Mission-based Performance Compact

between

Athlone Institute of Technology

and

The Higher Education Authority

Date: February 2014

Context

This Compact[1] is an agreement between the Higher Education Authority and Athlone Institute of Technology and is the outcome of a process of strategic dialogue between the two bodies.

The purpose of strategic dialogue is to align the missions, strategies and profiles of individual higher education institutions with national priorities, and to agree strategic objective indicators of success against which institutional performance will be measured and funding allocated.

This Compact demonstrates a shared sense of the balance that is required between institutional autonomy and public accountability and a recognition that a diverse range of strong, autonomous institutions is essential for the overall higher education system to respond effectively to evolving and unpredictable societal needs.

The Compact recognises that Athlone Institute of Technology is an autonomous institution with a distinctive mission, operating within a regional, national and international higher education environment.

The Compact recognises that there is a tension between providing a transparent framework of public accountability for performance in relation to funding, and risks of unintended behaviours related to measurements. It addresses this tension by requiring higher education institutions themselves to propose the qualitative and quantitative indicators against which their performance should be assessed by the Higher Education Authority.

The purpose of this Compact is to provide a strategic framework for the relationship between the Higher Education Authority and Athlone Institute of Technology. It sets out how Athlone Institute of Technology's mission and goals align with national goals for higher education.

By detailing HEA funding commitments and reciprocal Athlone Institute of Technology commitments, this Compact also contributes to creating a transparent and accountable system of administration of State funding. To support this purpose, the Higher Education Authority and Athlone Institute of Technology agree that this Compact will be published.

The principles of State funding support

The principles under which State funding for higher education is provided are:

- Institutional autonomy balanced with public accountability for high quality outcomes; and
- Core funding allocations that are predictable, fair and transparent, and that provide reasonable stability from year to year and in which funding follows the student.

Contents

1. Establishment of the Compact

The Higher Education Authority and Athlone Institute of Technology agree that:

- This Compact consists of this document and the accompanying current and planned profiles
- The term of this Compact is from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2016 unless terminated earlier by agreement.

Athlone Institute of Technology acknowledges that policy underlying some or all of this Compact is subject to review by the Minister for Education and Skills or by the Higher Education Authority from time to time. The Higher Education Authority and Athlone Institute of Technology agree that if changes need to be made to the Compact because of such a review, the Higher Education Authority will notify Athlone Institute of Technology of this in writing and will consult with Athlone Institute of Technology accordingly.

Some or all of the funding arrangements may be updated from time to time. Either party may propose changes to this Compact at any time.

2. Performance Funding Framework

Higher education Performance Funding will provide incentives for higher education institutions to improve overall performance in accordance with their own strategies and with their place in the overall system.

Performance Funding will be allocated based on performance against agreed targets and indicators of success proposed by the institution across a range of outcome domains. The targets and indicators of success must be agreed in strategic dialogue with the HEA. The intention is both to improve the performance of the institution in key areas and to steer the institution closer to its agreed mission and profile and to its position in the overall higher education system. The degree of challenge and of realism inherent in the targets proposed will be evaluated and discussed in strategic dialogue.

The Higher Education Authority and Athlone Institute of Technology agree to review annually the effectiveness of implementation of the strategies and goals for achieving the agreed national and institution outcomes.

As a condition of Performance Funding, in accordance with this agreement, Athlone Institute of Technology must:

- Agree performance targets as outlined in section 5 below
- Supply performance data to the Higher Education Authority for the relevant indicators
- Achieve the relevant targets agreed.

The assessment of progress against the agreed indicators of success and the allocation of Performance Funding against them will be notified annually to Athlone Institute of Technology.

3   Mission and Strategy Statement

Athlone Institute of Technology's mission and strategy sets out its values and aspirations, what it does and how it can best serve the interests of its students, staff and key stakeholders. The Higher Education Authority and Athlone Institute of Technology acknowledge that Athlone Institute of Technology's mission and strategy may evolve.

Athlone Institute of Technology and the Higher Education Authority recognise that Athlone Institute of Technology is an autonomous institution that is responsible for determining its mission, its aspirations and its strategies for their achievement.

However, the Higher Education Authority must ensure that together the missions and profiles of the different institutions will lead to overall coherence of the higher education system as a whole and to completeness, ensuring that national needs are being met and without unnecessary duplication.

Enter your mission and strategy statement here.

AIT will become a college of choice for learners and staff regionally, nationally, and internationally. This will be achieved through the development of innovative excellence in teaching and enhancement of the learning-centred environment, the establishment of a strong reputation in research, innovation, and industrial collaboration, and a leadership role in the economic, social, cultural, and environmental development of Midlands gateway/region.

3.1 Changes to the mission and strategy statement

The Higher Education Authority acknowledges that Athlone Institute of Technology may adjust its mission and strategy from time to time. Athlone Institute of Technology agrees that the following will be the subject of strategic dialogue with the Higher Education Authority and may result in a change to the Compact:

■ Any significant change that it proposes to make to its mission during the term of the Compact

■ Any significant change that it intends to make to its activities that could affect either the content or the practical application of its mission.

AIT's current mission statement is taken from the current strategic plan which covered the years 2009 to 2013. That strategic plan for AIT was formulated within the context of the wider social and economic development of the Midlands Gateway/region and the Irish economy. A vision for the Gateway was enunciated in the Strategic Development Framework for Midlands Gateway, which was launched by the then Tánaiste and Minister for Finance, Brian Cowen, in December 2006, and entails 'the development of a world-class, knowledge-based and competitive Gateway, underpinned by a quality urban structure and environment, excellent infrastructure and a visionary leadership, which maximises quality of life for its citizens.'

The next strategic plan is in preparation currently and is likely to see an expansion of the pillars as set out in the current plan. The new plan is being formed in the context of the wider cluster and this will significantly impact the character of the plan. That future plan will be centrally influenced by the national priorities as set out in the DES' Higher Education System performance Framework 2014-2016 document (May 2013). The key system objectives for the coming three-year period will inform the planning phase and, while that is as yet incomplete, those objectives are referenced within this compact.

There will be benefit in future in aligning strategic planning and compact cycles.

4. Current and Planned Profile

The following pages contain:

- Athlone Institute of Technology's current profile 2010/11 (as supplied by the HEA); and

- Athlone Institute of Technology's planned profile 2016/17 (completed).

For hard copy submissions, please bind the current and planned profile after this page.

For electronic submissions, please submit the current and planned profiles as PDF and Excel attachments respectively.

This profile is attached as an Appendix 2 as requested.

The HEA template is completed and provided as Appendix 3.

5. Development Plans and Objectives

5.1 Regional clusters

Strategy summary

Please provide a brief summary of Athlone Institute of Technology's strategy and chosen objectives in relation to its regional cluster.

This should set out:

- Member institutions
- Governance arrangements
- Priority objectives for the cluster.

Please note any external factors or assumptions that might affect institutional progress towards stated development objectives.

Regional clusters: strategy summary

Athlone Institute of Technology is forming its new strategic plan in the context of the contribution it can make within the Midlands-East cluster. That cluster comprises complementary providers with distinctive missions, reflecting a theme in the submission under the HEA Strategic Innovation and Development Fund 2013 whereby parties within the cluster can best realise the foundations for systemic collaboration, thereby ensuring greater coherence of provision.

Within that cluster, AIT has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with NUI Maynooth which will be this institute's most significant partner in the medium term. The partnership builds upon significant existing cooperation and it is proposed to build further and in an incremental manner. Both parties are committed to greater cooperation across all domains of academic activity, including staff development, joint taught, research and internationalisation programmes. The parties are also committed not only to collaboration but to strategic co-development, taking a coordinated approach to the future development of each institution, and in particular its discipline mix, sub-disciplinary specialisations, educational provision and research capacity.

While recognising the different missions of the university and the Institute and the related differentiation in student profiles and programme provision, both institutions have identified potential for collaborations in:

•	provision of taught modules at doctoral level, co-supervision of doctoral students, and supervisor training;

•	collaboration in access programmes, mature student support, and the formalisation of transfer and progression arrangements;

•	commercialisation, technology transfer and entrepreneurship development;

•	internationalisation;

•	professional development of academic staff.

The HEA-funded partners in the 3U, NUI Maynooth-AIT, and a third strategic partnership between DCU and DkIT will combine their distinctive missions and complementary strengths to develop a regional cluster. This cluster represents the largest, most diverse, and most complex cluster within the new higher education landscape, involving 11 separate and autonomous entities including universities, institutes of technology, colleges of education and other specialist institutions, from the public and private sectors. The activities and

benefits of the regional cluster will, where appropriate, extend to three private providers: RCSI, the National College of Ireland (NCI), and St Patrick's College Maynooth (SPCM).

The regional cluster participants have agreed the following high priority objectives:

• to establish and support a sustainable, shared, academic planning process to ensure coherent, coordinated and rational educational provision across the region;

• to develop a regional approach to access, transfer and progression;

• to foster a regional approach to enterprise and community engagement and to support regional development through knowledge transfer, placements and student entrepreneurship.

The cluster will focus on the first two objectives for the purpose of this compact.

Cluster governance

The cluster objectives will be pursued by all of the partner institutions working collectively to implement the agreed objectives in a collaborative manner. The governance structure for the cluster will consist of a Regional Cluster Board to provide oversight of progress towards cluster objectives, and a high level steering group for each strategic partnership. The Regional Cluster Board will consist of the presidents of the two universities and the two institutes of technology. It will be subordinate to, and report to, the governing authorities of the four institutions. It will provide oversight of the performance of the cluster against its plan for shared academic programme provision and integrated approaches to transfer and progression as agreed by the governing authorities and presented to the HEA. The steering groups for the three constituent strategic partnerships will each include the presidents and at least one other senior officer from each of the relevant institutions. They will report to the relevant institutional executive/management groups and to the governing authorities, and share progress reports with each other. This governance statement is supported by comprehensive MOUs for the constituent components of the cluster. These address matters such as responsibilities and obligations – including management and accountability for finances, confidentiality, intellectual property ownership, and dispute resolution.

