HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

Strategy and Performance Dialogue 2018 – 2021

HEI Self Evaluation Report on Progress

1 September 2018 – 31 August 2021

Section A: Summary Information

Name of Institution	Waterford Institute of Technology
Name and email address of contact person	Dr Richard Hayes, Vice President for Strategy vpstrategy@wit.ie
Date of submission	13 April 2022

Section B: Overview of Institutional Strategic Development and Performance

| Critical Reflection

Max. 5,600-character limit (750-800 words approx.) | WIT remained focussed through the 2018-2021 period on its core strategic purpose, which is to contribute positively to the economic, social and cultural development of the South East of Ireland through the provision of high quality education and research. Our goal of being a top 100 new university by 2030 continues to guide our efforts.

WIT's major strategic initiative during this period--the application for designation as a Technological University--was achieved with designation planned for May 2022. The significantly enhanced performance, coupled with the larger scale of the TU creates the platform for higher education in the region to make an even greater impact through

•   greater access to education,
•   retention of students within the region through enhanced educational and research provision,
•   support for regional human capital development,
•   increased impact through knowledge transfer and significantly enhanced research,
•   improved job opportunities that will be attractive to talent from outside the South East.

The ambitious targets set by WIT in 2018 were challenging, certainly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, but there is strong evidence across all areas of significant progress towards, if not achievement of those targets. There was validation of the high quality of the Institute's programmes through the QQI CINNTE quality review in 2020. The peer review of the TU application in 2021 strongly endorsed the quality of research and teaching at WIT.

The Institute is recognised as a regional leader, driving innovation, cultivating new economic opportunities, and through education adding to the skills base of the regional population. This position as a regional leader has strengthened during the pandemic and it is clear that a university in Waterford city will be transformative of the city and wider South East. The challenge for the next period will be to realise that transformation.

The pandemic has accelarated the digitalization of aspects of the WIT curriculum and 2018-2021 saw a massive investment in building digitally-enhanced teaching and learning capacity and capability. We are now better equipped to deliver online, blended, and digitally-enhanced programmes into the future. Recasting the learning experience in the light not only of technological change but also employment patterns and employer needs has guided WIT over the period; we continue to |

develop an employment focus to our programmes and services, and work closely with regional and national companies in this regard. We continue to increase access opportunities to higher education, both through the expansion of our part-time portfolio and through targetted initiatives directed towards particular cohorts traditionally under-represented. The number of WIT students with disabilities continues to rise and WIT has invested in support for this cohort in particular.

WIT's performance in research and innovation remains exceptional within the sector, with especially strong performance in attracting competitive EU funding. One of the Institute's major centres, the TSSG, has been transformed in the period under review to a research institute, the Walton Institute, following a rigourous peer review process. Research activity continues to grow in other areas which have been aligned to regional industrial need. The final Enterprise Ireland Interim Report of Irish Involvement in Horizon 2020 (2020) indicates that WIT led the IoT sector by a significant margin with a total of €16.6m in funding awards. Walton was awarded a total of €14.8m during H2020, a total greater than the rest of the IoT sector combined. The knowledge transfer consortium involving WIT was reviewed externally during the period and awarded an A+ rating. The Institute kept its EI Gateways and major research centres open and operational through COVID. The Institute has a large complement of PhD students, and research activity levels amongst staff remains exceptional within the sector, though neither has grown as expected—as explored below.

Maintaining international partnerships through the pandemic has been challenging. However, while short-term targets in relation to non-EU student recruitment have not been met, the long-term infrastructure in support of expanded international student recruitment and other international activity is strong. WIT's broad strategy has centred on the development of strategic partnerships with a number of universities in the US and China. The Institute is a full partner in the EU University CONEXUS project, another key strategic international initiative for the Institute.
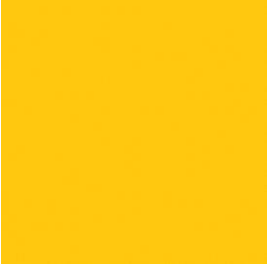
WIT has invested in enhancing governance and improving risk identification and management. WIT's Governing Body oversaw a review of the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan that made a number of recommendations for the further development of reporting and management structures and practices. The Institute has also enhanced its management capability and capacity through a number of key senior appointments, including in External Affairs and in Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity. COVID tested WIT's organisational resilience in terms of academic and organisational governance, systems and operations; the Institute proved its capability to effectively manage unprecedented risk through this challenge.

WIT is well equipped to transition to the South East Technological University. The considerable challenge remains ahead, especially in the light of funding shortfalls, further to enhance the impact of higher education on regional society, culture and the economy.

Section C: Key System Objectives (KSOs)

