

Higher Education Institution Self-Evaluation Report

1st September 2019 – 31st August 2020

<p>Institution Name</p>	<p><i>Athlone Institute of Technology</i></p>
<p>Overview of institutional progress</p>	<p>The Institute formalised and signed its compact with HEA in December 2018. At the same time the Institute was consulting with staff, students and other stakeholders to complete its new strategic plan for the period 2019-23. Both the strategic plan and compact were developed in tandem and both benefitted from a wide and extensive engagement process. Our new Strategic Plan - “A Technological University for the Region”, was approved by Governing Body on 18th September 2019. The plan sets out a vision to positively disrupt future ways of living, learning and working, to build new partnerships that strengthen innovation and create new and exciting opportunities for our communities. Our priorities and success measures in our Strategic Plan and our Strategic Initiatives in our Compact are centred on this key objective.</p> <p>We reported in our first self-evaluation report in October 2019, significant progress in attaining TU status by partnering with Limerick Institute of Technology. That progress has been ongoing, and we submitted our application for designation as a Technological University to the Minister on 20th November 2020. This application was dependant on the Institute reaching the metrics required by legislation and a rigorous external examination of those metrics has been completed. By meeting these metrics, we have made substantial progress in meeting our compact strategic initiatives and key metrics and have a set of benchmarks with which to move forward.</p> <p>The strength of our progression towards a Technological University is evidenced by our success in achieving Landscape funding of €2 million jointly with LIT in 2019 LIT and an award of €5 million in 2020.</p> <p>This solid and substantial progress was made notwithstanding the upheaval created by COVID 19. The institute’s compact strategic initiative to set up a Faculty of Continuing, Professional, Online and Distance Learning by first quarter 2019 now seems prescient and enabled the Institute to pivot to online delivery in a rapid but also controlled way. This disruption has inevitably influenced some strategic initiatives; however, we are confident that with an improvement in the restrictions we will not just be able to make progress on those initiatives but also to fully understand the longer-term effects that this pandemic has created and how it might affect the major drivers of change for higher education in the decade ahead. There is an urgency in addressing what the future will look like.</p>
<p>Please note: Each numbered heading below refers to the Key System Objectives, as provided in the <i>System Performance Framework 2018 – 2020</i>.</p>	

1. Providing a strong talent pipeline combining knowledge, skills & employability which responds effectively to the needs of our enterprise, public service and community sectors, both nationally and regionally, and maintains Irish leadership in Europe for skill availability.

Academic and support staff, in consultation with placement providers, have endeavoured to ensure placements, which are a key component of a strong talent pipeline, have continued where possible throughout the pandemic. Final year nursing students commenced their internships as scheduled in January 2021. In some instances, placements have been postponed to later in the academic year. However, priority has been given to students in award years. Because of the restricted access to Institute facilities, laboratory-based final year projects have been replaced with academically equivalent desk-based projects.

AIT over the last year have strengthened its links with enterprise across the region and nationally. The AIT – Industry Collaboration group was extended in 2019-20 with Skills development as a core pillar. In conjunction with the Regional Skills Forum Manager, skills audits and competencies to fill critical vacancies are identified and captured to inform decision on new programme design and curriculum review. This was evident in the successful applications for Springboard + in Q1 and the post graduate conversion courses that were funded in Q2 2020.

Through linkage with the Regional Skills Forum, the Institute continues to work with Small/Medium Enterprises (SME). Q2 of 2020 saw the establishment of an 'Engenuity Midlands Engineering Cluster' made up of 30+ Manufacturing SMEs in the Midlands. Support from the Institute in research, graduate placement and work placement was initiated. AIT is the leading course provider to access funded programmes under springboard+ for 2020, securing 1,169 funded places, 9% of the total national allocated places.

Strategic Priority 1a: Build on Athlone Institute of Technology’s well-established relationship with industry, to maintain, develop and evolve contemporary and relevant educational, training, and research provision.

<p>i. Institution Strategic Initiatives</p>	<p>1.1 Building on the work of MEND (SME Portal), and Regional Skills Forum develop an institutional database that links regional and national skills needs to better inform systematic programme development at all levels.</p> <p>1.2 Include work placement or ‘live project’ as an element of all level 8 awards.</p> <p>1.3 Continue to develop agile programme architecture and associated QA processes to respond to bespoke industry needs from Level 6-10.</p> <p>1.4 Develop an Online Distance Learning strategy to deliver education and training needs that are flexible and accessible to support a broader student demographic.</p> <p>1.5 Strengthen the link between Undergraduate and Postgraduate activities, including linked capstone activities, work placements, shared learning spaces and dissemination activities.</p> <p>1.6 Develop an Online Distance Learning unit to support Part-time, Lifelong Learning, Flexible and International access.</p> <p>1.7 Offer international language as either an integrated element of programmes or additional credits across all faculties.</p>			
<p>ii. Key Performance Indicators</p>	<p>Pre-compact Baseline</p>	<p>Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress</p>	<p>2019/2020 Interim Target</p>	<p>2019/2020 Actual (Reporting period 1 Sept 2019 – 31 Aug 2020)</p>
<p>Designation of staff for Skills for Growth Programme</p>	<p>No secondment</p>	<p>Dedicated staff member seconded to DoES to coordinate regional and national data.</p>	<p>Dedicated staff member seconded to DoES to coordinate regional and national data.</p>	<p>Skills for growth template went online in 2020 – approximately 22 Midland companies completed it in conjunction with Regional Skills Forum Manager</p>

Number of level 8 programmes with work placement or live project	65%	77% achieved against target of 70%.	80%	92%
Develop agile programme architecture	No baseline provided	Agile approach to refining and developing programmes, with industry collaboration implemented – measure of success reported was 24 Springboard courses awarded in 2019, across levels 6-9.	No specific target set, however as outlined in the Institute’s SER 2019 the Institute will continue to develop programme architecture to align with and respond to emerging needs to include up-skilling, re-skilling, access and international agendas. Commitment to review all programmes has been made to exploit evolving programme architectures.	Our agile approach to refining and developing programmes can be measured by our continued success in being awarded 22 Springboard and 3 ICT courses in 2020.
Creation of a new Faculty and Dean	No Faculty/Dean in place	Faculty established and new Dean appointed.	Complete as Dean and Faculty are established.	Complete with appointment of Dean of Faculty Continuing, Professional, Online and Distance Learning and Head of Department Lifelong Learning
Online Distance and Learning Strategy by Q3 2019	No strategy in place	Draft strategy developed	Draft Strategy developed	Not a formal plan but has been achieved as we now deliver all programmes in the Faculty online and in a flexible manner across all demographics and in conjunction with industry; in particular the Midlands Industry Collaboration group – consisting of 80 organisations across the Midlands, from where we have stated several objectives that we are working towards collaboratively. Formal Strategic Plan proposal awaiting EMT consideration. In Jan 2021, the Institute has 2074 SB+, ICT, HCI and July

				Stimulus 'Flexible learners' registered on the various flexible learning programmes.
Creation of new flexible and distributed learning programmes	Faculty of Business and Hospitality: 0	11/11 achieved. Faculty breakdown not provided.	Faculty of Business and Hospitality: 5	A total of 10 new postgraduate programmes, 2 new undergraduate certificate programmes and 9 modular programmes (L6 to L9) are now offered through flexible / remote delivery within the Faculty.
	Faculty of Engineering and Informatics: 1		Faculty of Engineering and Informatics: 9	A range of MSc and MEng programmes have been developed for flexible / blended / distributed learning. In addition, a range of Level 6, Level 8 Special Purpose awards and Level 9 Postgraduate Certificates and Postgraduate Diplomas have been developed and approved. In excess of 10 new programmes have been developed and commenced delivery in the Faculty
	Faculty of Science and Health: 1		Faculty of Science and Health: 9	A range of programmes have been developed for flexible/blended/distributed learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Postgraduate Diploma in Biopharmaceutical and Medical Device Systems (Springboard/HCI). • Two 30 credit online postgraduate certificates in