Assumptions, external factors, dependencies

The introduction of regional clusters as a new component of the higher education landscape is a very recent development that is challenging in its complexity for both the institutions and the HEA. The successful incorporation of this component into the landscape will require time, leadership, flexibility, and resources. It will also require careful planning in order to safeguard the quality of the student academic experience and institutional reputation.

Progress in the development of a regional cluster will be critically dependent on two factors that are outside the control of the institutions: resources and the responsiveness of students to new models of programme provision. We do not yet understand the student response to simplification and rationalisation of teaching provision or to split-site joint programme provision; the demand to date has been for institutional programmes, and, in the case of domestic students, for that provision to be close to home.

The experience to date is that building collaboration has required a substantial and sustained input of time by the presidents and at least two other senior officers from each institution along with considerable inputs by many others on specific projects.

In order to expedite cluster level projects and to ensure that the cluster can achieve more, AIT, along with NUIM, DCU, and DkIT, submitted to the HEA a proposal for funding under the Strategic Innovation Development Fund (SIDF). The submission was awarded €1 million towards the delivery of three objectives: coherence of provision, collaboration with further education and enhanced student learning supports.

Regional clusters:
Institution objectives and performance indicators

1.	Institution objective	Agree and implement processes to establish and support a sustainable and shared academic planning process to ensure coherent, coordinated and rational higher educational provision across the region. The shared academic planning process will involve: (a) preparation of projections of demand for higher education in the region and consideration of options for a strategic approach to provision by the cluster institutions. (b) preparation of a scoping study that will map existing course provision, student numbers, catchment areas, and arrangements for access, transfer and progression. It will seek to identify areas of demand, potential for collaboration, and potential for more coherent and rational provision. (c) a review of the student records and administrative systems and agreement of protocols for the development, approval, management and delivery of joint programmes, and also shared registration, alignment of marks and standards, and quality assurance procedures.
	Performance indicator	The cluster institutions will agree and implement a regional cluster enrolment plan for higher education provision. More specifically, we will monitor (a) the number of CAO entry routes by institution and (b) the number of, and enrolment on, joint academic programmes.
	Baseline	There is a complete absence of systematically compiled data and information at the regional cluster level.
	Interim target, end 2014	• Agree methodology for projections of regional demand. • Complete scoping study data collation and analysis. • Complete draft report on review of systems, protocols and procedures for joint academic programmes.

	Interim target, end 2015	• Outputs from scoping study and high level demand projections reviewed by Cluster Board, and management and governance structures in each institution. A draft plan for regional academic programme provision will be completed and agreed among participating institutions, and discussed with the HEA. The draft plan will include high level targets for undergraduate and postgraduate provision, and an agreed approach to CAO entry routes in line with the national process. • Develop and collectively approve proposals in relation to systems, protocols and procedures for shared and joint academic programmes, and also agree performance indicators for collaborative provision.
	Final target, end 2016	• Commence implementation of plan for regional academic programme provision and commence implementation of rationalised entry routes. • The number of, and enrolment on, joint academic programmes as agreed in shared academic programme finalised in 2015. • Complete review of pilot phase of delivery of shared and joint programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.
2.	Institution objective	Develop a regional approach to access, transfer and progression (ATP)
	Performance indicator	The cluster institutions will (a) develop an integrated regional approach to access, transfer and progression (ATP); and (b) prepare regional inventory of all options and mechanisms for ATP from FE to HE at programme and institutional level. The quantitative performance indicator will be the number of students transferring into or between institutions.
	Baseline	There is an absence of systematically compiled data and information at the regional cluster level.
	Interim target, end 2014	Complete inventory of current options and mechanisms for ATP into or between cluster institutions and from FE to HE at programme and institutional level.
	Interim target, end 2015	Identification of new progression routes and agreement on pathways to be enabled in 2016; performance indicators agreed for transfer and progression.
	Final target, end 2016	To have the full implementation of new transfer and progression pathways under way.

5.2 Participation, equal access and lifelong learning

Strategy summary

Please provide a brief summary of Athlone Institute of Technology's strategy and chosen objectives in relation to participation, equal access and lifelong learning.

This should reference the benchmarks by which the objectives have been set. Further supporting evidence, with regard to the means of verification, should be provided in the appendices as necessary.

Please note any external factors or assumptions that might affect institutional progress towards stated development objectives.

Participation, equal access and lifelong learning: strategy summary

AIT has remained solidly supportive of the ladder system and offers a suite of programmes at undergraduate level (levels 6–8), with every school offering options at Level 6. This approach echoes the Institute's continued commitment to widening participation at third level and to providing a supportive equal opportunity learning environment for all of our students. It is also consistent with key system Objective 6.1 which seeks to preserve a balance of provision across levels within any given regional cluster. In this respect, AIT sees itself contributing in a distinctive and consistent manner to the diversity of the cluster as a whole.

AIT is committed to providing opportunities for all, especially for students from groups that are under-represented in higher education. This approach is reflected in the Institute's access policy. In particular our plan focuses on those within our society who are under-represented in the third-level educational environment, namely, mature students, those with disabilities, migrants, travellers, and socio-economically disadvantaged learners (*The National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education*, 2008).

The current access plan set outs six overriding objectives:

• **Objective 1:** To raise awareness of access within the Midland Region and within the Institute.

• **Objective 2:** To increase participation of under-represented groups.

• **Objective 3:** To continue to promote the access agenda within the Institute by supporting and advancing learning and teaching.

• **Objective 4:** To deliver relevant and effective student supports.

• **Objective 5:** To make lifelong learning and educational mobility in the Midlands a reality; improving the quality and efficiency of adult learning in the Institute and in the wider region; promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship through relevant programmes and activities; enhance creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of lifelong learning.

• **Objective 6:** To develop structures, processes, and procedures to support the implementation of all of these access objectives.
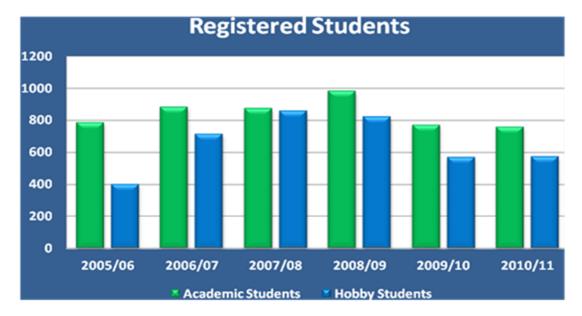
These objectives are currently under review as part of the preparation for the new strategic plan. They are being reviewed in the light of the particular objectives set out in the Minister for Education and Skills' suite of system-level key performance indicators set out in spring 2013.

Lifelong Learning

The Institute retains a distinct department devoted to lifelong learning. This provides academic programmes within different structures different delivery mechanisms to accommodate the mature learner. The department also delivers programmes in the wider region. Funding has become a significant factor and a challenge for prospective students who wish to engage with Lifelong Learning. The mission of the department is stated as:

In partnership with the Institute community, the department will promote the development of the Institute as an outstanding learning organization through leadership, innovation, and service in making information accessible and facilitating learning in all its forms to the adult learner.

The funding challenge has led to a decline in student numbers in recent years, and the trend apparent in the chart below (which refers to Lifelong Learning only) has continued into the current year. There has been a shift in recent years away from some provision for hobby courses towards a concentration on academic programmes.

The challenge of embedding concepts of widening access and lifelong learning in institutional strategies is scheduled to be included in the current strategic review. Toward this end, AIT is currently committed to review and further develop our policies and systems to ensure that all participating students have equal access to the highest quality of teaching and learning, services, and pastoral supports.[2]

Caring for individual students

AIT has a strong reputation for caring for the individual student and places considerable emphasis on continued efforts to enhance the student experience. This includes:

- supporting the pastoral care needs of students
- offering further study and careers advice and support
- providing medical and counselling care (through the Student Health Centre)
- supporting students accessing education from across a diverse spectrum
- providing a range of learning resources for AIT registered students (through the Student Resource Centre).

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[2] An ambition within the coming strategic plan will be better to exploit blended learning and digital platforms in support of Lifelong Learning. The initiative in respect of this is covered below in Section 5.7

Incoming first years are welcomed and led through a two-day New Student Induction programme which provides key information on supports and services available to students, opportunities to meet other students, information on Clubs and Societies, and important briefing sessions from their school of study. A registration pack with a personalised Induction Guide is mailed to them upon acceptance of a place at AIT. Our website and social media platforms provide information on what to expect from Induction. Current AIT students have developed digital media tools to help welcome new students and get their student experience off to a good start.

Activities such as Clubs and Societies day and the newly developed AIT ENGAGE programme provide students with a platform for making friends and developing interests outside their studies. Student engagement is a key factor of the student experience at AIT and contributes greatly to student retention.

AIT ENGAGE was developed in conjunction with the AIT Student Resource Centre and the AIT Students' Union; it is geared towards helping students develop their skills and at promoting student engagement throughout the Institute. The programme places heavy emphasis on volunteering and civic engagement in the wider community through links with organisations such as Volunteer Westmeath.

Among the range of supports provided is the Peer Assisted Study Support (PASS) programme, which is a series of peer led study support sessions for first year students, led by trained student PASS leaders.

