Mission Compact Review - Narrative

1. Introduction

- 1.1 WIT continues to perform strongly, as is evidenced in the document below, and continues to function as a key component in the Irish national higher education system. The Institute has a demonstrable record of achievement and a reputation for excellence in teaching, research and collaborative activity. The Institute plays a vital role in generating employment in the south-east of Ireland, as well as providing access to higher education for the population, servicing the training and education needs of industrial, commercial and other bodies in the region, and leading regional (and national) development in a number of domains through high-quality, high impact research. The Institute has the critical mass to sustain educational programmes and academic activity across a wide range of discipline areas and across all higher education levels on the National Framework of Qualifications.
- 1.2 The Institute welcomes the opportunity to engage with the HEA through the mission compact-development process. WIT welcomes the opportunity to develop its strategic capacity through the process. The process permits WIT to articulate its own strategic priorities, particularly but not exclusively with regard to its role within the Southern cluster and its leadership of the Technological University of the South-East project, as well as its own future development. The mission compact development process interlinks with the Institute's own evolving strategic planning processes.
- 1.3 WIT recognises the merits of the mission-based compact and its objectives and is committed to the measurement of its own performance against targets as part of its strategic development. WIT achieved the status of high performing HEI following the Cycle 2 review process due to the commitment and resourcefulness of its staff. A vital enabler for the institute to maintain its high standards will be significant capital and infrastructural development, equipment renewal and replacement and increased recurring budget investment. The decline in the resources base is the single greatest issue facing the organisation, potentially impinging on the institution's ability to comply with all of the requirements of this process.
- 1.4 The Institute's current strategic plan is to 2017. The Institute has thus commenced developing the next strategic plan. To this end, the Institute established a number of working groups in 2016 as a vehicle for exploring future strategy and for operationalising and implementing current and future strategy. These groups were:
 - (a) Teaching & Learning
 - (b) Further & Continuous education
 - (c) Retention
 - (d) Engagement with Second-level Education
 - (e) Facilitating Inter-/multi-Disciplinarity
 - (f) International Engagement
 - (g) The First Year Curriculum
 - (h) Stakeholder Engagement

An overarching working group on strategy has also been convened. All of these groups have been challenged to produce position papers which will be interwoven to form the basis of the next strategic plan as well as to advise on operational matters relating to recruitment, retention, curriculum development and programme design.

- 1.5 The Institute has also engaged in a business planning process with a focus on (a) the development of management information systems to support decision making by the Institute's Executive and other managers and (b) the production of a robust, costed three-year plan to address the Institute's current deficit and bring greater financial stability to the organisation. The business plan, to 2020, will be integrated into the next institutional strategy and will provide its operational expression.
- 1.6 The following paragraphs offer summary comments on the Institute's progress towards the targets identified for 2015-2016, comments developed further and in more detail in the attached table.

2. Regional Clusters

2.1 WIT remains an active participant in the Southern cluster. The cluster's initial efforts were directed towards developing the appropriate governance model to ensure the successful delivery of the objectives set for the cluster while respecting the individual traditions, missions and strategic objectives of individual constituent institutions. The development of appropriate governance structures has now enabled other activities to take place. "Cluster-driven" thinking is now embedded in the Institute's thinking and is informing the development of the Institute's strategy.

Improve student pathways and shared academic planning

- 2.2 There are myriad challenges in developing student pathways and in sharing academic planning, especially as student recruitment is increasingly competitive. The focus of the cluster has, in the first instance, been on sharing expertise and developing programmes at graduate level, as set out below.
- 2.3 For similar reasons developing pathways between institutions within the sector is also problematic and challenging. The cluster continues to develop local-level pathways in order to bring students into higher education. Sharing expertise on how best to develop these pathways is a more pragmatic activity for the cluster.

Meeting the criteria for TU designation

2.4 WIT has long been on a course that has differentiated it from the wider IOT sector and has placed it closer, in performance terms, to universities. The Institute has continued on that trajectory, as expressed in its performance against standard indicators and, specifically, against the criteria for designation as a Technological University as published by the HEA. The Institute's stakeholders, particularly its regional stakeholders, have been consistent over several decades on the need for WIT to re-designate as a university, better to serve regional need. The Institute is fully committed to delivering a high quality, internationally competitive university for the region in response to its stakeholders.