				<p>Manufacturing Technology Systems for BioPharma/Medical Device Industries</p> <p>The following programmes were developed and validated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postgraduate Certificate in Science in Advanced Practice (Nursing) (30 Credits, Level 9) • Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Advanced Practice (Nursing) (60 Credits, Level 9) • Master of Science in Advanced Practice (Nursing) (90 Credits, Level 9) • Postgraduate Certificate in Science in Professional Nursing (30 Credits, Level 9) • Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Professional Nursing (60 Credits, Level 9) • Master of Science in Professional Nursing (90 Credits, Level 9) <p>These were accredited by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland in this academic year and will roll out in Sept 2021. These programmes will be delivered synchronously and</p>
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				asynchronously using flexible modes of delivery to accommodate service needs and across campuses similar to previous consortium arrangements for level 8 awards in Emergency Nursing (2018-2021) and Acute Medicine Nursing (2017-2020).
	Department of Lifelong Learning: 2		Department of Lifelong Learning: 7	Faculty of Continuing, Professional, Online and Distance Learning created over 20 undergraduate and 6 postgraduate programmes.
L8 Programmes with Linked Capstone Activities	15%	82% achieved against 75% target (target redefined from compact)	85%	92%
Develop an online distance learning unit	No unit	Unit established, with identified focus and agreed actions.	Complete	Completed by the creation of the Faculty of Continuing Professional Online and Distance Learning
Offer international language as either an integrated element of programmes or additional credits across all faculties - No KPI provided.	No baseline provided.	Offerings are being considered as integrated or additional and will be informed by programme review and international collaboration and consultations.	No interim target set however offerings continue to be considered as integrated or additional and will be informed by programme review and international collaboration and consultations.	The Faculty of Business and Hospitality have included language electives in all Business programmes and in the programmes within Hospitality Tourism and Leisure which have an international focus. As part of thematic review, a strategy for greater inclusion of languages as a core module is in development and linking to our activities within the RUN-EU European University objectives for greater student and staff

				<p>mobility. The Faculty will act as the foundation for the language strategy within the Institute and work with the other faculties to offer language opportunities to other programmes as either elective modules or additional credits or digital badged MOOCs.</p>
<p>iii. Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)</p>	<p>In the context of the strategic initiatives communicated in the compact, a transformation of the institute's offerings in online, blended and distributed education has taken place catalysed by the formation of the Faculty Continuing, Professional, Online and Distance Learning. A wide range of new online and distributed offerings have been made available by the institute in response to government initiatives such as Springboard+ and other HCI calls. These offerings have been developed in close collaboration with regional and national employers through our AIT-Industry Collaboration structure. All who have attended have benefitted from gaining a greater understanding of what is going on in the Midlands, from accessing free of part-funded training/academic programmes, from developing collaboration with others who also attended, while some have even become more involved as a result in shaping the future of the Midlands through their participation in other groups and associations.</p> <p>Placement continues to be a challenge due to COVID-19 and the Institute has had to consult with placement providers to ensure students are catered for and achieve the learning outcomes required. This involves substantial input from both Academic Management and Professional Support Staff across the Institute.</p>			

Strategic Priority 1b: Transition companies that may not have a formal in-house R&D capacity to innovation activity through collaboration, and to increase the competitive advantage of companies through knowledge transfer.				
i. Institution Strategic Initiatives	Transition companies that may not have a formal in-house R&D capacity to innovation activity through collaboration.			
ii. Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline	Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress	2019/2020 Interim Target	2019/2020 Actual (Reporting period 1 Sept 2019 – 31 Aug 2020)
No KPIs indicated.			<i>*See table in narrative of this section below for targets</i>	Knowledge Transfer Ireland’s (KTI) Annual Knowledge Transfer Survey 2019, published Sept 2020: AIT Total Number of Collaboration, innovation voucher and consultancy services agreements with industry: 217
iii. Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)	<p>In the Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI) Annual Review & Annual Knowledge Transfer Survey 2019, published in September 2020, AIT ranked second among all Research Performing Organisations (Universities, Institutes of Technology, Colleges and State Research Organisations) in Ireland for <i>Total Number of Collaboration, innovation voucher and consultancy services agreements with industry</i>.</p> <p>This reflects AIT’s focus on supporting enterprises that may not have a formal R&D capacity to make the transition to R&D performance by developing collaborative relationships with AIT and acquiring the knowledge they need to develop new products, processes and designs – thereby improving their productivity, quality and efficiency.</p> <p>In December 2019, AIT was awarded funding by Enterprise Ireland to establish an Industry 4.0 Cluster which aims to support SMEs (manufacturing SMEs; companies along their value chain; digital enterprises; other companies) to capitalise on the opportunities presented by Industry 4.0, maximising their productivity, competitiveness, internationalisation and growth potential.</p>			

Key performance indicators	Pre-compact Baseline	Sept.' 2019 Progress	2018-Aug.' 2019/2020 Interim Target	2019/2020 Actual (reporting period 1 Sept.' 2019 – 31 Aug.' 2020)
Number of €5K Innovation Voucher projects completed	40	58 achieved against target of 44	48	39
Number of Licence Options Assignments (LOAs)	3	3 (target achieved)	4	3 <i>(see Section 2b for narrative)</i>
Total Value (€,'000) of industry contribution to research	€470,000	€618,500 achieved, exceeding target of €500,000	€565,000	€629,868
Total Number of applied research projects with industry	130	Achieved 153, exceeding target of 145	155	167
AIT Total number of collaborations, innovation voucher and consultancy services agreements with industry: 217 (KTI Annual Knowledge Transfer Survey 2019, published Sept.' 2020)				

2. Creating rich opportunities for national and international engagement which enhances the learning environment and delivers a strong bridge to enterprise and the wider community.

Our engagement with external stakeholders has been crucial in developing our TU application, a defining moment for our institute and the communities we serve and a blueprint for a technological university in a region that up to now was underserved by the third level sector.

A measure of our success in international engagement is our successful application to join a new, forward-thinking education alliance intended to increase collaboration between Europe’s universities. The [European Universities Network](#) (RUN EU) is part of an EU-wide ambition to create a centralised European Education Area and will enable greater staff and student mobility; provide a network of learning and innovation through European Innovation Hubs; Future Advanced Skills Academies (FASAs); Short Advanced Programmes; Structured Professional Doctorates and Joint Programme Delivery from L6 to L9 across the network.

Students will be able to choose a dynamic path across the network to obtain a degree by combining studies in multiple EU countries.

In addition to promoting and enabling greater mobility of the Institutes staff and students, the network, which is expected to increase the competitiveness of European universities, will be integral to promoting the kinds of future and advanced skills necessary for social transformation across the European Union.

Strategic Priority 2a: Design and develop programmes to enhance internationalisation amongst students, researchers and staff, creating greater awareness of mobility initiatives to priority international markets, European partner institutes and Enterprises thereby increasing international student numbers on undergraduate, postgraduate and research programmes; offering modules on-line to international partner institutes and supporting the expansion of joint programmes. In addition, outward mobility opportunities will support diversified career frameworks that create rich opportunities for mobility of excellent researchers and staff.

<p>i. Institution Strategic Initiatives</p>	<p>2.1 Expand delivery of cultural awareness training to staff in all faculties and offer modules to all students interested in study/placement abroad to further increase outward mobility of both students and staff</p> <p>2.2 Offer international language as either an integrated element of programmes or additional credits across all faculties</p> <p>2.3 Expand transnational education offering at existing and new partner universities in priority markets</p> <p>2.4 Offer international students registered at international partner universities the opportunity to complete a module of Athlone Institute of Technology approved programme on-line with the goal of transferring to Athlone Institute of Technology to complete the final year of study or postgraduate studies</p> <p>2.5 Continue to develop student success supports for International students</p>			
<p>ii. Key Performance Indicators</p>	<p>Pre-compact Baseline</p>	<p>Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress</p>	<p>2019/2020 Interim Target</p>	<p>2019/2020 Actual (Reporting period 1 Sept 2019 – 31 Aug 2020)</p>
<p>Number & Percentage of staff who have received cultural awareness training</p>	<p>0%</p>	<p>Estimated that by end of 2019, 70% of staff will have received training.</p>	<p>Original target 60% - updated to 90%</p>	<p><i>15 staff</i> 15 staff had completed cultural awareness training delivered by the Learning and Teaching Unit when delivery was interrupted by spread of Covid-19 in March 2020. The Learning and Teaching</p>