Tutor support

AIT continually invests in the student experience and in particular the academic success, progression and retention of our students. It does this by employing highly qualified tutors to coach and support students through their studies on a no cost basis for the student. Support is provided to all undergraduate students in maths, programming, software engineering, accounting, finance, marketing, management, and economics, chemistry, physics, microbiology, biochemistry, ecotoxicology, analytical toxicology, quality control & experimental design, and writing skills. In addition to tutor support, the Disability and Learning Support Service provides one to one support and tuition tailored to the particular needs of students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties.

Technology

AIT takes great pride in leading the way in the sector with our Assistive Technology Centre for students with disabilities. The Student Resource Centre has also sponsored the development of an On-line Writing Skills Resource which supplements the work of our writing skills tutor. Additionally, AIT has invested in an interactive e-learning study skills tool, Skills 4 Study Campus. This focuses on the core study skills through a stimulating mix of activities, practice and reflection opportunities and aims to help students learn, develop and accelerate their study skills as well as contributing to their overall student experience.

Participation, equal access and lifelong learning:
Institution objectives and performance indicators

1.		
	Institution objective	To increase the number of non-standard learners engaging through lifelong learning
	Performance indicator	To realise an increase in student enrolments from the current annual population of some 800 learners. The funding challenge is currently perceived to be an obstacle to growth.
	Baseline	827 students registered in September 2012
	Interim target, end 2014	880 students
	Interim target, end 2015	900 students
	Final target, end 2016	To continue growing the number of non-standard learners engaging through lifelong learning; this growth is contingent on the outcome of the current strategic planning process

2.		
	Institution objective	Participation in new AIT ENGAGE programme
	Performance indicator	Student membership of clubs and societies, in particular those societies involving civic engagement and volunteering
	Baseline	This is a novel departure and thus has a zero baseline engagement currently. There are, however, various examples of local engagement and volunteering to be found currently within the faculties.
	Interim target, end 2014	100 active members; 10 students to complete student leadership training
	Interim target, end 2015	200 active members; 20 students to complete student leadership training
	Final target, end 2016	300 active members; 30 students to complete student leadership training

3.		
	Institution objective	Further develop and embed Peer Assisted Student Support Programme (PASS)
	Performance indicator	Increase in number of 1st year courses offering PASS
	Baseline	8 courses in 2012/13
	Interim target, end 2014	17 courses
	Interim target, end 2015	20 courses
	Final target, end 2016	23 courses

To add more institution objectives, copy and paste one of the tables above **HERE** *and edit as required*

5.3 Excellent teaching and learning and quality of the student experience

Strategy summary

Please provide a brief summary of Athlone Institute of Technology's strategy and chosen objectives in relation to excellent teaching and learning and quality of the student experience.

This should set out:

1   Vision underpinning the portfolio of undergraduate programmes

2   Approaches being taken to improve overall performance

3   How planned provision is aligned to institutional mission

Further supporting evidence, with regard to the means of verification, should be provided in appendices as necessary.

Please note any external factors or assumptions that might affect progress towards stated objectives.

Excellent teaching and learning and quality of the student experience: strategy summary

Athlone Institute of Technology describes itself primarily as a teaching and learning organisation. We consciously offer an integrated suite of programmes across the relevant levels of the NFQ to afford a diverse variety of learners access to the framework.

Approaches being taken to improve overall performance:

AIT espouses a commitment to excellence in learning and teaching in its current and preceding strategic plans. Consistent with the key system objective for the period 2014–16, the Institute has for some years been striving to promote excellence in teaching and learning to underpin a high-quality student experience, and has devoted dedicated resources to the building of capacity in this area. In order to ensure that AIT students at undergraduate and postgraduate level develop the requisite knowledge, skills and competences for their discipline and that programmes of study are underpinned appropriate learning and teaching strategies, AIT will continue to focus on excellence in the choice and design of assessments (formative and summative) linked to programme and module learning outcomes.

Under system Objective 3, AIT is conscious of the indicator (3.5) concerning the percentage of staff with a pedagogical qualification. The professional development of staff in learning, teaching, and assessment as indicated in the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* will be supported and while significant progress has been made in this area, the Institute will commit to achieving key recommendations of the Report of the High Level Group to the European Commission on the Modernisation of Higher Education specifically in relation to certified pedagogical training and involving students as partners in teaching and learning, in particular in relation to curriculum design. The Institute will continue to provide opportunities to engage in formal education in learning, teaching and assessment at postgraduate level in order to allow teaching staff develop conceptual frameworks underpinning their practice with appropriate learning theories and engaging with current strategies in learning, teaching, and assessment. In addition, the Institute will continue to offer opportunities in formal professional development to staff from other HE institutes and continue to support institutes using a train the trainer approach in the implementation of specific modules linked to the Postgraduate Diploma in Learning, Teaching, and Assessment.

In addition the Institute commits to engage with National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. Appendix 8 shows the projections of participants on postgraduate L&T modules in AIT for the coming period.

In keeping with the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* and its current strategic plan, AIT is committed to the use of technology to enhance the learning experience of students. The Institute is committed to preparing students to engage as future lifelong learners and in assisting them to develop the digital literacies required to engage successfully as learners in a digital age. In particular, the use of Web 2.0 technologies will be developed including the recently updated virtual learning environment which offers opportunities for eLearning and eAssessment. The use of analytics from the virtual learning environment to assist in in the identification of 'at risk students' will be developed further. In conjunction with partners in the cluster, AIT supported a strand within the recent HEA SIDF bid to build upon existing expertise to deliver a collaborative platform for digital learning, which would enhance access for a more diverse cohort of learners. SIDF proposals in relation to the development of digital capacity will be managed through the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning.

The use of innovative technologies to enhance and monitor the student learning experience while on placement will be further developed, including attainment of competencies required by professional bodies while on placement and facilitating timely online engagement and intervention by placement coordinators and assessors.

Assisting the student: transition in a variety of contexts, (retention, progression and completion) remains a key priority. This is consistent with the theme adopted by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and includes engaging and exciting students in the use of enquiry-based and problem-solving approaches from the commencement of their programme in order to develop skills for employment and for active citizenship, in addition to providing opportunities to link theory with practice.

Continuing to address the challenge of engaging students in socially and linguistically diverse classrooms will be a priority with the further development of supports in language and core academic skills required to develop within higher education. The Institute is committed to providing an inclusive learning and teaching environment that is informed by the principles of universal design and in which all students are provided with the opportunity to reach their full potential as learners and as members of the wider society.

AIT is represented on the oversight committee for the first Irish National Student Survey. Under system Objective 3, there is considerable promise emerging from the initial pilot and AIT has commissioned a further piece of work in order to benchmark its particular findings against the outcomes nationally. These will be discussed with the leaders of the students' union and student representatives in AIT with a view to increased participation and ownership for future years.

Collaboration with providers from further education and secondary schools will be developed further to include the sharing of expertise in relation to technologies to enhance learning. The potential and benefit of preparing second-level students for third level and introducing them to the virtual learning environment and to the use of digital resources for the teaching of threshold concepts in subjects such as maths, sciences and languages will be explored in partnership with institutes in the cluster.

Finally, AIT is committed to recognising the value of educational research – to inform practice and contribute to the teaching of specific disciplines and the advancement of the scholarship of teaching in the broadest sense.

Excellent teaching and learning and quality of the student experience: Institution objectives and performance indicators

1.		
	Institution objective	Increase participation and attendance at new student induction
	Performance indicator	Increased metrics around attendance at sessions, library facilitation visits, and engagement with HEA Equal Access Survey completion during induction
	Baseline	As example, 44% completed the HEA Equal Access Survey in 2012/13 based on first year intake
	Interim target, end 2014	70% of total first year cohort
	Interim target, end 2015	75% completion
	Final target, end 2016	85% completion

2.		
	Institution objective	To promote excellence in learning, teaching and assessment thereby enhancing learning experience of all students.
	Performance indicator	65 members of AIT staff and 72 external participants have commenced on the flexible pathway to the Learning Innovation Network (LIN)/AIT Postgraduate Diploma in Learning, Teaching and Assessment since 2009. Prior to this, between 2007 and 2010, 18 members of staff completed the off campus DIT Postgraduate Certificate under SIF 1 funding.[3]
	Baseline	L&T Unit commenced offering accredited programmes in 2008.
		L&T Unit commenced targeted training in the use of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) in 2008. Prior to this such training was provided on an ad hoc basis. The figures above provide the current baseline.
		AIT is working with cluster partners to consider a mechanism for best sharing of expertise in this area.
	Interim target, end 2014	5 members of AIT staff and one external participant to graduate with the LIN/AIT Postgraduate Diploma in Learning, Teaching and Assessment in 2013 with potentially a further 8 members of AIT staff to graduate in 2014.
		Continued support for staff in the use of the VLE on all programmes of study.
		Continued support for staff in the use of Student Diary Pro for placement. Currently being rolled out in four academic departments.

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[3] See also Appendix 8 for projected numbers.

Interim target, end 2015	A further 10 members of AIT staff to graduate in 2015.
	Continued support for staff in the use of the VLE on all programmes of study.
	Continued support for staff in the use of Student Diary Pro for placement. Increase usage across all academic departments with placement incorporated in programme design.
Final target, end 2016	In proportion to above subject to resourcing.

5.4 High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation

Strategy summary

Please provide a brief summary of Athlone Institute of Technology's strategy and chosen objectives in relation to high quality, internationally competitive research and innovation.

This should reference the benchmarks against which the objectives have been set. Further supporting evidence, with regard to the means of verification, should be provided in an appendix as necessary.

Please note any external factors or assumptions that might affect progress towards the stated objectives.

