Institute of Technology, Sligo (ITS)
Strategic Dialogue Cycle 4 Reflections on Performance

Self-evaluation report – institution overview

<u>Institution overview:</u>

IT Sligo has reported that it has achieved 11 and made substantial progress towards the remaining 8 of its 19 final set of targets. IT Sligo continues to be the national leader in the development of online learning, designing programmes in partnership with employers. Perhaps the Institute has not taken the opportunity to better promote these successes. IT Sligo needs to improve its benchmarking of performance.

ITS submitted a very concise evaluation report. There was limited critical self-evaluation. On a number of occasions, reference is made to external factors such as funding, ECF, legislation, HEA and Brexit as impacting on targets which were not achieved by ITS. In addition, ITS refer to the challenges over the period of the compact such as being underfunded and that there were several changes in the Executive Team.

ITS are in a relatively strong financial position with healthy reserves and similar to last year, the commentary in parts of the report again refers to the tensions that performance/capacity to achieve targets is constrained by the factors as mentioned above rather than taking the opportunity in some cases to reflect better on their performance.

ITS is very clear that the main priorities are pursuit of CUA TU designation, Improving/growing research activity/performance and research and gaining/maintaining position as a specialist/distinctive institution (online provision). They state that "Domain 1 clusters…identified as being at the third level of priority for the Institute". They consider this as not unimportant, just not among the highest strategic priorities.

With regard to benchmarking ITS state that they have recognised the need to enhance capability in terms of data and benchmarking. The compact has contributed to this realisation. They state that progress has been made internally however given the scale of the institute, the ability to dedicate resources to the area is limited. CUA will be exploring the use of U-Multi Rank.

There were limited references to national policies (reference to the National Access Plan, Transitions agenda). ITS states that in respect of references to National Strategies, these are more reflected in the elaboration of a number of points included in this document, and additionally Appendix E pulls together a number of these references

It was difficult to verify some of the statistics provided as ITS appear to use a different measurement than HEA data.

IT Sligo states that it collects, reports on and analyses student data in a number of different ways; including (i) the actual number of students, (ii) the whole time equivalent (wte) student number, whereby a student taking 30 rather than 60 credits per year is counted as 0.5 wte and (iii) weighted whole time equivalent (wwte) which is the HEA's funding unit, weighted to reflect the relative cost of delivering programmes (1.0 for a classroom based student, up to 1.7 for a laboratory based student, with a further weighting for Postgraduate

Courses). For information purposes please see below student data in respect of (i), (ii) and (iii) – exclusive of traditional apprentices.

(i) Individual student numbers

All intakes by School & Department (WWTE) - Excluding Apprentices

School	Department	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Business & Social Sciences	Business	557	554	561	511	629
	MT&S	642	549	555	548	593
	Social Sciences	679	854	807	736	752
Engineering & Design	C&CP	948	964	916	912	906
	Civil & Const.	539	536	657	577	593
	Mech. & Elec.	934	1,043	1,001	1,149	1,228
Science	Env'mental Sciences	535	584	517	538	616
	Life Sciences	1,394	1,520	1,467	1,621	1,504
All	Research	151	207	200	208	254
View Total		6,378	6,810	6,681	6,800	7,076

(ii) whole time equivalent student numbers

All intakes by School & Department (WTE) - Excluding Apprentices

School	Department	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Business & Social Sciences	Business	557	554	561	511	629
	MT&S	551	462	465	461	493
	Social Sciences	522	658	621	567	577
Engineering & Design	C&CP	646	667	638	639	643
	Civil & Const.	358	358	447	397	409
	Mech. & Elec.	550	614	589	679	723
Science	Env'mental Sciences	343	374	336	346	392
	Life Sciences	872	936	899	988	926
All	Research	52	72	70	71	89
View Total		4,451	4,692	4,625	4,660	4,880

(iii) weighted wholetime equivalent numbers

All intakes by School & Department (WWTE) - Excluding Apprentices

School	Department	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Business & Social Sciences	Business	557	554	561	511	629
	MT&S	642	549	555	548	593
	Social Sciences	679	854	807	736	752
Engineering & Design	C&CP	948	964	916	912	906
	Civil & Const.	539	536	657	577	593
	Mech. & Elec.	934	1,043	1,001	1,149	1,228
Science	Env'mental Sciences	535	584	517	538	616
	Life Sciences	1,394	1,520	1,467	1,621	1,504
All	Research	151	207	200	208	254
View Total		6,378	6,810	6,681	6,800	7,076

ITS states that the three different sets of numbers all show an increase from 2013 (Compact baseline year) to 2016. The individual student number has grown faster than the whole-time equivalent, reflecting the fact that online part time numbers are the fastest growing category. The average weighting per student (wwte/wte) has remained relatively steady over the period, emphasising that online students are mainly in the STEM area.

ITS request the HEA to be realistic in its expectations of further improvements in system performance given the ongoing underfunding situation and recommend that the next round includes a mechanism whereby exceeding targets/successful innovation are rewarded or incentivised. Such a mechanism should not be funded from the underperformance from other HEI's but be additional.

As this is the final year of the compact process, IT Sligo reflected the success of the institution in delivering on the strategic goals of the compact, when conducting their self-evaluation.

They suggest that, on reflection, that they should have been more focussed on the number of objectives which they set in the original compact rather than trying to set objectives across all seven domains.

The commentary provided in some sections was limited and ITS could have taken the opportunity to supplement/highlight some other activities in which the Institute is involved and would have better demonstrated otherwise good performance.

ITS has included several appendices highlighting its activities and successes including

(i) IT Sligo, in partnership with the Insurance Institute, launched the first "new" higher education Apprenticeship. This 3 year Level 8 programme is delivered right across Ireland using IT Sligo's online platform, allowing students to earn whilst they learn on an industry developed programme that features a significant element of workbased learning. (Appendix A)

(ii) Research published in Quaternary Science Reviews by IT Sligo Archaeologist Dr Marion Dowd, pushed back the date of human existence in Ireland by 2,500 years. This discovery re-writes Irish archaeology and adds an entirely new chapter to human colonisation of the island – moving Ireland's story into a new era. (Appendix B)

(iii) IT Sligo, in collaboration with NUI Galway and the Irish Medical Devices Association Skillnet launched a new online blended learning Masters Degree in Medical Technology Regulatory Affairs, the first of its kind in Ireland. (Appendix C)

(iv) A team of Scientists, led by Professor Suresh Pillai of IT Sligo, made a significant breakthrough which could control the spread of antibiotic-resistant superbugs Published in the international scientific journal Scientific Reports, the breakthrough will allow everyday items from smartphones to door handles to be protected against bacteria including MRSA and E.coli. (Appendix D))

It is very clear that they are strong in the provision of online learning and this is referenced across many of the domains.

