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Connacht-Ulster Alliance

Eligibility Criteria Sample Process
Review – Connacht-Ulster Alliance

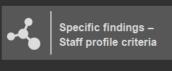| Draft report issued:	3 February 2021
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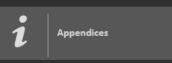
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Key dates:	
Commencement of fieldwork	19 October 2020
Date of initial draft report	28 January 2021
Date of final report	15 February 2021

This report has been prepared on the basis of the limitations set out in **Appendix 1**.

This assignment was undertaken as part of the internal audit services contract dated 01 January 2020 between Institute of Technology Sligo, on behalf of Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Sligo and Letterkenny Institute of Technology, and Deloitte Ireland LLP (Deloitte). The report is produced solely for the use of Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Sligo and Letterkenny Institute of Technology. Its contents should not be quoted or referred to in whole or in part without our prior written consent. Deloitte Ireland LLP will accept no responsibility to any third party as the report has not been prepared, and is not intended for any other purpose.

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Executive Summary

1. Executive summary

1.1 Introduction

Chapter 9 of the Technological Universities Act 2018 (the "Act") sets out the application process for applicant institutes to become a technological university. Section 28 of that Act sets out a number of eligibility criteria (the "Eligibility Criteria") that needs to be met by the applicant Institutes of Technology. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) issued in 2018, a guidance document called *Technological Universities – Proposed process in respect of an application to become Technological University* (the "HEA Guidance") to assist applicant institutions with interpretation of the Act and providing additional clarity on the technology university application process.

The Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology ("GMIT"), Institute of Technology Sligo ("ITS") and Letterkenny Institute of Technology ("LYIT") collaborated to form a strategic alliance called the Connacht-Ulster Alliance (hereinafter "CUA") under an agreement dated 9 July 2012. The CUA plan to submit their Application (the "Application") to become a Technological University to the Department of Education & Skills in Q1 2021. The purpose of this assignment is to ascertain if the CUA meet the minimum eligibility criteria in certain areas as set out in section 28 of the Act.

1.1.1 Scope

The scope of our assignment was to ascertain if the CUA meet certain eligibility criteria set out in section 28 of the Act. The scope covered the following areas:

Students:

- Identify the number of students (in the CUA) registered on a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level [*s.28.(1)(a) refers*]; and

- From the number identified above (base number), ascertain the number/percentage of research students registered on a programme which leads to an award to at least masters degree level [*s.28.(1)(a)(i) refers*].

- From the base number referenced identified above, ascertain that at least 30% of students are either [*s.28.(1)(a)(ii) refers*]:

    I. Registered on a programme that is provided on a flexible basis, such as by means of part-time, online or distance learning;

    II. Registered on a programme that has been designed, and is being delivered, with the involvement of business, enterprise, the professions, the community, local interests and other related stakeholders in the region in which the campuses of the applicant institutes are located;

    III. students who are not less than 23 years of age.

Staff:

- Identify the number of full-time academic staff from the CUA engaged who are engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level [*s.28.(1)(c)*].

- From the staff base number identified above, ascertain that at least 90 per cent hold a masters degree or doctoral degree [*s.28.(1)(c)(i)*].

- From the staff base number identified above, ascertain that at least at least 45 per cent hold [*s.28.(1)(c)(ii)*]

    (I) a doctoral degree, or

    (II) a terminal degree and

- not more than 10 per cent hold only a terminal degree [*s.28.(1)(c)(iii)*]

- From the staff base number identified above, ascertain that of those engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award at doctoral degree level, and the conduct of research, that at least 80 per cent hold a doctoral degree [*s.28.(1)(e)(i)(ii)*]

- From the base staff number identified above, ascertain the number of full-time academic staff of the CUA engaged in the supervision of students registered on a programme that leads to an award to doctoral degree level that [*s.28.(1)(f)*]:

    (i) hold (I) a doctoral degree, or

          (II) a terminal degree

    (ii) has a record of continued conduct of research in an area relevant to the programme

- Ascertain that in respect of not less than 3 fields of education [s.28.(1)(g):

    (i) the CUA provide programmes that lead to awards to doctoral degree level; and

    (ii) the academic staff and students of the CUA conduct research.

1. Executive summary

1.1.2   Approach

Our approach to this review was:

- Through discussion with key staff, establish the processes applied to identify the student & staff numbers, and research criteria provided by the CUA;
- Evaluate the process applied by the CUA by checking sample for both data and reviewing the assumptions underlying same.
- Determine the accuracy of the numbers calculated by CUA against section 28 of the Act.

The Eligibility Criteria requested to be reviewed is set out in **Appendix 2**. Further, HEA have released a proposed process in respect of an application to become a Technological University, 2018 as set out in **Appendix 3**.

Our review was conducted remotely due to the Covid-19 health restrictions in-place. Further, it should be noted that Deloitte did not undertake testing of full data population. As part of our review we identified the approach and process applied by the CUA and selected a sample of each relevant data population in order to ascertain the process undertaken. Refer to section 2 for further details. Our work was conducted in accordance with the limitations set out in **Appendix 1**.
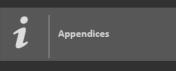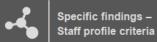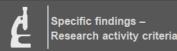
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We set out below a high level outcome of our review by eligibility criteria.