High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation: strategy summary

In the context of the national financial crisis and economic downturn, bridging the gap between research in HEIs and industrial application has never been more important in order for the national research and innovation system to deliver economic and social returns, in the form of competitive exports and sustainable jobs, on the significant state investment in research over the past decade. AIT, with its close connections to regional and national industry, is well positioned to help bridge this translational research gap. For example, our research and innovation centres have completed over 1,000 industry projects with more than 230 companies over the past seven years.

In this context, AIT's strategy is to be a partner of choice for enterprise: focusing our research, innovation and enterprise support activities on addressing the needs of regional and national industry by proactively collaborating with start-ups and established companies via market-informed research across our areas of core research expertise, and by providing a comprehensive range of knowledge intensive support services, with a focus on SMEs.

Focused Research Strategy

The Institute's research strategy is to focus our efforts in a small number of strategic areas based on core research competencies built up over the years, and aligned with regional needs and national research priority areas – namely: materials, biosciences, and software. This is in the context of limited resources, a commitment to providing top international quality postgraduate research education, and a realisation that no single organisation can address the many and varied challenges and opportunities facing industry and society in a global knowledge economy. AIT's three research institutes (please refer to Appendix 7) are anchored in these areas of core competence and are strategically aligned with the areas in which AIT has targeted and achieved delegation of authority to award at PhD and masters levels in research.

Our plan is to continue to build critical mass in our targeted thematic research areas over the coming years, and to ensure that our aligned undergraduate programmes deliver a sustainable pipeline of postgraduate research students, in combination with national and international postgraduate students, to underpin the long term sustainability of our research centres. With this in mind, all postgraduate research candidates are located in our graduate research school, co-located with our research institutes in our east campus 'research hub' facility, thereby promoting and enabling opportunities for interdisciplinary research. AIT's Director of Graduate Research Studies is also located in the hub, close to the research students, all of whom have access to structured professional development training plans and

to generic and transferrable skills training modules developed in collaboration with national and international HEI partners. Our strategic objectives include the continued development of our focused postgraduate research offerings – working in collaboration with our regional HEI cluster partners, continued use of industry and scientific advisory boards for our research institutes, and the diversification of our research funding base, including higher levels of EU and other non-Exchequer sources.

Our objective is also to develop, attract and retain leading postdoctoral researchers as key resources for our research institutes. For example, AIT is one of ten higher education institutes in Ireland currently working to implement the 'Charter and Code' for researchers and to achieve the 'HR Excellence in Research' logo awarded by the European Commission, thereby promoting AIT as a stimulating and favourable work place for top national and international researcher students and postdocs. Indeed, one of AIT's leading postdoctoral researchers, and a former AIT undergraduate and postgraduate research student, has recently taken up a position at Harvard University funded by the Marie Curie International Outgoing Fellowship – a prestigious European research funding scheme for high potential young researchers.

Based on the solid and growing strategic foundations outlined above, AIT has recently secured funding to lead two new national 'Technology Gateway Centres' funded by Enterprise Ireland (EI), focused on collaborative research with indigenous SMEs. AIT is a core academic partner in the new national cloud computing technology centre funded by EI and IDA, and AIT is also a partner in a large new SFI centre, SSPC.

Our future research activity will continue to be characterised by 'smart specialisation' – building on existing and growing institutional strengths in addressing regional and national needs.

Innovation

As part of the national 'technology transfer strengthening initiative' (TTSI), AIT is committed to the commercialisation of its research activities in the form of licensing of technology arising from collaborative research projects with established companies, and the creation of knowledge intensive 'spin-out' companies based on AIT developed technologies.

In order to bolster our internal capacity, we have formed a strategic partnership with NUIM in the context of the TTSI programme, whereby their larger and more experienced tech transfer office will provide support to AIT under the terms of a contractual 'service level agreement', with the strategic aim of driving increased levels of licensing and spin-out company creation over the coming years.

Our strategy of focusing on market-informed research, versus an exclusively technology-push type model, will also deliver increased levels of commercially valuable outcomes in the form of technology licences to our collaborating industry partners, as well as commercially viable and sustainable spin-outs.

Our Centre for Industrial Services & Design (CISD) centre delivers a broad range of knowledge-intensive innovation services for regional and national industrial clients, including SMEs; delivering results in a time frame that matches industry needs. Services include product design, rapid prototyping and analytical testing. Refer to section 5.5 for more details and strategic plans in relation to CISD.

External Factors – Risks / Assumptions

Please refer to Appendix 4 (research institutes/centres) and Appendix 5 (technology transfer) for a summary of key external factors and assumptions that might affect progress towards the stated objectives outlined in the following objective tables.

High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation:
Institution objectives and performance indicators

1.	Institution objective	Build critical mass around focused areas of core research capability aligned with regional needs and national research priorities, and leverage to drive market-informed research in collaboration with industry partners
	Performance indicator	* Number of industry projects * Number of companies engaged * Total € value of projects * Value of industry contribution to projects
	Baseline	Refer to Appendix 4
	Interim target, end 2014	Refer to Appendix 4
	Interim target, end 2015	Refer to Appendix 4
	Final target, end 2016	Refer to Appendix 4

2.	Institution objective	Deliver top quality postgraduate research programmes at Levels 9 and 10, aligned with our focused research areas and undergraduate programmes, in order to provide a sustainable pipeline of researchers to drive our impact-focused applied research mission. The SIDF-supported industry-focused postgraduate research scheme operated through IoTI will undoubtedly act as a catalyst in this regard.
	Performance indicator	• Delegated Authority to award at Level 9 and Level 10 by research • Director of postgraduate research studies - position in place and operational • Provision of structured generic and transferrable skills modules; professional development plans; and progression review processes for all research candidates • Support infrastructure in place

	Baseline	• Delegated Authority currently in place to award at L9 and L10 by research in our focused research areas; polymer, biosciences (toxicology, microbiology) and software (currently level 9 only). • Director of Postgraduate Research Studies in place since 2010 • Structured postgraduate research training modules developed via 'Graduate Research Alliance' in place and operational for L9 / L10 candidates and for research supervisors. • Structured professional development training plans and progression review process in place and operational for all postgraduate research students • Research hub facility in place providing the critical physical and management support infrastructure to meet the needs of top quality postgraduate research candidates
	Interim target, end 2014	• Plan developed and submitted to QQI in relation to delegated authority for Level 10 in software/networking • The proposal is to have a plan developed in collaboration with NUIM[4] and, potentially, other cluster partners in relation to the development and provision of shared structured postgraduate research modules (generic and transferable skills modules) in the context of our regional cluster. Such wider developments are contingent on the agreement of partners.
	Interim target, end 2015	• Delegated authority for Level 10 in software/networking, achieved successfully • To have 50% of agreed shared postgraduate research modules in place and operational with NUIM and cluster partners. Again and as above, this is contingent on the agreement of those partners.
	Final target, end 2016	• 100% of agreed shared postgraduate research modules in place and operational with NUIM and cluster partners. With the same proviso as already stated.
3.	Institution objective	Improved knowledge/technology transfer to enterprise via the commercialisation of AITs research activities, in the form of technology licensing to Irish-based companies, and the creation of knowledge intensive 'spin-out' companies.

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[4] The cluster is developing in an incremental manner. The initial phase involves a strong paring of partners within the cluster framework and the NUIM/AIT axis has the promise of sustainable academic and economic benefits.

Performance indicator	• Licences/options/assignments • Spin-outs • Invention disclosures • Priority patent applications
Baseline	AIT IP Policy currently in place and operational
Interim target, end 2014	Refer to Appendix 5
Interim target, end 2015	Refer to Appendix 5
Final target, end 2016	Refer to Appendix 5

To add more institution objectives, copy and paste one of the tables above **HERE** *and edit as required.*

5.5 Enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge exchange

Strategy summary

Please provide a brief summary of Athlone Institute of Technology's strategy and chosen objectives in relation to enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge exchange.

This should reference the benchmarks against which the objectives have been set. Further supporting evidence, with regard to the means of verification, should be provided in the appendices as necessary.

Please note any external factors or assumptions that might affect progress towards the stated objectives.

Enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge exchange: strategy summary

AIT's strategy is to be a partner of choice for enterprise – focusing our research, innovation and enterprise support activities on addressing the needs of regional and national industry by proactively collaborating with start-ups and established companies via market-informed research across our areas of core research expertise, and by providing a comprehensive range of knowledge-intensive support services, with a focus on SMEs. Our research and innovation centres have completed over 1,000 industry projects with more than 230 companies over the past seven years, including over 200 innovation vouchers.

Knowledge Intensive Services

A key driver of the above statistic is AIT's Centre for Industrial Services & Design (CISD) centre. CISD delivers a broad range of knowledge-intensive services for regional and national industrial clients; delivery results in a time frame that matches industry needs. CISD staff actively engage with clients to provide services including product design, rapid prototyping and extensive analytical testing via state-of-the-art equipment. Client satisfaction surveys have been conducted, with 92% of industrial clients stating their expectations were met or exceeded through their engagement, and 78% have returned with repeat business more than twice in a given year. AIT also generates a significant number of links with a broad range of companies across the pharma, medical device, electronics, chemical, green-tech and engineering sectors through the CISD centre. These engagements can and do lead to larger and more strategic long term collaborative research projects for our research institutes, some of which are 100% funded by industry – a strong reflection of the value placed by our industry partners on the knowledge services provided.

Our strategy is to continue to support and develop CISD in order to deliver key knowledge intensive services to an increasing number of industry partners, with a particular focus on supporting regional SMEs and start-ups in driving increased levels of regional innovation, competitiveness and growth. We also plan to expand the range of services offered by the centre to include more analytical testing services for the regional life science and indigenous food sectors, by leveraging our internal bioscience capabilities to support regional SMEs.