IT Sligo clearly state that Clusters and Internationalisation are important, but they are not the highest priority. For example, in respect of cluster, IT Sligo collaborates with a range of partners as appropriate both within and outside of the Regional Cluster, e.g. with Ulster University on a suite of Biomedical programmes, GMIT, AIT, NUI Galway (joint Masters Programme in Regulatory Affairs) and NIBRT (IT Sligo is the teaching provider for a large suite of NIBRT programmes).

IT Sligo's main priorities are expanding online provision, growing applied research and CUA TU designation and they have stated that these align with the Institutes own strategic priorities.

Self-evaluation report - domain level reviews

1. Regional clusters:

Initial commentary:

Member institutions of the West/North West regional cluster include NUI Galway, GMIT, IT Sligo and LYIT.

The members provided detailed commentary which provided a lot of examples which reflected the areas where the cluster is working well together (NFTL funded projects, pilot doctoral staff development programmes jointly awarded/delivered programmes).

ITS did take the opportunity to state that while protocols have been developed for discussion on programme provision, there are competitive tensions amongst the cluster partners (competing for funding and students).

Three objectives were set, one seems achieved and there are two with substantial progress made.

Establish a cluster of HEI's in the North-West Region. Reference is made to engagement with Regional Skills Fora, FE sector, ETBs, Failte Ireland along with statement that the collaboration under the cluster has deepened resulting in particular synergies in the area of Teaching and Learning (6 joint cluster projects awarded by NFTL).

The ITS 2016 target was a review of cluster objectives and performance and achievement of medium term cluster objectives. This review is not fully addressed in the report.

In relation to the objective on Coordinated academic planning, ITS state that while substantial progress was made and a diverse range of programmes are provided across the region, there is not a co-ordinated plan. There is reference to detailed mapping and analysis of programmes across all discipline areas at both u/g and p/g levels by the cluster along with deeper collaboration on research and technology transfer.

The pilot doctoral level staff development programme is making strong progress with 10 IOT staff registered in NUIG (it's not clear how many of these 10 are ITS staff).

Finally, on the objective to develop regional learning pathways with partner institutes and FE institutions to provide progression opportunities ITS state that while substantial progress was made and pathways have improved there has been no significant change to progression amongst HEIs in the region.

A scheme for progression and common access and transfer policies has been developed and cluster partners have a process for the systematic capture of student transfers in the region since 2015.

There was a reference to collaboration on access and developing regional solutions to the objectives identified in the National Access Plan.

A detailed list of all collaborations between the cluster partners and FE institutions was provided which helped to verify the progress made. However, ITS is only mentioned specifically in one collaboration.

The cluster offers three jointly awarded/delivered programmes and master's level (55 students registered) and a fourth programme in development.

ITS state that they have not agreed to the cluster proposal regarding a framework for research students (one-way progression of Research masters' students in the IoTs to NUIG) as it conflicts with their own plans to build its research portfolio.

The reporting includes example of areas of where collaboration has occurred.

- Full time and part time enrolments are increasing except for u/g part-time.
- Total 45% national share of remote u/g enrolments (ITS lead in this regard).
- Level 7 numbers are decreasing.
- Decrease in p/g graduates (14.1% decrease over 2015).
- Mature entrants decreasing.
- Flexible provision increasing.

National Policy Context:

ITS state that "both the absence of a clear policy context for Clusters (aborting the consultative document) and funding for clusters adds to uncertainty. Within the cluster there is not always agreement and that is evidenced by the fact that there is not an agreed response to the Performance Compact".

Reference is made to engagement with the RSF, the Cluster Programme Managers are members of the fora steering groups and the RSF Managers attend Cluster Operations Group meetings twice a year.

Critical evaluation and feedback:

Nationally, regional clusters have progressed better in some parts than others. It is true that each member institution has its own concerns and strategic imperatives, and given limited resources should concentrate on these. However, successful regional engagement would drive the region and provide an opportunity to leverage shared resources where appropriate.

2. Participation, equal access and lifelong learning:

Initial commentary:

There is limited reference to access and progression pathways, with IT Sligo stating that they have significantly expanded Access through the growth in online delivery (not clear what access categories are included in this statement). They have stated that full-time numbers have not increased as planned due to competition from IoT partners implementing financial recovery plans as required by the HEA.

ITS states that the National Access Plan identifies six main target groups to be supported with access and participation in higher education. One of these target groups is part-time / flexible participation students. IT Sligo's 2,000 online students are 95% part time and 100% "flexible", contributing to achieving the 22% national target for part-time/flexible participation The Institute's model allows students to study from any location at any time – thus overcoming many of the barriers that prevent people accessing traditional full-time campus based higher education. The cohort also has a significant number of mature students participating at Higher Certificate level, the first experience of H.E for many, another of the six categories identified in the National Access Plan.)

Two objectives set 1 achieved, 1 substantial progress made.

The 2016 target for the increase in online student numbers has been surpassed.

With regard to the objective to steadily increase student numbers, the original target of 10% was not achieved. Numbers have increased by 6% and ITS state that this is due to population decline in the region coupled with competition from other IOT partners as referenced above and "aggressive" expansion plans of other HEI's (IoTs and Unis) outside the region.

It is difficult to verify the increase in numbers suggested as ITS provide a weighted WTE number both in the original compact and the self-evaluation report which is different to HEA data. (See above charts added in institutional overview)

ITS also refers to a different final target number in the report to that stated in the original compact (7,204 v 7,004). This is an error in the submission, the target was 7,004.

Based on full-time under graduate and post-graduate enrolments numbers have decreased by 1.6% since 2012/13. Overall enrolments have increased by 4% since 2012/13 but this increase takes account of the significant increase in under graduate remote enrolments since 2012/13 of 39% in the same period.

Full time post graduate enrolments have decreased by 17% in the same period.

There is an increase in the socio-economic disadvantaged new entrants in the period from 12/13 – 15/16 of 25%. This category represents 39% of new entrants. Both mature and disability new entrants have decreased, 29% and 65% respectively over the same period.

National Policy Context:

ITS state that they have added a number of general entry programmes to respond to the Transition agenda.

ITS have improved on non–progression 22% from baseline of 27% as at end 2016. Commentary below in T&L domain.

IT Sligo references the national plan in the cluster context, noting that, 'the Cluster partners are committed to deepening collaboration on access and have made significant process in developing regional solutions to the objectives identified in the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019'.