- 2.5 WIT sees the criteria for designation as a TU, while useful benchmarks, as expressive of a performance at the lower end of what one might expect from a high quality university. The Institute's strategic plan will specify additional, enhanced criteria to those published by the HEA.
- 2.6 WIT's performance continues to be close to that described in the TU criteria across many of the metrics, as indicated in the table attached below. Of particular importance are metrics relating to research and to graduate programmes. The Institute continues to perform strongly, as indicated in the summary table below. The data is from the draft HEA WIT profile (2013-14). Additional data from WIT is not yet validated by HEA.
- 2.7 WIT and Carlow IT are jointly preparing a project plan for the HEA which provides a roadmap, with timelines, for the re-engagement process between the institutions, leading to the development of a Business Plan as required by Stage2 & 3 of the TU designation process. This project plan will be submitted in July, 2016.

3. Participation, LLL and Equal Access

Participation and Equal Access

- 3.1 The Institute recognises that current approaches have not maximized the potential to grow our part-time and flexible programme provision, though there has been significant growth in the last year. The Institute has prioritised therefore the development of its part-time portfolio and the creation of a robust infrastructure to support that prioritisation, including devoting staff capacity to developing new programmes, repurposing existing ones, and creating bespoke awards with industry partners.
- 3.2 The Institute plans to re-configure some of its part-time programmes that have proven popular over the last few years (i.e. Lean, GIFS) and deliver them in a more blended learning / online delivery format during 2017. The Institute anticipates that there may also be options if some of the minor or special purpose awards that might be developed as part of these developments are developed for an online / blended learning delivery mode.
- 3.3 The Institute is strategically looking at partnership with key stakeholders both in an effort to grow our part-time student numbers and enhance the capacity industry and communities in the region. During the 2015-2016 academic year, this strategic approach has resulted in the Institute securing a tender for Teagasc to deliver a customized up-skilling programme for its staff, the School of Nursing are developing a Skillnets programme and the School of Humanities are developing a customized level 6 award for the Irish Prison Service.
- 3.4 The Institute is working closely with the recently appointed Regional Skills Manager for the South East Region and taking on board many of the recommendations from the Action Plan for Jobs for the South East, will work closely to develop appropriate flexible and part-time offerings targeted with the 6 industry segments identified in the Action Plan for Jobs.

Teaching and Learning and the Quality of the Student Experience

3.5 The Institute sees the primary manifestation of its vision for the organisation as being the undergraduate curriculum. The current cycle of School Reviews is a vehicle for embedding

Institute thinking on its future—its research dimension, its regional orientations, its commitment to access and progression—into the curriculum and therefore into the student experience.

3.6 Enrolled student numbers have grown slightly. However, capacity constraints may limit any further growth. As stated in previous years, the Institute has a space shortfall of 40,000 m², the degradation of ICT infrastructure is impacting negatively on WIT and spare staff capacity is limited. This lack of investment in the Institute's infrastructure limits both the Institute's ability to grow and also its ability to serve as we would like our student base and the wider region.

Transitions agenda

- 3.7 WIT is committed to supporting the student in the physical, emotional and educational transition to third level. The particular supports that WIT provides include:
 - Formalised induction
 - Retention Programmes (see below)
 - New initiatives including Peer-to-Peer support programmes

WIT is currently engaged in a cycle of School programmatic reviews. As part of these reviews the institute is committed to reviewing the mix of generic and denominated entry. To date a number of Schools are proposing generic entry options.

- 3.8 The Institute recognises the increasing need to engage with the Transitions agenda and to facilitate the personal, intellectual and professional development of students moving from second to third level. The Institute has convened two working groups in this area, a group focussed on the First Year Experience and a group concerned with engagement with second level schools. The recommendations of these groups will determine the Institute's response in the coming period to the transition challenge. The working group on the First Year Experience has prioritised enhancing students' sense of belonging to the Institute and to their course; its recommendations are both operational and academic and will be implemented from 2016-17.
- 3.9 To inform its practice with regard to Transitions, the Institute has also established a Second Level Engagement working group. This group has issued a number of initial recommendations. The recommendations of this group will be implemented from September. Amongst these recommendations is that the group encourages an engagement with parents as part of the transition process.

