



Waterford Institute of Technology
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA PHORT LAIRGE

Mission-based Performance Compact

2018-2021

between

Waterford Institute of Technology

and

The Higher Education Authority

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1. Establishment of the Compact

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

- This Compact consists of this document and the accompanying data report on institutional performance
- The term of this Compact is from September 2018 to September 2021 unless terminated earlier by agreement

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

2. Performance Funding Framework

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

Performance Funding will be allocated by the HEA based on performance by reference to high level targets set out in the Framework. Targets must be agreed in strategy and performance dialogue with the HEA. The intention is both to improve the performance of the institution in key areas and to steer the institution closer to its agreed mission and profile and to its position in the overall higher education system. The degree of challenge and of realism inherent in the targets proposed will be evaluated and discussed in strategy and performance dialogue.

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

3 Mission and Strategy Statement

Waterford Institute of Technology's *Strategic Plan 2018-2021* sets out the organisation's vision and mission, its values and aspirations, what it does and how it can best serve the interests of its students, staff and stakeholders. This Compact and the strategic goals set out here align with the Institute's agreed strategy and are an expression of the Institute's values and ambitions.

Waterford Institute of Technology and the Higher Education Authority recognise that Waterford Institute of Technology is an autonomous institution that is responsible for determining its mission, its aspirations and its strategies for their achievement. However, the Higher Education Authority must ensure that together the missions and profiles of the different institutions will lead to overall coherence of the higher education system as a whole and to completeness, ensuring that national needs are being met and without unnecessary duplication.

Changes to the mission and strategy statement

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

- Any significant change that it proposes to make to its mission during the term of the Compact
- Any significant change that it intends to make to its activities that could affect either the content or the practical application of its mission.

It is recognised that Waterford Institute of Technology is currently engaged in processes (merger discussions and discussions relating to university designation application) that will may lead to the dissolution of the organisation or the significant reconfiguration of the organisation before 2021, with consequent implications for this agreement. Notwithstanding, Waterford Institute of Technology takes the view that the merger and university-designation application are entirely consistent with the strategic goals set out in this compact. Any significant changes in those goals or in the practical application of the mission of the organisation in its new iteration will be subject to discussion with the Authority as indicated above.

Waterford Institute of Technology: Our Vision

We are an education-focussed collaborative, inclusive, ethical and innovative community.

Our goal is to be in the top one hundred Young Universities in the world by 2030, demonstrating quality and excellence in all our activities.

Our focus will be on forming responsible global citizens, creating new knowledge and actively leading social and economic change.

The Values of Waterford Institute of Technology

At Waterford Institute of Technology we share the values that inform the missions of universities globally and we seek actively to promote the principles that guide universities in every manifestation. These principles, wholeheartedly embraced by Waterford Institute of Technology, mean that we believe in:

- Autonomy of thought and expression and intellectual independence;
- Truth and the centrality of truth-seeking to the university mission;
- Inquiry for its own sake;
- The university as a meeting-ground for the free exchange of ideas;
- The university as a trustee of tradition with a responsibility for handing tradition on to future generations;
- Ethical and responsible action;
- Continuous quality improvement, high standards, including the highest standards of professionalism.

Waterford Institute of Technology has also distinguished itself over several generations as upholding certain other values in addition to the above. These differentiate the organisation in the minds of its staff and students and the public at large. At Waterford Institute of Technology therefore:

- We believe in the **transformative power of education** and of the value of knowledge. Our commitment is to creating educational experiences that **liberate the potential of every individual**. Through teaching and research and by our example we form active and responsible global citizens.
 - We believe education should be open and knowledge freely available. We believe in **access to education for all** and acknowledge that this requires a focus on particular cohorts of society that have been traditionally under-represented in education. We believe in equality of opportunity and social mobility.
 - We believe in the value of **challenging and disruptive ideas** and pioneering thinking. We are comfortable with and endorse **interdisciplinary approaches**. We embrace the opportunities presented by **technological innovation**.
 - We believe in the power of **community**, in **inclusivity** and **partnership** and in the co-creation, exchange and sharing of knowledge. We work closely with our partners in a collaborative manner to ensure positive outcomes for students and social and economic impact.
 - We believe in **empathy** with our students and colleagues and **ambition** for our students and ourselves.
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The Mission of Waterford Institute of Technology

Guided by our values, we will achieve our vision by being, in our teaching and learning, in our research, in our structures and organisation, by our engagements with our stakeholders and partners, and by our other activities ...

- **Collaborative and cooperative, supportive of equality and diversity, inclusive and accessible**
We are a community centred on education and we believe strongly in collaboration and aspire to collegiate and cooperative ways of organisation and problem-solving. We are committed to equality. We encourage and promote, celebrate and cherish diversity in our community. We value the contributions of all members of our community—all staff and all students—to the learning effort.
 - **Active in support of equitable social, economic and cultural development**
We act positively to enable local, regional and national development towards future sustainability. We use our academic leadership to support the emergence of a more prosperous and just future for all. We are a catalyst for development and we are committed to ensuring that our academic programmes and research are relevant, flexible and responsive to the needs of our students and stakeholders.
 - **Progressive and innovative, generating new knowledge and new ways of doing things**
We positively and proactively cultivate responsible research and innovation. We are a dynamic and responsive organisation, an organisation that is unafraid of and relishes challenge. We understand technology and its impact, embrace the opportunities technology presents, and shape our activities including our teaching accordingly.
 - **Demonstrably excellent, leading, and ambitious**
We are committed to guaranteeing the quality of all of our activities. We have the ambition to create an international-quality university. We have the confidence to imagine a better future and to take practical steps to bring it into being. Our commitment to excellence, leadership and ambition is measured against the highest standards internationally.
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Waterford Institute of Technology: Strategic Goals 2018-2021

The transformational agenda set out in the Waterford Institute of Technology Strategic Plan will ensure that by 2021 the Institute will be known

1. For our provision of high quality educational experiences to students that are student centred and responsive to learner needs
2. As an accessible new university that offers a wide range of learning opportunities, access and progression routes and flexible modes of engagement with learning that reflect learner needs and societal change
3. As a research-led organisation with a demonstrably impactful, innovative, and dynamic research community
4. For being deeply embedded in regional discourse, policy-making, economic, social and cultural activity and as a driver of regional change
5. For our international profile that finds expression in the approach of our students and staff and in our extensive partnerships
6. As an effectively governed and managed organisation that is strategically focussed and demonstrates quality in all its activities

A seventh goal is also proposed that underpins the others. By 2021, the Institute's financial profile will be such that it will be evident that we are

7. A financially stable and sustainable organisation well-equipped to meet future needs.
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4. Development Plans and Key System Objectives

Institutions are required to set out a description of their proposed approach to deliver on each of the six key system objectives, with reference to the national targets as set out in the Framework.

- Institutions should detail a maximum of two institutional strategic priorities under each of the six framework headings.
- Each strategic priority should be accompanied by a description of the strategic initiatives, currently being implemented, or to be implemented over the three-year timespan of the compact (academic years 2018–2021).
- These strategic initiatives should be described with reference to the high-level targets as set out in the framework.

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

4.1 Strategic Alignment

Waterford Institute of Technology's value set, mission and institutional vision are described in detail in the paragraphs above and in its institutional strategy.

The institutional ambitions described in the strategy are directed towards the achievement of national policy objectives, as set out in the following sections. Most critically Waterford Institute of Technology's plans are set in the context of the wider reform of the higher education system and the national ambition to have the best education system in Europe by 2026 (see Action Plan for Education 2018). The following sections will demonstrate WIT's strategic alignment with those national policy ambitions. They will also demonstrate the very considerable contribution WIT has made to date to the achievement of national policy objectives for higher education in Ireland.

The ambitious expectations both of the higher education system and Waterford Institute of Technology however must be set within the context of the manifest under-funding of the higher education system in general and the Institutes of Technology in particular. Moreover, local ambition must take account of the fact that the Institute has virtually exhausted its resources in its continued efforts on behalf of the region. There has been a lack of significant capital investment for a number of years in the Institute and across the system and recent pay restorations have limited the availability of critical funding. In the case of WIT, the Institute's financial sustainability has been severely threatened in recent years. The Institute continues to carry a deficit. The Institute is heavily reliant on Exchequer funding with limited capacity to identify and exploit other funding streams. This reliance on the Exchequer means that the Institute is adversely impacted when State funding is unavailable or decreases, as has taken place over the last decade.

As indicated in the Strategic Plan, the Institute continues to review effectiveness of its operations and to act where possible to reduce the Institute's deficit and generate efficiencies. The Institute continues to investigate robust mechanisms for introducing greater flexibility into the deployment of academic staff in particular in order fully to utilise the range of resources available. Notwithstanding these efforts, there is no question that the continued ability of the Institute to contribute to the achievement of national priority, even in areas of institutional excellence such as research, is compromised by the lack of available funding and investment.

4.2 Key System Objective 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.

Waterford Institute of Technology is committed to the achievement of this system objective particularly with regard to the South East region. Strategic Goal 4 in the Institute's published strategic plan makes this evident.

As is indicated in the Institute's Plan, we are aware of increasing demand and need for flexibility in programme delivery; significant numbers of potential students cannot take programmes full time or are ineligible to take programmes full time. We need therefore to expand our part-time and flexible-learning offering considerably to meet the needs of these regional cohorts. Our target is to increase learner number in flexible (that is, non-full-time) mode by 1,500 over three years and thus contribute to achieving High Level Target 2 under this national objective.

The strategy to enhance the programme portfolio to facilitate flexible provision and an increased number of part-time learners is informed by and aligned with national and regional policy, specifically:

- Action Plan for Jobs 2012-2018 (Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation)
- South East Action Plan for Jobs 2015-2017 (Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation)
- Local Economic and Community Plan 2015-2010 (Waterford City and County Council)
- Waterford Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018-2020 (Waterford City and County Council)

The strategy is also informed by research conducted by the South East Regional Skills Forum and WIT's participation in internal and external fora including industry networks; Waterford Chamber of Commerce and other regional Chambers; Waterford City and County Council; Waterford Area Partnership; and other industry, social and community stakeholders across the South East.

We make reference in our strategy to a number of target groups for which we are committed to developing programmes. Specifically, building on the Institute's strengths, we wish to offer continuing professional development programmes to second-level and further education-based teachers within the region and beyond. We are committed in our Plan to developing a digital learning strategy that places us at the forefront of that field. We have identified targets that will embed digital learning activity within each academic School at the Institute.