3. Excellent teaching and learning and quality of student experience:

Initial commentary:

Examples are provided of methods used to improve and exceed the non-progression targets, given that ITS state that they have highest proportion of students in receipt of SUSI support.

IT Sligo suggested that the non progression measure is too blunt a measure as they state that non–progression of ITS student is more likely to do with non-academic reasons (by comparison to the university sector). Plans are set out to further improve progression.

Three targets are set out in the original compact, 2 included in the self-evaluation report (a 3rd objective was set out in the original compact and had final 2015 target). 1 target achieved, 1 some progress made.

As referenced above the target set out for non-progression has been exceeded.

The second objective to increase the number of academic staff with post-graduate qualifications has not been achieved. 2016 target of 20 and ITS have achieved 14. ITS state that the original target was set in the expectation that a Learning and Development Unit would be established but this was not the case due to staffing and financial resource issues. They have appointed an Educational Development Manager in early 2017 to address this. In addition, they did indicate in last year's report that it might be difficult to reach the 2016 target of 20. They have increased numbers by 3 over last year's update.

They do state that they have increased the number of academic staff with a L10 qualification in the same period. No other data provided in this regard.

The number of graduates has begun to increase after a period of decline.

Graduates	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Undergraduate	1,710	1,753	1,689	1,556	1,488	1,494
Postgraduate	79	64	58	81	46	52
Total	1,789	1,817	1,747	1,637	1,534	1,546

Enrolment data referred to in domain 2 above.

There is a very significant increase in the L8 offerings in 2017 over 2016.

2016 ISSE scores are for all categories are very close to the national averages (slightly less than average on supportive environment, reflective learning and higher order learning)

Very focussed on expanding online provision and this is evident from growth in enrolment numbers (39% over 2012/13).

National Policy Context:

The self-evaluation didn't seek to contextualise performance or challenges in the context of national strategy (*Action Plan(s) for Jobs*; the *National Skills Strategy 2025*; and, the *National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship*).

On Transitions, Sligo note that they have '…grown student numbers, maintained a diverse range of programmes, adding a number of general entry programmes to respond to the Transitions agenda'.

Sligo did not refer to the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) as part of benchmarking and self-evaluation processes.

4. High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation:

Initial commentary:

IT Sligo provided a clear statement that their strategic objective is to grow applied research to both drive economic and social development in the region but also to meet TU criteria which is an overriding strategic objective for the institute. ITS has provided details on the cumulative research output over the past 3 years from the Strategic Research Centres. There is no reference to cluster or CUA collaborations. There is a statement from ITS re cluster proposal on research as outlined in the earlier part of this report.

On performance, as against targets as set out in the compact, four objectives set, 1 achieved, 1 revised, 2 substantial progress made.

ITS achieved 2016 target to increase the number of staff engaging in research.

With regard to the objective to establish Strategic Research Centres, the 2016 target was for four SRC generating appropriate research outputs and funding. In the 2015 reference was made to the fact that the 4th centre was deferred but it was expected to be established and generating income by the end of the year. The report states that instead of establishing a 4th centre, ITS choose to establish a tier of Recognised Research Groups that could develop into SRCs. ITS have stated this objective was achieved.

The objective to increase research income was not reached but delays with INTERREG awards and external challenges related to the outcome of the Brexit vote have contributed to this.

ITS did not achieve its 2016 target to increase the number of L9 & 10 research students. They have retained their baseline figure and state that this is an achievement given the competitive funding environment and the removal of post-graduate grants. They expect this number to increase in 2017.

Student numbers provided in report are in line with HEA data.

National Policy Context:

IT Sligo does not link research activity to the delivery of targets as set out in *Innovation 2020* and *Enterprise 2025* in its self-evaluation report.

5. Enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge exchange:

Initial commentary:

The original compact refers to improving employability prospects of all graduates and the only reference to this is a recently signed Strategic Partnership Agreement with Abbvie to provide a network of excellence for R&D, Talent Development including upskilling. This will strengthen industrial experience for students and will increase the number of research masters and PhD students (previous reference to the decrease in enrolments in this area).

The commencement of the Insurance Apprenticeship programme in 2016, which was the first programme to commence in Ireland and in the HE sector (run in collaboration with the industry partner), is welcome, as is the Masters programmes in Med Teach Regulatory Affairs.

IS Sligo also references online delivery of company specific programmes.

As regards compact objectives, of the three objectives set, 2 are achieved and 1 has substantial progress.

Two new agreements to provide company specific training and enhanced engagement with stakeholders from the region and beyond.

In relation to the latter objective it would have been useful if some commentary had been provided on what the enhanced engagement has resulted in for ITS.

IT Sligo's key engagement objectives related to the development and delivery of tailored programmes for industry. Taking the example of the Masters in Regulatory Affairs, the outcome is that the Irish Medical Devices Association is funding staff from a range of blue chip multinational companies to take a course at IT Sligo. These companies include Boston Scientific, Medtronic, Allergan, Creganna and Covidien. IT Sligo takes this as validation that the Institute is producing graduates with the skills required by industry. It also serves to ensure that teaching is as up to date and industry informed as possible. This serves to enhance the reputation and therefore employability, of all our graduates. Providing graduates with the skills required by employers is one of IT Sligo's main aims, our engagement with enterprise both insures that this is the case (companies would not contribute to the cost of these programmes if they were not relevant) and provides the validation of this relevance. Our students benefit from this.)

With regard to the objective on increasing innovation vouchers, there was a target of 35 set in the compact and 24 were completed and 15 work in progress at end 2016.

Two Invention Disclosures are recorded in 2014.

National Policy Context:

The self-evaluation didn't seek to contextualise performance or challenges in the context of national strategy (*Action Plan(s) for Jobs*; the *National Skills Strategy 2025*; and, the *National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship*).

IT Sligo notes it role in a regional entrepreneurship programme with LYIT, "Ignite West" Technology Transfer Consortium with GMIT, LYIT and NUIG.

6. Enhanced internationalisation:

Initial commentary:

ITS state that internationalisation is not one of its highest priorities as the institute doesn't have the scale or resources required to achieve major international growth. It Sligo is collaborating with CUA partners and in process of agreeing a joint initiative to establish a CUA base in China.

Online provision also referenced in this domain which provides for students living outside Ireland to study in ITS.

Two objectives set, 1 achieved, 1 substantial progress

They state they have exceeded the target set for increased recruitment of international students (250) – Note that HEA figures show 174 international students in 2016/17.