KSO 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
KSO 1 Summary Statement *Max. 4,200-character limit (550-600 words approx.)*	WIT worked effectively through 2018-21 in support of the development of, especially, the regional talent base to address regional skills needs, both current and predicted. The Institute is also firmly focussed on developing the innovation capacity of the region and strongly supporting the region's provision of high quality employment opportunities in the knowledge economy, and in this respect is responding to the needs of enterprise and stakeholders more widely. The Institute has concentrated on developing regional capacity in key priority sectors and in supporting talent development in areas of greatest regional impact. The Institute has worked in tandem with a number of key regional agencies, especially the South East Regional Skills Forum, the Ireland South East Development Office, various enterprise clusters, stakeholder groups, and others to identify and address skills needs. Within the Institute, a number of key industry groups have helped guide the Institute in these developments, for instance the Industry Advisory Board in the School of Science which has assisted with the strategic alignment to industry needs of (a) the curriculum, (b) industrial placement activity for students, (c) research activity, (d) knowledge exchange and (e) future careers for students. This same strategic approach is evident in the WIT approach to developing lifelong learning opportunities. Enrolments here have grown over the period of the Compact in key areas of regional impact and priority. Enrolments specifically in labour-market activation-type activities have grown over the period (Springboard and related enrolments have grown from 302 in 2018-19 to 431 in 2020-21) while apprentice numbers remain consistently high (holding at between 350 and 400 per year). The Institute leads two Human Capital Initiative projects, "Strengthening and Protecting the Funds Industry in Ireland" (with CIT, State Street, BNY Melon) and "AMASE: Additive Manufacturing Advancing the South East" (with IT Carlow and a range of industry partners). WIT also participates in the TUD-led HCI GrowthHub aimed at fostering the entrepreneurial mindsets of students. The Institute has also focussed on strengthening internal systems and capacity in order to be able to respond more effectively to external need. Specifically, WIT has moved to ensure lifelong learning is fully integrated into the mainstream operations of the Institute rather than being developed as an expedient income stream. Thus WIT operates an Academically-Integrated Lifelong Learning Model, that is, course development and delivery of lifelong learning programmes sit within the academic schools rather than being run from an ancillary department. The model utilised differs from previous models in that the Department has no programmes

or students of its own, has no involvement in the curriculum, and does not recruit or support students. The Department is, rather, a strategic unit focussed on

•	Strategically developing the lifelong learning proposition of WIT informed by institutional strategy, regional priority, and national policy;

•	Identifying funding calls, co-ordinating institutional responses, and advising and liaising with academic core departments to ensure the alignment of the lifelong learning portfolio with institutional strategy as expressed in the broad range of activities within each School; and

•	Facilitating the development of the curriculum in line with international best practice for lifelong learning with a specific focus on digitally-enhanced learning.

The "academic dividend" gained from this this model is considerable. The ongoing pace of development of upskilling courses and the level of direct engagement with employers in their creation and delivery within each academic School informs its broader taught provision, knowledge-transfer and research.

Furthermore, the Institute has consolidated its external activities via the appointment of a VP for External Relations. This post, prioritised in the Institute's strategic plan, will assist with the development of a more consistent, coherent external face to the organisation across all outward-facing domains.

Strategic Priority 1.1 To facilitate the enrolment of flexible learners	Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline 2018	Overall Target 2018-2021	August 2021 KPI Value *Max. 210-character limit (30 words approx.)*
	# of part-time enrolments	1,540	2,640	2,030 (March 2021 SRS)

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SP 1.1 Commentary	The number of part-time learners and the number and range of programmes available in flexible, hybrid and online mode of delivery has increased over 2018-2021. The rate of growth of part-time programmes during this period is over 30% each year and while we did not reach our target we are on a positive trajectory and confident that this will continue as we merge into SETU. Growth is evidenced in our annual Springboard+ submissions, submissions under the July Stimulus calls and our success under the Human Capital Initiative.	**Colour rating for this Strategic Priority:** Amber
Max. 1,400-character limit (200 words approx.)	This growth has been strategic with a focus on the alignment of programme provision and innovation to clearly identified regional skills needs. The integration of part-time provision in each School and Department is also driving programme innovation at undergraduate level as new modes of delivery, new curricula and new workplace skills data is informing programme design across WIT. This approach supports the strategy of research-informed approaches to teaching and learning and aims to enhance student experience across all programmes.	
	Enrolments dropped slightly in AY 20/21, largely because of the COVID pandemic when many part-time learners re-prioritised their commitments based on their work and personal needs. This drop has reversed in AY 21/22.	

Strategic Priority 1.2	Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline 2018	Overall Target 2018-2021	**August 2021 KPI Value** *Max. 210-character limit (30 words approx.)*
To prepare students for employment	% programmes with employability statements	0%	100% UG 100% PG	95% (WIT Registry)

SP 1.2 Commentary	The institute identified Employability Statements as a priority by including the action in the WIT 2018-21 Strategic Plan that all students would receive a statement. Since then statements were piloted successfully on individual programmes in each Institute department and then rolled out to all programmes in 2021. At this point, over 95% of students receive an Employability Statement.	**Colour rating for this Strategic Priority:** Green
Max. 1,400-character limit (200 words approx.)	These statement give expression to the Institute's commitment to supporting students in securing employment and developing fulfilling careers and forms only a small part of the overall institutional infrastructure in support of employability. The WIT Careers Service has been involved in a number of initiatives in this regard, with the result that the WIT Careers Service has won the	

award for employabilty every year since 2017 at the Association of Higher Education Careers Services (AHECS) annual awards (see https://ahecs.ie/ahecs-awards-2021/). Amongst many initiatives was a partnership with IADT and DKIT in support of employability for creative arts graduates. The demands on the Careers Centre have significantly increased in the last three years, with CV review requests increasing by over 30%, "quick query" personal support sessions increasing by almost 200%, and since 2018 mock interviews increasing by almost 100%. Maintaining the service's high performance with this demand is a challenge.	