				<p>Unit who would normally deliver such sessions became trainers for staff to deliver remotely to our students and focus on ensuring that the pivot to online programme delivery was achieved to the highest standards possible. This had major impact on our cultural awareness training plans, however we remain committed to delivery of cultural awareness training and will resume in 2021/22.</p> <p>Two academic staff from AIT completed the Intercultural Trainer Certificate at Jacobs University, and Intercultur GMBH, Bremen, Germany from 20-31 January 2020.</p>
Opportunities for outward student mobility and staff exchange with established partner universities in European and non-European countries	Staff: 15 Students: 30	Staff: 26 (target of 17) Students: 27 (target of 33)	Staff: 22 Students: 37	Staff: 20 Students: 17
Increase second language competency to support increased participation in study and work abroad programmes.	No baseline provided.	Offerings will continue to be considered as integrated or additional and will be informed by programme review and international collaboration and consultations.	No interim target set, however the target in relation to offer of international language as either an integrated element of programmes or additional credits across all faculties also addresses this and is outlined in 1a of Self Evaluation Report and in the Institute's Original Compact document	Short study visits can motivate students to consider study abroad and/or language study. 40 students at AIT were offered cultural awareness training in advance of short study visits to international partner universities. Short International Field Studies to partner institutions are used to provide student groups an experience of study abroad. These group based 3-to-5-day international field trips provide

			Sections 1 & 2	students with a peer supported experience in a foreign institute, thereby demystifying the study abroad concept. Students who take these trips are more inclined to take a language.
Utilise network of 80 EU and 120 Non-EU MOUs to develop transnational education offerings. Assess opportunities to establish Joint institutes with established partner universities in China and Malaysia	No baseline provided for number of transnational educational offerings in place pre-compact.	Approval obtained to launch joint institute with Wuxi IoT in Jiangsu Province, China. Additional resource appointed to focus on Malaysian market.	As per the Institute's original Compact Document timeline target for delivery was Q3 2020. Update provided in SER at August 2019 reported approval obtained to launch joint institute with Wuxi and additional resource appointed to focus on Malaysian market.	Joint Institute launched at Wuxi Institute of Technology, China with four programmes and students recruited. AIT Marketing graduate appointed in Malaysia and developing links with Malaysian partners. Malaysian partner decided put plans on hold for launch of postgraduate programmes.
International students' groups offered online modules by AIT	0 programmes	6 programmes approved	20 programmes	10 programmes being delivered during academic year 2019-20 to Chinese partner universities. Remote delivery from March 2020 onwards. English online module delivered to two partner universities in China.
Student Success Supports for International Students	No baseline identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Career's office launched webinars for international students. - Academic writing coordinator has engaged with international students to provide supports. - Enhanced student induction experience. 	No interim target set, however the progress report shows clear progress in supports in August 2019 and building on that again in 2020.	An induction for new international students over four days was delivered in September 2019 in cooperation with Student Resources and Faculties. Student supports, such as counselling services, Health service, Careers Office, Academic Writing skills moved to online sessions once Covid-19 spread to Ireland from March 2020.

				<p>International students were contacted regularly by phone and Zoom sessions during March to June 2020 by International Office staff with support from Institute Nurse.</p> <p>Students were informed of services from local supermarkets, restaurants for online deliveries to their private student accommodation.</p> <p>AIT arranged drop off from local pharmacy if any medication was required. Students availed of AIT online student resources and other services such as Zoom Keep Fit sessions.</p>
<p>i. Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)</p>	<p>While the number of students and staff engaging in outward mobility is lower than planned, AIT is endeavouring to promote outward mobility of students and staff to international partner universities through participation in networks. AIT and Limerick Institute of Technology are members of the Regional University Network – European University – RUN-EU along with six other regionally focused European Higher Education Institutes in Portugal, Finland, Hungary, Austria and the Netherlands. The eight members are committed to societal transformation in their regions in the context of both new and emerging regional and global challenges, sustainable regional development and regional needs. The members have a regional as opposed to a city focus and have a proven track record in the delivery of future and advanced skills activities in teaching, learning, research and engagement relevant to societal challenges including future industry, sustainable development, environment and climate change, ageing population and social inclusion. Deans of Faculty and Executive Management from AIT have visited RUN-EU partners during academic year 2019-20 and the intention was to promote staff visits and student mobility for study and placement. This plan was curtailed due to spread of Covid-19 from March, but we have engaged virtually with our RUN-EU partners and we will be well placed to promote physical mobility when it is safe for our students and staff to travel.</p> <p>Several virtual events were held with international partners. Academic staff at AIT delivered English online and other modules remotely to partner universities in China during academic year 2019-20.</p>			

Strategic Priority 2b: Formally embed research excellence with teaching and learning activities to support staff development, student progression, and knowledge creation.				
Institution Strategic Initiatives	<p>2.6 Increased provision of a broad range of knowledge intensive services with a focus on start-ups and SMEs, increasing Innovation Voucher projects with industry.</p> <p>2.7 Increased technology transfer to enterprise, increasing Licence Options Assignments.</p>			
Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline	Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress	2019/2020 Interim Target	2019/2020 Actual (Reporting period 1 Sept 2019 – 31 Aug 2020)
Number of €5K Innovation Voucher projects completed.	40	58 achieved against target of 44.	48	39
Number of Licence Options Assignments (LOAs)	3	3 (target achieved)	4	3
Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)	<p>Innovation Voucher activity was impacted by the COVID situation in 2020 leading to underachievement against our target. However, AIT continues to perform strongly under the Enterprise Ireland and Invest Northern Ireland Innovation Vouchers programmes – an indicator of the flexibility and responsiveness of AIT’s Research Institutes, Technology Gateways and Faculties to the R&D needs of start-ups and SMEs. We marginally underperformed in terms of numbers of Licences, Options and Assignments for the period. However, AIT has exceeded our LOA targets to date under Knowledge Transfer Ireland’s Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative 3 2017-21.</p>			

3. Excellent research, development and innovation that has relevance, growing engagement with external partners and impact for the economy and society and strengthens our standing to become an Innovation Leader in Europe;

AIT aims to maximise the economic and social returns from its research, development and innovation activities through partnership and knowledge exchange with enterprise, entrepreneurs, community and other stakeholders. Our three strategic research institutes in Materials research (MRI), Bioscience research (BRI) and Software research (SRI), along with two Enterprise Ireland funded Technology Gateways – Applied Polymer Technologies (APT) and Connected Media Application Design and Delivery (COMAND) - drive market-informed research in collaboration with industry and academic partners.

We continue to support academic researchers in building supervision, examination, and disciplined research competencies through continuing and growing our staff time release programme. We have established a cross-faculty Graduate School with associated quality structures; continue to grow postgraduate seed-funding initiatives which significantly contribute to AIT’s institutional research profile and the AIT-LIT Technological University agenda. A Disruptive Innovation and Entrepreneurship Academy is in development within the Faculty of Business and Hospitality which will act as a nexus for student training in innovative concept and design enabling a pipeline of student research output to SME, new start-up or larger industry technology transfer. This Academy will link with the Research Institutes, Technology Gateways and MIRC as a bridge and enable transition of applied research to potential spin-out entities.

AIT-LIT see ourselves as supporting the achievement of the above Key System Objective by promoting and facilitating a research and innovation environment at AIT-LIT that brings together researchers, academic staff and students to collaborate with companies, entrepreneurs and regional and national stakeholders; and an embedded relationship between our research, innovation, teaching and learning activities.

Strategic Priority 3a: Continue to expand support for staff time release and funding initiatives, which have significantly contributed to the current institutional profile and associated TU agenda.