Entrepreneurship and Start-ups

As a regional economy, the Midlands has traditionally underperformed in generating new high growth knowledge-based export businesses ('High Potential Start-ups', HPSUs) – underperforming the rest of the State by 39% on a per capita basis since 2005. Hence, AIT has made support of entrepreneurship in the region, and creating an entrepreneurial culture

on campus, part of its core mission in tandem with its traditional educational and applied research roles. In order to help deliver on this strategic mission, the Midlands Innovation and Research Centre (MIRC) is a key enabling resource. The MIRC provides incubation facilities for innovative knowledge-based start-ups; hosts the New Frontiers start-up accelerator programme for regional entrepreneurs in collaboration with Enterprise Ireland; and provides all our start-up clients with direct and easy access to the research, innovation and enterprise development resources and expertise of AIT and our network of national and international partners. Working in partnership with Enterprise Ireland, the MIRC has incubated and supported 90 start-ups to date, including 13 HPSUs that have gone on to attract significant levels of risk capital investment from the private sector. MIRC start-up clients have also undertaken over €2m in collaborative research and innovation projects with AIT researchers and the CISD centre to successfully develop their technologies.

In order to further our vision of delivering higher HPSU rates for the region, AIT entered into a strategic collaboration with NUIM in relation to the New Frontiers programme in 2012. This new joint programme is led by AIT in close collaboration with NUIM, and serves the broader Midlands-Mid-East region – representing up to 14 per cent of the population of the State. The programme also brings together regional entrepreneurs (typically more market-driven) with academic entrepreneurs from both NUIM and AIT (typically more technology-driven) on the same programme, with resultant benefits and mutual learnings for both cohorts – with the strategic aim of ultimately delivering higher levels of sustainable start-up companies across the region. Given the significant under provision of top-class incubation facilities and services for start-ups in the Midlands relative to other regions nationally on a per capita basis, AIT also has a strategic objective to expand the current MIRC facility in order to accommodate more regional entrepreneurs, and has submitted a proposal to EI in this regard.

An external advisory board has been established to provide strategic advice and support in relation to the continued development of the MIRC and its services. This strategic board includes leading regional and international business angel and venture capital investors, leading entrepreneurs across various sectors relevant to the Midlands, the CEO of DCU Invent, and the EI regional director for the Midlands.

Finally, AIT launched a new Entrepreneurship Academy, InnovAIT, for student and graduate entrepreneurs in September 2013. This initiative is being led by the AIT Business School in collaboration with the MIRC and regional partners, and is based on learnings from leading international programmes in Finland, the USA, and elsewhere. This exciting new programme will develop a cohort of entrepreneurial graduates from AIT, willing and able to inject entrepreneurial initiative and drive as employees within established companies, as well as graduate entrepreneurs launching their own knowledge-based start-ups in the Midlands Region and beyond.

AIT believes that the above strategic plans and initiatives will significantly enhance the performance of AIT's enterprise programmes, drive increased value for money and deliver increased outputs for the Midlands region; with the strategic vision of transforming the rate of HPSU generation in the region from a position of significant under-performance to above the national average over the coming years, by working in collaboration and our regional partners and national agencies.

Please refer to Appendix 6 (knowledge intensive services) for a summary of key external factors and assumptions that might affect progress towards the stated objectives outlined in the following objective tables.

Community Engagement within the Region

Since its foundation, AIT has prioritised active engagement with the Midlands community, making resources and infrastructure available, as well as leveraging staff and student expertise for community and societal benefit. This philosophy is embedded in the current strategic plan, where the objective to play a catalytic role in the economic, social, cultural, and environmental development of the region is one of the key strategic pillars.

Deep level cooperation exists with State and public sector agencies, and with economic development bodies in the region, such that the Institute's academic and research activity, as well as infrastructural development, are in concert with broader plans for the region. In particular, AIT plays a key role as business and technical catalyst, evidenced by the Institute's ongoing collaborative links with industry. Similarly, the Institute's participation in various labour activation programmes such as Springboard and ICT Skillsnet, and its offerings geared towards upskilling and offering lifelong learning opportunities are vital elements of the region's knowledge ecosystem.

AIT's multi-million euro investment in its campus infrastructure is also leveraged for regional benefit. One potent example of how institute facilities serve the wider community is provided by AIT's sporting infrastructure, which increasingly supports Athlone town's ambition to become known as a sporting hub. Indeed, AIT played a major role in Athlone being recognised as a European Town of Sport for 2013. The Institute's new International Arena is a resource of world-class calibre for the region, and is generating a considerable economic impact with an estimated 4,500 bed nights by 2016. Similarly, its hosting of athletics, football, rugby and other sporting competitions and training sessions all contribute to economic activity in the town. This focus on sport allied to tourism and recreation on the one side and science on the other, is example of one area of specialisation which has developed in communion with the broader community and which will have wider benefits within the region. It also exemplifies a distinct contribution that AIT can make within a diversified system of higher education while following the key system Objective 7.4 concerning the utilisation of the facility.

Plans for the development of a Midlands Technology Campus also have a regional engagement dimension at their core. A new Centre for SME Competitiveness and Growth will be an integral part of the new campus, which will focus on the specific needs of the 9,000 SMEs in the Midlands, equipping them with the ability to compete more effectively and efficiently. These businesses operate in a wide variety of industries and sectors, but they are characterised by a shared need for enhanced skills in management development for growth, strategic thinking, innovation management, competitor analysis, market research and best practices in business processes such as HR and operations. The centre will provide an access point for these SMEs to the expertise of AIT's Business School, as well as the support of mentors and business angels from industry.

The new technology campus will also feature an auditorium, which will expand the conference and performance infrastructure of the Midlands region. This will play a major role in terms of being a conference resource for visiting industry, research and educational partners. Furthermore, it will also be available to the local community for a variety of uses, ranging from public lectures to cultural performances.

It is recognised that the Midlands historically has a relatively low record of engagement with knowledge careers. The Institute plays an important role in attempting to reverse this trend through encouraging young people in the region to actively engage in STEM activities. Workshops and classes in Coderdojo, programming language Scratch, as well as a Saturday Maths initiative and events such as SciFest, support broader national ambitions towards the realisation of knowledge economy status, while ensuring particularly that the Midlands addresses long term deficits in terms of higher education attainment.

Enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge exchange:
Institution objectives and performance indicators

1.	Institution objective	Working with Enterprise Ireland, support the development of knowledge-based start-ups in the Midlands region via MIRC campus business incubator, including the New Frontiers entrepreneur development programme delivered in partnership with NUIM.
	Performance indicator	• Number of New Frontiers Phase 2 participants/year. • Number of other entrepreneurs/projects supported per year (including incubation clients and New Frontiers clients not progressing to Phase 2).
	Baseline	• 13 New Frontiers Phase 2 participants in 2013. • 35 other entrepreneurs/projects supported in 2013.
	Interim target, end 2014	• 13 New Frontiers Phase 2 participants. • 37 other entrepreneurs/projects supported.
	Interim target, end 2015	• 13 New Frontiers Phase 2 participants. • 39 other entrepreneurs/projects supported.
	Final target, end 2016	• 15 New Frontiers Phase 2 participants. • 44 other entrepreneurs/projects supported.

2.	Institution objective	Provide a broad range of knowledge intensive innovation services to regional and national industrial clients, delivering results in a time frame that matches industry needs, and with a focus on start-ups and SMEs.
	Performance indicator	• # Industry projects • # Companies supported • # Innovation vouchers
	Baseline	Refer to Appendix 6
	Interim target, end 2014	Refer to Appendix 6
	Interim target, end 2015	Refer to Appendix 6
	Final target, end 2016	Refer to Appendix 6

External Factors – Risks / Assumptions:

AIT has funding approval from Enterprise Ireland for our New Frontiers programme until 2015, with 12 participant places contracted per annum. 13 places were approved

by Enterprise Ireland for 2013. The 2016 programme will be subject to funding approval from Enterprise Ireland.

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5.6 Enhanced internationalisation

Strategy summary

Please provide a brief summary of Athlone Institute of Technology's strategy and chosen objectives in relation to enhanced internationalisation.

This should reference the benchmarks against which the objectives have been set. Further supporting evidence, with regard to the means of verification, should be provided in the appendices as necessary.

Please note any external factors or assumptions that might affect progress towards the stated objectives.

Enhanced internationalisation: strategy summary

Internationalisation at AIT

Athlone Institute of Technology is deeply committed to the principle of mobility of students and staff between partner institutions in Europe and indeed on an international level. It has over the past decade developed a strong and consistent record in building international relationships and in supporting a throughput of international students. Through participation in trans-community consortia, the Institute aims to give direct and meaningful international experiences to all students and staff involved in exchange programmes. The Institute is also active in receiving and facilitating students outside the EU from countries such as China, India, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, North America, and Zambia. Undoubtedly, the cultural and intellectual enrichment derivable from a genuinely articulated European or international experience will contribute to the holistic formation of graduates and to their employability.

AIT has been successful in attracting international students since the launch of the Asia Strategy in 2000 and has agreements with more than 180 higher education institutions around the globe. The majority of international students choose AIT as a result of partnership agreements in place between their home institute and AIT. The current strategic plan identified internationalisation as a key element and this is expected to continue into the succeeding plan. The plans for the coming three-year period involve an increase in international activity in conjunction with partners within the cluster.

Under system Objective 5.1, AIT notes the target to ensure that at least 20% of all graduates will have had a study or training period abroad by 2020. This is an ambitious goal based on the evidence to date. AIT will be considering this target in the shaping of the coming strategic plan.