KSO 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**
KSO 2 Summary Statement *Max. 4,200-character limit (550-600 words approx.)*	WIT commits in its Strategic Plan 2018-2021 to developing an "international and internationalised profile that finds expression in the approach of our students and staff and in our extensive partnerships". In establishing and pursuing this goal, the Institute responds to the national goals relating to internationalisation articulated in "Irish Educated, Globally Connected: an international education strategy for Ireland, 2016-2020". WIT was quite successful in the early part of the period under review in facilitating increased mobility for staff and students. Increased numbers of international agreements have been entered into and, while not across every area, the growth of these networks is significant enough to suggest progress. Pre-pandemic, there were 41 outward-bound academics engaged in mobility and 71 students, significantly larger than in the years before. Over 270 students are catered for in Erasmus+ Inter-Institutional Agreements. COVID-19 impacted very significantly on student and staff mobility and international student recruitment, with very serious fall-offs in enrolment and effectively zero mobility for a long period. New opportunities for international mobility have been explored during that period and various mechanisms for delivering support to international students who remained in situ for the duration of the cessation of on-campus activities were trialled and found effective. The institute has continued to progress significant strategic international partnerships. The most immediately important of these are with Rochester Institute of Technology in the United States, Nanjing University of Science and Technology in China, and a range of partners associated with the CONEXUS European University consortium. We anticipate, in the context of the Technological University, being in a stronger position to recruit more heavily from non-EU markets; we acknowledge an under-performance in recruiting non-EU students in the period under review. The extensive discussions that have taken place in the context of the TU application have enabled significant forward movement on future structures to support internationalisation and refinement of thinking in relation to how Schools and the internationalisation

function inter-relate. The TU discussions have also allowed for significant progress in scoping out a future strategy for internationalisation, including market development, within the new university.

With regard to knowledge transfer, WIT continues to be acknowledged as one of the leading performers in this area in the sector as indicated in periodic Enterprise Ireland reports and as evidenced by awards such as KTI Impact Award 2020, Research Centre of the Year at the 2020 Pharma Awards, and the IMR Manufacturing Award 2020. The impact on industry of COVID has been felt in the performance of the Institute in knowledge transfer but we anticipate a strong recovery based on a more recent analysis. In the course of the period under review, in addition to maintaining three EI Technology Gateways (more than any other IOT), all of which remained operational through the pandemic, WIT led or been a key contributor in three key regional economic development initiatives funded under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund: a Life Sciences Incubator for the South East (Kinetic Labs); 3D WIT training hub for industry in new manufacturing techniques; and L14, a lean Industry 4.0 facility supporting productivity and process improvement. WIT led the development and roll out of the South East Regional Accelerator 2018-2021 and in 2019 doubled the footprint in ArcLabs, an anchor in the regional innovation and enterprise support framework. These all form part of the Institute's impact on industry in the region.

Strategic Priority 2.1 To increase the diversity of the student population by increasing international student recruitment	Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline 2018	Overall Target 2018-2021	August 2021 KPI Value *Max. 210-character limit (30 words approx.)*
	# of international students	304	375	199 (WIT March 2021 SRS)

SP 2.1 Commentary *Max. 1,400-character limit (200 words approx.)*	WIT's internationalisation activity involves (1) curriculum reform and enhanced mobility options for students and staff; (2) recruiting more non-EU international students; (3) increasing research funding from international sources. Progress has been made against (1) and (3) but COVID had a significant impact on (2). WIT has oriented its internationalisation activity around a number of key partnerships, as listed above:	**Colour rating for this Strategic Priority:** Amber

	• Activities scoped with RIT include research projects, mobility for staff, and enterprise-related partnerships, with some recent mobility of researchers; • WIT has the longest-standing relationship in Irish higher education with a Chinese partner in the shape of NUIST, now elevated to involve the creation of a joint college in China; • WIT is a full partner in CONEXUS, a multi-disciplinary, multi-dimensional, large-scale consortium focused on sustainability in urban coastal regions funded under the European University programme (https://www.eu-conexus.eu/en/). In all above cases, enhanced faculty and student mobility, and a large increase in student recruitment in the case of NUIST, are anticipated. New focus has been brought to non-EU student recruitment with the re-designation as a university. There is already externally-facilitated work taking place on a detailed market development plan that will be constructed over the early years of the new university.		

Strategic Priority 2.2 To increase knowledge transfer activity through partnerships, and innovation	Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline 2018	Overall Target 2018-2021	August 2021 KPI Value *Max. 210-character limit (30 words approx.)*
	# of Licences/Options/Assignments	Licences/Options/Assignments: 4 (2017)	Licences/Options/Assignments: 6	Licences/Options/Assignments: 7
	# of Registered spinouts created	Registered spinouts created: 0 (2017)	Registered spinouts created: 1	Registered spinouts created: 0
	Funded spinouts created	Funded spinouts created: 0 (2017)	Funded spinouts created: 1	Funded spinouts created: 0
	# of Spin-outs converting EI to HSPU clients	Spin-outs converting EI to HSPU clients: 0 (2017)	Spin-outs converting EI to HSPU clients: 1	Spin-outs converting EI to HSPU clients: 0