The Institute is explicit in its published strategy in its desire to empower learners "in their learning and future development and employability" and, in this context, has committed to issuing employability statements to all students (currently the Institute does not issue formal employability statements) (High Level Target 5). The Institute will declare its commitment to employability for students in an agreed and published Student Charter. Other initiatives in relation to career development for students are outlined in the Institute's published strategy.

Appendix 1 provides further details on the Institute's strategy to enhance flexible provision.

High Level Targets:

A number of the following high-level targets are relevant to the Institute's future strategy. Particular emphasis has been placed in the Institute's thinking on the targets highlighted below.

1. Increase to 10% the number of those aged 25-64 engaged in lifelong learning by 2020 and to 15% by 2025 National Skills Strategy Target; current base line is 6.7%;
2. **Increase the numbers of HE entrants studying on a flexible basis by 25% by 2021 (baseline 2016/17 20% or 45,018 of total enrolments are flexible learners);**
3. Increase tertiary attainment among 30-34 years olds to 60% by 2020 (52.9% 2016);
4. **All students will have the opportunity to undertake a work placement or work-based project as part of their course by 2025 (baseline to be established and tracked);**
5. **Introduce Employability Statements for all disciplines in all HEIs by 2020 (baseline to be established and tracked);**
6. Increase number of available Springboard places by 30% by 2021 in both universities and institutes of technology;
7. Double target to 9,000 annual new apprenticeship registrations by 2020 (over 4,500 in 2017) with 78 separate apprenticeships in place;
8. Increase the proportion of the higher education cohort studying a foreign language, in any capacity, as part of their course to 20% by 2026 (new baseline to be established and tracked);
9. Achievement of the targets in the new ICT Action Plan.

WIT Target 1: Enrolment of Flexible Learners

Waterford Institute of Technology has a pivotal role in developing the regional workforce and in cultivating the kind of innovation ecosystem that will guarantee and sustain prosperity. Action 15 of the Institute's published Strategic Plan indicates a plan to "increase the number of programmes available in flexible (non-full-time) mode to recruit an additional 1,500 flexible learners over three years." The re-orientation of the organisation towards offering more part-time programmes and the ongoing expansion of online and blended learning opportunities is partly to do with strengthening our role in regional workforce development.

Context, Benchmark and Baseline:

HEA-published enrolment statistics (2016-17) indicate that WIT attracted 1,540 part-time enrolments that year. This represented 6.7% of the total part-time enrolments in the Institute of Technology sector, placing WIT in a ranking of fifth largest recruiter in the sector.

Target:

The Institute's target is based on improving the Institute's ranking across the Institutes and increasing WIT's overall market share in the first instance to at least 7% and ultimately to over 10%. This would improve the Institute's overall ranking, based on current numbers, to fourth within the sector. The target of an additional 1,100 part time learner enrolments described below derives from existing overall numbers; it is recognised that the overall cohort of flexible learners may increase nationally and thus may allow for a final number closer to 1,500, the target proposed by the WIT Strategic Plan.

Institutional targets are described below.¹

Baseline (number of part-time enrolments)	Interim 2019 Target	Interim 2020 Target	Final 2021 Target
1,540	1,840 (+300)	2,165 (+325)	2,640 (+475)

Actions:

The Institute proposes a number of actions in its Strategic Plan directed towards this target. These activities supplement existing activities in this domain—the recruitment of learners through schemes such as Springboard, for instance, and ongoing strong recruitment in Apprentice programmes. The new activities are:

- The further development of the Institute's online and digitally-enhanced teaching capability, in support of the further development of the Institute's online programme portfolio (see WIT Strategy Actions 4, 5 and 6). The recruitment of learners to flexible, online programmes across all Departments will account for significant numbers of new learners.
- The enhancement of the flexible programme portfolio to increase across all Schools the number of Minor and Special Purpose awards available to part-time learners.
- The Institute will further expand its activities in CPD.

¹ The baseline source is the SRS return for 2016-17. Targets are for the 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21 SRS returns respectively.

- While currently the Institute recruits many flexible learners on CPD programmes, the Strategy focusses on a particular cohort—staff within the second-level and further education sectors—for new programme development (see Action 14 in the WIT strategy). The Institute will target the development of at least one new CPD programme for teachers in every academic School. The Institute will engage with the national Teaching Council to identify opportunities for flexible provision of teacher education programmes for both new and existing teachers to re-train, to address national and regional shortages of teachers particularly in the STEM disciplines. The Institute is also exploring an Institute-wide Professional Master in Education to be offered on a part-time basis.
- A second cohort—community groups—is also indicated in the Strategy (Action 32) as a possible market for extended CPD activity.

The Institute wishes to reorient its programme portfolio to make it more available to the employed people who may not be available to take modules in day-time. In particular the Institute sees potential in re-positioning its post-graduate portfolio to make it more available on a flexible basis.

There are elements of the institutional infrastructure that require re-orientation in support of part-time learners. Actions in the Strategic Plan reflect this need. Specifically:

- The Institute needs further investment in learner supports and in the overall learning environment for part-time learning. This means, for instance, making laboratories and classrooms available out of office hours as well as making available learner and pastoral supports. The financial challenges associated with this are considerable. It is proposed that the increased numbers will offset the costs.
- The Institute's quality assurance framework and the associated practical arrangements for the application of that framework will be revised to optimise the delivery of flexible learning (see Action 2 of the WIT strategy).
- The Institute's approach to part-time learning development will be increasingly decentralised in the sense that the Institute's strategy will distribute responsibility for the achievement of part-time targets across the multiple Schools and Departments with the central offices providing support and a co-ordination function. The Institute's analysis at Department and School level indicates areas of under-performance in terms of part-time recruitment; the Institute will focus on these areas, in addition to areas where gaps in regional skills needs have been identified.

Other elements in the Institute's approach to flexible learning are described in Appendix 1 below.

WIT Target 2: Preparation for Employment

Action 30 of the Institute's Strategic Plan involves a commitment to "issuing employability statements on all programmes". This action is proposed "in the context of a co-ordinated career development programme for all students focussed on future employability and linked to regional and national skills needs." This builds on the Institute's strengths in the provision of work-based learning and work-placement opportunities for all learners. The further extension of work placement opportunities to involve the community sector is also part of the Institute's strategy (see Action 32).

Context, Benchmark and Baseline:

Typically the process by which programmes of study at Waterford Institute of Technology are validated and accredited involves employer groups and industry representatives in the relevant domain; in this way, the Institute ensures that the graduate formed by the programme is employment-ready and well-equipped in terms of skills and abilities for relevant future careers. In some areas, professional body accreditation also recognises future employability.

Most programmes at the Institute contain some element of work placement or work-based learning. This further ensures the relevance of the skills of the student to future work and thus the future employability of the graduate.

The Institute runs maintains a Careers Centre which is the main point of contact for students and graduates, offering support in planning for and securing productive employment, as well as a contact point for employers interested in securing the recruitment of well educated, career orientated, informed graduates. The Careers Centre offers advice and access to a wide range of information relating to career planning, occupation profiles, employers details, job search strategies, applications, CVs, interviewing skills and psychometric tests, postgraduate courses and funding, work and study abroad and vacancies.

The Institute does not currently issue employability statements.

Target:

As outlined above, the Institute is committed to issuing employability statements on all programmes and will do so in line with the national target of 2020. It will do so in the context of a comprehensive career development programme that will encompass pre-entry advice to applicants, learner induction and orientation, the curriculum and advice and support for those approaching graduation.

Targets therefore are:

1. Issue employability statements on all programmes by 2020. The following table sets out interim targets to that time

	Baseline (% Level of availability of employability statements) ²	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Undergraduate	0	25	75	100
Postgraduate	0	50	100	100

2. Design and pilot a career-development programme that encompasses all phases in the learner life-cycle in at least two academic areas by 2020;

² The targets refer to the number of graduates who will receive employability statements. Source: WIT Registrar's Office.

3. Publish an agreed student charter outlining commitments to student career development by 2019;
4. Develop a detailed, comprehensive and centralised data set of employers and industry contacts by 2019.

Actions:

The Institute has committed in its published strategy to the development of a student charter that will specify, amongst other things, the expectations students may have of the organisation with regard to career development and employability. As an expression of this commitment in the charter, the Institute will issue employability statements to completing students.

The Institute's career service and career support structures are highly evolved but somewhat un-co-ordinated, specifically in the articulation between the central careers office and the activities of Schools and Departments around support for student work-placement and careers choices. The Institute will, in the context of developing what is indicated in Action 30 as "a co-ordinated career development programme for all students", create greater co-ordination between Schools, the central careers service and employer groups. In the first instance this involves gathering and sharing data on employer contacts in a much more co-ordinated and systematic way—which in itself is related to a wider institutional need for a more co-ordinated engagement with regional stakeholders in particular. Action 28 of the Plan therefore reads: "Create formal structures to facilitate co-ordinated and cohesive engagement with stakeholders and partners (and in support of existing forums such as the Regional Skills Forum) and convene this group around an appointed senior officer." It is understood that these formal structures, including the creation of a shared stakeholder (and therefore employer) data-set and the management of that data through a CRM system, will greatly facilitate the co-ordination of career support interventions.

4.3 Key System Objective 2

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

Our vision of the future Waterford Institute of Technology is of an organisation where we are habitually outward-facing and globally oriented.

This orientation is expressed in the first instance through the Institute's long tradition of working with international partners—in research and in teaching—and in facilitating student mobility, inward and outward. The national aspirations that Irish higher education would be “globally competitive” speaks to a particular (and limited) element in internationalisation, that is, student recruitment. Waterford Institute of Technology is however committed to a broader view of internationalisation which reflects that of the European Parliament whereby internationalisation is defined as “the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society.”³ The further internationalisation of the Institute is critical from multiple perspectives: students now function and go on to work in a world where an international perspective is required in every domain; internationalisation is an expression of an institutional commitment to diversity; building internationalisation is a means to attract and retain talent in the region; and internationalisation typically creates a source of income through international research funding and through the recruitment of fee-paying students. In order to prepare our students for the global workplace, the Waterford Institute of Technology curriculum must be further internationalised, both in content and in the international opportunities available to students. Study abroad options should be integrated into all undergraduate programmes where practicable. Notwithstanding all this, the Institute has prioritised international student recruitment, as set out below. We continue to demonstrate our desire to create a diverse, multi-national organisation and will continue to recruit international students from many cultures and countries. We will prioritise the development of a relatively small number of key partnerships in order to maximise the impact of our internationalising effort in alignment with national policy regarding key markets.