<p>i. Institution Strategic Initiatives</p>	<p>3.1 Continue to build further capability to deliver relevant solutions to our industrial partners through increased, focused, collaboration with state funded research centres such as SFI funded centres (CONFIRM, AMBER) and Technology Centres such as IMR and ICOMP</p> <p>3.2 Build on Athlone Institute of Technology’s very successful Research Institutes and Technology Gateways to increase applied research with enterprise and increase income derived from industry</p> <p>3.3 Grow the number of industrial projects through our Technology Gateways, COMAND and APT, increasing research revenue</p> <p>3.4 Develop a more agile metric driven time-release programme that supports all stages of researchers’ development by building supervision, examination and disciplined research competencies</p> <p>3.5 Support research development by developing a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) framework to include research capacity building</p> <p>3.6 By balancing targeted seed funding and external funding, increase postgraduate student numbers and funded postdoctoral positions in areas aligned with current and evolving areas of expertise, while addressing national priority areas. Develop a strategy to increase the number of high value projects between enterprise and Athlone Institute of Technology</p>
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	<p>3.7 Develop a strategy to increase the number of high value projects between enterprise and Athlone Institute of Technology</p> <p>3.8 Develop an operational plan to integrate research excellence with teaching and learning that encompasses dual participation by research institutes and faculties</p> <p>3.9 Demonstrate the impact and contribution of applied research to the campus, industry and global competitiveness</p> <p>3.10 Expand initiatives to incentivise research, including inter alia promoting researcher ‘champions’ and time release from teaching.</p> <p>3.11 Support targeted research exchange programmes and inter-institutional research agendas, including mobility, supervision, examination and grant writing</p> <p>3.12 Establish a graduate school to further support integration of research with teaching and develop articulated pathways to structured MSc and PhD programmes</p>			
ii. Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline	Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress	2019/2020 Interim Target	2019/2020 Actual (Reporting period 1 Sept 2019 – 31 Aug 2020)
Total Value (€,000) of industry contribution to research projects	€470,000	€618,500 achieved, exceeding target of €500,000	€565,000	€629,868
Total Number of applied research projects with industry	130	Achieved 153, exceeding target of 145	155	167
Number of staff on time release	12	13 (target achieved)	24	14
Percentage of Full time academic staff who hold level 10 Qualification or equivalent as per TU Criteria (currently 34 Staff Completing PhDs):	34%	Target of 48% - indicated target achieved, but specific % or number of staff not provided.	No target for 2020 set, however the Institute’s Original Compact document set targets as follows: 2019 – 48% 2021 – 53% 2025 – 60% 53% by 2021 is targeted and was achieved in 2020	53%
Number of registered Postgraduate Students	72	Achieved 86, exceeding target of 80 2018/19 Taught: 412 Research: 86 Total: 498	90	Postgraduate Students have increased: 2019/20 Taught: 490 Research: 158 Total: 648

<p>Strategy to increase number of AIT enterprise projects.</p>	<p>Process for developing AIT Strategic Plan 2019-23 commenced early 2018</p>	<p>In progress - Strategic Plan 2019-23 approved by Governing Body on 18-Sep-19.</p>	<p>No target set</p>	<p>Second among all Research Performing Organisations in Ireland for research agreements and consultancy with industry in Knowledge Transfer Ireland's Annual Knowledge Transfer Survey 2019.</p>
<p>Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)</p>	<p>During 2019/20 AIT continued to link industry needs with our core research expertise via market informed collaborative applied R&D, helping a growing range of companies to solve their technical and business problems. We increased our number of applied research projects with enterprise to 167 and our income derived from industry to €630k – including via multi-partner R&D centres and R&D projects.</p> <p>14 AIT academic staff were awarded Time Release under the 2019/20 programme to enable them to actively engage in research.</p> <p>As of June 2020, AIT achieved the 53% target set for 2021 for the percentage of staff possessing a doctoral degree or equivalent as a proportion of full-time academic staff (engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level). AIT – LIT has a detailed plan to increase the proportion of full-time academic staff who will meet the TU requirement of within 10 years at least 65 per cent.</p> <p>As of March 2020, AIT had 158 registered postgraduate students – 64 at Level 9 and 94 at Level 10. Breakdown by Faculty: Business 4, Engineering 116 and Science 38.</p> <p>We continue to increase the number of AIT-enterprise projects. In the KTI Annual Review & Annual Knowledge Transfer Survey 2019, published in September 2020, AIT ranked second among all Research Performing Organisations in Ireland for <i>Total Number of Collaboration, innovation voucher and consultancy services agreements with industry</i>.</p>			

Strategic Priority 3b: Link core research expertise with industry needs via market informed collaborative applied R&D, while in parallel, aiming to diversify our R&D funding sources towards increased EU funding.				
i. Institution Strategic Initiatives	Build on EU funding success to increase funding through international research collaborations			
ii. Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline	Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress	2019/2020 Interim Target	2019/2020 Actual (Reporting period 1 Sept 2019 – 31 Aug 2020)
Level of EU funding of AIT international research collaborations.	€755,938 (as of Aug-18)	Achieved €1,661,575 in competitive funding	No target set	€2,203,748.33
Pilot Senior Leadership Team structure (composed of 30% Research Staff) in one Faculty	No baseline provided	Pilot Senior Leadership Team structure (composed of 30% Research Staff) in one Faculty	Roll out Structure to all Faculties - Q1 2020	Senior Leadership team structure is in place and operating in the Faculty of Engineering & Informatics and in the Faculty of Science & Health. The Faculty of Business and Hospitality has identified key areas of research and innovation development and now has 12 postgraduate research students since February 2020 with cross faculty and cross RUN-EU partner supervisory teams in place. It is envisioned that these students will be part of proposed Disruptive Innovation and Entrepreneurship Academy
Review existing time release structures and implement KPI's and Deliverables - Q1 2019	No baseline provided	Review conducted	Modification to the Time-Release scheme will be actioned Q4 2019	Identified KPIs and Deliverables specific to each applicant are now a core tenet of the time release structures.
Creation of Best Publication Initiatives - Q2 2019	No baseline provided	Target achieved - 'Best Publication' award and recognition for research activity developed; AIT Research Symposium held in May 2019.	No interim target set, however further new initiatives established to incentivise research. While no target was set in the previous SER those	The progress report shows new targeted initiatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poster Competition for Postgraduates across Faculties • 'Women in Research'

			new initiatives outlined are in themselves a metric in addressing Strategic Priority 3b: <i>'link core research expertise with industry needs via market informed collaborative applied R&D, while in parallel, aiming to diversity our R&D funding sources towards increased EU Funding'</i> .	<p>Award</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athena SWAN Action Plan - commitment to an annual 'Women in Research' post-doctoral funding scheme commencing Q2 2021.
Expand take up of staff time release	12 staff	13 staff	24 staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 Academic Staff on Research Time Release • An additional 10 new supervisors to PhD supervision
Number of Researchers engaged in Researcher Exchange, International Co-Supervision and collaborative grant writing, through network of EU and non-EU MoUs	No baseline provided	Network of Institutional MOUs with other EU and Non-EU HEIs have been leveraged for enhancing researcher mobility, co-supervision, examination and collaborative grant writing. Cumulative funding secured by AIT under Horizon 2020 more than doubled in 2018/19.	Increase by 10% year on year: <i>As no baseline was provided or specific details on numbers participating in 2018-19, it is not possible to identify the specific target here for 2019-20. Please provide specific details. *See narrative in commentary box</i>	Due to the ongoing COVID situation, no researcher exchanges were possible. AIT has been successfully funded through Erasmus+ to become a member of a new European University Consortium (RUN EU) which will promote staff and student exchange when possible.

<p>Graduate School: complete external panel review and deliver by Q3 2019</p>	<p>No graduate school</p>	<p>New structure will be resourced by Q4 2019 and will be fully operational by the end of 2019</p>	<p>Graduate School to be fully operational by Q4 2019</p>	<p>The revised academic regulations for postgraduate research, including the establishment of a graduate school, were approved by external panel and operationalised in 2019. The institute appointed a Dean of Graduate School and Research in 2020.</p>
<p>i. Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)</p>	<p>In 2019/20 AIT continue to grow and develop its research expertise and diversify its research funding sources. Senior Leadership Team structures relating to research have been established in all faculties with each Faculty’s Research Committee. Senior Leadership team structure is in place and operating in the Faculty of Engineering & Informatics and in the Faculty of Science & Health. The Faculty of Business and Hospitality has identified key areas of research and innovation development and now has 12 postgraduate research students since February 2020 with cross faculty and cross RUN-EU partner supervisory teams in place. It is envisioned that these students will be part of proposed Disruptive Innovation and Entrepreneurship Academy</p> <p>The time release programme has continued to be successful and grows steadily, and each applicant now identifies KPIs and deliverables. New initiatives to highlight research have taken place, such as the postgraduate poster competition and Women in Research Award.</p> <p>The Graduate School is established, as well as revised academic regulations for postgraduate research. These were approved by external panel and operationalised in 2019. The institute appointed a Dean of Graduate School and Research in 2020.</p> <p>The impact of Covid has been mitigated in several ways, for example the postgraduate poster competition was held virtually, however, programmes for researcher mobility were profoundly affected. AIT has been successfully funded for several projects which include researcher mobility and will promote staff and student exchanges when they become possible again.</p>			

4. Significantly improves the equality of opportunity through Education and Training and recruits a student body that reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland’s population;

AIT continues to focus on ensuring that our student cohort is reflective of the diversity of Ireland’s population in our student profiles; are committed to addressing the Access Agenda and the impact of our work is reflected in our performance in some key target groups including:

- **2019/20**
- HEAR: 6% Full-time new entrants of overall intake (54 students) – exceeding our target of 35
- DARE: 5% Full-time new entrants of overall intake (48 students) – exceeding the target of 15
- Mature Students: 159 via the CAO route
- Travellers: 4 students – target to increase to 7

AIT has continued to work with MEND and the College Connect programme which aims to enhance educational aspirations for the most socio-economically disadvantaged in the MEND region through a participative and sustainable suite of activities and resources to illuminate pathways and provide opportunities into, through and beyond higher education. We continue desk-based research into pathway/routes into higher education and AIT is the lead for Traveller Community Needs Analysis as part of the MEND project. AIT provided student assistance to 453 students in 2019/20, of which 44 were lone parents.