Research agreements with industry (fully funded by industry)	Research agreements with industry (fully funded by industry): <€25k: 113 (2017) €25k-€500: 3 (2017) >€500k: 0 (2017)	Research agreements with industry (fully funded by industry): <€25k: 85 €25k-€500: 1 >€500k: 0	Research agreements with industry (fully funded by industry): <€25k: 51 €25k-€500k: 0 >€500k: 0
Research agreements with industry (part funded by industry)	Research agreements with industry (part funded by industry): <€25k: 3 (2017) €25k-€500: 7 (2017) >€500k: 0 (2017)	Research agreements with industry (part funded by industry): <€25k: 3 €25k-€500: 5 >€500k: 0	Research agreements with industry (part funded by industry): <€25k: 3 €25k-€500k:11 >€500k: 0
# of IDFs	IDFs: 9 (2017)	IDFs: 14	IDFs: 13
# of IDFs converted to licences	IDFs converted to licences: 2 (2017)	IDFs converted to licences: 6	IDFs converted to licenses: 3
# of Priority Patent applications filed	Priority Patent applications filed: 4 (2017)	Priority Patent applications filed: 5	Priority Patent applications filed: 3
# of Patent applications granted	Patent applications granted: 0 (2017)	Patent applications granted: 1	Patent applications granted: 1
# of Patent applications converted to licences	Patent applications converted to licences: 1 (2017)	Patent applications converted to licences: 1	Patent applications converted to licences: 0
# of Consultancy agreements	Consultancy agreements: 5 (2017)	Consultancy agreements: 4	Consultancy agreements: 208

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SP 2.2 Commentary *Max. 1,400-character limit (200 words approx.)*	The performance of the Technology Transfer Office at WIT has been consistent or has outperformed our Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI) targets up to 2019. The pandemic in 2020 disrupted many of our partners and as a result LOAs decreased significantly. The TTO in WIT is part of a large consortium of two IOTs and one University. This consortium has been in operation since 2017 and has been reviewed by an international panel of TT peers. The outcome from the panel review was this consortium performance was A+ rated, higher than any other TT consortium in Ireland. In 2020 the WIT TTO was reviewed by an independent UK consultancy in terms of future performance, procedures and governance which found a high level of excellence. Overall, the office is under-resourced for the level of performance and this remains a risk to future performance.	**Colour rating for this Strategic Priority:** Green
KSO 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.**	
KSO 3 Summary Statement *Max. 4,200-character limit (550-600 words approx.)*	WIT's research community continues to perform well against all the standard metrics and WIT remains amongst the most research active IOTs in Ireland, notwithstanding certain structural limitations on research within the sector. Research had become deeply embedded in the activities of all Schools, enhanced further through the implementation of a structured doctoral programme and the creation of research boards in every School. The quality of research in the TU consortium met the legislative requirements for university designation according to the peer review panel. The Institute's performance in attracting research funding—especially European research funding—continues to be very strong. Over the 4 years of the plan: • Significant EU awards have been secured across a number of active fields of research, thereby widening our participation in European research over the 2018-21 period; • The Institute increased its participation in national SFI Research Centres over the course of the plan and now participates in six SFI Research Centres; • WIT is one of the leading regional organisations in terms of RDI expenditure nationally and a leader in the South East region, with over €50 million in expenditure to the end of 2020.	

The Institute developed its infrastructure, practices and processes in support of research in the period under review. A major achievement was the designation of the Walton Institute, a recognition of the consistent excellence of research in this domain over many years and the maturity of research activity and infrastructure here. In terms of systems and governance, strong progress was made in strengthening RDI governance and systems though the following:

- Establishment of the Research Advisory Council

- Introduction of / updating of research policies including WIT's Code of Conduct for Responsible Research Practice, Definition & organisation of Research, Open Research Policy, IP Policy, Conflict of Interest Policy, Consultancy Policy.

- Investment in research information systems including a CRM, Scopus, Grant Management System, CRIS, and Docusign
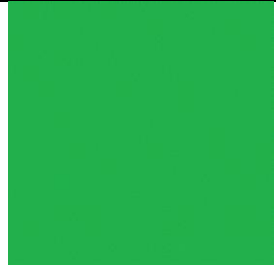
A pilot project in workload allocation (the Connexions schemes) has proven successful and has been rolled out a second time with a more extensive reach. Throughout the period under review WIT was assessed and retained its European accreditation under the HR Excellence for Research standard, validating its continued focus on delivering an inclusive and professional environment for researchers.

The Institute continues to sustain and grow research activity across five key areas consistent with TU metrics and to cultivate emerging research in a number of new areas. Within the acknowledged constraints of the staff contract and resource allocation model, and in the context of very restricted research capital funding, and, further, recognising the increasingly competitive nature of, for instance, graduate student and researcher recruitment, sustaining high levels of performance remains a challenge. Nonetheless, consistent progress has been made and relatively high performance in peer-reviewed publications, funding and PhD student recruitment largely sustained. The Institute's three Enterprise Ireland Technology Gateways continue to perform extremely well as drivers of research-led innovation throughout the South East. The Gateways—in Advanced Manufacturing, Pharmaceuticals and Healthcare, and Mobile Services—continue to be a key instrument for transferring knowledge from the WIT research community to the region.
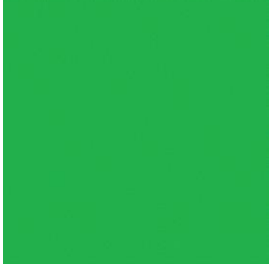
Throughout the lifetime of the plan the Institute made significant investment to advance its PhD programmes in line with the National Framework for Doctoral Education – developing and accrediting Universal Pathway modules, enhancing postgraduate support structures, providing mentoring and training supports for supervisors, and a range of other measures.
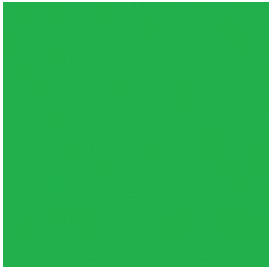
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Strategic Priority 3.1	Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline 2018	Overall Target 2018-2021	August 2021 KPI Value
To improve graduate student enrolment				*Max. 210-character limit (30 words approx.)*
	# of PhD enrolments	148 (2016)	200	156 (March 2021 SRS)

