions including contributions by employees and the annual estimates process. The Institute has no evidence that this funding policy will not continue to meet such sums in accordance with current practice.

The net deferred funding for retirement benefits recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income was as follows:

| | 31 August 2020 €000s | 31 August 2019 €000s |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Funding recoverable in respect of retirement Benefit costs | 14,273 | 12,182 |

The deferred funding liabilities for retirement benefit as at 31 August 2020 amounted to €227,334,000.

(vi) **History of defined benefits obligations**

| | 31 August 2020 €000s | 31 August 2019 €000s |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Defined benefit obligations | 227,334 | 218,989 |
| Experience losses/(gains) on deferred benefit scheme liabilities | | |

25. Post Balance Sheet Events

There were no significant events since the balance sheet date which could have implications for these financial statements.

26. Foundations and Trusts

The American Friends of Athlone Institute of Technology was established with the charitable purpose of raising and providing financial support to the Institute and other qualifying organisations.

Whilst Athlone Institute of Technology does not have a shareholding in American Friends of Athlone Institute of Technology Inc., future funding may be received from this company. This company is currently not actively fundraising and had no revenue for the year ended 31st August 2020.

27. AIT-LIT Consortium and Technological University Application

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris granted Technological University (TU) status to Athlone Institute of Technology and Limerick Institute of Technology on 5th May 2021. The appointed day for new Technological University will be 1st October, 2021 and it will be named Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest. To date funding of €3.5m has been received by Athlone Institute of Technology

28. Approval of Financial Statements

The Financial Statements were approved by the Governing Body on 16th June, 2021.