IT Sligo states that it had set a target of 250 international students. This target was a student number target, it was not an international fee paying target. The figure the Institute provided of 281 was based on the November returns and included 100 Erasmus students, other EU full time students and non- EU full fee-paying students.

IT Sligo targets were from a relatively modest base of 140 international students and in exceeding its target the institute doubled its international student cohort. It is unlikely that IT Sligo will itself achieve the 15% national target, as set out in Irish Educated – Globally Connected, given its peripheral location in the North West of Ireland far from the major urban centres of choice. However, the achievement of Technological University designation will clearly assist in the Institute's ability to attract international students.

With regard to the objective to increase the number of outward student placements they state they have increased this by 40% rather than 100% as set out in the original compact. This is due to a new business with language programme failing to attract planned number of students.

It is difficult to verify the numbers as ITS provide figures in the original compact and the self-evaluation report which are different to the HEA data. From HEA data Full-Time Non-EU students have increased from 28 to 132 (in the period 12/13 – 16/17).

Outward Erasmus placements in 2016/17 numbered 11.

National Policy Context:

IT Sligo didn't reference performance to Ireland's international strategy, *Irish Educated, Globally Connected: An international education strategy for Ireland, 2016-2020.* The self-evaluation report does note that internationalisation 'is not one of IT Sligo's highest priorities as IT Sligo lacks the scale and resources'.

7. Institutional consolidation:

Initial commentary:

ITS state that CUA progress has been significant given the challenges faced, absence of legislation, delays in receiving funding, TUI industrial action and turnover of senior staff amongst a number of the partners and CUA itself.

The objective set on the original compact to pursue a trajectory that achieves re-designation as a TU had 4 parts. Three of these have been achieved.

Submission of Stage 2 plan is due Q4 2017 and dates for Evaluation of Stage 2, application for merging and application for designation as a TU TBC.

National Policy Context:

It is true that the CUA partners are somewhat reliant on resolutions of issues around technological universities at national rather than local level.

Critical evaluation and feedback:

Overall commitment to CUA progress and Technological University status seems to vary across the partnership. While it is true that progress has been somewhat restricted due to external factors the partners should continue to progress together where they can and be prepared to move when the opportunity arises. More evidence of progress such as collaborative project progressing or completed, towards the shared TU goal, would be useful.

8. Additional Notes:

IT Sligo made no reference to Gender Equality in the self-evaluation statement.

ITS has responded that no reference was made to gender equality as it was not the subject of any targets. The Institute has identified addressing inequality as an action in the next strategic plan and we look forward to discussing this at the Strategic Dialogue)

Appendices - Four top achievements of IT Sligo in 2016.

The four achievements cut across our three major spheres of activity, teaching & learning, research and engagement as well as the majority of the Compact Domains. The achievements are; two new programmes, one a full time online Hons Degree apprenticeship in Insurance Practice developed in collaboration with the Insurance Industry, the second a part time online Masters in Regulatory Affairs jointly delivered with NUI Galway and developed with the Irish Medical Devices Association, and two pieces of world-class research, one being an Archaeological discovery which resets the clock for human habitation in Ireland by 2,500 years and the second the development of a nanotechnology application to protect against infections from superbugs such as E.coli and MRSA.

(i)   The new Insurance Apprenticeship. IT Sligo, in partnership with the Insurance Institute, launched the first "new" higher education Apprenticeship. This 3 year Level 8 programme is delivered right across Ireland using IT Sligo's online platform, allowing students to earn whilst they learn on an industry developed programme that features a significant element of workbased learning

Launching the new programme, the Minister of Education and Skills, Richard Bruton stated

"As our economy comes out of a very difficult period, there are many new opportunities in the further education and training sector, including traineeships and apprenticeships, as well as in the third level sector. My Department's Action Plan for Education contains ambitious actions to be developed and implemented including a total of 100 apprenticeship schemes and 50 traineeship schemes delivering 50,000 registrations between now and 2020. This level 8 apprenticeship programme ticks many of the boxes when it comes to responsiveness to emerging skills needs coupled with flexible and online learning". (Press release attached as Appendix A)

In addition to the Action Plan for Education, the launch of this new programme contributed towards 3 of the 5 elements of the Vision for Ireland as set out in the National Skills Strategy 2025 namely; education responsive to the needs of society and the economy, strengthens the relationship between higher education and employers and effectively using technology to support talent and skills provision.

(ii)   In March 2016, research published in Quaternary Science Reviews by IT Sligo Archaeologist Dr Marion Dowd, pushed back the date of human existence in Ireland by 2,500 years. This discovery re-writes Irish archaeology and adds an entirely new chapter to human colonisation of the island – moving Ireland's story into a new era.

Radiocarbon dating of a butchered brown bear bone, which has been stored in a cardboard box at the National Musuem of Ireland for almost 100 years, has established that humans were on the island of Ireland so 12,500 years ago – 2,500 years earlier than

previously believed. Since the 1970s, the oldest evidence of human occupation on the island of Ireland has been at Mount Sandel in Co. Derry. This site has been dates at 8,000 BC, indicating that humans had occupied the island for some 10,000 years. However, new analysis of the bear patellaoriginally found in Co Clare in 1903 gives us undisputed evidence that people existed in Ireland during the preceding Palaeolithic period at 10,500 BC, some 12,500 years ago.

This is a major breakthrough for archaeologists who have spent decades searching for earlier signs of human occupation on the inland. (Press release attached as Appendix B)

(iii)   IT Sligo, in collaboration with NUI Galway and the Irish Medical Devices Association Skillnet launched a new online blended learning Masters Degree in Medical Technology Regulatory Affairs, the first of its kind in Ireland. The impetus for the development of this specialist programme emerged from industry needs and the content was developed in conjunction with a taskforce of regulatory experts. The course will enable Regulatory Affairs personnel in the Med Tech industry to understand all current device and diagnostic regulation and to develop the skills necessary to address and prepare for the ever-changing global environment of regulatory affairs.

This new programme was developed in response to industry needs, in partnership with industry and uses online technology – all objectives set out in the National Skills Strategy. In addition, the specific discipline, Medical Devices, has also been identified as an important sector with specific skills needs in the National Strategy. (Press release attached as Appendix C)

(iv)   A team of Scientists, led by Professor Suresh Pillai of IT Sligo, made a significant breakthrough which could control the spread of antibiotic-resistant superbugs Published in the international scientific journal Scientific Reports, the breakthrough will allow everyday items from smartphones to door handles to be protected against bacteria including MRSA and E.coli. Using nanotechnology, the discovery is an effective and practical antimicrobial solution that can be applied to everyday items.