SP 3.1 Commentary	Over the pandemic, the recruitment of graduate students presents certain challenges, including that of an increasingly competitive marketplace. WIT's relative performance in PhD recruitment remains relatively high. Approximately 75% of all PhD students enrolled in the technological sector in Ireland are enrolled within TU Dublin, Munster TU and WIT. HEA records show that WIT's PhD enrollment over the period 2018-21 was second only to TU Dublin in the technological sector. WIT remains unique in the sector in offering a DBA.	Colour rating for this Strategic Priority: Amber
Max. 1,400-character limit (200 words approx.)	Recently, international PhD students being unable to travel and take up positions was challenging. The competition for quality PhD candidates amongst Irish Universities is quite high with many accepting places and then diverting to another competing university. However, hybrid supervision and distance PhD programmes are now possible. In 2021, 13 IRC Government of Ireland Post-graduate Scholarships were awarded to WIT scholars, a record (2018 baseline was 4) and amongst the highest in the sector. For the 2020-21 AY, 17 SERD scholarships were awared and 21 WIT scholarships including 6 co-funded by industry.	
	We anticipate that EU-CONEXUS membership will increase our ability to recruit students as SETU will also be the only English speaking University in the alliance.	

| Strategic Priority 3.2

To enhance research activity | Key Performance Indicators | Pre-compact Baseline 2018 | Overall Target 2018-2021 | August 2021 KPI Value

Max. 210-character limit (30 words approx.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Amount (€) of competitive research funding from EU | Annual amount in 2018: €4.2m | €14.43m (cumulative amount over three years; 2019, 2020, and 2021) | €16.74 (cumulative amount over 2018-2021)

(Source: WIT internal systems) |
| | # of research-active staff | 364 | 420 | 382*

The HERD return is made only every two years. This represents an interim figure based on out internal Current Research Information System (CRIS). |
| | # of peer-reviewed publications | 116 | 160 | 189*

This is the return from the Scopus database. The 2018 baseline data in Scopus was 131. The growth of 44% evident in the Scopus return is greater than the Web of Science-based target (116 to 160=37% growth) |
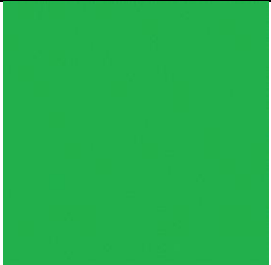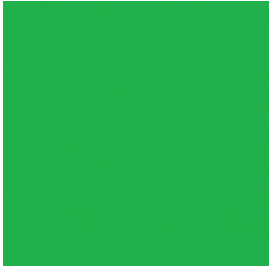| SP 3.2 Commentary | Against an overall target of €14.43m, WIT achieved €16.74m in competitive research funding, €2.3m over target. This performance remains exceptional in the sector. Future plans involve hiring a research grant writer who will be tasked with writing strategic applications. Increased training and resources for Horizon Europe, Cluster and MSCA applications as well as national funding programmes are also being rolled out. | | | **Colour rating for this Strategic Priority:** Green |

| Max. 1,400-character limit (200 words approx.) | The procurement of the CRIS researcher managment system will address data gathering challenges associated with tracking staff research activity (including capturing the outputs of individual researchers) and allow for more regular reporting. Research committees within Schools will be a vehicle further to promote research amongst staff. WIT research supports continue to evolve in line with international best practice. The continuation of the Research Connexions funding scheme allows staff buy-out teaching hours which circumvents some of the restrictions of the staff contract.

Initial Compact returns were based on Web of Science data. We have since procured Scopus which allows for the capture of a wider range of publications. Scopus returns indicate an increase in publications over the 2018-21 period from 131 in 2018-19 to 189 in 2020-21. Publications over the 2018-21 period in Scopus (n=520) for WIT lag only behind MTU (CIT and Tralee, n=721) and TUD (n=1683). | |
| **KSO 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** | |

| **KSO 4 Summary Statement**

Max. 4,200-character limit (550-600 words approx.) | Recognising the needs of a diverse student cohort and promoting inclusivity and equity of provision for all learners are core underpinnings of WIT's office for Student Life and Learning. SLL has expanded on its already wide range of student support activities in the period 2018-21 in response to local need and in support of national strategy. COVID-19 presented considerable challenges and longer term will continue to have an impact on student well-being into the future.

With regard to the target groups identified in the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-19, the various areas within SLL (Access, Disability, Retention and Engagement etc.) aim to improve equality of opportunity and support successful outcomes for all students by providing opportunities for students to develop the skills to be able to persist in education. Over the period 2018-21 we have further strengthened relationships with students, academic staff and departments within the Institute and schools and community groups from the region with this in mind. We have developed new links with schools and guidance counsellors and begun to work with other HEIs.

Our progress has been greatly enhanced through targeted funding including the HEA Innovation Fund, HEA Access Contingency Fund, HEA Student Mental Health Funding and PATH funding streams, which have enabled us to develop new projects (e.g. ATTAINS, SOLES) and develop links with community groups and organisations, and in particular those supporting members the Traveller community (pre-entry).