Legislative criteria	How CUA plans to meet the criteria:	Outcome of Deloitte review
S.28(1)(a) of the students of the applicant institutes registered on a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelors degree level:	CUA indicated that of the 20,240 students, **11,390** students are enrolled in a course leading to an award of at least honours Bachelor Degree.	The data used to analyse the student base numbers was the November 2020 preliminary Student Records System (SRS) return, covering the 2020/2021 academic year, individually submitted to the HEA by GMIT, LYIT, and ITS. We reviewed the SRS dataset and identified 20,240 students in the SRS. From our review of the data received, nothing came to our attention that would indicate that the process applied by the CUA to identify students who are enrolled in a programme that leads to an award of at least honours bachelors degree level was not satisfactory. Our review identified 11,390 students registered on a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelors degree level. Please refer to *section 2.1.2* for details of the review conducted.
(i) at least 4 per cent are research students registered on a programme which leads to an award to at least masters degree level, and	CUA identified that **462** or **4.1%** of the 11,390 students are registered on a programme which leads to an award to at least masters degree level. CUA have advised **462** students are broken as follows: • **365** students enrolled in a research masters (Programme type 26) • **72** students enrolled in a doctoral programme (Programme type 27) and, • **25** enrolled in a masters taught programme (25*)	No issue came to our attention with respect to the process followed by the CUA to determine the research students who were registered on a programme which leads to an award to at least a masters degree level. Our review identified that of the 11,390 students, 462 or **4.06% of** students are research students registered on a programme which leads to an award to at least masters degree level. Please refer to *section 2.1.3* for details.

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1.2 Summary of findings

We set out below a high level outcome of our review by eligibility criteria.

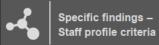| Legislative criteria	How CUA plans to meet the criteria:	Outcome of Deloitte review
(ii) at least 30 per cent fall within one or more than one of the following classes of students:	The CUA have indicated they only plan on meeting 1 condition, which is condition (III) of this criteria.	The CUA is only required to meet one condition on this criteria. Deloitte as agreed with the CUA have limited its review to condition (III), with this in mind no issues came to our attention regarding condition (III). We have not tested the criteria for conditions I and II. The results for the criteria are summarised below.
(I) students who are registered on a programme that is provided on a flexible basis, such as by means of part-time, online or distance learning;	The CUA identified that **2,359** or **20.7%** of the 11,390 students are on a programme that is provided on a flexible basis.	The CUA meet the criteria under heading III below, therefore, this criteria was not considered as part of the review.
(II) students who are registered on a programme that has been designed, and is being delivered, with the involvement (which shall be construed in accordance with subsection (2)(b)), of business, enterprise, the professions, the community, local interests and other related stakeholders in the region in which the campuses of the applicant institutes are located;	The vast majority of programmes across the CUA are designed with the involvement of business and enterprise. In terms of delivery, 6,354 of the above registered students are currently registered on a programme with an accredited work placement element. Pre Covid-19, on average 92% of students undertook their work placements within the region. It is estimated that if the CUA was not operating under the Covid-19 restrictions, 51.3% of the registered students would be on work placement within the region, however this criteria has not being included in the independent audit.	The CUA meet the criteria under heading III below, therefore, this criteria was not considered as part of the review.
(III) students who are not less than 23 years of age.	The CUA identified that **3,888** or **34.1%** of the 11,390 students are not less than 23 years of age.	Nothing came to our attention that would indicate that the process applied by the CUA to determine the age of students that would address the legislative criteria was not satisfactory. During our review, we noted the date of birth field for two students was not recorded accurately on the SRS. Following queries to the CUA, these issues were resolved. As a result, one student was incorrectly classified as a student who is less than 23 years of age by CUA resulting to a difference of one (1). Our review identified that of the 11,390 students, **3,889** or **34.14%** are students who are not less than 23 years of age. Refer to *section 2.1.4* for further details.

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1.2   Summary of findings

We set out below a high level outcome of our review by eligibility criteria.

Legislative criteria	How CUA plans to meet the criteria:	Outcome of Deloitte review
S. 28 (1) (c) Of the full-time academic staff of the applicant institutes engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level—	From the information provided by the CUA, they indicated that the total number of staff engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level is **843**.	The base data used for this analysis was the GMIT, ITS and LYIT raw CORE data as of October 2020 which is the basis CUA will use for their Employment Control Framework (ECF) submission. Deloitte reviewed and re-calculated the CUA figures using the raw CORE data dump to determine the **843** base number of staff was accurate. Nothing came to our attention that would indicate that the process applied by the CUA to identify the full-time academic staff engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level was not satisfactory.
(i) at least 90 per cent hold a masters degree or doctoral degree,	Of the above staff, **780**, or **92.53%** staff hold a master's, doctoral or doctoral equivalent degree.	Our review identified that of the **843** staff, **780**, or **92.53%** staff hold a master's, doctoral or doctoral equivalent degree. *Please refer to section 3.1.2/3.1.2a for details.*

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1.2 Summary of findings

We set out below a high level outcome of our review by eligibility criteria.