In the reporting period, 24 students were in receipt of the 1916 bursary fund.

Strategic Priority 4a: Athlone Institute of Technology is committed to supporting access and fostering an environment of diversity, inclusion and social integration to all people and communities regardless of their gender, nationality or social status.

Strategic Priority 4b: Ensuring the success of all students is a priority for Athlone Institute of Technology. The Institute will continue to evolve institutional policies, procedures, and activities in light of stakeholder input, contemporary data, and international best practice

<p>i. Institution Strategic Initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1 Build on the success of the MEND PATH 2 and PATH 3 funding to develop strategic knowledge, partners and policies to support sustained access to Athlone Institute of Technology by underrepresented groups. 4.2 Promote articulation agreements with Further Education providers and demonstrate pathways from Further Education to Higher Education, aligned in areas defined by regional and national skills needs. 4.3 Continue the Institute of Sanctuary bursary scheme to support refugee access 4.4 Develop a student success strategy which incorporates increased access via HEAR, DARE and other underrepresented groupings that access AIT while also continuing our commitment to working with DEIS schools 4.5 Build on the success of the PASS, AIT Inspire, Student Success Advisors and Academic Tutors initiatives to enhance success rates, experience and retention specifically targeting vulnerable groups 4.6 Continue the strong partnerships between all stakeholders (quality office, students union, academic and support staff) so as to continue to strategically utilise ISSE feedback to enhance the student experience. 4.7 Use student data to understand student profiles, programme pathways, and HE perceptions, with a view to informed decision-making with respect to programme viability, opportunity, and factors that may influence success. 4.8 Continue to systematically review provision and explore cross-faculty opportunities
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ii. Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline	Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress	2019/2020 Interim Target	2019/2020 Actual (Reporting period 1 Sept 2019 – 31 Aug 2020)
<p>PATH 2/PATH 3: Strategic knowledge, partners, policies to support access</p>	<p>No baseline provided</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access pathways reviewed. - Pilot mentoring programme for DEIS schools developed with LWETB. - Access to BA in Business 	<p>Actions referenced in 2019 report are the targets and are outlined in the Summary of the 2019 SER:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigating 2 new access pathways; • Pilot mentoring programme for DEIS schools in Jan 2020 	<p>AIT and College Connect are currently developing schools outreach activities that provide potential school students with access to mentoring initiatives involving current AIT students. Several variations of the College Connect mentoring initiatives (College: What’s the Story? and the Change Makers programme) have been piloted and designed with support from the AIT Access Department. A total of 122 school students from Temple Michael College in Longford and the Mullingar Community College all participated on the first pilot programme prior to the Covid closures. College Connect are working in tandem with AIT Access to broaden these mentoring initiatives and enhance their impact within the MEND region.</p> <p>AIT is the lead for Traveller Community Needs Analysis as part of the MEND project.</p> <p>A DEIS support programme was delivered in collaboration with Ard Scoil Chiarán, Clara, this was offered through the Business in the Community – Skills at Work Programme.</p>

				11 students participated on the programme despite COVID-19. We are continuing with this programme in 2020-21 year.
Review of existing articulation and MoU arrangements	No baseline provided	Reported as 'in progress'	<p>No interim targets set, however, <i>(Progress towards target setting) Meeting held with Longford Westmeath ETB in May 2020 to explore collaboration on Engineering courses. This included sharing of resources, curriculum and subject matter expertise with clear progression paths from FE to HE. This also involves Heads of Departments visiting FE courses and explaining HE provision.</i></p> <p><i>Department of Hospitality have established an excellent relationship with Laois & Offaly ETB, which involves progression pathways to HE courses and the Institute facilitating practical workshops for FE learners.</i></p>	<p>There have been no further articulation agreements or MOUs signed during the academic year 2019-2020. Equally, the review of articulation and MOU agreements was postponed in the context of the creation of the AIT-LIT TU consortium. In Q4 of 2019 AIT and LIT made a formal decision to merge and seek designation as a TU.</p> <p>Working groups have been established as part of the process.</p> <p>The operability of existing MOUs and articulation agreements will now be reviewed in the context of the TU being a designated awarding body.</p> <p>A common approach and template for the review of all existing MOUs and articulation agreements will be finalised by the AIT-LIT TU Consortium working group addressing this theme of access, transfer and progression arrangements with Further Education Providers and Collaborative Partners.</p>

				Reviews, therefore in the 2019/20 were postponed in the above context for strategic and tactical considerations
Number of Institute of Sanctuary bursaries supporting refugee access	9	Target was 12: reported as achieved, but exact number was not provided.	Target set in Institute's Original Compact document of: 2019 - 12 2020 - 15 2021 - 17	In 2019, we supported 11 students on full and partial scholarships. 2 of these students left the scholarship programme in the reporting period as they achieved refugee status, a goal which enabled them to avail of Government funded supports.
Student Success Strategy	Baseline not provided	In Progress – Bespoke new induction programme “Ready, Steady, Connect”, September 2019	AIT have committed to further supports that include but are not limited to: Academic Writing Science and Maths tutelage Assistive Technologies Medical access and Counselling services	As part of the AIT Student Success Strategy, we are working on continuous improvement of our pre induction programme, “Ready, Steady, Connect”, which targets HEAR and Dare students. AIT continues to refine New Student Induction and the 7-week transition to Third Level programme “AIT Connect”. A notable development in our medical provision includes the Slaintecare funded sexual health screening clinic piloted in this reporting period. Counselling services continue to be provided in response to student demand, in consultation with our Students’ Union and relevant stakeholders.

				<p>AIT continues to provide academic writing, science, maths and business tutor support services to our students.</p> <p>Additionally, AIT has developed a range of online supports for students including Write Right online academic writing module. Services continued throughout COVID lockdown moving to online delivery.</p> <p>All of these initiatives are targeted at ensuring that students successfully complete their first year of college and are provided with the tools to succeed in their progressive years.</p>
<p>Use of ISSE Feedback to enhance the student experience</p>	<p>No baseline provided</p>	<p>Quality Office has built capacity in data analysis and reporting and now produce an institutional level ISSE report inclusive of qualitative analysis.</p>	<p>No interim target set, however, as identified in the 2019 SER: ‘Institutional level ISSE report, inclusive of qualitative analysis, is utilised to inform decision making. It is planned to define a schedule of reporting and complete a gap analysis of reports by Q1 2020’</p>	<p>Through the Learning and Teaching Unit in AIT, <u>a learning enhancement project has been established to data mine the results from the National Student Survey</u>. AIT’s response rate on this annual national survey has been one of the highest of participating HEIs. The rate of response in excess of 65% annually provides rich data to measure the student’s engagement with their programme of study and their social and academic engagement in the AIT community. <u>Using POWER BI, statistical information is now compiled and available to</u></p>

				<u>Faculties and Departments to measure key variables on the data set provided to AIT by the national survey.</u>
Implement a Schedule of Reporting of Access, Progression and Retention Data	No baseline provided.	In progress	Define a schedule of reporting and complete a gap analysis of reports by Q1 2020	(i) Progression and retention tracking is currently limited to the ACCESS area including: (a) 1916 Bursary recipients and (b) College of Sanctuary Scholarship recipients. SAF recipients are tracked for Semester 1 exam completion currently before issuing additional payments in Semester. (ii) AIT will conduct a gap analysis and will review data collection in Semester 2 2020-21 with a view to widening the scope of systematically monitoring and reporting progression and retention levels of all programmes and stages.
Review of provision and cross-faculty opportunities	No baseline provided	Audit of provision and plan future directions is ongoing	No interim target set, Original Compact document. However as identified in the 2019 SER: Faculty Level Strategic Plans will be developed by Q2 2020 to refine academic position, processes and identify emerging opportunities and modes of delivery.	Faculty have been committed to developing our AIT-LIT Technological University application and have paused the development of their own faculty strategic plans in anticipation of designation. This planning has ensured that Faculty are well positioned to contribute to the vision for the new TU as set out in our application.

i. Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)

(i) Build on the success of MEND PATH 2 and PATH 3 funding to develop strategic knowledge, partners and policies to support sustained access to Athlone Institute of Technology by underrepresented groups.