The Institute has been at the forefront of connecting in meaningful ways with enterprise for many years and has a distinguished record in knowledge transfer with high performance in the creation of spin out companies, patents and against a range of other measures. The Institute's outward-facing orientation will continue to find expression in the number instances of technology transfer evident in the Institute's activities.

³ See http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/540370/IPOL_STU%282015%29540370_EN.pdf.

High Level Targets:

A number of the following high-level targets are relevant to the Institute's future strategy. Particular emphasis has been placed in the Institute's thinking on the targets highlighted below.

1. Increase the output value of internationalisation to €1.15bn per annum by 2020 (International Education Strategy baseline €819m in 2014/15);
2. **International students to represent 15% of full-time students by 2020. (In 2016/17, 11.6% of all fulltime students in HEA-funded higher education institutions were international students);**
3. Progress towards Bologna target of at least 20% of those who graduate in 2020 to undertake a study or training period abroad;
4. **Number of innovation vouchers project agreements with industry to increase by 12% by 2020 (487 in 2016);**
5. Increase number of commercially relevant technologies (licences, options, assignments) by 20% by 2020 (163 in 2017);
6. **Increase number of spin-outs established during the year by 40% by 2020 (Innovation 2020 target, 29 in 2014);**
7. Improve Employer satisfaction rates with HEI collaboration with enterprise by 25% as tracked in National Employer Survey (companies < 50 employees – 55% rated collaboration as good/very good; companies with 51 – 250 employees – 60% and companies > 251+ employees – 75%);
8. Participation in Erasmus+ in Higher Education and other Study and Work Placements Abroad to reach 4,400 by 2022 (3,135 in 2016) in accordance with international strategy.

WIT Target 3: International Student Recruitment

The Institute makes a commitment in Action 40 of its Strategic Plan to increasing “the diversity of the student population by increasing the number of incoming EU and non-EU students as part of an international student recruitment strategy consistent with national targets.” The targets for international student recruitment are set with the national targets therefore in mind.

Context, Benchmark and Baseline:

The Institute currently ranks 13th for non-EU enrolments across the higher education system.⁴ WIT ranks 5th for international students in the IOT sector. WIT takes about 8% of that overall cohort of non-EU students attending IOTs, behind DIT who take 30% and DKIT who take 16%.

Targets:

To meet the national target of having 15% international students on current numbers WIT would need to recruit over 900 students. This is not credible. Even the national policy of increasing non-EU intake by 33% is not credible when applied to WIT as this would require us to increase our intake by almost 100%.

It seems reasonable to target a better ranking within the IOT sector initially, particularly based on past performance; in time, an increased ranking nationally is desirable. To be ranked third within the Institute of Technology sector, based on current numbers, we would need an additional c.100 non-EU students.

The institutional average for non-EU enrolments is 4% of the student population. It is proposed to insist that all academic Schools who have yet to reach 4% would do so by 2021 and target an overall growth to between 7% and 8% overall which is more credible. Year-on-year growth of 7-8% suggests a final target for 2021 of 375.

Baseline (number of full-time non-EU students) ⁵	Interim 2019 Target	Interim 2020 Target	Final 2021 Target
304	315 (+11)	330 (+15)	375 (+45)

Actions:

In the context of updating our internationalisation strategy and the clear articulation of priorities in our approach over the coming period (incorporating commercial and non-commercial activity, extending academic partnerships with income-generating activity), the Institute is currently engaged in a review and a restructuring of its International function in support of its ambitions regarding student recruitment. As part of that restructuring, the Institute will draw on latent capacity within Schools and Departments in a systemic, structured and appropriate way, aligned to best practice and overall Institute policy.

⁴ Comparative figures are based on HEA 2016-17 institutional profile reports filtered by domiciliary origin.

⁵ The baseline source is the institutional SRS return for 2016-17 filtered to include International, International Exchange, and International Repeat students (that is, students who are not in receipt of Free Fees under the government’s initiative and who are classified as “Non-EU”). The targets refer to the SRS for 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21 respectively.

The Institute is at capacity when it comes to EU enrolments through the Erasmus programme. The Institute does not see any significant expansion of activity here.

A more systematic and School-specific manner of setting non-EU enrolment targets will be deployed over the course of the Plan; the Institute's dependency on a small number of Schools for non-EU recruitment is high risk and the overall increase must be distributed across all academic areas. As a first step, Action 39 of the Institute's Plan involves obliging each School within the Institute to "Extend by one [...] the range of international partners in articulation and joint degree agreements as part of an international partnership development strategy." In the first instance this will be a vehicle for non-EU student recruitment.

The Institute will continue to support and encourage activity in disciplines aligned to current market priorities and future strategically important markets and geographic zones, recognising Ireland's trade strategy and wider diplomatic effort. The zones of key importance are currently: China; Malaysia; and India. With the continued support of agencies such as Enterprise Ireland, and guided by their efforts, the Institute will explore additional zones of activity such as the Middle East and Africa. The Institute will continue to support study abroad activities with North American colleges and will seek further expansion of degree completion opportunities in particular with colleges in Canada (Ontario) and the United States (Georgia).

WIT Target 4: Technology Transfer

Action 31 of the Institute's Strategy indicates that we will "Increase knowledge transfer activity—measured in invention disclosures, patents, licenses, and spin-outs—in line with national targets, and continue to expand SME and industry collaborations regionally and nationally."

Context, Benchmarks and Baseline:

The Technology Transfer Office (TTO) in WIT is fully funded through a Knowledge Transfer Ireland (www.kti.ie) programme called the Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative (TTSI3).

Working with KTI the TTO in WIT has set out a series of ambitious knowledge transfer targets over a five-year period to 2021 for metrics such as licences, spin-out companies, research agreements and patents filed. The underlying rationale to this approach is that these metrics reflect WIT's ability to professionally manage our intellectual property output generated from our research to enhance Ireland's competitive advantage and international reputation whilst creating sustainable jobs and contributing to regional economic growth.

The following are the Waterford Institute of Technology targets (and actuals) for 2017 and for 2018 in technology transfer. This performance has been validated by Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI).

		2017		2018	
		Target	Actual	Target	Actual
Licences/Options/Assignments		5	4	5	7
Registered spinouts created		1	0	1	1
Funded spinouts created		1	0	0	1
Spin-outs converting EI to HPSU clients		1	0	0	0
Research agreements with industry (Fully Funded by Industry)					
	< €25K	80	113	85	72
	€25K- €500	1	3	2	2
	>€500K	0	0	0	0
Research collaboration agreements	(Part Funded by Industry)				
	< €25K	2	3	2	0
	€25K- €500	5	7	5	8
	>€500K	0	0	0	0
IDF's		10	9	12	11
IDFs converted to Licences		5	2	5	0
Priority Patent applications filed		4	4	4	3
Patent applications granted		0	0	1	0
Patent applications converted to licences		0	1	1	0
Consultancy agreements		3	5	3	5

Targets:

The following are the Institute's targets in the Technology Transfer domain 2019 to 2021, the final three years of the Institute's five year strategy in this area. These represent a continued enhancement of activity for the function measured across all the standard metrics.⁶

Targets		2019	2020	2021
		Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
LOAs		6	6	6
Registered spinouts created		1	1	1
Funded spinouts created		1	0	1
Spin-outs converting EI to HPSU clients		1	0	1
Research agreements with industry	< €25K	85	85	85
	€25K- €500	1	2	1
	>€500K	0	0	0
Research collaboration agreements	< €25K	3	3	3
	€25K- €500	5	5	5

⁶ These targets are drawn from the annual returns from the WIT TTO Office to KTI.

>€500K	0	0	0
IDF's	12	14	14
IDFs converted to Licences	6	6	6
Priority Patent applications filed	5	5	5
Patent applications granted	0	0	1
Patent applications converted to licences	0	1	1
Consultancy agreements	3	4	4

Actions:

1. WIT's knowledge transfer and commercialisation effort will focus primarily in the coming period on increasing the activity of two centres, SEAM [South East Applied Materials Research Centre] (Advanced Manufacturing, based in the School of Engineering) and PMBRC [Pharmaceutical and Molecular Biotechnology Research Centre] (Life Sciences, based in the School of Science).
 - Both Centres have been given ambitious targets to increase commercialisation activity by 20%. The Centres will emulate the model for growth that has led to considerable success in this area for the TSSG [Telecommunications Software Systems Group], another major research centre at WIT.
 - It is proposed that a dedicated resource with a sole focus on activity in Engineering and Life Sciences will be added to the TTO from 2019 in support of the achievement of these targets.
 - The Institute will be prioritising applications for capital funding in these areas and anticipates applying under upcoming Enterprise Ireland support funding calls for funding to purchase and upgrade equipment in these domains.
 - Engagement activity in SEAM will increase with the development of a dedicated training company that will support high tech industry with tailored training support.
2. Funded by Enterprise Ireland, a significant expansion of the Institute's ArcLabs research and innovation centre and incubation hub is currently taking place with building works complete by 2019. This extension will double the ArcLabs capacity to support clients.
3. The "NDRC At ArcLabs" accelerator programme is based in ArcLabs. The Accelerator programme is part of Enterprise Ireland's overall strategy to increase the number and quality of start-ups that have the potential to employ more than 10 persons and achieve €1 million in export sales within three years. Currently WIT hosts 9 companies as part of this programme with potential to generate significant commercialisation activity. The client base is made up of a mixture of clients from within the South East of Ireland, from other regions in Ireland, and from outside Ireland, and the ambition is that these companies will base themselves as they scale up in the South East. It is anticipated that the number of companies linked to the accelerator programme will increase to 30 over the coming 18 months.

4.4 Key System Objective 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.

Waterford Institute of Technology is uniquely positioned within the Institute of Technology sector in research; the Institute has been clearly a leader in research across the sector for many years. The Institute wishes to retain this pre-eminent position and has declared as a priority its Strategic Plan that it will be “a research-led organisation with a demonstrably impactful, innovative, and dynamic research community”.