Legislative criteria	How CUA plans to meet the criteria:	Outcome of Deloitte review
(ii) at least 45 per cent hold— (I) a doctoral degree, or (II) subject to subparagraph (iii), a terminal degree, as well as sufficient practical experience gained in the practice of a profession to which the programme relates, such that the degree and experience together can reasonably be viewed by the advisory panel as equivalent to a doctoral degree, And	CUA indicated that of the 843 staff, **380** or **45.08%** of staff hold a doctoral or doctoral equivalent degree. This is broken to: • **330** or **39.15%** of staff holds a doctoral degree. • **50** or **5.93%** of staff holds a doctoral equivalent degree (qualification to at least honours degree within the framework together with a professional membership or a qualification that is the highest achievable in their profession deemed equivalent)	As mentioned in the previous page, CUA plan to include a variety of doctoral equivalent degrees where the degree combined with the staff experience can reasonably be viewed as equivalent to a doctoral degree. Our review identified that of the 843 staff, **380** or **45.08%** staff hold a doctoral degree or a doctoral equivalent degree. Of the 380 staff, **50** or **5.93%** are deemed by the CUA to hold a doctoral equivalent degree. Whilst Deloitte have reviewed a sample of these staff CV's, the decision rests with the Advisory Panel as set out in the legislation '*reasonably be viewed by the advisory panel as equivalent to a doctoral degree*'. *Please refer to section 3.1.3 for details.*
(iii) not more than 10 per cent hold only the qualifications referred to in *subparagraph (ii)(II)*;	As indicated above, of the 843 staff, **50** or **5.93%** of staff holds a doctoral equivalent degree (qualification to at least honours degree within the framework together with a professional membership or a qualification that is the highest achievable in their profession deemed equivalent)	

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We set out below a high level outcome of our review by eligibility criteria.

Legislative criteria	How CUA plans to meet the criteria:	Outcome of Deloitte review
S. 28 (1) (e) of the full-time academic staff of the applicant institutes engaged in both of the following, at least 80 per cent hold a doctoral degree— (i) the provision of a programme that leads to an award at doctoral degree level, and (ii) the conduct of research;	CUA indicated a total of **55** full-time academic staff engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award at doctoral degree level, and the conduct of research. Of the 55, **53** or **96.36%** hold a doctoral degree.	CUA have interpreted S.28(1)(e)(i) as a full-time academic staff engaged in the supervision of students registered on a doctoral degree (Programme Type 27). The doctoral degree students and supervisors were identified by the research offices of the respective applicant institutes. Please see section 3.1.4 for CUA's interpretation of the conduct of research. Our review identified **55** full-time academic staff of the applicant institutes engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award at doctoral degree level and the conduct of research. Of the 55 staff, we identified that **53** or **96.36%** hold a doctoral degree. Therefore no issues came to our attention during testing. *Please refer to section 3.1.4 for details.*

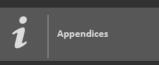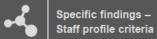Executive summary

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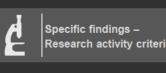
Legislative criteria	How CUA plans to meet the criteria:	Outcome of Deloitte review
S. 28 (1) (f) each of the full-time academic staff of the applicant institutes engaged in the supervision of students registered on a programme that leads to an award to doctoral degree level— (i) holds— (I) a doctoral degree, or (II) a terminal degree, as well as sufficient practical experience gained in the practice of a profession to which the programme relates, such that the degree and experience together can reasonably be viewed by the advisory panel as equivalent to a doctoral degree, And	CUA identified that **53** or **96.36%** of the 55 supervisors hold a doctoral degree. Of the 55 supervisors 36 are principal supervisors and **36** or **100%** of the principal supervisors hold a doctoral degree.	Deloitte's interpretation of this criteria is that all PhD supervisors, should hold a doctoral or a doctoral equivalent degree. We ascertained from our review of the datasets that **53** or **96.36%** of the 55 supervisors hold a doctoral degree. We also ascertained from our review of the datasets that 36 of the 55 supervisors were principal supervisors, and **33** or **100%** of the principal supervisors hold a doctoral degree. We tested a sample of 10 supervisors (principal) to ensure that they hold the a level 10 or doctoral degree equivalent qualification, all 10 principal supervisors hold a doctoral degree. Therefore, no issues has come to our attention. *Please refer to section 3.1.5 for details.*
(ii) has a record of continued conduct of research in an area relevant to the programme;	Currently **55** or **100%** of full-time academic staff engaged in the supervision of students registered on a programme that leads to an award to doctoral degree level have a record of continued conduct of research in an area relevant to the programme.	Please see section 3.1.4 for CUA's interpretation of the conduct of research. Of the 55 supervisors previously identified, we selected a sample of 10 principal supervisors and ascertained that all 10 supervisors have a record of continued conduct of research in an area relevant to the programme which they are currently engaged in the supervision of a student/students registered on a programme that leads to an award to doctoral degree level. No issue came to our attention during our testing of this area. *Please refer to section 3.1.5 for details.*

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1.2 Summary of findings

We set out below a high level outcome of our review by eligibility criteria.

Legislative criteria	How CUA plans to meet the criteria:	Outcome of Deloitte review
S. 28 (1) (g) in respect of not less than 3 fields of education— (i) the applicant institutes provide programmes that lead to awards to doctoral degree level, and (ii) the academic staff and students of the applicant institutes conduct research;	The CUA meet five fields of Education. Programmes leading to doctoral degree level are provided in the following broad ISCED fields of education: 02 – Arts and humanities 03 – Social sciences, journalism and information 05 – Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics 06 – Information and Communication Technologies 07 – Engineering, manufacturing and construction	CUA identified their students registered on doctoral degrees and their corresponding ISCED code through review of their doctoral degree student Banner profiles as of October 2020. Nothing came to our attention that would indicate that the process applied by the CUA to: • identify the fields of education that lead to awards to doctoral degree level was not satisfactory: and • determine that the academic staff and students conduct research in was not satisfactory. Our review identified that CUA provide programmes that leads to the award of a doctoral degree in **seven fields of education**. *Please refer to section 4.1.2 for details*

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Specific Findings – Student Profile Criteria

2. Student Profile Criteria

An overview of the process to collate student profile information applied by CUA together with details of the independent outcome of the review is outlined below.