It will be of particular use in hospitals and medical facilities which are losing the battle against the spread of killer superbugs (Press release attached as Appendix D)

1. The HEA have reflected that Clusters and Internationalisation did not align with the Institute's own strategic plan but that is not exactly the position the Institute articulated. Clusters and internationalisation are important, they are just not our highest priority. For example, in respect of cluster, IT Sligo collaborates with a range of partners as appropriate both within and outside of the Regional Cluster, e.g. with Ulster University on a suite of Biomedical programmes, GMIT, AIT, NUI Galway (joint Masters Programme in Regulatory Affairs) and NIBRT (IT Sligo is the teaching provider for a large suite of NIBRT programmes).

Appendix A

News Release

Ireland's Newest Apprentices Begin Landmark Insurance Education Journey

Ireland's first ever Insurance Apprentices have started a ground-breaking Level 8 degree programme of study.

The new Insurance Practitioner Apprenticeship is a statutory apprenticeship, which has been developed jointly by the Industry's education body, The Insurance Institute and Institute of Technology, Sligo.

It was formally launched by the Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton T.D. at IT Sligo on Friday, and came a day after his announcement of a new Government Action Plan for Education, which aims make Ireland's education and training system the best in Europe by 2026.

The new entrants, comprising school leavers, graduates and career changers, started the three-year programme of study, which is being delivered online.

The new apprentices are entering one of Ireland's largest and most diverse financial services sectors which currently employs more than 28,000 people nationwide.

The apprenticeship, designed in conjunction with the insurance industry, equips students with the technical skills and business acumen identified as essential for today's market.

Leading to a Level 8 honours degree award, the Insurance Practitioner Apprenticeship is the first of its kind in the country.

Launching the apprenticeship today, Minister Bruton said "As our economy comes out of a very difficult period, there are many new opportunities in the further education and training sector, including traineeships and apprenticeships, as well as in the third level sector. My Department's Action Plan for Education contains ambitious actions to be developed and implemented including a total of 100 apprenticeship schemes and 50 traineeship schemes delivering 50,000 registrations between now and 2020. This level 8 apprenticeship programme ticks many of the boxes when it comes to responsiveness to emerging skills needs coupled with flexible and online learning".

Apprentices will study online from their place of work one day a week. A core element of the apprenticeship will be the practical on-the-job work experience, which will enable them to test their knowledge, and enhance their skillset.

Welcoming the launch of the new apprenticeship programme, Dermot Murray, CEO of The Insurance Institute said: "This is a game-changer for the way we recruit, develop and retain

talent in the insurance sector. The programme is creating a national standard for education and competencies in the industry and it goes a long way towards solving the problems companies are facing due to skills shortages. I'm looking forward to seeing the initiative expand in 2017 and beyond, and we will continue to work closely with IT Sligo and the insurance industry to ensure its relevance in this ever-changing market."

Colin McLean, Interim President of IT Sligo said: "This is a perfect illustration of 21st century collaboration between industry and educators. The combination of modern technology through online learning with the expertise of industry practitioners will provide these apprentices with the relevant skills to thrive as an Insurance professional."

The new Insurance Practitioner Apprenticeship has the support of The Apprenticeship Council SOLAS: The Further Education and Training Authority; and the Higher Education Authority.

Appendix B

Press Release

New Discovery Pushes Back Date of Human Existence in Ireland by 2,500 years

- ? Hugely significant discovery re-writes Irish history
- ? Bear bone analysis shows humans were in Ireland during the Palaeolithic period

A remarkable archaeological discovery in a Co. Clare cave has pushed back the date of human existence in Ireland by 2,500 years.

This discovery re-writes Irish archaeology and adds an entirely new chapter to human colonisation of the island – moving Ireland's story into a new era.

Radiocarbon dating of a butchered brown bear bone, which has been stored in a cardboard box at the National Museum of Ireland for almost 100 years, has established that humans were on the island of Ireland some 12,500 years ago –2,500 earlier than previously believed.

Since the 1970s, the oldest evidence of human occupation on the island of Ireland has been at Mount Sandel in Co. Derry. This site has been dated at 8,000 BC, which is in the Mesolithic period, indicating that humans had occupied the island for some 10,000 years.

However, new analysis of the bear patella – or knee bone – originally found in Co. Clare in 1903 gives us undisputed evidence that people existed in Ireland during the preceding Palaeolithic period at 10,500 BC, some 12,500 years ago.

This is a major breakthrough for archaeologists who have spent decades searching for earlier signs of human occupation on the island.

The discovery was made by Dr Marion Dowd, an archaeologist at IT Sligo, and Dr Ruth Carden, a Research Associate with the National Museum of Ireland.

"Archaeologists have been searching for the Irish Palaeolithic since the 19th century, and now, finally, the first piece of the jigsaw has been revealed. This find adds a new chapter to the human history of Ireland," said Dr Dowd.

Dowd and Carden's paper on the discovery was published over the weekend in the international scientific journal Quaternary Science Reviews (QSR). Dr Dowd is a lecturer in Prehistoric Archaeology at the School of Science in IT Sligo and is a specialist in Irish cave archaeology.

The adult bear bone was one of thousands of bones originally discovered in Alice and Gwendoline Cave, Co. Clare in 1903 by a team of early scientists. They published a report on their investigations and noted that the bear bone had knife marks.

The bone was stored in a collection at the National Museum of Ireland since the 1920s. In 2010 and 2011, animal osteologist Dr Ruth Carden, a Research Associate at the museum, was re-analysing its animal bone collections from early cave excavations. She came across the bear bone and documented it along with many others.

As a specialist in cave archaeology, Dr Dowd, became interested in the butchered bear patella and, together with Dr Carden, the pair sought funding from the Royal Irish Academy for radiocarbon dating, which was carried out by the Chrono Centre at Queen's University Belfast.

"When a Palaeolithic date was returned, it came as quite a shock. Here we had evidence of someone butchering a brown bear carcass and cutting through the knee probably to extract the tendons. Yes, we expected a prehistoric date, but the Palaeolithic result took us completely by surprise," says Dr Dowd.

A second sample was sent to the University of Oxford for radiocarbon dating to test the validity of the initial result. Both dates indicated human butchery of the bear about 12,500 years ago.

The bone was then sent to three bone specialists for independent analysis of the cut marks. These were Dr Jill Cook at the British Museum in London; Prof. Terry O'Connor at the University of York and Prof. Alice Choyke at the Central European University in Hungary.