The Institute will retain over the coming period its commitment to research excellence, will continue to deliver innovation and will enhance its research impact. These commitments are reflected in its Strategic Plan and in this Compact. In general terms, it is necessary that the Institute disseminates more widely the results of its research activity and descriptions of the nature of the activity itself; creates greater critical mass amongst research groups to enable them attract more research funding, research students, and generate more high-quality publications; and broadens the range of research activity into new disciplines and between disciplines. Increasing research activity along these lines is a requirement if we are to feature as a top one hundred university and fulfil our overarching strategic objectives.

The Institute has sought to generate impact through creating critical mass in areas of priority and on quality and excellence in research output. The Institute continues to maintain several international-standard research centres across a range of disciplines and the Institute’s Strategic Plan will see an expansion of the number of international-standard centres. The Institute’s strategy projects a 25% increase in the number of research active staff over the coming three years. Research governance infrastructure will be further developed in support of this expansion.

The Institute wishes to focus on greatly increasing its impact in terms of publications and citations, in keeping with a broader emphasis throughout the Strategic Plan on forging a more outward-facing and confident organisation. The increased focus on dissemination is necessary to meet targets associated with “young university” ranking.

Cross-Institute Graduate School structures need to be enhanced to ensure uniform access to training and professional development opportunities for graduate students. This will necessitate the further development and resourcing of the Graduate Studies Office. This Office will also support a targeted increase of 25% in research student numbers, as set out in the Plan.

High Level Targets:

A number of the following high-level targets are relevant to the Institute's future strategy. Particular emphasis has been placed in the Institute's thinking on the targets highlighted below.

1. **Increase of 500 new postgraduate research enrolments in disciplines aligned to enterprise and other national needs by 2020. (baseline 2,235 in 2014/15);**
2. Increase by 30% the number of funded postdoctoral positions in disciplines aligned to enterprise and other national needs by 2020. (Innovation 2020 target);
3. Double overall Higher Education research income derived from industry to €48m (Innovation 2020 target - €24m in 2014);
4. Increase research projects between enterprise and the public research system by 20% by 2020 (2014 Baseline is 878);
5. **Secure HEI Horizon 2020 target of €550m in funding by 2020 (over €200m secured by end of 2016);**
6. **Increase applied research in the Institutes of technology.**

WIT Target 5: Graduate Student Enrolment

Action 21 of the Institute's Strategic Plan proposes that the Institute will "increase the numbers of research-active staff and of research postgraduate students by 25% and provide them with a range of training and professional development opportunities." The Institute has been directed in its thinking by the need to increase critical mass in research activity in general in the organisation and specifically towards the creation of additional areas of distinction as well as by national targets. The Institute's targeted growth in research student numbers has also been informed by the targets associated with Technological University designation. The Institute's primary focus in growing graduate student numbers has been on doctoral students.

In addition to this focus on increasing our cohort of graduate students, the Institute continues to improve the breadth and depth of training in generic/transferrable skills and discipline-specific skills to offer these students to prepare them for their professional life post-graduation. In particular the Institute has introduced a Structured PhD framework, with all PhD students registered from 2018-19 required to register on a structured PhD programme. These programmes will be consistent with the National Framework for Doctoral Education and will feature a newly developed suite of accredited modules in generic/transferrable skills formation.

Benchmarks and Baseline:

The Institute's Strategic Plan takes as its baseline 2016-17 enrolments. PhD enrolments at WIT in 2016-17 numbered 148. Based on those enrolments, Waterford Institute of Technology has the second highest number of PhD students in the Institute of Technology sector and the second highest number of graduate research students in the sector.

While the Institute lags behind the "young" universities (DCU, UL and MU) in terms of PhD student enrolments, setting aside DIT and CIT, WIT has almost the same number of PhD students than all the remaining IOTs combined. The Institute's ambition—to be amongst the top 100 "young" universities by 2030—requires that we close the gap in PhD enrolments to the smaller universities.

The Institute has targeted growth of 25% in its published plan based on 2016-17 enrolments of 148 PhD (FT and PT). This will see the Institute consolidate this position within the IOT sector. Since 2012-13, the Institute has grown its population of PhD students from 14.6% of the Institute of Technology total (75/554) to over 17% of the total within the sector (148/864). The targeted increase of 25% would result in a planned increase of approximately 50 graduate students and an increase in overall share to approximately 20%. This is consistent with the growth trajectory of the Institute to date. An emphasis will be placed on achieving this growth through funded PhD positions, a significant portion of which will be co-funded by enterprise partners.

Targets:

25% increase represents an increase of 50 students on a base of 148.

Baseline ⁷	September 2019 Target	September 2020 Target	Final 2021 Target
148	170	185	200

Actions:

⁷ The baseline source is the Institute's SRS return for 2016-17. The targets accordingly are for the SRS 2018-19, 2019-20, and 2020-2021.

The Institute will undertake the following to achieve its target over the period of this Compact.

1. Building on success to date, the Institute will run the next iteration of the WIT President's PhD scholarship programme, emphasising
 - a. Funding of new PhD research supervisors to build capacity; and
 - b. The potential of the proposed projects to form the basis for successful research funding applications.
2. Building on success to date, the Institute will run the next iteration of the WIT PhD Co-fund scholarship programme twice per year placing emphasis on the co-funding of positions by enterprise and other non-governmental partners, especially those based in the South East region. This initiative will
 - a. Continue to build capacity in areas of regional and national impact; and
 - b. Enhance the engagement between the Institute and industry and other partners.
3. Continue to provide significant support for research funding applications in areas of strategic importance that will lead to the recruitment of research postgraduate students. This initiative involves, where possible, freeing faculty in priority areas from some teaching activities to focus on developing funding applications. The Institute will continue to run its grant preparation support scheme (currently successfully utilized in the School of Science) which has led to increased research activity and increased graduate student recruitment. It is anticipated that
 - a. The targeted increase in EU funding (see Target 6 below) will be in areas that necessarily generate a need for graduate students and will lead to graduate student enrolments;
 - b. We will continue to support students in their applications to the Irish Research Council under their various PhD funding programmes, with a particular emphasis on the Enterprise Partnership Programme and the Employment Base Programme;
 - c. Funding proposals will focus on training networks (eg Marie Skłodowska-Curie programmes) that will necessarily attract graduate students (as well as on large scale projects);
 - d. Increased activity within SFI research centers (for example, VISTAMILK) which will also attract graduate students at doctoral level;
 - e. Continued enhancement of our offerings to international students through the International Office with a focus on graduate programmes;
 - f. As resources allow, the Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) will run several more times in the cycle between now and 2021.
4. Enhance the breadth and depth of generic/transferrable skills training and discipline-specific training offered to research postgraduate students, building specifically on success to date in streamlining and accrediting generic skills training as part of the overall structures doctorate programme.
5. Actively promote the development of inter-disciplinary research postgraduate programmes between WIT schools and use the experience gained to prepare WIT researchers for successful applications for Horizon Europe FP9. The newly formed Research Advisory Council (Action 24 in the Institute's Strategic Plan) will be a formal means by which interdisciplinary research opportunities are examined and promoted.

WIT Target 6: Research Activity

The Institute will over the course of the Plan maintain its position as amongst the highest performing Institutes of Technology in research. It will expand its research activity (as indicated above) and will develop from three to five the research centres of critical mass within the Institute. This is indicated in Action 18 of the Plan where the Institute proposes to “develop and/or maintain international-standard research centres/institutes across five prioritised discipline areas.” This constitutes a continued growth of research—much of it applied—in the Institute in areas of critical mass with research excellence as a primary consideration. A number of other actions in the Strategic Plan complement this plan to expand high-quality research activity: a continued focus on targeted national infrastructural programmes (see Action 19), and strong commitments to building research infrastructure around research data collection (Action 23), support structures and research-career development supports in particular (Action 24), and “Action 25: Overhaul existing research governance infrastructure, policies and processes to maintain a research environment that reaches the highest research integrity standards.”

Context, Benchmarks and Baseline:

The evolution of education at Waterford Institute of Technology for almost 50 years is marked by enormous achievements and impact in research, innovation and graduate education. This impact has placed WIT at the forefront of the Institute of Technology Sector within this space. In terms of PhD graduates, funding (total expenditure and EU success), and knowledge transfer metrics the Institute has demonstrated that it is a clear leader in the sector. This performance has for many years compared favourable to many of the universities in Ireland. Such achievement is all the more impressive when considered against a backdrop of no dedicated top-slice funding, unequal grant allocation and a staff contract which does not support the development of research activities.

Key impact data which indicates the success of the institute include:

- Leveraging over €73 million in research funding in the past 5 years
- The top performing IoT in leveraging EU funding from FP6, FP7 through to H2020 (a total of €26million)
- The only IoT to meet the TU criteria of 4% registered research students
- The Institute with the highest R&D spend in the sector
- Almost 30% of all PhD graduates in the IoT sector over a 10 year period from WIT

Over the lifetime of the last strategic compact Waterford institute of Technology achieved all of its research targets. This achievement was attained within one of the most challenging funding environments in the history of the Irish third level sector.

The region has been a major beneficiary of this enormous effort with the Institute supporting research across the impact spectrum from basic to applied. The long term impact of this investment has led to the region becoming a hub for high value industrial sectors in ICT, Agri Food, Pharma and medical devices. The research activity across the Institute has supported the economic as well as cultural life of the region. From idea generation to subsequent start-ups the development and support of a research culture at the Institute has had a lasting positive impact on the region.

The Institute proposes measuring progress on its planned growth in research activity (in support of the national goal to grow research in the IOT sector) through measuring:

- (a) Progress against EU funding targets;
- (b) The number of staff determined to be research active;
- (c) The number of peer-reviewed publications associated with the Institute.

EU Funding

The following tables describe the Institute's research funding by agency and by region for the period 2015-17.

Overview of WIT Funding Received 2015-17: Funding by Region⁸

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-Year End
Region	Amount (€)	Amount (€)	Amount (€)
National	€11,507,670	€8,136,214	€6,143,096
European/International	€316,944	€3,896,675	€0
Industry	€1,968,075	€1,770,380	€20,628
<i>Total</i>	<i>€13,792,689</i>	<i>€13,803,269</i>	<i>€6,163,724</i>

The Institute has targeted a 20% increase in EU funding sourced through competitive applications in the period to 2021.