2.1 Overview - Student Profile Criteria

2.1.1. Overview:

The GMIT/ITS/LYIT plan to use the November 2020 Student Records System (SRS) returns that they have separately submitted to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) when calculating its student profile as part of its Technological University application.

The three institutes (GMIT, ITS, and LYIT) rely on their existing internal controls to ensure the data integrity of the SRS returns. In addition, the three institutes investigate the SRS returns for anomalies prior to submitting them to the HEA. The Registrar of each institute sign the SRS return confirming its accuracy. Upon submission, the HEA conducts a sense check over the SRS returns submitted by each institution. Please refer to Appendix 1 for the limitations associated with using this data.

The SRS return is submitted bi-annually to the HEA by all the institutes in April based on a census date of March, and November of each year. The data submitted to the HEA contains data for current students of the institutions who are currently in the process of completing a programme in the current academic year.

The SRS return consists of three files:

- **Programme file** – contains information on the general area of study that a course belongs to e.g. Bachelor of Engineering, Bachelor of Arts, Diploma in Business Studies. The programme file contains descriptors such as programme name, faculty, and programme type (i.e. Undergraduate Degree).

- **Course file** – a course is a denominated area of study within a programme, for instance, Bachelor of Engineering in Electronic & Electrical Engineering. The student has enrolled on the programme Bachelor of Engineering but is pursuing a more specific area of study. The course file contains descriptors such as course name, course code, awarding body etc.

- **Student survey** - contains the individual student or graduate records. A broad range of data is collected: student details such as age; gender; country of origin; course details such as course being pursued; mode of study (full-time/part-time); and subject data (where further breakdown is required e.g. BA Arts, BSc Science).
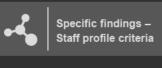
In compiling the data for the planned CUA Application, each institution was responsible for sourcing the SRS data for its own institute (GMIT, ITS, and LYIT). The SRS were extracted by the administrative manager in the Registrar's department in each institute. Each institution (GMIT, ITS, and LYIT) provided a Programme file, Course File, and Student Survey file. This dataset was used by the CUA project team to determine if they met the criteria as set out below in the Technological Universities Act 2018. For confidentiality purposes, most of the identifiable student data (name, address, contact number) from the GMIT, ITS, and LYIT SRS Return dataset that was not relevant for this review was removed. The CUA Data Analyst has advised that no other alterations to the SRS data were made.

Following review by Deloitte of the SRS data, there were two manual adjustments made to student date of birth by the CUA Data Analyst in conjunction with the relevant Institutes after Deloitte advised of incorrect date of births identified. Please see section 2.1.3 (III) for information.

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2. Student Profile Criteria

CUA Methodology applied to the Student Profile Criteria

2.1.2. Student Numbers:

> Eligibility Criteria – The Act states:
>
> *S.28 (1)(a) of the students of the applicant institutes registered on a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level.*
>
> *(i) At least 4 per cent are research students registered on a programme, which leads to an award to at least master's degree level.*

To establish the percentage of research students, the total population of students registered on programmes leading to at least an honours bachelor degree had to be first identified.

CUA Methodology: Using the November 2020 SRS datasets for GMIT, ITS, and LYIT returned to the HEA, the CUA identified that the combined student number is 20,240. Through the SRS dataset, the CUA identified the students that formed the base number (*students . . registered on a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level*) as set out by the criteria and the following inclusions and exclusions were applied in the SRS dataset:

I. Types of Students

- Enrolment status – All students that were considered as "EO" (exam only student) were excluded. These students are repeat exam only students and do not attend lectures.

II. Programmes that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level

- NFQ Level – The Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) provides guidelines as to what level of qualification would merit at least an honours bachelor's degree (or at least level 8). All students who are not enrolled in NFQ level 8, 9, and 10 were excluded. In order to do this, the CUA have excluded all students enrolled under programmes OW, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 1A, 23 and 24 as they did not meet the criteria.
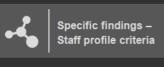
Figure 1.0

Student Numbers	Number of Students
Student number in combined SRS	20,240
Less Exam Only	-185
Less Level 6, Level 7 and Minor awards (ProgTy OW, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 1A, 23 and 24)	-8,665
Total Leading to an award of at least honours Bachelor Degree	11,390

Figure 1.0 above illustrates the number of students (11,390) as identified by the CUA to meet the legislative criteria (*registered in a programme that lead to an award to at least honours bachelors degree level*). This figure includes students from GMIT, ITS, and LYIT.
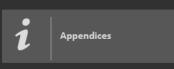
2. Student Profile Criteria

Deloitte Evaluation of Process applied to the Student Profile Criteria

Continued . . ./ **2.1.2. Student Numbers:**

Deloitte Evaluation of Process: For confidentiality purposes, most of the identifiable student data (name, address, contact number) from the GMIT, ITS, and LYIT SRS Return dataset was removed. The CUA made a representation to us that no other alterations were made to the SRS dataset prior to sharing the data with Deloitte.