Priority Markets

AIT is committed to maintaining and strengthening links with European Higher Education Institutes under the Erasmus programme. From the launch of the Asia Strategy in 2000, AIT has participated in Enterprise Ireland Trade Missions to Asia. AIT opened an office at the Enterprise Ireland Incubator Unit in Shanghai in 2004. The main non-EU markets are:

- China

- Middle East with particular reference to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

- Malaysia

- Brazil

- India

Enterprise Ireland and the branding strategy of Education in Ireland are promoting the Government of Ireland Scholarship Scheme to attract high calibre students to Ireland. Brazil and China were selected as two markets where AIT is interested in offering an international scholarship for postgraduate study. A Chinese postgraduate student from AIT's Business School was offered a scholarship under the new Government of Ireland Scholarship scheme during 2012-13 to study on the one-year Master of Accounting. These incentives will help create greater awareness of Ireland as a destination to study Accounting and highlight links to professional accountancy bodies.

AIT is participating in the Science Without Borders programme funded by the Brazilian government whereby Brazilian students can spend the academic year studying Science and Engineering programmes abroad. The first group of 14 undergraduate students will commence their undergraduate studies for academic year 2013-14 and 80 students are undertaking English language programmes at AIT for academic year 2013-14.

Many Brazilian students choose to study abroad for postgraduate opportunities and to participate in research projects with international partners. AIT is committed to attracting high-level international researchers. The Software Research Institute at AIT currently hosts two lead investigators from the Institute of Software Chinese Academy of Science, Beijing. The Materials Research Institute at AIT has attracted researchers from Malaysia and discussions have commenced to promote postgraduate research opportunities to students from Brazil during the new academic year. An expansion of 4th level programmes at the Institute will support the development of research activities at AIT and attract high-quality international researchers.

Enhanced internationalisation:
Institution objectives and performance indicators

1.	Institution objective	Extend the internationalisation of the campus,
	Performance indicator	The ambition is that international students should comprise 15% of full-time learners by the academic year commencing 2020.
	Baseline	Currently international students represent some 11% of the student cohort
	Interim target, end 2014	To increase over the period of the compact to 12%. This to achieved incrementally and is in line with system Objective 5.3 as contained in the HEA's Higher Education System performance Framework. No precise target has been finalised in respect of each year as yet but an interim figure of 12% would not be unrealistic.
	Interim target, end 2015	While figures for succeeding years are subject to the outcome from the current strategic review, it is anticipated that this proportion will increase incrementally. A target of 12.5% for 2015.
	Final target, end 2016	As above and awaiting finalisation of the new strategic plan. A target of 13% for 2015.

2.	Institution objective	Further internationalise the curriculum of AIT programmes, particularly in the Business School
	Performance indicator	This has to be determined in the context of the current strategic review.
	Baseline	Currently there is one full time dedicated international programme.
	Interim target, end 2014	TBD and contingent on the current strategic planning process.
	Interim target, end 2015	TBD
	Final target, end 2016	TBD

3.	Institution objective	Develop mobile technologies to communicate with international students.
	Performance indicator	Greater ease of access and through a variety of media for international students. This is actively under consideration currently.
	Baseline	There is currently a usage of social media tools, the intention is to develop this further with the use of a more flexible mobile platform.
	Interim target, end 2014	Have in place the facility mentioned above with increasing usage. The targets for this and subsequent years have yet to be determined.

Interim target, end 2015	TBD
Final target, end 2016	TBD

5.7 Institutional consolidation

Strategy summary

Please provide a brief summary of Athlone Institute of Technology's strategy and chosen objectives in relation to institutional consolidation.

This should reference the benchmarks against which the objectives have been set. Further supporting evidence, with regard to the means of verification, should be provided in the appendices as necessary.

Please note any external factors or assumptions that might affect progress towards the stated objectives.

Institutional consolidation: strategy summary

Athlone Institute of Technology has engaged in the recent landscape discussions arising from the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* and subsequent papers. AIT is successfully embedded within a cluster and has declared its ambition to achieve technological university status. In respect of the criteria set for such an ambition, AIT is working to meet these and will keep the Authority informed of developments. Within the broader system of higher education, AIT remains primarily a teaching organisation serving a distinctive region with a focus on applied learning and research in a defined number of domains. This approach will remain in the coming three-year period as it complements the work of partners within the cluster.

Athlone Institute of Technology has proactively engaged with those partners in the Midlands, East, and North Dublin cluster (MEND) and this grouping has already made progress in a number of initiatives and not least in the coordination of a successful bid under the HEA's Strategic innovation and Development Fund 2013. A central driver underlying that bid was the shared desire to broaden access, to create enhanced pathways for learners, and to build the infrastructure and capacity to serve a more diverse range of learners.

While the next strategic plan is still in development, it is anticipated that inter-institutional collaboration will be an additional pillar within that plan. This will involve shared governance structures and reporting arrangements for the cluster and greater coordination of programme provision with a view to the optimum value for public monies.

Key system Objective 6.2 concerns the number of collaborative programmes and elements that are shared within the cluster. AIT and partners have secured funding under SIDF 2013 to effect further progress in this.

As given previously, it is not possible to benchmark the objectives at this stage partly because there is no national precedence and partly because the objectives themselves are currently still in development stage and are contingent on resourcing.

Sequence is an element here and relates to the external factors and assumptions mentioned above. AIT is currently engaged in its strategic planning process and is accordingly somewhat disadvantaged in this regard. Coordination of planning cycles in future years will assist in this regard, and it is appreciated that a process such as strategic dialogue must commence somewhere and will inevitably fall better for some rather than others in terms of the planning cycle. Similarly, the cluster prioritised a number of strands in its successful SIDF bid that are consistent with the national strategy, and which will serve better to knit the cluster and to facilitate a number of prioritised components. These components inform the initial objectives under the heading, institutional consolidation. Three are provided here as the remaining two are referenced within other sections of this return.

Institutional consolidation:
Institution objectives and performance indicators

1.	Institution objective	To put in place the foundations for enhanced collaboration with partners within the MEND cluster.
	Performance indicator	1. A scoping study that will map existing course provision, student numbers, catchment areas, and arrangements for access, transfer, and progression. This study will seek to identify areas of demand, potential for collaboration, and potential for more coherent and rational provision. 2. A study of the student records and administrative systems to develop protocols for joint programmes and shared registration, including marks and standards, administrative processes, and quality assurance procedures 3. A scoping and feasibility study for a system to allow for seamless transfer of student information and records. This will be a phased project which eventually may extend to AIT.
	Baseline	By the nature of the exercise, it is difficult to establish a baseline in this regard. The cluster, although it has various pockets of valuable collaboration, is effectively starting from scratch.
	Interim target, end 2014	A detailed report of the coherence of provision across the partners with concrete proposals for collaborative provision, coordinated access, transfer and progression, and an overall enrolment plan for the region. As these targets reflect the ambition within the cluster as a whole and as they are contingent on winning support and resource, the timings are indicative and indeed the sequence may well change. This caveat applies to all the objectives within this section.
	Interim target, end 2015	Protocols for joint degrees and joint registration.
	Final target, end 2016	An implementation plan for sharing and transfer of student information across the cluster.

2.	Institution objective	To build a Collaborative Platform for Digital Learning
	Performance indicator	1. We will create a network of expertise in digital pedagogy, which is the key enabler in capitalising on the affordances of digital technologies. Each of the partners currently has some distributed expertise and provision in this area, but we recognise that collectively we can develop a comprehensive suite of accredited and non-accredited modules and workshops in digital pedagogy which can be offered to academic staff across the partner institutions.
		2. The development of e-learning and blended learning programmes needs to be underpinned by expertise in both digital pedagogy and digital content development. A distributed team of experts of both kinds will be formed within and across the partner institutions, working together to further our expertise and provide a coordinated and complementary programme of professional development for academic departments.
		3. Design and install a common technological platform to capture and stream lecture theatre activities. This will enable the generation and archiving of digital content and provide for the streaming of on-campus classes to off-campus groups (whether part-time or remote students or students of a partner institution). It will carry once-off technological costs to be incurred in each of the institutions.
		4. Using data analytics, we will exploit the very rich and substantial amounts of data from our common virtual learning environment (Moodle II), to systematically underpin a process of continuous improvement of the curriculum. Up to now, such data on students' engagement and interaction with learning resources have not been fully exploited. We will do this by building a set of 'learning analytics dashboards' that allow academic staff to (i) track student engagement, and map this engagement to attainment, (ii) optimise the curriculum and its delivery in response to engagement and attainment and (iii) increase effectiveness in the design of student assessment.
	Baseline	Please see above.
	Interim target, end 2014	A network of experts in digital pedagogy, and in digital content development and presentation within and across the partner institutions.
	Interim target, end 2015	A common technological platform to capture and stream lecture-theatre activities in two lecture-theatres in AIT as part of a wider initiative to extend capacity in this area throughout the cluster.
2.		

	Final target, end 2016	A set of 'learning analytics dashboards' that will systematically underpin a process of continuous improvement of the curriculum.