Research-Active Staff⁹

The Institute routinely completes the Higher Education R&D Survey (HERD) co-ordinated by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. The last available survey—which is taken at two-yearly intervals—is for 2016-17. The survey indicated a research active complement (as defined by HERD) of 364 staff within WIT, as described below:

Research Area	M	F	T
<i>School of Business</i>			
Accountancy & Economics	11	8	19
Management & Organisation	14	21	35
Graduate Business Studies	1	0	1
<i>School of Lifelong learning & Education</i>			
Education	2	7	9
<i>School of Engineering</i>			
Engineering Technology - (SEAM)	10	4	14
Engineering Technology - (all other areas)	15	1	16
Architecture	9	4	13
Built Environment	7	0	7
<i>School of Health Sciences</i>			
Nursing	3	9	12
Health, Sports & Exercise Science	12	14	26
<i>School of Humanities</i>			
Applied Arts	12	16	28
Creative & Performing Arts	4	5	9
Languages, Tourism & Hospitality	4	6	10
<i>School of Science</i>			
Sciences - (Eco-Innovation)	11	17	28
Sciences - (Pharmaceutical)	12	8	20
Computing, Maths & Physics	16	6	22
TSSG	79	14	93
Office of Research & Innovation	2	0	2
Total	224	140	364

⁸ Source: WIT Research Support Unit

⁹ Source: WIT Research Support Unit, HERD Survey return 2016-17.

Publications

The Institute continues to seek optimum ways to gather data on staff publications in a systematic manner; current measures, such as Web of Science, do not capture all of the Institute's research outputs. Notwithstanding, the Institute performs at a high level within the Institute of Technology sector when it comes to publications, as demonstrated by the following table (compiled by THEA¹⁰):

	Indexed Publications	Citations	Authors	Citations per Publication
Athlone IT	201	736	154	3.5
Cork IT	676	4132	374	6.1
Dublin Institute of Technology	1703	11242	934	6.6
IADT	32	68	29	2.1
Dundalk IT	242	1107	149	4.2
Galway-Mayo IT	212	1725	108	8.1
IT Blanchardstown	38	332	28	8.7
IT Carlow	77	274	69	3.6
IT Sligo	157	1010	100	6.4
IT Tallaght	137	844	119	6.2
IT Tralee	53	69	49	1.3
Letterkenny IT	57	176	52	3.1
Limerick IT	79	228	75	2.9
Waterford IT	696	3390	387	5.2
Sectoral Total	4360	25333	2627	

As this indicates, WIT is amongst the top-performing IOTs when it comes to publications, citations and other related measures.

The Institute's own analysis (based on Web of Science data, January 2019) suggests that over a five year period it produced in the region of 600 peer-reviewed publications, as indicated by the following:

Year	Publications	Citations
2014	80	33
2015	104	148
2016	119	418
2017	137	762
2018	140	1038
	580	2399

This publication data reflects the actual publications tracked by the Web of Science database in the years 2014-2018 and the citations of these publications that occurred in this period also. It is not a citation count of all WIT publications nor is it a count of the citations of just those publications in a given year.

Appendix 3 to this Compact sets out in more detail the Institute's current research performance.

Targets:

In the course of the period 2018-2021, Waterford Institute of Technology has targeted:

¹⁰ Source: THEA, Facts and Figures about Research, Development and Innovation Activities in the Technological Sector, February 2018.

- (a) Increased EU funding through competitive research-funding applications by 20% (or 7% per year) as follows:

Benchmark ¹¹ (total competitive research funding from EU sources)	2019 Target	2020 Target	2021 Target
€4.2 million	€4.5 million	€4.8 million	€5.13 million

- (b) An increase in the number of research-active staff by at least 15%:

Benchmark ¹² (number of research active staff)	2019 Target	2020 Target	2021 Target
364	385	405	420

- (c) The implementation of a research dissemination strategy that leads to a 30% increase in the number of quality peer-reviewed publications:

Benchmark ¹³ (number of peer-reviewed publications per annum)	2019 Target	2020 Target	2021 Target
116	130	145	160

Actions:

Measures which will be the driving force for the Institute's research ambitions include:

- Initiatives which facilitate staff engagement with research, in support of the targeted increases expressed above, including continued support for researchers through the implementation of our HRS4R action plan and the development of a workload allocation model that is fit for purpose, as well as through the creation of a Research Council;
- The creation of the designation of Research Institute to enhance structures and governance in larger research centres and to facilitate continued growth;

¹¹ This data will be drawn from the WIT RSU data on research funding.

¹² Baseline data and subsequent targets will draw on the HERD surveys.

¹³ This data will utilise Web of Science, filtered by organisation.

- Expansion of schemes such as our grant preparation support scheme to encourage staff to write grant applications, and facilitating staff information about potential grants through Research Professional and other means;
- New focus on publication across the Institute and the development of a publication strategy in support of achieving the targets above;
- Support for the development of our three technology gateways and enhanced engagement with SFI centres;
- The continued evolution of data collection relating to research that can be integrated with existing systems, specifically the evolution of our collection of data on publications and our systems to enhance the visibility of current research.

4.5 Key System Objective 4

Significantly improve the equality of opportunity through education and training and recruits a student body that reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population.

The Institute's mission, as indicated in its Strategic Plan, describes the Institute's firm commitments to equality and diversity and the Institute's desire to be an active agent for equitable social change. In this context, the Institute has prioritised embedding equity and equity of access in all its activities.

The Strategic Plan supports the development of a widening participation framework aligned to the specific needs of each academic School within the Institute—the plan requires that access initiatives are mainstreamed within the work of individual departments and Schools. The framework will explicitly incorporate:

- targeted approaches to meet quotas of specific access cohorts identified in National policy;
- vertical integration from pre-school to post-secondary through supporting early intervention programmes and key transitions in education;
- recruitment activities based on accurate data pertaining to local and regional participation rates of under-represented groups;
- the consolidation and expansion of our pathway programme; and
- the implementation of universal design in the curriculum to ensure its accessibility.

Our commitment to enhancing the diversity of our population—of staff and students—involves the recognition of the unique contribution of every individual to the community, to the learning experience and to knowledge creation. Certain responsibilities follow from this commitment, including a responsibility to ensure that the curriculum is accessible to all students; certain adjustments to the learning environment, support structures, as well as to the taught curriculum, will be required in the period of the Plan. Our commitment to the formal recognition of the unique contribution of every individual involves developing training programmes for staff so that they can fully engage in promoting and facilitating access and flexible learning.

Waterford Institute of Technology is part of a wider educational system in the region and its future development must be seen in the context of developments across the system, particularly at second level and in further education. The further development of partnership between the Institute and further education providers will be necessary to enhance the efficacy of the entire system in offering opportunities to all.

High Level Targets:

A number of the following high-level targets are relevant to the Institute's future strategy. Particular emphasis has been placed in the Institute's thinking on the targets highlighted below.

1. All HEIs will have a Student Success Strategy in place by 2020 which will embed whole-of-HEI approaches to institutional access strategies;
2. **Implement new data initiatives and indicators to support the development and implementation of evidenced based National Plans for Equity of Access by 2019;**
3. **Implement the strands of the Programme for Access to Third Level (PATH) Fund to support the implementation of the National Plan for Equity of Access 2015-2019;**
4. **Sustain the expansion from underrepresented groups with 2,000 additional enrolments from socioeconomically disadvantaged groups and 1,000 from Further education access programmes;**
5. Increase in enrolments from DEIS schools by ensuring that every such school will be participating in a HEI led access programme;
6. Completion rates for students from disadvantaged cohorts will be specifically targeted for improvement.

WIT Target 7: Evidence Base on Access

Action 12 of the Institute's Strategic Plan indicates that Waterford Institute of Technology will "gather and report on data relating to access to identify under-represented groups in the profile of the Institute, and actively recruit from those groups to align with national targets with a particular focus on socio-economic disadvantage."

Context, Benchmarks and Baseline:

To date the collection and analysis on baseline data on WP ("widening participation") student cohorts has been problematic within the Institute.

- The macro approach adopted to data collection and collation has not supported the level of analysis required to get a full picture of how the Institute performs in relation to widening participation at the micro levels;
- Equally the Institute has benchmarked itself against other Institutes and Universities and given less attention to geographical and other regional but highly relevant benchmarks;
- The Institute has a rich repository of data to draw from but accessibility to this data is limited by a lack of capacity among staff as to where and how to access this data in a way that is useful for their specific requirements; there is a reasonable level of knowledge among Institute staff of the data sources across the relevant external agencies and bodies but poor capacity as to how these data sources can be developed and utilised to meet Institute specific needs.

The Institute's appointment of a senior data analyst in 2017 goes some way towards addressing this particular gap. The further development of this office and an expansion of the range of reports will be critical to enhancing the Institute's intelligence as it relates to widening participation.

To facilitate further development in this area, and in the context of the Technological University application and designation process, GDPR requirements, along with more stringent HEA and other funding body reporting requirements, WIT will review current Institute WP data plans and policies. Guidelines for the initial stages of the review are laid out below with an anticipated timeframe of twelve months.

Targets:

The Institute will deliver a comprehensive Institute-wide WP Data Framework complete with proposed implementation plan with matched timelines and identification of associated resource requirements. In the process to achieve this aim it will achieve the following targets:

- Identify and list existing Institute data repositories for data collection and collation (quantitative and qualitative) on WP initiatives and, where possible, on potential and current student cohorts;
- Identify and list existing data collection and analysis methodologies to include sharing agreements with and other inputs from relevant external agencies both local and regional;
- Make recommendations as to how best to support the WP data remit of personnel across the Institute;
- Recommend how the Institute can develop and retain an active link to ongoing work of National Access Office's Data Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education and other relevant National bodies. This collaboration will support the Institute to enhance its overall evidence-base for future policy development and performance indicators in the area of the access and retention of students from the equity of access target groups.

Actions:

Senior Management within WIT will support and lead on an Institute WP Data Project. This project will operate on an Institute-wide basis and within a 12 month period.

The objectives of the work undertaken within the project for example will include:

- Availability and reporting of baseline data per academic schools ;
- Range and type of data available;
- The governance of the data analytics role/s and data management processes;
- The extent to which the existing data framework is streamlined with our WP strategy;
- Extent to which WIT data framework is aligned to national strategy;
- Extent to which WIT data framework is aligned across the region, for example, the regional spatial strategy as evident in the National Planning Framework;
- Possibilities for integrating and streamlining WIT data requirements with data requirements of other key sectoral stakeholders.