On receipt of the November 2020 SRS data from each institution by the CUA Data Analyst, we consolidated the data into a single database. We independently reviewed the consolidated SRS data used to evaluate whether the CUA would meet the legislative criteria set by the Act. From our review, we noted that there were no graduates included in the November SRS listing (graduates are normally included in the March SRS return). Further, we have noted that there were no Erasmus students in the SRS dataset due to COVID.

We have ascertained that the programmes considered by the CUA to meet the base criteria would merit an award of at least honours bachelors degree level as set out in the NFQ. From our review, nothing came to our attention that would indicate that the process applied by the CUA to identify students who are enrolled in a programme that leads to an award of at least honours bachelors degree level was not satisfactory.

Data Review: Figure 1.1 demonstrates how the student base number was identified. We ascertained the number of students from GMIT, ITS, and LYIT per the complete SRS dataset returned to the HEA in November 2020 (**20,240**). We then excluded the following:

1. All students with "EO" status – exam only;
2. All students on programmes OW, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 1A, 23 and 24.

Figure 1.1

Student Numbers	GMIT	ITS	LYIT	TOTAL
Current Students (SRS November 2020)	7,675	8,283	4,282	20,240
1. Less: Exam Only	-146	-20	-19	-185
2. Less: Level 6, 7 and Minor awards (ProgTy OW, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 1A, 23 and 24)	-2,256	-4,552	-1,857	-8,665
Total Leading to an award of at least honours Bachelor Degree	5,273	3,711	2,406	11,390

This left a total of **11,390** students . . . . . *registered on a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level* which matches that identified by the CUA.

We performed testing on a limited sample of students (sample of 25) from the SRS return to ascertain that the students are currently enrolled and active. For the sample of 25 students, we reviewed the student Moodle/Blackboard activity which shows a log of the student interaction with the online learning platform to evidence the students are currently active in the programme or fees paid (non-grant) to evidence that the student is interested in pursuing the programme. Further, we reviewed if the students were registered in the programme reported in the SRS. No issues came to our attention to indicate that the process to collate the student numbers applied by the CUA was unsatisfactory.
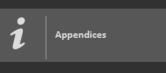
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2. Student Profile Criteria

2.1.3. Research Students:

> Eligibility Criteria (legislative criteria)
>
> (i)   At least 4 per cent are research students registered on a programme, which leads to an award to at least master's degree level.

Technological Universities Act 2018 provides a specific criteria in order for a student to be considered as a research student. Per the Act, *"research student is a student who is registered on a programme of education and training where not less than 60% of the available credits are assigned in respect of a thesis or theses prepared by the student based on research conducted by him or her"*.

To support applicant Institutes in their application process, the HEA have provided additional guidance by defining a number of terms such as 'research', and a 'thesis or theses'. Please refer to *Appendix 3* for an extract of the HEA guidance.

CUA Methodology: Based on the definition of a 'research student', 'research', and 'thesis or theses', the CUA identified the programmes leading to an award to at least master's degree level that have research components as part of the required credits to be completed by a student. The programme types considered by the CUA for this criteria are shown in Figure 1.2

Figure 1.2

Programme Type	Programme Name	Number of Student
26	Research Masters	365
27	Doctoral	72
25*	Masters Taught	25
Total Research Students		462

The CUA identified programme types 26, and 27 for this criterion as both programme types are research based programmes which have significant research components as part of the credits to be completed. In addition there is only one Master's Taught programme under the programme type 25* (MSc Applied Sport and Exercise Nutrition) which is offered by GMIT where 60% of the available credits relate to a thesis or theses. These programmes have **462** research students registered which represents **4.1%** of the base number (11,390) calculated by the CUA.

Deloitte Review: During our review, nothing came to our attention to indicate that the process applied by the CUA to identify programmes considered leading to an award to at least master's degree level and have the minimum research component as required by the Act were unsatisfactory. The number of students registered on these programmes was ascertained as **462** or **4.06%** of 11,390. using the SRS dataset. No variance was identified to those identified by the CUA.

We reviewed the programme type 25* (MSc Applied Sport and Exercise Nutrition). Our review identified the programme has a total of 90 credits, of which, **60** credits or **66.67%** are research based. Refer to Figure 1.3.
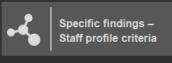
Figure 1.3

Module	Credits	Research credits
Human Nutrition	5	
Sport and Exercise Physiology	5	
Sport and Exercise Nutrition Research in Practice 1	10	10
Advanced Sport and Exercise Nutrition	10	
Research Methods	10	10
Sport and Exercise Nutrition Research in Practice 2	10	10
Laboratory Techniques in Sport and Exercise Nutrition	10	
Research project	30	30
Total Credits	**90**	**60**

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2. Student Profile Criteria

2.1.4. Students who are not less than 23 years of age:

Eligibility Criteria (legislative criteria)

S. 28 (1) (ii) at least 30 per cent fall within one or more than one of the following classes of students:

(I)   Students who are registered on a programme that is provided on a flexible basis, such as by means of part-time, online or distance learning

(II)   Students who are registered on a programme that has been designed, and is being delivered with the involvement (which will be construed in accordance with subsection (2)(b)), of business, enterprise, the professions, the community, local interests in the region in which the campuses of the applicant institutes are located;

(III) Students who are not less than 23 years of age.