Transition is not a linear process but an ongoing and cyclical one. Evidence from the WIT P2P peer mentoring programme further highlights the important role of student-led activity and how students can play a significant role in supporting transition and access |

initiatives for other students. All activities aim to enhance the student experience and promote inclusivity to create a culture of belonging. Student success is a cross-institutional, multi-unit responsibility, and SLL aims to further develop and embed a sense of ownership, engagement and responsibility across academic and other for student transition, engagement and access activities.

While COVID-19 has impacted on the student experience, we have developed new and innovative ways to engage with students. Overall, there has been learning as a result of COVID-19 that will benefit and enhance transition and access activities going forward. Podcasts developed during the pandemic for example are a very useful resource that can be accessed by all students and potential students and give insight into experiences of students as well as providing information on supports and services. We are cognizant that from September 2021 there have been essentially two years of new entrants – those commencing first year in 2021/22 and those that progressed to year 2 (most of whom who had not been on campus). This has necessitated considerable effort to ensure transition and support activities were offered to those second year students, particularly supporting them to form social connections and to develop their identity as learners in WIT, given the critical nature of that sense of belonging to overall persistence.

Additional funding over the last 2 years has enabled us to be more responsive to the needs and requirements of our students (pre and post entry) and funded the development of bespoke initiatives that would not have been otherwise possible. We were able to respond and support both pay and non-pay activities because of the flexibility of funding streams. As a result we have broadened our supports, been more responsive and strengthened our relationships with our stakeholders. It also supported us to reach target cohorts that have been impacted by COVID-19 and provide increased individual support where necessary.

There are clearly challenges with trying to enhance services at a time of significantly increased demand when resources are limited. We note that funding allocations which are year to year and tied to specific student need does not allow for more strategic service development which is a limitation.

Strategic Priority 4.1 To collect and analyse data to identify under-represented groups with a focus on accessibility for learners with disabilities	Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline 2018	Overall Target 2018-2021	August 2021 KPI Value *Max. 210-character limit (30 words approx.)*
	Data repositories and data collection and collation on learners with disabilities	N/A	Develop data systems to ensure more effective support for students with disabilities	A system has been developed and refined over this period.

SP 4.1 Commentary *Max. 1,400-character limit (200 words approx.)*	During 2018 -2021 the Disability Attribute System was developed which allows the WIT disability office to open an attribute on the internal MIS system for every student who registers with the disability office. It holds historical and real time data. It enables reports to be run for FSD returns and other data collecting requirements e.g. e-cohesion and AHEAD. In addition, within the last number of years WIT Computer Services also developed a bespoke web facility that pulls data from the MIS system and is called the Exam Reasonable Accommodations System. This enables academic staff to look up class lists and identify students on their modules who are registered with the disability office and require reasonable accommodations and exam supports. It is the communication system the Disability Office, Exams Office, and School Offices depend upon to implement exam reasonable accommodations, enabling departments to make specific arrangements for the student, for instance that a scribe or a reader is booked or a computer lab is set up with the disability office exam profile that facilitates the use of certain technologies such as electronic readers for exam purposes.	**Colour rating for this Strategic Priority:** Green

Strategic Priority 4.2 To provide access for underrepresented groups	Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline 2018	Overall Target 2018-2021	August 2021 KPI Value *Max. 210-character limit (30 words approx.)*
	# of disability entrants	261 (2017-18)	273	*628 (204 new registrations) in 2020-1 from a baseline of 534 (172), an 18% increase as opposed to a 5% targetted increase (261 to 273) (FSD RAR return)
	# of Traveller entrants	0 (2017-18)	2	1 Traveller new entrant came to WIT in 2020-2021 but did not declare this on the EAS. We currently have 4 Traveller students at the Institute. (WIT internal systems)

	# of mature entrants	277 (2017-18)	275	264 (March 2021 SRS)

SP 4.2 Commentary *Max. 1,400-character limit (200 words approx.)*	Note that we have had to adjust our reporting on this KPI due to a systems error in the Equal Access Survey. The normalised figures from our own disability service for registered students with disabilities show that new registrations rose from 172 to 204 in the period and the total registration of students with disabilities rose from 534 to 628, almost an 18% increase. During the time frame in question the Disability Office has developed a number of new initiatives , including participation in DARE, a College Transition Programme, commissioning a sensory room for students with ASD, and developing static tactile wayfinding maps for the Blind/Visually Impaired. In terms of access, new pre-entry supports include JumpAGrade which provides an online grinds/tuition service for secondary school students, covering 6 local secondary schools in Waterford city of which 3 are DEIS schools. It was trialled in 2020 and rolled out further in 2021 and 2022, with to date 112 students who have been supported. Other activities include redevelopment of links with local Traveller organisations (WYTEC, Waterford CDP, Bunclody, Wexford Traveller Women's Group - FDYS & WWETB), all supported by HEA funding. We note a modest fall in mature student numbers which continue to be in the region of 10% of new entrants. We attribute this fall to mature learners reassessing priorities during COVID.	**Colour rating for this Strategic Priority:** Green

KSO 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**

KSO 5 Summary Statement *Max. 4,200-character limit (550-600 words approx.)*	As recorded in the WIT review of its 2018-2021 Strategic Plan, there is strong evidence that WIT continues to provide excellent, high quality educational experiences to students. The validation of WIT's quality assurance arrangements that took place through the CINNTE Institutional Review carried out by QQI in 2020 is a reason for continued high confidence in the Institute's curriculum, programmes and overall learning environment. Clearly COVID-19 presented very considerable challenges when it came to maintaining a quality learning experience for students and ensuring ongoing student connectedness to the Institute. The Institute was quick in its response to COVID-19 and the additional flexibility in programme delivery provided by the Institute's Academic Council enabled a transition to a largely online learning

environment through 2020. The Institute has been similarly flexible in managing the return of students to campus and to face-to-face learning.