WIT will set up and resource an access, participation and retention data implementation sub-group.

The data analysis function successful secured funding from the Open Data Engagement Fund to undertake a project in data analysis related to access in 2017, a project that will conclude later in 2018. The results of this project will inform future access activity as well as the construction of a WP data group.

WIT Target 8: Access for Under-represented Groups

As indicated above, Action 12 of the Institute's Strategic Plan proposes that Waterford Institute of Technology will focus particular attention on socio-economically disadvantaged groups in its access effort over the coming period.

Context, Benchmarks and Baseline:

Activities in pursuit of widening higher education participation in WIT have a long history and the Institute's development in this area has aligned closely to local and regional needs. Historically these strategies were part of the mainstream activities of the Institute and Higher Education in Waterford and the surrounding regions, became a real option for whole cohorts of students who previously were excluded from this progression route.

Internal and external drivers has directed the Institute towards the next growth phase of WP and in recent decades we have put much emphasis on segmenting and consolidating WP activities with considerable success across all HEA target cohorts (listed below). The range of WP activities varies across the cohorts but broadly encompasses pre-entry, post entry and exit supports. The Institute recognises that our next successes in WP will require a mainstreaming approach and to this effect commits to developing the comprehensive WP framework in tandem with its WP Data Plan (see above).

Targets:

Indicative targets for Access for the coming period are as follows:

	Baseline ¹⁴	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Disability New Entrants	261	265	267	273
Traveller New Entrants	0	0	1	2
Mature New Entrants	277	255	270	275

These targets remain indicative pending the strategic reorganisation of Access activity in the Institute over the coming period, as outlined.

Over the coming twelve months, we will begin the process of scoping out and developing a WP framework. Among the hallmarks of this framework will be:

- A robust evidence-based approach to support continued WP policy and practice (see Data Plan above);
- Describing and building bespoke and tailored interventions and strategies for different WP cohorts as identified by the National Access Plan;
- The integration of WP activities across academic schools to further the mainstreaming agenda;
- Building further staff capacity including continued development of WP T&L strategies;

¹⁴ Source: draft SRS 2017-18.

- Ensuring (through clear evidence-based reporting, regular measurement, and continual review) the tight alignment of the local objectives to Regional and National WP objectives and policy.

WIT will continue to strive to meet above National targets. The proposed data plan and the revised WP framework will further inform our benchmarking process and new additional targets which will reflect the South-East's specific socio-economic, cultural and geographic profiles.

Actions:

The following actions are proposed over the course of the Compact in support of achieving these targets:

- Gather and collate data on all access activities across Institute and map onto WIT SP and National Access Plan to identify baseline data for activities with specific remit around “underrepresented” target groups (see also Data Plan above);
- Identify appropriate priority areas and restructure associated activities to support academic integration into one Academic school on a pilot basis. The proposed remit for initial work is:
 - List actions within school to progress the access, participation and retention of under-represented students and how this specifically impacts on the target cohorts
 - Identify trends, barriers and opportunities for greater access and participation of under-represented students as per target cohorts
 - Identify transferability of practices to other areas of the Institute;
- Align our numerical planning targets, through the development of quota based targeted approaches, with those of the National plan for Equity of Access to Education;
- In conjunction with the WP data group identify other appropriate indicators of socio-economic disadvantage;
- Re-assess current formal partnership agreements for existing and potential access activities with external sectoral stakeholders;
- Re-frame existing all pre-entry support programmes to focus on :
 - key transition points in education
 - geo-profiling indicators
 - a rebalance between targeted and universal interventions
- Extend the numbers of entrants on the current SED entry routes
- Work in collaboration with the relevant National bodies to investigate a pilot restructuring of the current WIT undergraduate SED entry routes (Pathways/REACH) to facilitate additional entries from the target cohorts.

4.6 Key System Objective 5

Demonstrate 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.

The excellence of the WIT teaching and learning environment and approach has been affirmed in the quality reviews undertaken by the Institute, most recently in School Reviews of academic schools and in the Institutional Review 2010.¹⁵ The latter, for instance, commented on “the centrality accorded to learners in the Institute’s policies and procedures for quality assurance” (p.28) and “the availability of a broad range of institute-wide academic and pastoral support services for learners”, “the accessibility of staff to learners outside formal teaching hours”, and “the pedagogic response of individual members of staff to the changing learner profile” (p.42). Such affirmations of the quality of the organisation’s teaching are fundamental to maintaining a reputation with the general public and with peer academics for excellence. Notwithstanding the challenging financial environment, maintaining the high quality of the learning experience within the Institute as recognised in quality assurance reviews and our strong reputation is core to the Institute’s continued development.¹⁶ Ensuring our quality assurance infrastructure meets our needs is critical.

The Institute’s commitment to its students is clear in its strategy. This commitment to students will find formal expression in the development of a Student Charter over the course of the coming three years (see WIT Strategic Plan Action 1).

The Institute is fully committed to the creation of the kinds of quality learning environments that will contribute to the formation of the responsible, ethical, innovative global citizens envisaged in the Plan. The Institute is firmly focussed on enhancing the environment within which students learn—enhancing the quality of classrooms, the availability of equipment, the overall support structures, and the qualifications and expertise of staff (see, for instance, Action 50 in the Institute’s Strategic Plan).

The Institute’s Strategy recognises students as active participants in learning, not passive recipients. The Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) is a tool for the Institute to validate the quality of its teaching. Ensuring students use this instrument, and ensuring that action follows on foot of their feedback, is important.

The improvement of student retention and progression is a priority goal. Staff training in support of this goal is necessary. Staff training in teaching and learning in general is also necessary and needs to continue. The further development of research into teaching and learning at the Institute can be assisted by consolidating research activity formally into a Centre for Teaching and Learning Research. Such a Centre can lead research-informed approaches to teaching.

As indicated above, the Institute’s Strategic Plan makes explicit commitment towards the development of a strategy for technology enhanced learning. The development of this strategy is required to ensure we offer best practice in online pedagogy which will be applied in through the design, delivery and assessment of blended and online courses. The Blended and Online Delivery strategy will outline the quality assurance procedures and resources needed to guarantee the integrity of any programme offered by the Institute.

The Plan recognises the centrality of the Institute’s library to the learning environment and requires the creation of a library development plan.

¹⁵ See [http://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Waterford Institute of Technology, Institutional Review-2010.Final Report.pdf](http://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Waterford%20Institute%20of%20Technology%20AIQR%202010.Final%20Report.pdf).

¹⁶ The most recent report on the Institute’s quality assurance arrangements is published by QQI at <http://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Waterford%20Institute%20of%20Technology%20AIQR%202017.pdf#search=Waterford%20AIQR%2A>.

High Level Targets:

1. Implement from 2018 Continuous Professional Development Framework for all academic staff in all HEIs;
2. All HEIs to engage in International benchmarking by 2020;
3. **Improve problematic non-progression rates by 10% (overall baseline of 15% for 2014/15);**
4. **Improve non-progression rates in STEM disciplines by 10% (differing discipline baselines);**
5. **All HEIs to have in place policies for digital teaching and learning by 2019;**
6. The HEA will develop guidelines to steer the process of total quality management, in line with best international practice.

WIT Target 9: Non-Progression

Action 10 of the Institute's strategy indicates a desire to "direct increased resources at School and department level and in central areas in support of student retention and progression, aligned with a published retention and progression strategy that plans for a 30% reduction in non-progression rates."

Context, Benchmarks and Baseline:

Student Transition, Engagement, Progression and Success (STEPS) is the Institute's overarching strategy for interventions and activities relating to student retention and success. Student engagement, which is defined as a key part of student success, encompasses both social and academic aspects of the student experience and is influenced by activities inside and outside of the classroom. Over the last three years Student Life and Learning have developed and started to implement programmes and interventions that focus on transition and the first year, particularly on the social domain, as part of STEPS. Informed by best practice in the domain and by the substantial academic literature on student success and progression, the STEPS programme aims to build:

- Supportive peer relations
- Meaningful interactions between staff and students
- Developing knowledge, confidence and identity as successful HE learners
- A HE experience relevant to students' interests and future goals

The Institute has conducted systematic analysis of retention and progression across all its programmes and has developed a robust data set to inform institutional, School and Department policy. The most recent non-progression report developed by the Institute suggests a 21% non-progression rate from year 1 to year. This is consistent with previous reports: 2014-15 percentage was 21%, 2013-14 percentage was 20%. The numbers of students who did not progress was for 2015-16 412, for 2014-15 388, and for 2013-14 385.

The overall non-progression figures hides considerable variance between programme levels, between disciplines, and between and within individual programmes. There is a considerably higher non-progression rate in Science and Engineering than in Health Science, for instance, and considerably higher non-progression at level 6 compared to level 8. The Institute has identified very positive examples within its programme portfolio of high progression and, at the same time, programmes where non-progression is several times the Institute norm. Focussing, as indicated above, on programme, department and School-level initiatives and targets will allow for more tailored initiatives.

Targets:

A 30% reduction in non-progression would equate, with current numbers, to 124 students.

Benchmark (number of non-progressing students)	Interim 2019 Target	Interim 2020 Target	Final 2021 Target
412 ¹⁷	350	300	285

Actions:

¹⁷ Based on most recent analysis which is for 2015-16 new entrants who did not progress into year 2 for 2016-17. Data is drawn from institutional SRS returns and subsequent targets will be based on SRS returns.

Student Life and Learning, the function in WIT charged with implementing STEPS, has with the principles above in mind developed the following FYE and transition programmes and initiatives in order to pursue the targeted reduction in non-progression from an institution-level point of view:

1. WITStart – Student Orientation

- Approximately 1200 first year students in 2017-18 participated in a revised and extended two day student orientation that combined the traditional registration process. The organisation, training and operations were led by SLL with both students and staff trained in team building activities, icebreakers etc.
- WITStart ensures that a consistent orientation is delivered and places equal emphasis on social and academic spheres/domains
- Students are encouraged by peers to make connections and to get to know people
- Activities where possible are student led (by peer mentors or student ambassadors)
- The initial successful evaluation of the programme means that the programme will continue to be implemented over the coming academic years.