Retention strategies and outcomes

- 3.10 The Institute has recognised its performance with regard to retention, particularly in some areas, needs to be better. The Institute convened a working group in 2016 to examine the issue and to develop recommendations for the Institute on how best to address retention difficulties.
- 3.11 The Institute Registration Audit is a retention measure aimed at First Year students with data collected at two points in the academic year, once per semester. It is a data collection instrument aimed at: confirming actual student numbers; identifying students at risk of non-completion or falling behind in their studies and providing more robust data for examinations reports. A student who may be at risk of non-completion due to poor attendance at lectures/labs/tutorials or inadequate completion of assignments etc. is contacted by their Department and encouraged to make contact with their course leader in order to resolve difficulties. The Registration Audit is identified by the School of Humanities (Arts and Law

programmes) as the formal retention mechanism used by both programmes. The Department of Engineering Technology continues the Registration Audit into 2nd year, semester 1 of the Higher Certificate in Electronic Engineering.

- 3.12 The pastoral role of course leaders and cohort leaders has been identified by a number of Schools (Business, Health Science and Humanities) as important in student retention. Ensuring that students have the course leaders contact details, meeting students informally, being the first point of contact if students have a problem and having an open door policy were all noted as was the use of Moodle to communicate with students and the important support role of Student Life and Learning (SLL).
- 3.13 The following table summarises retention initiatives that are taking place across the Institute's Schools and Departments.

School of Business

First Year Experience (FYE) Group - created February 2010

- Annual Student Survey of the First Year Experience

School of Engineering

- First Year Induction overhaul

Moodle

- Semester 1 Module to facilitate transition and engagement (Business Learning & Practice) on Level 6 and 7 programmes - Year-long Linked Modules in Accounting and in Economics 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 Integrated Project Mentoring - BBS Year 1 Course Leader **School of Health Sciences** Department of Health, Sport & Exercise Science **Department of Nursing and Health Care** Programme specific induction Daily monitoring of attendance and follow up Mentoring - all 1st year stduents Early intervention with non attenders/poor attenders Course leader - lecturing group in semester 1 Open door policy Emphasis on continuous assessment in semester 1 Cohort leaders that have pastoral role for students Generic skills/learning modules Peer-to-peer mentoring initiative 80% attendance criterion on some modules Assessment schedules **School of Humanities Arts Programme** Law Programmes Retention Audit Retention Audit Course Leader Performance and Attendance Committee

4. Workload management

Department of Engineering Technology

- Retention Audit - Years 1 & 2

Higher Certificate in Electronic Engineering

- Individual student 'mentoring' - Years 1 & 2

BYTE (Broadening Your Third-level Experience)

4.1 WIT continues to develop its practice with regard to workload allocation. The Institute has prioritised the development of the infrastructure to manage allocations through its timetabling

Induction semester 1 & semester 2

Computing & Maths Learning Centre

Restructuring timetable

Department of Computing and Mathematics

First Year Retention Scheme (FYRS) - additional tuition

School of Science and Computing

system. That system is now a vital part of the Institute's management reporting toolkit, as well as serving an operational and logistical purpose.

- 4.2 The effort over the last 24 months has been to integrate all academic units with the timetabling function to ensure consistency in allocation practice across the Institute. This has enabled the Institute for the first time to report on and evaluate workload allocations at individual, department, School and Institute level. This has been very important in improving the Institute's ability to cost activities and to bring efficiency to its operations.
- 4.3 A workload allocation model based solely on recording teaching activity does not accommodate the breadth of workload associated with modern academic institutions and modern academics. WIT has developed particularly its allocation and recording of research-related activity to acknowledge, formally, this dimension of academic activity. Post-graduate supervision, for instance, is now recorded on the timetabling system, with associated student names. This allows the Institute to track student progress, as well as to determine at any point in time the resource that is being dedicated to that supervisory activity.
- 4.4 The Institute is anxious that the full range of activity engaged in by its staff is fully and formally registered so that it can be measured, costed, and evaluated. The Institute has convened a workload allocation group to draft an allocation policy. This policy will develop a method, based on best practice nationally and internationally, for the formal recognition of activities such as the preparation of research funding applications, publications, community engagement and industry collaboration, and other forms of activity. A preliminary draft policy is included below (Appendix A) for information.