As per the legislation set out above, the CUA were required to meet 30% in one or more of (I), (II) and (III). The CUA advised that they plan to meet the third condition of this criteria namely - *Students who are not less than 23 years of age.*

(III)   **CUA Methodology:** The CUA have determined the age of students based on the date of birth in the consolidated SRS (November 2020) and had set a cut-off date of 1st January 1997. The CUA applied the HEA methodology to identify a Mature Students which is being 23 years or over on January 1st preceding the start of the academic year. The CUA performed its calculations based on 1 January 2020 to determine the age of students. The reported number of students who were 23 year or over per the combined CUA Student listing was **3,889** or **34.14%**.

Deloitte Review: As part of our review, we recalculated the age of the student as of 1st of January 2020 using the SRS provided. During our review of student date of births, we noted the following:
*   One student who is a member of staff had a date of birth on the SRS of 1st January 1900. This date was entered by default in the system as no date of birth was provided by the student.
*   One student had a date of birth of 16th July 2020. This student had the course start date entered in the date of birth field.

Following queries with CUA, the correct dates of birth were applied to both students. As a result:
*   The student with a date of birth of 1st January 1900 was correctly classified as a student not less than 23 years of age.
*   The student with the date of birth of 16th July 2020 was incorrectly classified as a student who is less than 23 years of age by CUA resulting to a difference of one (1).
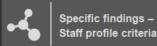
On analysis of the student age, we noted that there were 3,889 students who were 23 years or more in age (refer to Figure 1.4). Our review identified that of the 11,390 students, **3,889** or **34.14%** of students were not less than 23 years of age as of 1st of January 2020.
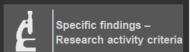
Figure 1.4

Student Age	Total	Total as %
Less than 23	7,501	65.86%
Not less than 23	3,889	34.14%
Grand Total	**11,390**	**100%**

3. Specific Findings – Staff Profile Criteria

3. Staff Profile Criteria

An overview of the process to collate staff profile information applied by CUA together with details of the independent outcome of the review is outlined below.

3.1 Overview - Staff Profile Criteria

3.1.1 Overview:

Under the TU Legislation, the applicant Institutes are required to meet certain eligibility criteria around staff qualifications, these eligibility criteria are based on *"the full-time academic staff of the applicant institutes engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level"*. Therefore it is essential to collate the *"full-time academic staff"* who are *"engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level"* first to ascertain the base number on which to calculate the eligibility criteria.

An overview of the methodology applied by the applicant Institutes to ascertain the staff numbers is set out below.

To collate its staff number, the Institutes used their October 2020 raw CORE HR data (hereinafter called 'CORE data'). The raw CORE data includes all active staff within each applicant institute along with their appropriate department, payscale description, qualification, employment status, employee ID and pay multiplier generated from the Institutes CORE systems. This raw CORE data is the basis that the Institutes use when collating and submitting their ECF return to the HEA. The staff dataset was collated for each institution separately and was merged by the CUA Project office.

To ascertain the staff base number as set out in section 28.1(c) of the TU Act 2018, the Institutes calculated the number of staff who meet all the following criteria:
- Academic staff who are engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level (NFQL 8);
- Staff with an employment status of permanent whole-time, temporary whole-time, contract of indefinite duration where their whole-time equivalent is equal to 1, staff on temporary reduced hours due to parental leave or other personal arrangement;
- Seconded staff, full-time academic staff currently on career break or maternity leave that are due to return in this academic year, 2020/2021;

Further to above, the applicant Institutes have reviewed the staff number based on the above criteria and have made specific inclusions and exclusions in order to arrive at their base number (refer to page 22 for the specific inclusions and exclusions).

To identify staff qualifications, the HR Departments of each applicant Institute maintain personnel files which include staff contracts, and details of their qualifications including parchments and/or other relevant documentation in order to determine their highest qualification. Additionally, each Institute put in place a process to identify doctoral equivalent degrees which included all staff being invited to apply for consideration by completing a template and submitting a Curriculum Vitae (CV) to the CUA project office. Each staff application was considered under the following criteria as determined by the CUA, with staff holding Fellowships given priority:
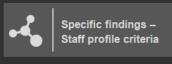- A Level 8/9 degree;
- At least 10 years' experience gained in industry or academia;
- Evidence of continuous professional development, possibly including an academic degree in addition to their current highest qualification;
- Current (paid) membership of a recognised Professional Body;
- Lecturing in a related area/discipline or research active in a related area/discipline;
- And/or a Fellowship awarded by a Professional Body;
- An up to date CV including all of the above, with specific details relating to academic qualifications (year of award, awarding institution, title and level of award, etc.).
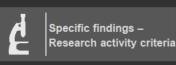
Following the above, the dataset of each institute was used to calculate their staff eligibility criteria as set out in the Technological Universities Act 2018.
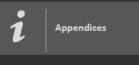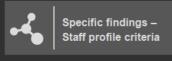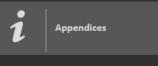
CUA Methodology applied to the Staff Profile Criteria

3.1.2 Staff Base Number:

> Eligibility Criteria (legislative criteria)
>
> S. 28 (1) (c) of the full-time academic staff of the applicant institutes engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level—

Methodology applied by the CUA: To collate the number *"of the full-time academic staff of the applicant institutes engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level",* the raw CORE data from GMIT, ITS and LYIT was collated by the CUA project office. The raw CORE data includes all staff and a total of 3,123 staff was identified.