2. P2P

- The Institute has a P2P (Peer Mentoring Programme) currently running in all programmes in the Department of Health, Sport & Exercise Science (DHSES) and on the BA in Criminal Justice Studies. Each first year student is matched in a small group with a mentor from 2nd, 3rd or 4th year from their course.
- SLL is responsible for all recruitment, training and co-ordination of the programme.
- Events include: Mentor led orientation, Team Building and Team Based Learning activities, department Table Quiz, P2P Mentor and Mentee meetings, Social Evenings ,Academic Workshops; (essay writing, referencing etc.), Information sessions, mentor specific workshops and training, day time events including exam prep sessions and coffee mornings
- A total of 190 first years and 37 P2P Mentors have been involved in the programme academic year 2015/16. A total of 240 first years and 43 P2P Mentors have been involved in the programme this academic year 2016/17. A total of 260 first years and 51 P2P Mentors have been involved in the programme this academic year 2017/18. Further expansion is planned into two new departments for 2018/2019.

3. BYTE (Broadening Your Third Level Experience)

- The BYTE programme is a new initiative running in the Department of Engineering Technology since September 2015 under the STEPS program. It aims is to encourage a sense of belonging and community and improve the student experience. The concept for BYTE is to give students the opportunity to meet students from other years and courses but also to give them a voice to determine the future direction of BYTE sessions.
- The BYTE initiative aims to provide students with an informal social setting whilst delivering a set of tangible skills that will benefit them not just throughout their college experience but throughout their life.
- Students from all years across 6 programmes meet once a week in a timetabled session. It is not a formal mentoring scheme but encompasses many elements that are helpful to the transition process. It fosters peer support that naturally arises within a student

community and has developed that into a hybrid that offers orientation, information and social integration as well as elements of academic integration and of mentoring

- The weekly agenda for the programme was developed in conjunction with the student group. There is a mix of structured sessions (referencing, writing CVs, study skills, team building, health and wellbeing, graduate talk) etc. and informal sessions (table quiz, lunch, drop-in coffee mornings, soccer league etc.)

The above are institution-level activities and the overall approach is to build on and expand these activities given their success. However, there is also an effort required at retaining students within academic Schools and particularly programmes with high non-progression rates, principally in Engineering and Science. These efforts will be informed by the detailed analysis carried out to date. There will be an allocation of resources at School and Department level, co-ordinated and informed by the Retention Office centrally, in support of progression initiatives in areas identified as requiring special attention, as well as additional resources to supplement the SLL co-ordinating function.

WIT Target 10: Digital and Online Learning

A range of actions within the WIT Strategic Plan 2018-2021 relate to the development of technology enhanced teaching and learning at the Institute. Action 5 specifically plans that the Institute will “develop, publish and implement a digital learning strategy that places us at the forefront of the field.” This strategy will be supported by focussed staff training in the area of technology enhanced learning (“Action 3: Increase training budget by 25% in further training in Teaching, Learning and Assessment for faculty and staff and align at least 35% of the overall budget in support of training in online, digital and technology-enhanced teaching and learning”) and by the creation of a Community of Practice in this domain (see Action 4). As indicated above, the Institute plans to “recruit students to at least one fully online programme (of at least 10 credits) in every Department” over the course of its Plan (see Action 6).

Context, Benchmarks and Baseline

Strategy for Irish Higher Education (HE) continues to recognise the importance of embracing technology to “deliver learning in an innovative way, so that students are fully prepared for the challenges and opportunities they will face in the future”. Developing a consistent digital experience for third-level students is one of the priorities of the recently published national strategy with all HEIs required to have policies in place for digital learning and teaching by 2020 as a means of promoting high quality learning experiences. This strategy places a clear emphasis on using digital technologies to enhance teaching, learning and assessment and embracing digital technologies is considered essential in fulfilling the goal of improving the learning experience and the success of learners. Digital technologies are a key enabler of flexible and lifelong learning and facilitate a widening of participation and access to Irish HE.

WIT has identified three priority areas as central to progressing the integration of Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) in keeping with national and institutional strategy. These areas include the Programme Portfolio; the community of end users responsible for developing and delivering the programmes; and the continued development of the policy, infrastructure and partnerships required to facilitate the delivery of the programmes by the community. The Institute has a dedicated Centre for Technology-Enhanced Learning (CTEL) which works collaboratively with Schools and Departments across the Institute to implement and support TEL.

- Programme Portfolio:
 - The majority of WIT programmes are currently ‘web enhanced’ where digital learning, facilitated via the online learning environment (namely Moodle) and associated learning technologies, are applied to support delivery orientated around the traditional classroom environment.
 - A growing number of programmes are designed and delivered in a ‘blended learning mode’ to create an integrated learning experience which involves both online components and traditional on-campus attendance. Online activity is mixed with classroom meetings to replace a significant percentage, but not all, of required traditional face-to-face campus instructional activities.
 - In the case of the Department of Nursing and Healthcare for the 2016/2017 academic year, ten of their thirteen programmes could be considered non-standard and developed specifically in response to the needs of industry and therefore industry focused. The majority of these programmes (93% or 12 programmes) include modules delivered in a blended mode ranging from 5 % of the modules on a programmes to 100% of the modules with a total of 847 enrolments. One programme

is delivered fully online. Of the 127 modules for the 2016/2017 academic year for the department, 34%(n=44) are delivered in a blended mode. Over 34% of the teaching hours on the 44 modules are delivered online. Many of the Department programmes are taken by non-traditional students with 37% of students on these programmes living outside the Southeast demonstrating how access is being increased by offering blended options. Retention on all programmes in this Department is very positive (between 70 and 100%), and the programmes evaluations are encouraging. The relationship between the degree of blended activity and retention has not yet been explored. However, it would seem that blended modules for the non-standard students are evaluated as positively as the non-blended modules (the Department evaluate all modules for each course board).

- This practice is reflected in other Departments in the Institute as they continue to evolve their Programme Portfolio.

- Community

- WIT has a growing community of users with growing levels of expertise in line with the increasing portfolio of blended and online programmes and rise in the adoption of TEL.
- CTCL is strategically responsible for engaging and supporting the community in using technology in their evolving online learning environment. They provide support for both all staff and students through both a virtual and physical helpdesk on both the main and college street campus. Staff engage with the CTCL team through a range of initiatives including accredited and unaccredited professional development, seminars, workshops, one-to one consultations, newsletters, and online training platforms (e.g. Lynda.com) which are generally well received by WIT staff. Over forty staff attended the 'The Collective: Unexpected' event in June 2017 which celebrated the ongoing work in TEL in WIT.
- Thirty-five staff have completed the level nine accredited module titled 'Blended Learning' over the past three years.
- In addition, staff are also encouraged to research their practice and several have peer reviewed publications evaluating their teaching, including the use of technology as part of the delivery of the curricula.

- Policy, Infrastructure and Partnership

- WIT is committed to continually evolving the overarching policy and the underlying online learning infrastructure in keeping with international trends and developments in TEL. Several platforms are combined and integrated with central WIT registration and student data applications (e.g. Banner) to present a seamless user experience to students.
- CTCL is responsible for supporting TEL in WIT and has a positive engagement with the WIT community as evidenced by continued increase in usage of the physical and virtual helpdesks (9338 email initiated queries since September, 1 2014).
- Moodle represents the core of the online learning environment and is coupled with other applications for content development, online live lectures and improving student writing. Usage of Moodle is continuing to grow with an increase of 42% in access (41.87% 233,556 vs 164,623) when comparing users in semester 1 2014 with semester one 2017. There was a 30% increase in the number of sessions when comparing the same periods (814,406 vs 625,028).

- WIT has partnered with various providers, such as HEANet, as a means of providing the necessary infrastructure and evolve the online learning environment.

Various departments in WIT have also partnered with several Irish HE's to facilitate collaborative continuing professional development activities for staff. All Aboard 2017 is an example of one such initiative where over seventy-five participants in WIT TEL events as part of the project.

Targets:

WIT has defined the following targets as a means of supporting the strategic development of the programme portfolio, community and infrastructure.

- Programme Portfolio
 - As indicated above, the Institute plans to “recruit students to at least one fully online programme (of at least 10 credits) in every Department” over the course of its Plan (see Action 6).
- Community
 - The Institute plans to spent 35% of its overall training budget on training in online, digital and technology-enhanced teaching and learning;
 - The Institute wishes to initiate a Community of Practice in TEL;
 - Increase the engagement of staff across all WIT Schools in researching their TEL practice by securing appropriate funding and encouraging relevant research output.
- Policy, Infrastructure and Partnership
 - Develop appropriate TEL policies in line with the national strategy to have policies in place for digital learning and teaching by 2020 as a means of promoting high quality learning experiences;
 - Continue to evolve the online learning environment and increase the availability of associated learning technologies to staff and students;
 - Continue to evolve necessary partnerships to facilitate the continued development of the learning environment.

The Institute proposing measuring its achievement of its objectives in this regard through the volume of its programmes that are available in blended or online mode. Note that this does not exclude those programmes also being available in other modes.

Baseline ¹⁸ (number of programmes available in blended or online mode)	Interim 2019 Target	Interim 2020 Target	Final 2021 Target
5%	10%	20%	25%

¹⁸ Number of programmes based on annual SRS returns.

Actions:

In the period of this Compact the Institute will:

- Activate the TEL Community of Practice. A vehicle for the further development of the Institute's technology enhanced learning capacity will be the TEL Community of Practice. This initiative (launched April 2018) creates a formal forum to discuss, debate and discover best practice in the areas of online, blended and technology-enhanced learning.
- Utilise the increased training budget to continue to facilitate a range of staff events (accredited and unaccredited CPD including level 9 modules, digital badges, seminars, workshops, one-to one consultations, newsletters, and access to online training platforms) aimed at sharing good practice and encourage the development at least one online or blended programme in each department.
- Develop necessary policy to facilitate the continued development of TEL in WIT;
- Upgrade Moodle and continue to evolve the integration with relevant platforms and technologies including those focusing on content development and delivery of live online lectures, etc;
- Support staff in researching and disseminating their TEL practice and particularly in support of the Institute's targets with regard to programme development.

4.7 Key System Objective 6

Demonstrate consistent improvement in governance, leadership and operational excellence.