3.	Institution objective	Increased collaboration with further education to enhance coherence, access, transfer, and progression.
	Performance indicator	1. Conduct a scoping exercise which identifies and brings together the cluster's regional FE stakeholders and examines existing instruments and mechanisms for Access, Transfer, and Progression (ATP) from FE to HE at programme and institutional level.
		2. Set up a network of HE and FE providers in the region modelled on the existing North East Further and Higher Education Alliance (NEFHEA).
		3. Create an online portal to provide a 'one stop shop' for individuals interested in accessing information on FE in their local area and opportunities for progression from FE to HE, residing on the existing NUI Maynooth All-Ireland Research Observatory (AIRO), which utilises data analytics, data visualisation and research to provide accessible public information and inform public policy.
		4. Develop and design a blended bridging programme, building on our existing experience of collaborative provision between HE and FE, combining modules across levels 5, 6 and 7 to bridge the gap between FE and HE. These bridging/foundation programmes will be recognised by all the HE partners for the purposes of progression, and will be supported with online learning resources.
	Baseline	As above, there are some platforms in place and AIT has a strong and successful series of relationships with local ETBs and FE colleges. The proposal here is to embed these within the cluster and to join them with parallel initiatives established by our partners.
	Interim target, end 2014	A coherent mapping of the provision of HE and FE provision across the region, which will be supported by an online data portal.
	Interim target, end 2015	A formal network of FE and HE providers within the region, specifically established for the purpose of collaboration on improving access, transfer and progression opportunities across the region.
	Final target, end 2016	A bridging/foundation programme developed and ready to be offered with a number of FE providers and which is recognised by all HE providers in the region.

6. Annual Compliance Statement

As the strategic dialogue process develops, the HEA will take into account ongoing compliance with important foundational requirements such as:

- Statutory quality assurance processes
- Providing an annual statement required under their Code of Governance and with all other requirements of that Code
- Providing details of satisfactory financial outturn, budget and financial plan
- Employment control framework
- Data returns to the HEA.

Where significant or urgent compliance issues arise (such as unacceptable financial deficit, weakness in financial plans or major omissions or delays in returns, they will be discussed as part of the strategic dialogue).

Athlone Institute of Technology has sought to comply with its obligations in respect of the HEA and QQI. AIT has agreed its quality assurance procedures with the relevant authority and has successfully come through institutional review and has had all of its academic units go through programmatic review within the recent past. The Institute has delegated authority for all taught programmes and delegation for research awards in specific fields at Levels 9 and 10 on the NFQ.

The Institute publishes an annual statement and provides details of satisfactory financial outturn, budget, and financial plan. It reports its ECF figures quarterly to the HEA on the appropriate template and makes other data returns accordingly.

7. Performance Funding

Having regard to the performance of Athlone Institute of Technology in the strategic dialogue process leading to this compact, performance funding of

€ 117,000

has been allocated to the Institute.

8. Agreement

To be completed following the conclusion of the strategic dialogue process.

Having regard to the agreed minute of the strategic dialogue meeting attached, the HEA and Athlone Institute of Technology agree that the mission, planned profile and targets, as set out in the foregoing sections of this Compact, are consistent with the objectives set for the higher education system and are appropriate to Institute.

Signed: _____

Chief Executive, Higher Education Authority

Date:

Signed: _____

Chief Officer, Athlone Institute of Technology

Date:

Appendices

We (Athlone Institute of Technology) include the following appendices with our performance compact.

List the appendices here:

☐	Appendix 1: Regional clusters
☐	Appendix 2: A table of actual and projected student numbers
☐	Appendix 3: Student population within the HEA template
☐	Appendix 4: High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation
☐	Appendix 5: Technology Transfer
☐	Appendix 6: Knowledge Intensive Services
☐	Appendix 7: Profile of AIT Research Institutes

Other Appendices

Appendix 8: Projections of participants on postgraduate L&T modules

Add more rows as necessary

Appendix 1: Regional clusters

Athlone Institute of Technology is a member of the MEND cluster (Midlands, Eastern, and North Dublin)[5] a consortium of considerable size incorporating many distinct entities but linked, in the main, to four higher education institutions in the Dublin North Leinster and Midlands region:

■ Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT);

■ the National University of Ireland, Maynooth (NUI Maynooth);

■ Dublin City University (DCU); and

■ Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT).

These four institutions share a common strategic vision: that our collective success and our contribution to economic and social development requires not only institutional excellence, but also strategic differentiation and intense collaboration, so that each institution can make a distinctive contribution to regional networks and the national system of higher education, to a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

We have clearly and repeatedly committed to this vision in our strategies and our submissions to the HEA *Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape* process. Along with those partners, Athlone Institute of Technology is working to put in place a sustainable structure to enable and extend collaboration in the coming three years.

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[5] This is an informal designation. The title has not been formally considered or approved by the members of the cluster.

Appendix 2: A table of actual and projected student numbers

Summary of Actual and Project Student Population					
TableB:					
Programme	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017
Other Enrolments					
Foundation	72	122	72	72	72
Fetac Cert	156	194	194	194	226
Fetac Advanced Cert	0	0	0	0	0
SubTotal	228	316	266	266	298
Undergraduate Enrolments					
Higher Certificate (Level 6)	1,233	1,174	1,175	1,211	1,221
Ordinary Degree (level 7)	1,370	1,321	1,395	1,522	1,636
Honours Degree (Level 8)	1,660	1,651	1,812	1,996	2,091
Occasional	684	607	614	618	621
Sub Total	4,947	4,752	4,995	5,347	5,569
Postgraduate Enrolments					
PostGraduate Certificate/Diplo	95	47	55	61	69
Masters Taught, Level 9	210	178	209	265	276
Masters Research (Level 9)	51	61	67	67	75
PhD (level 10)	7	11	17	20	20
Occasional	22	-	-	-	-
Sub Total	385	297	348	413	440
Overall Total	5,560	5,365	5,609	6,026	6,307
% Change per year		-4%	5%	7%	5%
Total % Change over 5 years	13%				
Total L8 & L9T	1,965	1,876	2,076	2,322	2,436
4%	79	75	83	93	97
Forecast L9/L10 by research	58	72	84	87	95
Shortfall for TU Target	21	3	- 1	6	2

Appendix 3: Student population within the HEA template

Athlone Institute of Technology
Profile 2016

STUDENT NUMBERS

Entrants	No.	% Change over current		Graduates	No.	%
New Entrants (Full-time Undergraduate)	1,413	18%		Undergraduate Graduates	5,218	92%
				Postgraduate Graduates	440	8%

Enrolments

		Full-time	Part-time	Remote	Total			Full-time	Part-time	Remote	Total
Other Enrolments (IoTs only)	No.	86	212		298	**Other Enrolments (IoTs only)**	%	29%	71%	0%	100%
Foundation	No.	72			72	Foundation	%	100%	0%	0%	24%
FETAC Cert	No.	14	20		34	FETAC Cert	%	41%	59%	0%	11%
FETAC Advanced Cert	No.	0	192		192	FETAC Advanced Cert	%	0%	100%	0%	64%
of which are apprenticeship	No.	192			192	of which are apprenticeship	%	100%	0%	0%	64%
Undergraduate	**No.**	**4,293**	**925**		**5,218**	**Undergraduate**	**%**	**82%**	**18%**	**0%**	**88%**
Diploma/Cert	No.	1,011	210		1,221	Diploma/Cert	%	83%	17%	0%	23%
Ordinary Degree (L7)	No.	1,341	295		1,636	Ordinary Degree (L7)	%	82%	18%	0%	31%
Honours Degree (L8)	No.	1,941	150		2,091	Honours Degree (L8)	%	93%	7%	0%	40%
Occasional	No.	0	270		270	Occasional	%	0%	100%	0%	5%
Postgraduate	**No.**	**308**	**132**		**440**	**Postgraduate**	**%**	**70%**	**30%**	**0%**	**7%**
Postgrad Diploma/Cert	No.	39	30		69	Postgrad Diploma/Cert	%	57%	43%	0%	16%
Masters Taught (L9)	No.	181	95		276	Masters Taught (L9)	%	66%	34%	0%	63%
Masters Research (L9)	No.	70	5		75	Masters Research (L9)	%	93%	7%	0%	17%
PhD (L10)	No.	18	2		20	PhD (L10)	%	90%	10%	0%	5%
Occasional	No.	0			0	Occasional	%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total UG and PG Enrolments *7	**No.**	**4,687**	**1,269**		**5,956**	**Total UG and PG Enrolments**	**%**	**79%**	**21%**	**0%**	**100%**

DISCIPLINARY MIX

Full-time Undergraduate New Entrants	No.	%		PhDs (All modes)	No.	%
General Programmes	0	0%	General Programmes		0%
Education Science	0	0%	Education Science		0%
Humanities & Arts	261	18%	Humanities & Arts		0%
Social Science, Business & Law	380	27%	Social Science, Business & Law	2	10%
Science	284	20%	Science	12	60%
Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction	264	19%	Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction	6	30%
Agriculture & Veterinary	48	3%	Agriculture & Veterinary		0%
Health & Welfare	56	4%	Health & Welfare		0%
Services	120	8%	Services		0%
Combined	0	0%	Combined		0%
Total	**1,413**	**100%**	**Total**	**20**	**100%**

PARTICIPATION

(% of Total Enrolments incl. Flexible Learning)	No.	%		(% of New Entrants)	No.	%
Flexible Learners (PT, Distance, E-Learning, In-Service)	1,269	21%	Mature Entrants (Full-time Undergraduate) *3	420	30%
Participants in Labour Market Activation (Springboard) *(% of National Participation) *1*			Estimate: Entrants with Disability (EAS)	115	8%
Regional Intake *(% of Full-time Enrolments) *2*					
from the institution's county		25%	Estimate: Entrants from Non-Manual, Semi- and Unskilled Socio-economic Backgrounds	427	30%
from the institution's county and bordering counties		65%			

INTERNATIONALIzATION

International Students (Full-time)	No.	%			No.
(% of Full-time Enrolments)	610	13%	Erasmus Students Outgoing (excl. work placements) *4		80
EU	200	33%			
Non-EU	410	67%			