CUA have interpreted S.28 (1)(c) as:

- Full-time academic staff (including academic management or management specifically engaged in programme development);
- Contracted on a permanent whole-time, temporary whole-time or contract of indefinite duration with an FTE of 1; and
- Engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelors degree level.

Based on the above interpretation, to determine the base number of staff for each institute, the institutes internally classified their staff as Category A, B, or C (See below for description) and identified the following inclusions and exclusions applied to the raw CORE data (refer to Figure 2.1 for details) in the following three steps:

1. **Academic Staff** – the first step taken was to determine the total number of academic staff, which includes those in categories A, B and C staff for each institute. The process followed by the applicant institutes is as follows:
    - *Category A*: Are all academic staff which includes full-time academic teaching staff, both full-time and part-time staff in the following roles academic management, heads of learning and teaching/education development and heads of research/research managers where they undertake academic/research duties, and post-doctoral researchers engaged in supervision or the provision of higher education programmes (see appendix 5 for list of non-teaching staff engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level). To identify the category A staff CUA applied the following description filters to the raw CORE data:
        1. Full Time Academic Teaching Staff;
        2. Academic Management;
        3. Heads of Learning and Teaching/Education Development;
        4. Heads of Research/Research Managers whom undertake academic/research duties; and
        5. Full-time Post-doctoral researchers engaged in supervision or the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level.
    - *Category B*: Are staff who are all full-time academic staff, on temporary reduced hours due to parental leave or other personal arrangement. A total of 4 staff were included.
    - *Category C*: Are all seconded staff, full-time academic staff currently on career break or maternity leave that are due to return in this academic year (2020/2021). A total of 7 staff were included.

Figure 2.1

Staff Profile	GMIT	ITS	LYIT	Total
October 2020 Raw CORE Data	1063	1095	965	3123
Identified Category A Staff	462	401	265	1128
Add: Category B and Category C Staff	4	6	1	11
Less: Non Full-Time Staff	-78	-60	-63	-201
Less: L6/L7 Academic Staff	-23	-37	-29	-89
Less: Specific Exclusions	-4	-1	-3	-8
Add: Specific Inclusions	1	0	1	2
Total Full-Time Academic Staff	362	309	172	843

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3. Staff Profile Criteria

CUA Methodology applied to the Staff Profile Criteria

Continued . . ./ 3.1.2 Staff Base Number:

2. **Full-time staff engaged in the provision of at least an Honours Bachelor Degree level** – the second step was to determine the full-time management staff engaged in the provision of at least an Honours Bachelor Degree from the total staff identified. The process followed by the applicant institutes was as follows:
   - Exclusion of all casual part time, temporary part time, permanent part time, pro rata part time, and temporary whole-time cover. Along with academic management staff with a pay multiplier on CORE of less than one, other than those who are classified as category B or category C staff: A total of 201 staff were identified.
   - Exclusion of staff not engaged in the provision of a programme leading to at least an honours bachelor degree level: A total of 89 staff were identified.

3. **Specific Inclusions/Exclusions** – the final step was to identify any staff who should be excluded/included under the previous two parameters.
   - Two exclusions were Financial Controller's who have no academic involvement;
   - Two exclusions were staff who left the applicant IoTs after the ECF data was collated;
   - Two exclusions were staff who are the Head of Innovation Centre and Head of Medical & Engineering Technologies who have no academic involvement;
   - One exclusion was a category C staff member who will not be returning in the upcoming academic year (2020/2021);
   - One exclusion was an Assistant Lecturer not engaged in the provision of a L8+ programme; and
   - One inclusion was an administration staff member in a senior management grade who is supervising a research student; and
   - One inclusion was a senior management grade staff member who is the current Head of Online Learning.
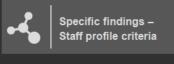
The CUA project office aggregated the staff numbers identified above (figure 2.1) and identified **843** *full-time academic staff . . engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level*.

Deloitte review: The CUA project office provided Deloitte with the raw CORE dataset of October 2020 from GMIT, ITS & LYIT. Deloitte performed a walkthrough of the process applied by the CUA to calculate their staff profile figures with a staff member of the CUA project office. We then re-performed the methodology applied by the CUA on the raw CORE dataset of October 2020, to ascertain the base number of staff identified by CUA and to evaluate the methodology applied. We applied the methodology of the CUA and identified **843** *full-time academic staff . . engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level*. This is the base number on which the eligibility metrics will be applied. In applying the CUA methodology, we noted that the classification of HR staff across the three institutes was not consistent, i.e. administration (ADM) staff in one institute were excluded as they are not engaged in the provision of an eligible programme, however in another institute the administration (ADM) staff were included as the category included senior lecturers, Registrar, President and some seconded staff who are engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level.
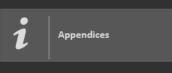
3. Staff Profile Criteria

CUA Methodology applied to the Staff Profile Criteria

3.1.2a Staff Number with Masters or Doctoral Degree:

Eligibility Criteria (legislative criteria)

S. 28 (1) (c)   of the full-time academic staff of the applicant institutes engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level—

         (i) at least 90 per cent hold a masters degree or doctoral degree,

CUA have interpreted S.28 (1)(c)(i) as:
- staff who hold a either a master's degree, a doctoral degree or with their degree and experience combined could be considered equivalent to a doctoral degree (hereinafter referred to as a 'doctoral equivalent degree').