5. High Quality Internationally Competitive Research and Innovation

- 5.1 WIT has strengthened its research funding position in the academic year 2014 / 15. Securing €14.9m in research awards, this represents an increase of 15% compared to the same period the previous year. The Institute's research centres continue to compete and partner with high quality internationally recognised research institutes. Very significantly at a national level TSSG secured €3.5m from SFI through its involvement in the national SFI Research Centre CONNECT. The Institute continues to play a significant role in the European Research Area. 24% of the Institute's research funding was derived from European / international sources. WIT was ranked first in the IoTI sector in terms of both the overall number of proposals submitted under H2020 and the success rate as a percentage of submissions. A measure of this success in the current reporting period includes the award to WIT to lead the first H2020 5G Public Private Partnership Project, Cognet valued at €5.9m.
- 5.2 WIT continues to sustain a strong PhD programme supported through the development of the WIT Graduate School, ability to compete for external research funding and the provision of the WIT PhD Scholarship Programme. This will be further strengthened through ongoing collaboration with the Southern Cluster partners to facilitate sharing and credit recognition of

generic skills modules for structured PhD students and opportunities for co-development of modules.

5.3 The Institute has committed to value and support researcher career development and to this end committed in 2014 to the roll out of a detailed action plan (2014 – 2018) as part of the EU's HRS4R designation. Significant progress has been made in 2015 in progressing critical actions as identified in the plan specifically relating to research ethics and integrity, research career training and career development supports and commencement of a review of HR processes and procedures in relation to the researcher community.

6. Enhanced Engagement and Knowledge Exchange

- 6.1 In 2015 WIT demonstrated its ongoing capability and commitment to collaborating with industry and commercialising its technologies in order to enhance competitiveness of Irish business and also creating sustainable jobs regionally and nationally. The Institute exceeded its commercialisation metrics as set nationally under the TTSI 2 programme recording 9 licences, 2 spin outs, 261 collaborative, contract and consultancy agreements with industry, 3 patents and 9 invention disclosures. For reference, these figures represent up to 6% of the total national commercialisation outputs of all of the 25 research institutes. When benchmarked against research expenditure where WIT has approximately 3% of the national total, these figures highlight that WIT is outperforming national averages.
- 6.2 The Knowledge Transfer Ireland Awards recognise top performance by Irish academics and HEIs in industry engagement and their positive impact on Irish business. Two WIT academics were awarded two out of the four awards given in 2015 to Irish Higher Education Institutions. These included the Research2Business Collaborative Impact Award and the Consultancy Impact Award.
- 6.3 The Institute's three Technology Gateway Centres continue to act as critical conduits through which WIT externally engages with priority industry sectors not only for the South East region but also nationally these include ICT, Life Sciences/ Pharma, Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering. Furthermore WIT through its ArcLabs incubation Centre in both Waterford and Kilkenny supported 27 companies which employed 198 staff. The year saw significant expansion and growth of a number of these companies all greatly contributing to regional development. In 2015 WIT was and continues to be very much engaged with a wide number of regional enterprise agencies and industry bodies through its participating in the development and roll out of the South East Action Plan for Jobs.

7. Internationalisation

- 7.1 The Institute continues to position itself as an internationally-relevant higher education provider and seeks to apply an international dimension to its programmes of study. The Institute continues to build partnerships with universities and colleges across the world and has signed a range of MOUs that will enable mutually beneficial academic activity to take place with these partners.
- 7.2 The Institute is currently preparing an ambitious international student recruitment strategy, building on its considerable success to date in attracting international students to

Waterford. This strategy will require significant operational and structural change within the Institute over the coming 18 months. The recruitment of fee-paying international students will form an important dimension to the Institute's business plan for the coming five year period.