Targets in this area will include: (i) continuing desk-based research into pathways / routes into higher education; updating new findings into the Pathways Report 2020; (ii) providing information to key stakeholders; (iii) promoting Access routes through all communication channels and education stakeholders in the region.

(ii) Number of Institute of Sanctuary bursaries supporting refugee access

AIT will initiate a review of recruiting and intake strategies for the programme. Our goal is to widen the scope of our recruitment to include additional direct provision centres in the wider midlands region towards achieving scholarship targets.

(iii) Community Outreach and Engagement, including 1916 Bursary promotion

AIT continues to build relationships with local community groups and organisations through outreach and engagement activities.

AIRO: - Work continues on the Community Mapping and Engagement Dashboard which is the online data set that will provide a statistical analysis of community and educational services in the MEND Region.

STATUS Toolkit Implementation Committee AIT was formed to rework and progress the Traveller STATUS Toolkit Quality Assurance checklist for implementation at third level. Work will continue in the next reporting period on this project.

(iv) Continue the strong partnerships between all stakeholders (quality office, students union, academic and support staff) so as to continue to strategically utilise ISSE feedback to enhance the student experience.

The Student Induction programme was overhauled and reimagined to be delivered entirely online in our efforts to positively influence student experience and student success. The Access Office is committed to exploring optimal blended learning options for future delivery of *Ready Steady Connect*, New Student Induction, and the *Access Programme*.

(v) Build on the success of the PASS, AIT Inspire, Student Success Advisors and Academic Tutors initiatives to enhance success rates, experience and retention specifically targeting vulnerable groups

Tutor support is provided in key areas such as Science, Maths, Business and Academic Writing. PASS continues to operate successfully in AIT. The quantitative levels achieved to date, as outlined, will be used to benchmark against in 2020/21:

2019/2020 Actual (Reporting period 1 Sept 2019 – 31 Aug 2020)	
PASS sessions	10
AIT Programmes	14
PASS Leaders	20
First year students (PASS was available to)	308
Individual attendances (number of students who attended one or more sessions)	244
Number of students who attended three or more sessions	99

5. Demonstrates consistent improvement in the quality of the learning environment with a close eye to international best practice through a strong focus on quality & academic excellence;

AIT is committed to providing an excellent learning environment for all its students. This is clearly articulated in the Institute mission - ‘to provide contemporary and relevant student centred, career focused education, training and applied research programmes for our diverse cohort of learners’. A key driver for this system objective is the ambition to become a Technological University, known for an ‘outstanding learner experience and distinctive regional contribution, while maintaining our global orientation’ (HEA Compact 2018-2021). During this reporting phase the design and implementation of quality enhancements were clearly aligned to this strategic focus whilst being informed by the National Forum, QQI and the ENQA. The AIT-LIT Consortium application process involved engagement with key stakeholders and thorough examination of international best practice to inform key elements of the application, leading to shared articulation of the educational philosophy, principles for curriculum design and graduate attributes. The principles of Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE) and phased approach to implementation were agreed. Covid19 had an immediate impact on higher education globally. Addressing this key system objective in a pandemic involved a shift to emergency remote learning involving planning and providing necessary supports for both staff and students to maintain a quality learning environment.

The sub-elements noted in the interim targets, and their achievement, provide evidence of progress in key areas including the pivot in focus on the learning environment resulting from COVID-19 and maximising the remote nature of teaching, learning and assessment.

Strategic Priority 5a: Develop a Total Quality Management Strategy and subscribe to becoming a data driven organisation to enhance decision-making capacity. AIT commits to rolling reviews of the academic position to include; level, discipline, architecture, and delivery method for all programmes ensuring offerings are contemporary, relevant, and fit for purpose.

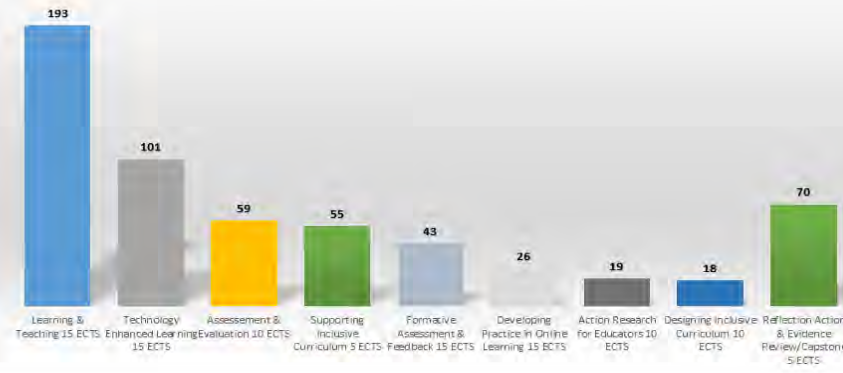
<p>i. Institution Strategic Initiatives</p>	<p>5.1 Support the Professional development of staff as critical decision makers, both with respect to academic excellence and quality assurance/enhancement</p> <p>5.2 Develop a dashboard of critical data, compliant with a schedule of reporting that is accessible to relevant faculties and units with a focus on Access, progression and retention.</p> <p>5.3 Incorporate Universal Design Principles in new curricula design</p> <p>5.4 Further develop the online Distance Learning strategy to respond to learner needs and emerging opportunities</p>			
<p>ii. Key Performance Indicators</p>	<p>Pre-compact Baseline</p>	<p>Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress</p>	<p>2019/2020 Interim Target</p>	<p>2019/2020 Actual (Reporting period 1 Sept 2019 – 31 Aug 2020)</p>
<p>Percentage of full-time academic staff who hold level 10 qualifications or equivalent as per TU Criteria (currently 34 staff completing PhDs)</p>	<p>34%</p>	<p>Target of 48% - indicated target achieved, but specific % or number of staff not provided.</p>	<p>Institute Original Compact document set targets as follows: 2019 – 48% 2021 – 53% 2025 – 60% 53% by 2021 is targeted and achieved in 2020</p>	<p>53%</p>

Review existing time release structures and implement KPIs and Deliverables – Q1 2019	No baseline provided	Target was to complete review and identify and document KPIs – indicated this was achieved.	While no quantitative target was set for 2020, report shows progress in that identified KPIs and deliverables specific to each applicant are now a core tenet of the time release structures.	Identified KPIs and Deliverables specific to each applicant are now a core tenet of the time release structures.
Number of Staff on Time Release	12	Target was 13 – indicated target achieved, but specific number was not provided.	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 Academic Staff on Research Time Release • An additional 10 new supervisors to PhD supervision
Dashboard compliant with a schedule of reporting and accessible.	No dashboard in place	Gap analysis underway to identify what reports are being generated by faculties and support units.	<p>Planned actions noted in 2019 report:</p> <p>Identify subject experts</p> <p>Agree clear reporting requirements</p> <p>Develop list of key institute reports with required outputs and timelines.</p>	Learning Enhancement Project conducted involving all four faculties in AIT in collaboration with the Learning and Teaching Unit, Quality Office and Banner Office. A model for analysing data at faculty level, was developed, specific to assessment of and for Learning, using the MS Power BI software. The findings of which, will be used to inform QAE thematic reviews, programmatic reviews and institutional reviews.
Pilot course exemplifying design principles on CAO	No baseline provided	BA Design with Product Innovation L8 approved and on CAO for intake in Sept 2020	Intake of BA Design with Product Innovation Students, Sept 2020	No intake possible due to low student applications.
Universal Design for Learning Principles in use in Faculties	No baseline provided	UDL included in staff induction – in progress.	Target set in Institute’s Original Compact Document: to incorporate universal	The Learning and Teaching Unit response to Universal Design for Learning Principles for use in Faculties 2019-2020 includes:

			<p>design principles into new curricula design and commence roll out by Q2 2020</p>	<p>(i) Introduction to UDL Principles was incorporated into the new academic staff induction and are an integral part of all postgraduate diploma modules (ii) CPD focuses on devising multiple means of representation when developing teaching resources. (iii) Accessible exams policy is used during periods of assessment across all faculties and included in exam writing workshops (iv) Informed by this strategic commitment, a National Forum funded Learning Enhancement Project (LEP) was awarded in 2019 which led to the establishment of a multi-disciplinary UDL working group in the institute comprising of key stakeholders with expertise in this area. A key output is the development of UDL guideline documents and resources for use by faculties in the design of learning, teaching and assessment, as open educational resources OERs.</p>
<p>Online Distance Learning Strategy: See KSO 1, SI 1.4.</p>			<p>Draft Strategy developed</p>	<p>Not a formal plan but this has been achieved in that we now deliver all programmes in the Faculty online and in a flexible manner across all demographics and in conjunction with industry, in particular the Midlands Industry Collaboration, from</p>

				<p>where we have stated several objectives that we are working towards collaboratively. Currently drafting formal Strategic Plan.</p>
<p>i. Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)</p>	<p>Percentage of full-time academic staff who hold level 10 qualifications/equivalent as per TU Criteria (Currently 34 AIT staff completing PhDs) Application for technological university status sets a key metric of 45% of academic staff with L10/equivalent. AIT has already achieved our 2021 target of 53% and together with LIT we have achieved the key TU target of 45%.</p> <p>Support the Professional development of staff as critical decision makers, both with respect to academic excellence and quality assurance/enhancement</p> <p>(i) Quality of the Learning Environment</p> <p>(i) The Learning and Teaching Unit team conducted a rigorous analysis of a range of platforms for remote teaching widely used in Higher Education (HE), including the licenced version of Zoom for HE.</p> <p>(ii) Informed by its research the L&T team also devised and published a guide to the AIT digital ecosystem, titled “Tips and Tools for Remote Learning, Teaching and Assessment” based on an adapted version of the ABC Learning Design Model.</p> <p>(iii) Once the online platforms for 2020-2021 had been agreed, a range of appropriate supports was designed and facilitated by the L&T Unit. These activities were aimed at preparing staff for remote/online delivery in 2020-2021. Academic and professional support staff from across the institute engaged with the Learning and Teaching Unit.</p> <p>(iv) The institute managed the selection and purchase of technology required for staff to teach online. In addition, funding for student equipment, based on the criteria as set Minister for DFHERIS, enabled students to avail of technology.</p> <p>(ii) CPD</p> <p>In addition to excellent participant rates in a full range of non-accredited CPD offerings, engagement by staff in the Postgraduate Diploma in Learning, Teaching and Assessment continued in 2019-2020. The summary below outlines the total number of awards to date as micro-credentials or special purpose awards in addition to the capstone module for the major award.</p>			

Total number of flexible pathway modules completed 2009 - 2019



Dashboard compliant with a schedule of reporting and accessible.

This Learning Enhancement Project involved all four faculties in AIT in collaboration with the Learning and Teaching Unit, Quality Office and Banner Office. A model for analysing data at faculty level, specific to **Assessment of, for and as Learning** was developed using the MS Power BI software. The findings will be used to inform QAE thematic reviews, programmatic reviews and institutional reviews.

Universal Design for Learning in Curriculum Design LEP

This Learning Enhancement Project began in January 2020 with the aim of developing a greater awareness of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a means of enhancing engagement and inclusion in education across the Institute. The outputs of the project will support the current Strategic Plan which commits to having the principles of UDL underpin all curricula developed in the Institute.

Strategic Priority 5b: Building on the success of the Sunday Times Higher Education Ranking and ISSE benchmarking, Athlone Institute of Technology aspires to become an internationally ranked (U-Multirank) institution.					
i. Institution Strategic Initiatives		1.1 Using QS metrics, internally model Faculties and subject areas to determine priority area for comparison and ranking. 1.2 Develop a strategy and action plan to improve performance relevant to QS metrics.			
ii. Key Performance Indicators		Pre-compact Baseline	Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress	2019/2020 Interim Target	2019/2020 Actual (Reporting period 1 Sept 2019 – 31 Aug 2020)
uMultirank benchmarking		No baseline provided	AIT has decided to opt for uMultirank in place of QS metrics for benchmarking.	* See narrative in the commentary box below	2020 Results on approx.' 30 metrics across Broad Areas of Teaching & Learning; Research; Knowledge Transfer and International Orientation are: 4 A's; 8 B's; 7 C's; 7 D's; 4 E's.
Strategy and action plan to improve performance relevant to QS metrics		No baseline provided	Reported as being 'in progress', with decision to use uMultirank	Outlined in 2019 SER summary and aligned with the Institutes Strategic Plan and TU work packages: "The Institutes Strategic Plan was guided by information provided by participation in U-Multirank. This data was an important source of information and assisted in formulating strategic priorities and success measures. AIT also utilises the bi-annual SRS data source and Institutional profiles, both managed by the HEA. Specifically, in areas of active research SLT's in the relevant Faculties will be responsible for identification of areas for review and benchmarking. This process will facilitate areas of research and educational excellence and serve as a key enabler for future strategic decision-making."	Annual Review of performance, noting areas of strength and weakness and also in line with Strategic Plan.

**iii. Interim targets,
commentary and data source
(maximum of 300 words)**

**Please colour code this box in
line with progress achieved.**

Having benchmark data such as UMultirank is very useful. However, it must be noted that it is subjective:

- (i) Provision and strategic focus for all HEI's are not the same, there are areas we can compare but not in all and against all HEI's
- (ii) Mechanism for capture and collation of reports is not 100% validated thus we must always review and analyse results with caution.

The questionnaire which is provided by HEI's and accounts for approx. 75% of inputs is manually entered.

We also utilise the Institutional Profiles published by the HEA annually as a rich source of data for benchmarking. This also contributes to our focus on Continuous Improvement and achievement of Institute KPI's; our benchmarking on Internationalisation; Access metrics; Progression data by level and ISCED ratios such as student: staff; Pay: Non-Pay and gender data on staffing, In addition, the HEA has provided many good reports on HEI data sets across many variables, and with the recent addition of the visuals and trending, has facilitated access to very valuable data. Most recently the Deprivation Index Scale report was published and highlights the Socio-economic challenges that is a critical priority for AIT.

AIT emerged as a 'Top 25 Performing University' Globally for Interdisciplinary Research. We have improved our progression %'s and increased our full-time students to 15% from our International markets. According to National Survey, AIT Students are the 'Most Satisfied' in Ireland.

We are committed to improving our visibility in publications, having launched online repository for academic research, increased focus on patents awarded, improve our completion rates and actioned gender balance in particular STEM areas and Females in Research and Senior Management.

6. Demonstrates consistent improvement in governance, leadership and operational excellence.

Embedding Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Athena SWAN into the fabric of the Institute is underway:

EDI is a standing item on EMT and GB meeting agendas by way of Departmental Athena SWAN Champions, support for staff participants in the Aurora Programme and roll out of unconscious bias and cultural awareness education.

The AIT-LIT TU Consortium partnership is based on a shared commitment to foundational principles of quality culture enhancement and excellence in operation and governance. AIT-LIT will develop and have procedures in place for the development of programmes that respond to the needs of business, enterprise, the professions, and other stakeholders in the region. The new TU will foster and promote a quality culture where quality is embedded in all its activities, and this will be coupled with its commitment to quality assurance and accountability, quality enhancement and continuous improvement.