The WIT response to COVID rapidly accelerated the Institute's activity in the remote learning domain, greatly enhanced engagement with the Community of Practice in Technology-Enhanced Learning that has been initiated in 2019, and drove large-scale innovation across digitally-enhanced teaching. The learnings achieved in this period of crisis will be long-lasting and experience is that certain programmes and learner cohorts will not return to traditional modes of delivery. This is particularly the case for some post-graduate and part-time cohorts. There are myriad examples of innovation in the digitally-enhanced teaching and learning domain and include the three major projects under the government's Human Capital Initiative (HCI) for which WIT received funding. While a digital teaching and learning strategy was not completed in the course of the plan, significant work has taken place in drafting this strategy and the Executive (Q4 2021) has commenced work on a wider digital strategy for the Institute that will offer a framework for that development. There was significant capital investment in infrastructure in support of digital teaching and learning activity.

The Institute continues to perform quite well in student retention and has a range of innovative and effective strategies at institutional and School and Department levels in support of retention as indicated below.

The Technological University application developed over the period 2018-2021 is unambiguous in articulating the learner-centredness of the new organisation, building on the strong traditions of the two partner IOTs. Very considerable work was undertaken as part of Technological University preparations in the teaching and learning domain, with the focus in the latter half of the period on academic governance, that is, on the transition from two to a single Academic Council, from two to a single set of marks and standards, and related matters in support of ensuring the quality of the university student experience.

Strategic Priority 5.1 To increase resources in support of student retention and progression	Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline 2018	Overall Target 2018-2021	August 2021 KPI Value *Max. 210-character limit (30 words approx.)*
	# of students not progressing	412 (2015-16)	285	235 (WIT Internal systems)
SP 5.1 Commentary	There has been a steady decrease in student non-progression rates over the last three years. This has been as a result of a strategic focus on retention and steady effort both through central student support functions and at School, department and programme levels.			**Colour rating for this Strategic Priority:** Green

Max. 1,400-character limit (200 words approx.)	The focus of Student Life and Learning (SLL) has been on enhancing and embedding transition activities across the social, academic and support domains of the student experience with particular emphasis on student-led initiatives. This includes a student-led orientation programme (online during lockdown) and an extensive peer mentoring programme (P2P) focusing on supporting students to develop a sense of belonging, become members of social networks and to develop social capital. There were 103 mentors across four schools and 6 departments supporting first year students in 2020/2021 with over 160 mentors recruited. A Special Purpose Award was developed to accredit senior mentors. An additional programme, EngageWIT, was launched to support continuing students. Over 800 students attended these sessions delivered in conjunction with academic departments. SLL also works with academic departments on the delivery of academic writing and learning supports. SLL invested heavily in enhancing its social media presence over the last three years as a vehicle to communicate and support students.	

Strategic Priority 5.2 To develop and improve digital and online learning	Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline 2018	Overall Target 2018-2021	August 2021 KPI Value *Max. 210-character limit (30 words approx.)*
	% of programmes that are available in blended or online mode	5% (based on annual SRS returns)	25%	During the pandemic, virtually all programmes were delivered in online or blended mode.

SP 5.2 Commentary *Max. 1,400-character limit (200 words approx.)*	WIT's performance during the pandemic with regard to the continuation of programme delivery online was positive. Despite infrastructure and other challenges, work already done to migrate programmes to blended modes of delivery, as well as investment in staff training over the past 5 years, paid dividends. The fact that WIT has an established Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning (see https://ctel.wit.ie/), which has been supporting the development of digital pedagogies and training in online and blended modes of delivery for some time, meant that staff were somewhat prepared for the emergency teaching period. The provision of training, online support and individual learning session was augmented during COVID . Over 2018-2021 dedicated specialist staff numbers working in CTEL increased by 25% and a specific budget to support digital teaching and learning was established (assisted by the COVID pandemic	**Colour rating for this Strategic Priority:** Green

	funding made available via the HEA). There has been a continued commitment at the WIT Executive to recognise the changing needs of learners and staff when using technology to support learning.	
	The model for blended, online and remote delivery of teaching in WIT has been acknowledged by peers across higher education, evidenced through study visits from other HEI's and also recognition at national Higher Education Awards (2020, 2021) for programmes delivered in WIT.	