The experts were unaware of the radiocarbon dating results prior to their examinations but all determined that the cut marks were made on fresh bone, confirming that the cut marks were of the same date as the patella, and therefore that humans were in Ireland during the Palaeolithic period.

"This made sense as the location of the marks spoke of someone trying to cut through the tough knee joint, perhaps someone who was inexperienced," explains Dr Dowd. "In their repeated attempts, they left seven marks on the bone surface. The implement used would probably have been something like a long flint blade."

"The bone was in fresh condition meaning that people were carrying out activities in the immediate vicinity – possibly butchering a bear inside the cave or at the cave entrance," said Dr Dowd.

Dr Ruth Carden said: "From a zoological point of view, this is very exciting, since up to now we have not factored in a possible 'human-dimension' when we are studying patterns of colonisation and local extinctions of species to Ireland.

"This paper should generate a lot of discussion within the zoological research world and it's time to start thinking outside the box...or even dismantling it entirely!"

Dr Dowd and Dr Carden are now hoping to get funding to carry out further analysis of other material recovered during the 1903 excavations, the cave itself and other potential cave sites around the country.

Professor Vincent Cunnane, President of IT Sligo said: "Academic research is often lauded for helping to shape new concepts and innovations of the future, but this ground-breaking discovery for Irish archaeology highlights the vital role it can play in challenging and deepening our understanding of our heritage and history."

Nigel T. Monaghan, Keeper, Natural History Division of the National Museum of Ireland said: "The National Museum of Ireland – Natural History, holds collections of approximately two million specimens, all are available for research and we never know what may emerge.

Radiocarbon dating is something never imagined by the people who excavated these bones in caves over a century ago, and these collections may have much more to reveal about Ireland's ancient past."

The remarkable discovery comes just three years after the first evidence of Palaeolithic occupation of Scotland was uncovered. In 2013, a cache of flint tools was unearthed on the Isle of Islay, pushing the date of human existence in Scotland from the Mesolithic into the Palaeolithic era.

Appendix C

New Collaboration Aims To Help Ireland's Medical Technology Sector 'Master' Regulatory Affairs

A new education collaboration involving NUI Galway, Institute of Technology, Sligo and the Irish Medical Devices Association Skillnet is set to significantly enhance the ability of Irish Companies in filling regulatory and quality assurance roles.

The Masters in Medical Technology Regulatory Affairs is a new online blended learning programme and the first of its kind in Ireland.

The programme was formally launched by representatives of NUI Galway and IT Sligo at the IMDA and Plastics Ireland networking event in Sligo on Tuesday as part of the National Start Up Gathering Week.

The impetus for the development of this specialist programme emerged from industry needs and the content has been developed in conjunction with a taskforce comprised of regulatory experts from the IMDA's Regulatory and Quality Working Group.

The course will enable Regulatory Affairs personnel in the Medical Technology industry to understand all current device and diagnostic regulations and to develop the skills necessary to address and prepare for the ever-changing global environment of regulatory affairs.

"The Medical Technology industry is one of the most important growth areas in the Irish economy," said Terry Smith, Professor of Biomedical Engineering Science at NUI, Galway "The whole area of Regulatory Affairs is critical to the future success of this highly regulated industry, and to the continued growth of the Irish economy."

"This new programme addresses a gap in the training of regulatory affairs personnel in Ireland," said Professor Vincent Cunnane, President of IT Sligo. "Because it is an online programme, we look forward to it becoming the flagship offering in education for Regulatory Affairs programmes, not just nationally, but also internationally in due course."

The new programme, which commenced in September, is delivered part-time over two years. The first year of the programme has been funded by the IMDA which has also helped ensure significant industry input into the course content.

ENDS---

Appendix D

For Immediate Release

Irish Scientific Discovery Key to Controlling Killer Superbugs

- ? Scientists create formula to prevent MRSA, E. coli and other bugs from breeding on glass and metallic surfaces
- ? Hospital surfaces, smartphones, ATMs can all be bacteria-proofed
- ? 99.9pc kill rate on MRSA, E. coli and other superbugs
- ? Product that will save lives to be made by Irish company

A new discovery could control the spread of deadly antibiotic-resistant superbugs which experts fear are on course to kill 10 million people every year by 2050 – more than will die from cancer.

A team of scientists, led by Professor Suresh C. Pillai from **IT Sligo**, have made the significant breakthrough which will allow everyday items – from smartphones to door handles -- to be protected against deadly bacteria, including MRSA and E. coli.

The research was published today in prestigious international scientific journal, Scientific Reports, published by the Nature publishing group.

News of the discovery comes just days after UK Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne warned that superbugs could become deadlier than cancer and are on course to kill 10 million people globally by 2050.

Speaking at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington, Mr Osborne warned that the problem would slash global GDP by around €100 trillion if it was not tackled.

Using nanotechnology, the discovery is an effective and practical antimicrobial solution -- an agent that kills microorganisms or inhibits their growth -- that can be used to protect a range of everyday items.

Items include anything made from glass, metallics and ceramics including computer or tablet screens, smartphones, ATMs, door handles, TVs, handrails, lifts, urinals, toilet seats, fridges, microwaves and ceramic floor or wall tiles.

It will be of particular use in hospitals and medical facilities which are losing the battle against the spread of killer superbugs.

Other common uses would include in swimming pools and public buildings, on glass in public buses and trains, sneeze guards protecting food in delis and restaurants as well as in clean rooms in the medical sector.

The discovery is the culmination of almost 12 years of research by a team of scientists, led by Prof. Suresh C. Pillai initially at CREST (Centre for Research in EngineeringSurface Technology) in DIT and then at IT Sligo's Nanotechnology Research Group (PEM Centre).

"It's absolutely wonderful to finally be at this stage. This breakthrough will change the whole fight against superbugs. It can effectvely control the spread of bacteria," said **Prof. Pillai.**

He continued: "Every single person has a sea of bacteria on their hands. The mobile phone is the most contaminated personal item that we can have. Bacteria grows on the phone and can live there for up to five months. As it is contaminated with proteins from saliva and from the

hand, It's fertile land for bacteria and has been shown to carry 30 times more bacteria than a toilet seat."

The research started at Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT)'s CREST and involves scientists now based at IT Sligo, Dublin City University (DCU) and the University of Surrey. Major researchers included Dr Joanna Carroll and Dr Nigel S. Leyland.

It has been funded for the past eight years by John Browne, founder and CEO of **Kastus Technologies Ltd**, who is bringing the product to a global market. He was also supported by significant investment from Enterprise Ireland.