8. Institutional Consolidation

8.1 As stated earlier, a re-engagement process between IT Carlow IT and Waterford IT has been identified and is being reviewed. The recent funding award of €1.445m by the HEA to both IOTs provides the incentive and basis for the commencement of this process of re-engagement. The agreement and submission of a project plan for this re-engagement in the coming weeks will provide a roadmap for this first stage of the process which should lead to the production of the business plan required by stages 2 & 3 of the TU designation process.

Appendix A: Draft Workload Allocation Policy

Introduction

- Currently academic staff workload at WIT is calculated solely in terms of the teaching timetable. This current model for workload distribution, primarily in terms of class contact hours, is no longer fit for purpose as it no longer adequately represents the full span of work carried out by academic staff in WIT. The following policy is in response to the requests of staff for a more transparent means for recognising the span of work that takes place within the Institute.
- WIT is committed to the fair and equitable distribution of work amongst academic staff and to clarifying its expectations of its employees. This policy document is designed also to offer a framework within which a constructive dialogue can take place between Institute management and academic faculty resulting in a clear articulation of the Institute's expectations of its staff and staff expectations of the Institute.
- It is acknowledged that some aspects of a workload allocation system already exist at the Institute (in the area of the allocation of programme management time, time for research supervision, and so on). The policy will facilitate consistency in those and other workload allocations across the Institute as well as transparency and clarity in that
- The Institute does not seek through this policy to alter the terms and conditions of academic staff which are established in staff contracts. The policy is designed to protect faculty by arriving at clear means of recognising formally the full range of activities staff engage in.

Overall Workload

Academic staff contracts typically state the working time associated with that contract grade. The expectations in terms of working time are set out in the following table.

Post	Working Time	
Assistant Lecturer	Teaching such assigned classes as deemed appropriate by the management of the Institute, day or evening, up to 630 hours per annum including supervision of post-graduate students where appropriate. There will be a norm of 18 class contact hours per week, which may be varied by Institute management from 16 to 20 following consultation with the Assistant Lecturer. A weighting of 1.5 will apply to hours worked after 6.00 p.m.	
Lecturer	Teaching such assigned classes as deemed appropriate by the management of the Institute, day or evening, up to 560 hours per annum including supervision of post-graduate students where appropriate. There will be a norm of 16 class contact hours per week, which may be varied by Institute management from 14 to 18 following consultation with the Lecturer. A weighting of 1.5 will apply to hours worked after 6 p.m.	
Senior Lecturer 1 (Teaching)	Teaching such assigned classes as deemed appropriate by the management of the Institute, day or evening, up to 560 hours per annum including supervision of post-graduate students where appropriate. There will be a norm of 16 class contact hours per week, which may be varied by Institute management from 14 to 18 following consultation with the post holder. A weighting of 1.5 will apply to hours worked after 6 p.m.	
SLII (Head of Department)	Teaching classes for up to 105 hours per annum and carrying out assessment, monitoring and evaluation of examination work and providing an academic and consultative support to students in their learning activities; directing and supervising the work of Tutor/Demonstrators and taking academic responsibility for the academic standards of this work.	
SLIII (Head of School)	of School) Teaching classes for up to 105 hours per annum and carrying out assessment, monitoring and evaluation of examination we and providing an academic and consultative support to students in their learning activities; directing and supervising the wo of Tutor/Demonstrators and taking academic responsibility for the academic standards of this work.	

- It is not proposed to alter the annual hours requirement associated with the grades above or to otherwise alter the terms and conditions of these contracts. It is proposed to interpret "Teaching classes" in the paragraphs above as referring to "Academic activities" including, but not limited to, face-to-faceteaching
- 2.3 Academic activities fall into four categories:
 - teaching activities;
 - research activities;
 - academic service activities:
 - external engagement activities.