Strategic Priority 6a

<p>i. Institution Strategic Initiative</p>	<p>1.3 Achieve Athena SWAN Bronze Status. 1.4 Implement recommendations outlined in the HEA National Review on Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutes 1.5 Embed the Athena SWAN Committee as a permanent Institute committee with powers to drive the Gender Equality Agenda.</p>			
<p>ii. Key Performance Indicators</p>	<p>Pre-compact Baseline</p>	<p>Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress</p>	<p>2019/2020 Interim Target</p>	<p>2019/2020 Actual (Reporting period 1 Sept 2019 – 31 Aug 2020)</p>
<p>(i) Athena Swan Bronze Status</p>	<p>No application made</p>	<p>Application made November 2018; unsuccessful result received April 2019</p>	<p>Re-submit application by April 2020</p>	<p>Unsuccessful result received July 2020. Resubmitted January 2021.</p>
<p>(ii) Number of Gender Equality recommendations implemented.</p>	<p>No baseline provided</p>	<p>Continuing to implement recommendations.</p>	<p>Target as per that which was set in SER 2019: Continue to embed Gender Equality recommendations into all reporting structures of the Institute.</p>	<p>19/22 implemented</p>
<p>(iii) Athena Swan Committee embedded into management structures of AIT</p>	<p>No baseline provided</p>	<p>Athena Swan committee designated as a sub-committee of governing body in March 2019.</p>	<p>As per the narrative in the Institute’s SER 2019 and subsequent dialogue with the HEA it was agreed the key metric of embedding the AS Committee into management structure of the Institute is achieved, therefore no further target set.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governing Body representation on the Athena SWAN Self-assessment Team. • EDI Steering Committee chaired by the President • Athena SWAN SAT representation on the EDI Committee.

i. Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)

- (i) The institute disappointedly received an unsuccessful outcome to its 2020 Athena SWAN (AS) application. Feedback received pushed us to carry out a deeper analysis of the data gathered. Additional focus groups held, specifically designed to look at gaps in understanding of staff views and spotlight the significance of the data in relation to staff lived experience, were supported by a qualitative analysis of comments in the staff survey and resulted in a stronger submission and more robust action plan - submitted January 2021. Implementation of the Institute’s approved EDI and Athena SWAN Action Plans have begun.
- (ii) The Institute continues to implement National Review Gender Equality recommendations with 19/22 implemented and confirms gender balance improvement on Governing Body (GB) and Executive Management Team (EMT) in 2019/2020/2021.

	Academic Year 2018/19		Academic Year 2019/2020		Academic Year 2020/2021	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Governing Body	67%	33%	56%	44%	56%	44%
EMT	75%	25%	67%	33%	54%	46%

Membership of AIT Committees by Gender Academic Year – 2020/2021			
	Total	Male	Female
Governing Body	18	10 (56%)	8 (44%)
Executive Management Team	13	7 (54%)	6 (46%)
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	14	6 (43%)	8 (57%)
Academic Council	29	14 (48%)	15 (52%)
Academic Standards and Quality	25	14 (56%)	11 (44%)
Research, Innovation and Enterprise	14	9 (64%)	5 (36%)
Research Ethics	12	4 (33%)	8 (67%)
Professional Development	12	5 (42%)	7 (58%)

- Focus for improvement on Gender balance on Research, Innovation and Enterprise and Research Ethics Committees, at the next intake.

Outstanding recommendations for implementation are addressed in the Institutes’ current Athena SWAN Action Plan:

- Workload allocation model review
- PMDS review
- Institute Committees Chairs - Gender balance


	<p>(iii) Key metric of embedding the Athena SWAN committee into management structures of AIT has been achieved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The AS self-assessment team (SAT); chaired by the Vice President for Strategic Planning, Institutional Performance, Equality and Diversity has Governing Body; Students Union; Academic, Research and Professional Management and Support staff representation. The Athena SWAN SAT reports to the Institutes' EDI Committee (established December 2019 and chaired by the President), which reports directly to Governing Body. Issues pertaining to EDI are permanent items on all Governing Body and EMT meeting agendas. <p>Additionally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Athena SWAN Departmental Champions - identified and induction received. Commitment to provision of leadership development opportunities for female staff is maintained with a second cohort of participants on the 2020/21 Aurora Programme.
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Strategic Priority 6b

i. Institution Strategic Initiative	Demonstrate consistent improvement in governance, leadership and operational excellence – targets			
	Unlike System Objectives 1-5, the Institute considers System Objective 6 and its High-Level Targets as mandatory and not an area where we can prioritise some over others.			
ii. Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline	Sept 2018-Aug 2019 Progress	2019/2020 Interim Target	2019/2020 Actual (Reporting period 1 Sept 2019 – 31 Aug 2020)
1. Implementation of the 2018 Higher Education Gender Equality Task Force Action Plan and the 2016 Expert Group recommendations.	No baseline set	AGS submitted on time. Compliant with procurement rules and guidelines. Financial position: 2019 calendar year expected to end with a surplus, but a deficit of €777k euro is forecast for end of academic year 2019/20.	No targets set as the Institute is obliged to implement all 11 high level targets of the performance framework.	1. The Institute continues to implement recommendations made by the HEA in the National Review Document with 19/22 of the recommendations implemented.
2. HEIs (Higher Education Institutes) to have attained an Athena SWAN bronze				2. The institute received an unsuccessful outcome to its 2020 Athena SWAN submission, however,

<p>institutional award by 2019 (TUs within 3 years of establishment.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. All HEIs to submit their annual Governance Statements to HEA on time. 4. 100% compliance by HEIs with public procurement rules. 5. Draft annual financial statements to be submitted by HEIs to C&AG (Comptroller and Auditor General) within stipulated C&AG guidelines. 6. Full transparency in HEI (Higher Education Institutions) financial statements about accounting for Trusts and Foundations. 7. 100% compliance by HEIs with public pay policy. 8. 100% compliance by HEIs with public sector numbers controls. 				<p>have resubmitted in January 2021.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. AIT have reported on all governance and compliance requirements as set out in the Annual Governance Statement for 2019/20 reviewed by Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) on 23rd November 2020; approved by Governing Body on 9th December 2020 and submitted to the HEA on 15th December 2020. 4. AIT has achieved significant improvement on procurement compliance in 2019/20 with only one instance of non-compliance. AIT confirms it has a corporate procurement policy and multi annual procurement plan approved by GB and operating to ensure compliance 5. AIT have complied and submitted Annual Financial Statement 2019/20 in required format and timeline of 30th November 2020. 6. AIT has included in the
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<p>9. Implementation of recommendations from rolling governance reviews.</p> <p>10. HEA will develop individual compacts with the HEIs which reflect the overall ambitions of the System Performance Framework and local/regional opportunities.</p> <p>11. Institutional strategic compacts will be assessed by a panel of experts, including international participants, to assess their coherence and capacity for delivery.</p>				<p>Financial Statements 2019/20 full transparency in relation to AIT's Foundation – 'American Friends of AIT.'</p> <p>7. Public Pay Policy (I) The Institute affirms that Government policy on pay is being complied with. (II) The Institute confirms that no severance payments were made during the year. (III) The Institute confirms that it has in place arrangements for ensuring that external work undertaken by employees does not impact upon the performance of core contracted duties.</p> <p>8. AIT has complied with Public Sector number reporting and controls.</p> <p>9. AIT confirms it has implemented all recommendations from Rolling Governance reviews</p> <p>10. } The Institute engages 11. } fully with the HEA in the development, submission</p>
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				and review of its Strategic Dialogue Compact.
<p>iii. Interim targets, commentary and data source (maximum of 300 words)</p>	<p>Our commitment to operational excellence and governance remains at the core of our Institute. We continue to have a record of accomplishment of compliance with Governance issues; work closely internally and with external stakeholders such as HEA, C&AG, etc to ensure that the Institute has not only proper policies and procedures in place, but also an ethos of and culture that promotes good governance.</p> <p>As an agile and ambitious Institute, our Quality Office continues to build robust systems, data, and operational protocols ensuring the protection of the enrolled learner while leading contemporary and relevant educational provision; evidenced by our continued position as the highest ranked Institute of Technology in the Sunday Times Good University Guide 2021.</p> <p>We are committed to maintaining our academic standards and continually enhancing the quality of our teaching and learning provision, our students' voices remain integral to our academic quality and are a central tenant underpinning our quality assurance strategy. The Institute will continue to work in partnership with the HEA in developing a governance model, which will hold good ethics, integrity, and best practice in high regard.</p> <p>The approval of the Institutes Strategic Risk Register by Governing Body in May 2020; linked to both the Institute's Strategic Plan and Compact; identifies mitigating actions including: Work plan for EMT and GB meetings to include reports from Faculty on: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic implementation Plan on progress in relation to KPIs as laid out in Compact • Thematic priorities and deliverables as outlined in the Institute Strategic Plan 2019-2023 <p>Commitment to the implementation of the three outstanding recommendations of the Higher Education Gender Equality Task Force are addressed in the Institute's current Athena SWAN Action Plan (<i>outlined above in 6a(ii)</i>).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workload allocation model review • PMDS review • Institute Committees Chairs - Gender balance <p>Together with attaining Athena SWAN Bronze award will move this initiative to green in the future.</p>			
<p>7. Signature: Of the President or on behalf of the President (please sign in space below)</p>				
<p>Signature:</p>				
<p>Date:</p>	<p>3rd March 2021</p>			