As there is nothing that will effectively kill antibiotic-resistant superbugs completely from the surface of items, scientists have been searching for a way to prevent the spread.

This has been in the form of building or 'baking' antimicrobial surfaces into products during the manufacturing process.

However, until now, all these materials were toxic or needed UV light in order to make them work. This meant they were not practical for indoor use and had limited commercial application.

"The challenge was the preparation of a solution that was activated by indoor light rather than UV light and we have now done that," said Prof Pillai.

The new water-based solution can be sprayed onto any glass, ceramic or metallic surface during the production process, rendering the surface 99.9 per cent resistant to superbugs like MRSA, E. coli and other fungi.

The solution is sprayed on the product -- such as a smartphone glass surface -- and then 'baked' into it, forming a super-hard surface. The coating is transparent, permanent and scratch resistant and actually forms a harder surface than the original glass or ceramic material.

The team first developed the revolutionary material to work on ceramics and has spent the last five years adapting the formula – which is non-toxic and has no harmful bi-products -- to make it work on glass and metallic surfaces.

Research is now underway by the group on how to adapt the solution for use in plastics and paint, allowing even wider use of the protective material.

Prof Pillai, Kastus and the team have obtained a US and a UK patent on the unique process with a number of global patent applications pending. It is rare for such an academic scientific discovery to have such commercial viability.

"I was sold on this from the first moment I heard about it. It's been a long road to here but it was such a compelling story that it was hard to walk away from so I had to see it through to the end," said **John Browne, Kastus CEO**.

He continued: "This is a game changer. The uniqueness of antimicrobia surface treatment means that the applications for it in the real world are endless. The multinational glass manufacturers we are in negotiations with to sell the product to have been searching for years to come up with such a solution but have failed."

Professor Declan McCormack, Head of the School of Chemical and Pharmaceutical Sciences at DIT said: "This is a great example of excellent science being translated into impactful real-

life applications. The potential this has in terms of application, and in terms of dealing with the very real issues of infections, is substantial. We are delighted to have collaborated with IT Sligo, DCU, the University of Surrey in the UK and Kastus on this very fruitful research and hope that collaboration continues for many years into the future."

Professor Vincent Cunnane, President of IT Sligo said: "This landmark piece of research is perfectly in tune with IT Sligo's ambition to continue to develop our research profile. We want our research to have meaningful impact on the development of the region, and society as a whole. This discovery by Suresh and his team is a prime example of that ambition."

Appendix E

Reference to National policies

The HEA's reflections noted the limited references to National policies. The Institute is very cognisant of these and works with various stakeholders across the region and nationally to deliver on the objectives contained in such policies. In reflecting on the Compact targets for 2016 the Institute limited it's response to the achievement of the targets for reasons of clarity and conciseness. However, it is more than happy to provide reflections on it's achievements and contributions in respect of national policies and objectives. The report below addresses each of the policies referred to in the reflections report.

Domain 1: IT Sligo references the national plan in the cluster context, noting that, 'the Cluster partners are committed to deepening collaboration on access and have made significant process in developing regional solutions to the objectives identified in the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019'.

Goal 1: To mainstream the delivery of equity of access in HEIs

Supports for students from target groups are addressed primarily through mainstream student services (e.g. mentoring and retention, disability services, counselling).

HEI access strategies are aligned with the policy and targets as set out in this *National Access Plan* (In Strategic Plan, see Objective A, Action 2.5 'Embed Universal Design for Learning (UDL) across programmes, with appropriate training and supports'.

Post-entry mentoring programme has been reviewed.

Goal 2: To assess the impact of current initiatives to support equity of access to higher education

access infrastructure has been in relation to appropriate application of core funding to support an access infrastructure in HEIs (new disability services, additional counselling hours)

Goal 3: To gather accurate data and evidence on access and participation and to base policy on what that data tells us

Have analysed geographic patterns of access to higher education.

Tracking of progression, retention rates and the student experience of target student groups to be incorporated into the SCRUM system

Annual meetings with School principals and career guidance teachers with IT Sligo to review linkages and associated access-related activities. ETBs are now part of this,

Goal 4: To build coherent pathways from further education and to foster other entry routes to highe education

Have mapped and develop clear student pathways, including those between further and higher education

RPL policy in place, and to engage with QQI in the development of an overall national

HEAR and DARE schemes now fully implemented

Access to HE increased for insurance industry employees

New MOU with MSL ETB

Goal 5: To develop regional and community partnership strategies for increasing access to higher education with a particular focus on mentoring

Two new programmes developed with NUIG and one new apprenticeship with GMIT (All in medical devices sector)

Regional Skills Forum audit underway.

New Domain included in the Strategic Plan 'Partnership and External Engagement' with four areas for building stronger partnerships: with 2nd level Schools/ETBs, Employers, Community and with Alumni

Developed 1st new apprenticeship in Ireland in direct response to improving access to HE.

Domain 3 and 5: The self-evaluation didn't seek to contextualise performance or challenges in the context of national strategy (*Action Plan(s) for Jobs*; the *National Skills Strategy 2025*; and, the *National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship*).

Under the National Action Plan for Jobs, North-West, there are 15 actions for IT Sligo. Of those, here is a list of achievements as per the March 2016 report (numbers identify the action in the plan):

1: For the New Frontiers is Enterprise Ireland's national entrepreneur development programme for innovative, early-stage start-ups. The ITSligo/LyIT operation delivered Three Phase 1 programmes in 2016 to 42 participants. 12 Participants completed Phase 2 in 2016. They were drawn from the Food, IT, Consumer and Industrial products sectors. In the North West, there were 45 participated in Phase 1.

The Virtual Incubation Programme, funded through the EI CEC collaborative programme was launched with a collaboration between Millmount Development Centre, Drogheda and Creative Spark Enterprise Centre, Dundalk. 4 participants, from the med tech, digital graphic design and consumer products sectors make up the first cohort of this 6 month engagement.

37: Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI), through its management of Enterprise Ireland's Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative (TTSI), supports the outreach activities to industry undertaken by the network of Technology Transfer Offices around the country. Working with the Technology Transfer Office network, KTI works with business, investors, Universities, Institutes of Technology, State research organisations, research funders and Government agencies to maximise the availability of State-funded technology, ideas and expertise to business. KTI also heavily promotes the use of such research capabilities through its central knowledge transfer and technology transfer functions. The KTI website (www.knowledgetransferireland.com) hosts model agreements, practical guides and information on expertise within the public research system, supporting the efficient transfer of economically valuable research outputs to enterprise.