It is understood that faculty may discharge their obligations to the institute, to the total hours listed above, in carrying out activities in one or more of these categories. There is no obligation to engage in activities across all four activity types. It is understood that the majority of staff will discharge the majority of their hours requirement through teaching. It is good practice for staff teaching to also be involved in research and for staff predominantly engaged in research also to be involved in teaching.

The tables below (1-4) establish the equivalence of individual activities across each of these categories to current timetabled hours.

- The policy seeks to embed principles of equity, transparency, and flexibility in the allocation of workload to staff so that individuals can manage their workload in a manner that best contributes to their personal, professional and intellectual development while also benefitting their academic unit and the Institute as a whole. 3.1
- 3.2 With this in mind, the following guiding principles will apply in allocating work to academic staff:
 - Allocation will take place in an open, consultative manner:
 - Faculty will be allocated work according to their professional expertise and with a mind to their professional, intellectual and personal development;

 - Work allocations will be balanced across academic units and there will be an equitable distribution of workload; Individual workloads will also be balanced and there will be a consistent distribution of work to ensure equitable contributions from all staff to the development of the (d)
 - (e) It is the role of academic management to allocate staff;
 - Timetabling and allocation are separate activities and, normally, staff have no input into timetabling;
 - The distribution of workload will be made public and will be reviewed annually

- The School will normally report on its workload allocation practice for the previous year to the Governing Body as part of its annual report. From time to time, the Institute's Executive may also seek reports from academic areas on allocations.
- This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Table 1:

Category	Sub-category	Equivalence (total hours)	Notes
Teaching activity	Under-graduate 5 credit module, year 1	48	Includes all modes of delivery, including online
<i>,</i>	Under-graduate 5 credit module, other than year 1 (ex final degree year)	36	Includes all modes of delivery, including online
	Under-graduate 5 credit module, level 8 (final year)	24	Includes all modes of delivery, including online
	Under-graduate 10 credit module, any year	48	Includes all modes of delivery, including online
	Taught post-graduate 5 credit module	36	Includes all modes of delivery, including online
	Taught post-graduate 10 credit module	48	That is, five students per hour undergraduate dissertations
	Undergraduate placement supervision	12	Presumes 5 students minimum (2.4 hours per student)
	Taught post-graduate dissertation	12	Presumes 2 students minimum (6 hours per student)
	For student groups of >50	Add 12 per 50 or part thereof	
	PhD supervision	24	
	Research Masters supervision	18	
	DBA supervision	18	
	Placement supervision	12	Per 5 students (2.4 hours per student)

Table 2:

Research activity	Registered on a higher degree outside WIT (as approved by HOD)	12	In addition to fee support and research of	day	
	Supervision of post-doctoral researcher	12	Add 12 per post-doc		
	Publications (5 year average)	Calculated according	Book		4.5
		to scale across	Each chapter in own authored book	0.75	
			Refereed article		3.5
			Non-refereed article		1.5
			Edited book	2.0 x 0.1 fe	or each
			chapter		
			Book Chapter in edited collection		1.5
			Working paper/internet publication	1.0	
			Conference paper		1.0
			Book review	0.25	
			Seminar/invited lecture	0.5	
			Newspaper/magazine article	0.75	
			Research report		2
			Editor of journal special issue	2.75	
			Reader's reports (book proposal)		0.25
			Reader's reports (journal article)		0.1
			Co-authored pieces		
			1.0/authors		
	PhD External examiner	6			
	PhD internal examiner	4			

Table 3:

Academic service	Service on Academic Council or its committees	12	One hour per committee
	Programme leader	24	Applies to full-time HC, degree or H Degree programmes only and not to one-year add-on programmes which attract 12 hours leadership.
	Programme leader for course > 30	Add 12 per 30 students	
	Year tutor		
	Health and Safety Officer		
	Placement co-ordination		
	Membership external interview board		

Table 4:

External engagement	School visits	12	Presumes at least two schools
	Membership of a committee of a national professional	12	
	or academic body		
	Membership of a regional committee or body	6	
	Membership of an international committee or	12	
	professional body		
	Patent application		
	International academic partnership resulting in student		
	exchange agreement		