The Institute fully endorses the governance framework for Institutes of Technology (2018) and is acting currently in order to ensure the principles outlined in the framework are applied at the Institute. The Institute recognises the need for and is fully committed to delivering robust and transparent governance to ensure it retains the confidence of students, parents and stakeholders and its own staff.

At their meeting on the 23rd January, 2018 the Governing Body of Waterford Institute of Technology adopted the THEA Code of Governance for Institutes of Technology published in January 2018. While implementation commenced immediately (in the first instance with the approval of new standing orders and scheduling private meetings without the presence of Executive), the Governing Body recognises that it will take approximately 12 months to implement the code.

Training on the governance framework has been scheduled, for both Governing Body members and management, for May 2018. Additionally, the Governing Body have completed the self-assessment questionnaire included in the Code and are in the process of analysing the results and taking any corrective action deemed necessary. The audit committee and board of DCS are also in the process of completing the questionnaire.

The subsidiary companies of Waterford Institute of Technology will also be directed to operate to the highest standards of governance and full transparency; they will also adopt the THEA Code in so far as is practical to do so.

The Governing Body operates a number of sub-committees, all of which operate under specific Terms of Reference, have very defined work programmes and report as required to Governing Body. The composition of the Audit Committee and Board of DCS include external members. The Audit Committee meet periodically with the internal auditors in private and invite the C&AG to meet with them annually.

The institute recognises that for a number of years the completion of the financial statements has experienced delays for various reasons including the consolidation of DCS and changing of the accounting treatment of research overheads, however the Institute is confident that it has now overcome these legacy issues and from 2016/17 onwards financial statements will be drafted and submitted to the C&AG within the prescribed timelines. Additionally, the Institute has and will continue to submit the Financial Memorandum, Annual Report and Statement of Internal Controls within the prescribed timelines.

The Institute aims to comply with Public Procurement guidelines and leverages the frameworks and tender processes of the O.G.P as far as possible, while from time to time there may be specific challenges in implementing all the framework requirements the Institute is committed to achieving value for money.

The Institute commits in the Strategic Plan to two additional initiatives directed at improving the overall operations of the organisation by embedding more clearly a values-driven culture. These initiatives, described in Action 43 and Action 44, involve respectively the development of a “Values in Action” behavioural framework and the creation of a staff charter.

The HEA Strategic Dialogue process and the performance compact process has enhanced strategic capacity within the organisation. The Institute has invested in this area through the creation of a Strategic Planning function and by investing in data analysis capacity.

The Institute continues to develop its governance framework around research and some actions specific to this are included in the research section above. In addition, the Institute is currently working closely with other institutions, THEA and the QQI on academic governance in the context of the new governance framework; the Institute is in fact developing and leading a sector-wide project on academic governance that we anticipate will have sector wide impact.

High Level Targets:

- 1. Implementation of the 2018 Higher Education Gender Equality Task Force Action Plan and the 2016 Expert Group recommendations;**
- 2. HEIs to have attained an Athena SWAN bronze institutional award by 2019 (TUs within 3 years of establishment);**
- 3. All HEIs to submit their annual Governance Statements to HEA on time;**
- 4. 100% compliance by HEIs with public procurement rules;**
- 5. Draft annual financial statements to be submitted by HEIs to C&AG within stipulated C&AG guidelines;**
- 6. Full transparency in HEI financial statements about accounting for Trusts and Foundations;**
- 7. 100% compliance by HEIs with public pay policy;**
- 8. 100% compliance by HEIs with public sector numbers controls;**
- 9. Implementation of recommendations from rolling governance reviews;**
- 10. HEA will develop individual compacts with the HEIs which reflect the overall ambitions of the System Performance Framework and local/regional opportunities;**
- 11. Institutional strategic compacts will be assessed by a panel of experts, including international participants, to assess their coherence and capacity for delivery.**

WIT Target 11: Athena SWAN

Consistent with its need to building greater diversity in the Institute community and its strong commitment to equality, the WIT strategy indicates a plan to “secure the Athena Swan bronze award [at institutional level] and post-accreditation identify two Schools that will proceed for their own bronze accreditation.” The Institute plans to submit for Athena Swan accreditation by November 2018. WIT fully subscribes to addressing issues relating to gender representation, student opportunity and progression, career development and the working environment as highlighted in the Athena Swan process.

Context, Benchmarks and Baseline:

The Athena SWAN charter was first discussed at Executive Board level in February 2016 in the light of national equality policy. WIT policy, and the HEA-negotiated extension of the Athena SWAN Charter to Ireland. The Institute committed to pursuing a Bronze Award later in 2016 and a committee was convened in February 2017. A full-time project manager to co-ordinate the work was appointed early in 2018. The Athena Swan Self-Assessment team was established in 2017 (additional membership was added in January 2018 in order to reflect a wider scope and profile of the institute on the SAT team) and comprises of the Chair (F), steering group (3F, 1M), project manager (F) and 3 working groups (10 F; 12M).

Targets:

Athena Swan bronze award at institutional level by 2019.

Actions:

The following table outlines progress to date on the Athena Swan application and milestones in the period ahead. These direct the action of the Institute with regard to the application.

Date	Milestone
Feb 2017	President and Executive board commit to Athena Swan
June 2017 – Sept 2017	SAT Team formally established
October 2017	SAT team first meeting (SAT team meet monthly)
December 2017	Athena SWAN Project Manager (ASPM) appointed
Feb 2018	WIT officially signs up the Athena SWAN Charter Principles
Forthcoming Milestones	
June 2018	Institute Athena SWAN Staff Survey and Focus Groups
September 2018	Submit intention to submit letter to Equality Challenge Unit in the UK
October 2018	The Athena Swan application approval by Executive Board and Governing body
November 2018	Submit Athena SWAN Bronze Application

WIT Target 12: Building Strategic Capacity

The Institute's engagement with the HEA Strategic Dialogue process is ongoing. Engagement with the process is a critical element in building the Institute's strategic capacity. This high-level target is identified here in order to ensure WIT continues to build strategic capacity in the context of renewed and developing governance and management arrangements.

Context, Baseline and Benchmarks:

The Strategic Dialogue process has given Waterford Institute of Technology the opportunity to clarify its own strategic thinking and to identify performance targets associated with strategic priorities. The process has given the Institute the opportunity to benchmark its activities and publically to declare both its challenges and the strong and successful elements in its profile.

Waterford Institute of Technology has not had a full-time head of strategy for over a decade. In response to changing national requirements, the Institute appointed a head of Strategic Planning at Executive level in 2017. This appointment was in part a response to the increasing requirements from the Institute's various partners, in particular the HEA and other State agencies, for reporting and strategic information. The appointment was also with a view to the next cycle of strategic planning at the Institute, with the expiration of the Institute's last plan in 2017, and with ongoing strategic developments associated with the process of application for university designation (through the Technological University process). The new Head of Strategy directed his efforts in the first instance on developing the Institute's Strategic Plan to 2021. That Plan has now been completed.

The Plan is embedded in the governance arrangements of the organisation. The Plan's development was guided in the first instance by a sub-committee of the Governing Body. The final plan was approved both by the Governing Body and the Academic Council whose works plans will be modified to reflect the strategic targets outlined in the Plan.

In parallel, the Institute has also invested in data collection and analysis, again informed by wider national policy changes and new requirements. The Institute appointed a data manager and analyst in 2017 reporting to the Head of Strategy with a role that involves developing the necessary reporting structures for the Executive so that it may execute the Institute's agreed strategy. The data analysis function supports the completion of the HEA dialogue process through the development of a range of performance benchmarks and inform Executive target setting. The initial focus of this office has been on preparing institutional reports presenting in readable format integrated institutional data on the following areas:

- Retention and non-progression
- Timetable allocation and resource utilisation
- Student enrolments in institutional and national context

Targets:

The Institute will continue to engage with the strategic dialogue process and will agree strategic compacts as required. This will take place in the context of the implementation of its agreed institutional strategy and the continued development of strategic infrastructure.

Actions:

The Governing Body will receive monthly updates on performance against the targets set in the Institute's Strategic Plan. A dashboard of performance indicators will be developed to ensure clear and focussed reporting on achievements to date. The Governing Body Audit and Risk Committee has also requested regular updates on the Institute's performance against strategic targets. The measures ensure that the agreed strategy directs the Institute's efforts at the highest level and ensure Executive accountability for decisions relating to the plan, particularly with regard to the expenditure of resources.

The Strategic Plan describe (Action 49) a plan to "develop, collate and disseminate publically data on institutional performance measured against national and international benchmarks." The data analysis unit's focus currently is on developing tools to offer succinct reports to Heads of School and Department across a range of performance measures at programme, department and School levels. Extending the range of available reports by the data analysis unit will involve developing reports on the following:

- Research metrics and institutional performance
- Graduate satisfaction and destinations
- Geo-profiling enrolment and progression data
- Reports associated with the access data plan (see above)

The data analysis unit draws on statistical expertise in compiling its reports and has recently begun to liaise with the HEA on future data needs. The Institute would wish to formalise both these arrangements.

6. Annual Compliance Statement

The HEA will take into account ongoing compliance with important foundational requirements such as:

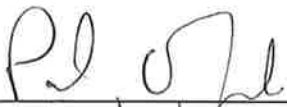
- Statutory quality assurance processes
- Providing an annual statement required under their Code of Governance and with all other requirements of that Code
- Providing details of satisfactory financial outturn, budget and financial plan
- Employment control framework
- Data returns to the HEA.

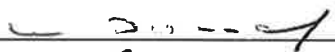
Where significant or urgent governance or compliance issues arise, such as unacceptable financial deficit, weakness in financial plans or major omissions or delays in returns, an institution may be deemed not to have met the minimum requirements of strategy and performance dialogue.

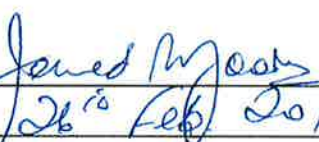
7. Agreement

To be completed following the conclusion of the strategy and performance dialogue process.

The HEA and Waterford Institute of Technology agree that the mission, planned profile and targets, as set out in the foregoing sections of this Compact, are consistent with the objectives set for the higher education system and are appropriate to the place of Waterford Institute of Technology within the system.

Signed: 
Date: 26/2/19
Chief Executive, Higher Education Authority

Signed: 
Date: 26 Feb 2019
President, Higher Education Institution

Signed: 
Date: 26th Feb 2019
Chair, Governing Body, Higher Education Institution