40: The NE Regional Skills Forum manager, located at the Regional Development Centre (RDC) at DkIT, is working with relevant stakeholders and leveraging industry linkages. IoTs, ETBs and EI have steering committee positions on the Skills Forum, along with industry representatives and other stakeholders. Within DkIT, during 2016, the RDC supported entrepreneurs through EI's New Frontiers programme and the EI funded CEC VIP programme, in collaboration with Creative Spark. DkIT was also engaged in a number of Innovation Vouchers and Fusion projects with industry. It also engaged in a number of workshops promoting applied research opportunities across the North East. In November, DkIT engaged in roundtable workshops with companies from Louth, Meath, Cavan and Monaghan to support its three-year strategic planning process.

45: The Connaught Ulster Alliance achieved approval from the Minister for Stage 1 submission of the 4 Stage Technological University re-designation process. €750K funding was approved by the HEA in 2016.

91: A combined Medical Devices Cluster of companies was approved for funding by EI. In addition, EI funding was also approved for a Manufacturing Gateway in IT Sligo.

116: The NW Skills forum met in November. Numerous employer representative bodies and employers were in attendance along with the various education and training providers from the region. The RSF manager is involved in a number of initiatives that promotes education/training providers collaborating with external employers in areas such as work based learning, student placements, projects and events.

117: Three new programmes in Clinical Medical Science were delivered, in collaboration with the University of Ulster. The Annual Engineering Expo and Science Festival were successfully staged at Sligo IT. In addition, ibec members are in regular contact with the HEI sector to progress and advance this action.

128: IT Sligo met with 2nd level Principals and Career Guidance Teachers in Sept 2016. IT Sligo and MSL ETB are holding discussions leading towards better career guidance practices.

Domain 3: Sligo did not refer to the <u>Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE)</u> as part of benchmarking and self-evaluation processes.

The Institute carried out a comprehensive review of the ISSE report for IT Sligo and made a presentation to staff on this in May 2016 (available upon request). In summary, of the various scores, it may be concluded that IT Sligo was very close to the national averages for all categories (slightly less than average on supportive environment, reflective learning and higher order learning). Upon completion of an analysis of the report down to programme level, the following actions were identified:

Roll out of Moodle to all Programmes [occurring incrementally].

Every Lecturer to have a Moodle page.

Moodle to be used as a student engagement tool [taking place for all new programmes]

Writing centre to be investigated [new programme on Literature and Writing approved].

Learning Support Centre & tutorials to be in library [in the process of setting up a CELT centre]

Blended learning and support needs to be looked at [has been introduced into all new apprenticeship programmes]

Review work placements in courses [since agreed in the new strategy for all Level 8 programmes].

More sophisticated ways of doing roll calls [the Seats™ software system is being trialled].

Breaking the Mould to be extended [this has now been integrated itno a Universal Design approach].

Map of when assessments likely to be scheduled to avoid duplication of dates [being done at programme level].

Domain 4: IT Sligo does not link research activity to the delivery of targets as set out in _Innovation 2020_

In relation to the actions stated in the Innovation 2020 report:

We have built a strong research and innovation base in Ireland: T Sligo has identified 3 Strategic Research Centres and 5 Recognised Research Groups. There is a particular focus on Environmental Science, Precision Engineering and Manufacturing, Biomedical Sciences and Social Sciences. The intention is to focus on key domains and to adequately resource these to build a level of critical mass and international standard output.

We will become a Global Innovation Leader: In 2016 It Sligo worked with IDA to attract two new FDI companies to the region, both of whom set up their first footprint in the Institute's Innovation Centre. Discussions also commenced with IDA and the Local Enterprise Office to take space in the Building Block in the town (a facility to support new start-ups and incoming busineses).

We will increase public and private investment in research and development: In 2016, the Institute invested in excess of €400,000 in building research capacity and research bursaries.

We will enhance the impact of research and innovation for enterprise: In 2016 the Institute delivered 24 Innovation Voucher projects

We will ensure that education drives innovation: The Institute commenced delivery of a new taught masters programmes in Medical Devices (Regulatory Affairs) in collaboration with NUIG. This is in direct response to the needs of industry.

We will focus research and innovation activity on social and economic development: All of the research at IT Sligo is focussed on social and economic development, as is evidenced by the peer reviewed publications and reports generated for industry.

We will support Innovation through the protection and transfer of knowledge: The Institute had a number of live patents that are the subject of commercialisation discussions with potential industry partners.

Domain 4: IT Sligo does not link research activity to the delivery of targets as set out in _Enterprise 2025_ in its self-evaluation report.

The vision in the Enterprise 2025 report is for Ireland to be the best place to succeed in business delivering sustainable employment and higher standards of living for all. IT Sligo has contributed directly to this in the North-West through the activities of it's innovation Centre

that houses 30 new start-ups or incoming businesses setting-up in the region. These companies include a number of IDA companies that have taken space in the Innovation Centre as their first platform in the region before locating to an industrial setting. There are over 150 employees associated with these companies and the success rate is 95% (i.e. based on companies still in existence after 5 years, independent of the Institute). The Institute also contributes directly to the development of talent for the region, where all of the new programmes (and programme re-validations) are carried out with input from industrial experts.

Domains 6: IT Sligo didn't reference performance to Ireland's international strategy, _Irish Educated, Globally Connected: An international education strategy for Ireland, 2016-2020_. The self-evaluation report does note that internationalisation 'is not one of IT Sligo's highest priorities as IT Sligo lacks the scale and resources'.

The report below summaries some of the key deliverables from IT Sligo in respect of Ireland's International Strategy:

Strategic Priority 2: Internationally oriented, globally competitive institutions

IT Sligo delivers to the International strategy mainly through it's online programmes. There are students located in 23 counties taking online programmes provided by IT Sligo. Notwithstanding that, It Sligo had in excess of 300 international students on campus in 2016. It also agreed with the CUA partners for the three International offices to cork in collaboration when attending or promoting the Institutes internationally.

In 2016, some 8% of the student population of IT Sligo was made up of non-Irish full time students. This represents a 20% increase over the 2015 data.

In 2016, 12 staff availed of the Erasmus+ outgoing scheme. This is a significant increase over the figure of 7 in 2015.

Currently, approximately 10% of students go on placement abroad. These are in programmes such as tourism and childcare. In it's new Strategic Plan, IT Sligo committed to providing work-placement on all Level 8 programmes. This will increased the demand for overseas placements.

Strategic Priority 4: Succeeding Abroad

In 2016, It Sligo introduced the *KonnectAgain™* Alumni package and currently has in excess of 1,000 registered users. This is being used to better understand the needs and expectations of Alumni.