TEACHING AND LEARNING

STAFF

	No.	%
Core Staff *5	**428**	
Academic Staff	250	58%
Support staff	178	42%
Contract Research & Specialist Staff	**70**	
Academic Staff	19	27%
Support staff	51	73%
Total Staff	**498**	
Total Academic	269	54%
Total Support	229	46%

FINANCIAL DATA

	€ 000	%
Total Income *6	**43,236**	
State Grants	16,423	38%
Fees	18,001	42%
Exchequer	6,273	15%
Non-Exchequer	11,728	27%
Research Grants & Contracts	3,412	8%
Other Income	5,400	12%
Total Expenditure	**43,099**	
Core - Pay	27,766	64%
Core - Non-Pay	6,106	14%
Other Pay	3,140	7%
Other Non-Pay	2,675	6%
Research Grants & Contracts - Pay	2,559	6%
Research Grants & Contracts - Non-Pay	853	2%

Assumptions

*1 LMA programmes will have scaled back to not be material in 2016	*5 Staff numbers reflect advised ECF reductions
*2 Regional Intake % is based on Sept 2013 1st year intake	*6 Financial data reflects advised budget reductions
*3 Mature entrant % is based on Sept 2013 1st year intake	*7 Students numbers exclude non-accredited courses
*4 Outgoing Erasmus students will be a focus in our new strategic plan	

Appendix 4: High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation

Research Institutes / Centres

	2013	2014	2015	2016
MRI (including APT Technology Gateway Centre)*				
No of Projects > €1.5k	8	12	16	18
No of Projects > €5k	15	24	25	26
No of Projects > €10k (IPPs, direct funded etc)	9	10	11	12
No of Companies engaged with	27	38	41	44
Total €000 value of projects	258	395	493	590
Value €000 of industry contribution to these projects	106	150	193	262
SRI (including COMAND Technology Gateway Centre)				
No of Projects > €1.5k	0	0	0	0
No of Projects > €5k	18	22	24	24
No of Projects > €10k (IPPs, direct funded etc)	3	4	5	6
No of Companies engaged with	21	26	29	30
Total €000 value of projects	367	542	680	819
Value €000 of industry contribution to these projects	106	156	214	266
* The BRI will also contribute to these metrics				

External Factors – Risks / Assumptions:

The metrics above have previously been agreed with Enterprise Ireland as part of research agreements and are subject to change

The metrics are dependent on the continuation of state support for funding initiatives such as the Enterprise Ireland Technology Gateway Centres, Innovation Vouchers & Innovation Partnership schemes, the R&D tax credit scheme and the continued ability of AIT (as a state institution) to offer competitive contracts to world class researchers and on the availability of suitably qualified researchers to meet our needs

Appendix 5: Technology Transfer

Knowledge/ Technology Transfer to Enterprise

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Licenses/Options/Assignments	1	2	3	3
Spin Outs	0	0	1	1
Invention Disclosures	3	4	4	4
Priority Patent Applications	1	2	2	2

External Factors – Risks / Assumptions:

Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative (TTSI) support under Enterprise Ireland continues up to 2016 at levels agreed at the commencement of TTSI2

Patent Fund Support (Stage 1, 2 and 3) continues at 2013 levels as a minimum

Research funding support from the funding agencies remains, at worst case, constant - particularly for collaborative research with industry

Assumption: Industry continues to engage with HEIs in collaborative research, exploitation of results and with the technology transfer system in general

Appendix 6: Knowledge Intensive Services

The projections below relate to the knowledge intensive innovation services (including product design, rapid prototyping and analytical testing) provided to industry by AIT's Centre for Industrial Services & Design (CISD).

	2013	2014	2015	2016
# Industry Projects	166	169	171	174
# Companies	82	84	86	88
# Innovation Vouchers	30	32	33	34

External Factors – Risks / Assumptions:

- Enterprise Ireland innovation voucher scheme continues over the projected timeframe

- Retention of key CISD staff

Appendix 7: PROFILE OF AIT RESEARCH INSTITUTES

Materials Research Institute

The Materials Research Institute (MRI) conducts interdisciplinary research focused on materials science and technology, including the delivery of contract research and testing services for industry. The MRI's main research areas include: polymer materials processing, biomedical materials design and synthesis, plastics materials analysis and characterisation, recycling/green technologies, and the development of drug delivery systems. AIT has invested heavily in the infrastructure of the MRI, including major state-of-the-art laboratories in the areas of imaging and materials characterisation, and a dedicated wet chemistry laboratory.

The Enterprise Ireland-funded Applied Polymer Technology Centre (APT Ireland) has been established as a designated research centre within the MRI, with a core research focus on polymer materials processing, formulation and enhancement. The Technology Gateway underpins an AIT strategic research goal to develop strong nationally and internationally recognised centres and groups within the MRI, which are independent yet closely aligned.

The MRI team is heavily involved in the industry-driven applied research activities of the Irish

Centre for Composites Research (IComp). The MRI has also built strategic alliances with a wide range of Irish and international universities and research groups which offer further expertise and input to the research programme of the MRI for the benefit of all its stakeholders, including industry partners.

The MRI is also part of the SFI-funded Synthesis and Solid State Pharmaceutical Cluster (SSPC) whose primary focus is to better understand mechanisms, control processes and predict outcomes for the efficient and environmentally sustainable production of safe medicines.

From a postgraduate research education perspective, MRI is a key participant in the Irish Research Council-funded International Centre for Graduate Education in Micro and Nano Engineering (ICGEE) which involves 14 partners from Ireland, USA, China, and Europe. This consortium of third-level education institutions is dedicated to developing a structured doctoral level training programme in micro- and nano-engineering, which includes international participation and collaboration.

Software Research Institute

The Software Research Institute (SRI) conducts cross cutting research in the fields of:

Connected Media: Powered by ongoing advances in hardware and software technologies, rich media applications play an ever greater role in our lives. These applications cause challenges for media delivery, with the required QoE, to end-users. Improvements in networking technologies will be needed to enable the delivery of high resolution and multi-view video in real-time, dynamically adapted to changing network conditions and multiple screen types. New modalities of interaction such as natural user interfaces enabled by Kinect like technologies promise a leap forward in ease of interaction across a diverse range of

applications from health to retail. Advances in analytics will enable digital systems to monitor, analyse and thereby react in a more intelligent fashion to the needs of users.

Infrastructure Management. Driven by global grand challenges such as climate change, ICT is being used to gain maximum efficiencies and return on investment in a wide spread of application areas such as smart grids, water systems, transport systems and communication networks etc. Cyber-physical ICT on this scale raises many research challenges including how to process the volumes of data generated from distributed infrastructural systems, how to create self-managing and adaptive systems and how to process and transmit data securely. Future infrastructure systems will, we believe, feature a hybrid of cloud and distributed, or 'edge' management approaches.

SRI has been very extensively involved with industry collaboration since its inceptions and has engaged in more than 200 industrial projects over its lifecycle. These engagements have included Innovation Vouchers, Innovation Partnership, direct company engagements etc. SRI also hosts the Enterprise Ireland-funded COMAND (Connected Media Application Design and Delivery) Technology Gateway centre. COMAND is based on the conviction that the convergence of a number of key technologies over the next 3–5 years will i) greatly impact patterns of media consumption and ii) will enable novel forms of personalised and real-time media based interaction between humans and technology and in turn this will create both challenges and opportunities for companies in the COMAND industrial base across a wide range of application domains. The goal of COMAND is therefore to identify and advance key connectivity and multimedia technologies through research and transfer these technologies to industry for commercialisation.

SRI also actively participates in national and international joint collaborations with academic and industrial partners. For example, SRI is, together with DCU and UCC, a core academic partner in the National Cloud Computing Technology Centre, recently funded by Enterprise Ireland, and is also a key partner in a leading EU research project, called Commune, which addresses novel means to improve the management of telecom networks.

Bioscience Research Institute

The Bioscience Research Institute (BRI) at AIT is characterised by a strong history of both fundamental and applied high-impact research spanning 30 years in the core domains of toxicology, microbiology and analytical chemistry (http://BRI.ait.ie). The past five years has witnessed substantial growth in research capacity and capabilities in these domains aligned with expansions into strategically important areas of life and health sciences, medical devices, biopharma, agri-food and the environment where a strong emphasis has been placed on technology development in support of indigenous industries. Prof Neil Rowan, newly appointed Director of the BRI, also holds an Adjunct Professorship to the School of Medicine at NUI Galway, which highlights the clear ambition of the BRI to forge synergistic partnerships with leading universities in these smart specialisation areas.

Future research for the BRI will be characterised by a continued expansion of core collaborative research partnerships with particular emphasis on growing postgraduate and postdoctoral numbers and activities in the agri-food, environment, biomedical, and health domains.

Building on successful multi-centred initiatives such as the EU ShareBiotech project (www.sharebiotech.net) and Erasmus Lifelong Learning programmes that actively connect BRI

staff and researchers to 17 different academic institutions across the EU, the BRI will continue to expand research alliances with international academic partners in Europe, Asia and North America in these strategically important domains vis-à-vis SFI, FP7 and Horizon 2020 funding mechanisms.

Appendix 8: Projections of participants on postgraduate L&T modules

Projected Student Numbers 2013 2014/2014-2015/2015-2016 Electives and Capstone Module	No.
Certificate in Learning & Teaching	10
Certificate in Technology Enhanced Learning	10
Certificate in Action Research for Educators	8
Creating an Inclusive Curriculum	10
Supporting an Inclusive Curriculum	10
Reflection, Action & Evidence Review	10
Certificate in Assessment & Evaluation	16

This number is contingent on the resourcing available.