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

KSO 6 Summary Statement *Max. 4,200-character limit (550-600 words approx.)*	The Institute's management, staff and operations were severely tested over the latter half of the 2018-2021 period. In most cases, nonetheless, significant advances have been made, including in the context either of major national strategic developments (such as national developments in GBPR, risk management, and various IT systems) and in the context of the TU. A number of noteworthy developments in research governance and organisation have taken place as described above.
	The Institute continues to build highly effective procedures and processes for the management of risk, and significant work has taken place on multi-layer risk registers through the organisation.
	Ongoing work in developing resource and workload allocation models has been somewhat constrained by national discussions but WIT has implemented some useful pilot programmes and is contributing to national reviews and discussions. As noted above, actions associated with the implementation of HRS4R at the Institute have been endorsed by the EU.
	Significant activity has taken place over the course of the plan in the implementation of national systems within the organisation, including the national payroll system and upgrades to various other systems. WIT has been a full participant in these initiatives.
	The appointment of a new Vice President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is a significant forward step for the Institute in supporting work in these areas. An application for Athena Swan bronze accreditation has been postponed until after TU designation but significant foundational work has been completed in relation to that application. In 2018, informed by a significant evidence base gathered as part of WIT's Athena SWAN self-assessment process, WIT published a Gender Equality Action Plan which was endorsed by WIT's Executive Board and approved by Governing Body. This was the culmination of a thorough institution-wide review of gender equality structures, policies, procedures, and culture in WIT and set out a set out a path to further enhancing gender equality work in WIT. Implementation of the WIT Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) 2018-2021 has been underway since 2018 with real progress made. The establishment of a new EDI Office in WIT in 2021, including a dedicated Vice President for Equality Diversity and Inclusion, along with two additional full time administrative staff, has provided additional impetus to the full implementation of the WIT GEAP and a renewed focus on the attainment of an Athena SWAN award. WIT adopted the new Athena Swan Ireland principles in

December 2021, and is currently leading a Gender Equality Enhancement Fund project with partners across the TU sector to embed inclusive gender equality into the curricula of the new TU sector.

The Institute continues to evolve its data gathering and analysis capability, linked to its development of strategic capacity. Some good progress has been made in refining institutional data and presenting it in useable formats and the Institute continues to embed data into its decision-making. Again, the TU process has enabled significant further development in this area. The process by which quantitative criteria for TU designation were audited as part of the evaluation of the TU application was useful in further developing capacity but, independent of this, significant development activity has taken place within WIT.

Strategic Priority 6.1	Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline 2018	Overall Target 2018-2021	August 2021 KPI Value
To secure the Athena Swan bronze award and post-accreditation identify two schools that will proceed for the own bronze accreditation				*Max. 210-character limit (30 words approx.)*
	Apply for Athena Swan bronze award at institutional level	N/A	Achieve Athena Swan bronze award	Award has not been achieved.

SP 6.1 Commentary	WIT has been working towards the achievement of an Athena SWAN Bronze award since 2017 and includes progress towards the award in its own GEAP. In 2021, WIT's Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team undertook a review of progress to date on WIT's plan. Their report highlights that 63% of actions in the WIT GEAP are now fully completed, or in progress. Just 7% have not yet been progressed, and the remaining 30% of the actions set out in the GEAP are planned, many in the context of the new TU. As WIT enters the TU, the strategic focus has now shifted to attaining an Athena Swan Legacy award for the new university. Work is underway on this process with colleagues from IT Carlow with a view to SETU making an application for a legacy award to Athena Swan Ireland by October 2022. A full SETU Athena Swan Bronze award application is planned with 2 years of designation day. Also an Equality Statement will be submitted for approval to one of the first meetings of the Governing Body of new TU. An SETU EDI Policy has been prepared and is ready for adoption. Additional work is underway on the development of an interim Gender Equality Action Plan for the	**Colour rating for this Strategic Priority:** Amber
Max. 1,400-character limit (200 words approx.)		

| | | | | SETU, along with a Gender Identity Policy and a Policy on Tackling Sexual Harassment and violence for SETU, amongst others. | |

Strategic Priority 6.2 To continue to build strategic capacity in the context of developing governance and management arrangements	Key Performance Indicators	Pre-compact Baseline 2018	Overall Target 2018-2021	August 2021 KPI Value *Max. 210-character limit (30 words approx.)*
	WIT does not declare quantitative measures associated with this priority.	N/a	The actions associated with the priority include: Regular reporting to GB on performance; Timely submission and agreement of Performance Compact; Analysis and reporting on data to inform management decision-making Implement agreed institutional strategy and continued development of strategic infrastructure	Progress continues to be made in enhancing governance and management along the agreed lines.
SP 6.2 Commentary *Max. 1,400-character limit (200 words approx.)*	WIT continues to develop its governance and management arrangement in support of its strategic priorities and in line with best practice. The THEA Internal Controls Framework was adopted and processes were put in place to integrate the implementation to provide assurances in relation to the adequacy of the system of internal control. In the 2018-21 period, the WIT Risk Management Policy was reviewed and implemented. A full system of risk review and analysis has been embedded at all levels of the organisation and key decision making is undertaken in the context of risk.			**Colour rating for this Strategic Priority:** Select colour and hit 'Tab'

	Additional operational excellence has been achieved through the TU integration process particularly in relation to systems upgrades and new streamlined process appropriately benchmarked. WIT has acted as the national pilot for Higher Education Payroll Shared Services with a successful transfer and operation since late 2020 as well as being the national pilot for other Financial System enhancements.	
	As a result of COVID-19 all corporate governance (Governing Body and Governing Body Sub-Committees), academic governance (Academic Council and its committees) and all Executive meetings were held in secure on-line forums achieving efficiencies and increased opportunities for participation.	
	The Institute has retained its ISO50001 award and has increased operational focus on sustainability and environmental goals.	

Section D: Signature

Note: This section should be signed by the President or on behalf of the President.

Name of signatory	Dr Richard Hayes
Title	Vice President for Strategy
Signature	
Date	13 April 2022