From the 843 base staff identified, the Institutes identified the highest awarded qualification of each staff member. Set out on page 20 is the methodology applied by the CUA to identify those staff deemed to hold a terminal degree. Based on this methodology, the CUA project office has identified that of the 843 *full-time academic staff . . engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level,* a total of **780**, or **92.53%** of staff hold a either a master's degree, a doctoral degree or doctoral equivalent degree.

Deloitte review:
Per the CORE dataset, we identified that of 843 staff, **780 (92.53%)** of staff hold a masters, doctoral or terminal degree (refer to Figure 2.1.1 for details). We selected for testing a random sample of 24 full-time academic staff engaged in at least an Honours Bachelor Degree on a pro-rata basis between GMIT, ITS & LYIT to ascertain that they are full-time academic staff; engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level; and hold a masters degree, doctoral degree. Please refer to section 3.1.3 for testing of staff deemed to hold a doctoral equivalent degree.
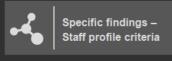For our sample of 24, we reviewed:
1. the contract of employment to ascertain their employment status e.g. full-time, or has a whole-time equivalent;
2. the staff members' lecturing timetable and the relevant timetable of the course that they are engaged to deliver; and
3. evidence to ascertain their highest qualifications (masters, doctoral degree) per the dataset.

Figure 2.1.1 Staff Profile	GMIT	ITS	LYIT	Total	%
L8	28	23	12	63	7.47%
L9	176	138	86	400	47.45%
L10	143	125	62	330	39.15%
L10 Equivalent	15	23	12	50	5.93%
L10/Equivalent/L10	158	148	74	380	45.08%
L9/L10/Doctoral Equivalent	334	286	160	780	92.53%
Total Staff L8+	362	309	172	843	100.00%

Through testing of the requested documentation we ascertained that out of the 24 samples selected all 24 staff matched the details recorded on the CUA staff dataset for those staff members. Nothing came to our attention during this testing to suggest that the recording of staff qualifications and contract details is not satisfactory.

3. Staff Profile Criteria

CUA Methodology applied to the Staff Profile Criteria

3.1.3 Full-time academic staff holding a doctoral degree or doctoral equivalent degree:

Eligibility Criteria (legislative criteria)

S. 28 (1) (c)   of the full-time academic staff of the applicant institutes engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level—

(ii)   at least 45 per cent hold—

(I)   a doctoral degree, or

(II)   subject to subparagraph (iii), a terminal degree, as well as sufficient practical experience gained in the practice of a profession to which the programme relates, such that the degree and experience together can reasonably be viewed by the advisory panel as equivalent to a doctoral degree, and

(iii)   not more than 10 per cent hold only the qualifications referred to in subparagraph (ii) (II);

Methodology applied by the CUA: In relation to the above criteria, additional guidance was provided in respect of terminal / doctoral equivalent degrees as follows:
- Section 28 (2)(c)(ii) of the Technological Universities Act 2018 refer to Appendix 2 for extract; and
- the HEA Guidelines, refer to Appendix 3 (section 2 - Staff numbers, qualifications and equivalences) for relevant extracts.

For the purpose of meeting the TU Criteria under section S28.1(c)(ii)(II), the CUA outlined their methodology to ascertain staff deemed to hold a doctoral equivalent degree (refer to page 20 for the criteria).

As depicted in Figure 2.1.1 on the previous page, using their staff dataset, the CUA applied filters to base number of 843 to identify their full-time academic staff engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level, and identified that **380** or **45.08%** hold either a doctoral degree or a doctoral equivalent degree, broken down as follows:
- **330** or **39.15%** hold a doctoral degree; and
- **50** or **5.93%** hold a doctoral equivalent degree. The CUA informed that they have collated the CVs of over 50 staff but have submitted those considered to be the strongest candidates. These CVs set out the highest qualification attained, their experience, publications and other activities which combined they deem to be a doctoral equivalent degree.

Deloitte Review:
From the base staff number of 843, using filters on the CORE dataset, we identified that **380 (45.08%)** hold a doctoral or doctoral equivalent degree. Of the 380 staff, **330 (39.15%)** staff hold a doctoral degree and **50 (5.93%)** of staff hold a doctoral equivalent degree.

Having previously reviewed a sample of staff with masters and doctoral degree qualifications for the testing outlined in 3.1.2a, we focussed our attention on the doctoral equivalent degrees. We initially reviewed at a high-level the curriculum vitae (CV) of all 50 staff considered to hold a doctoral equivalent degree and selected a sample of 12 (40%) for further review, this was split by seven staff holding fellowships and five deemed equivalent to a doctoral degree as a result of their industry/academic experience, continued professional development, awards received, membership of a professional body for review and other contributions made to their field of education. We obtained and review copies of the employee contracts, evidence of highest qualifications (transcript / parchment) and curriculum vitae setting out their industry, academic and research experience, certificate of membership of professional bodies and other supporting documents as deemed appropriate.

During our review, nothing came to our attention that would indicate that the methodology applied by the CUA to identify staff holding a doctoral degree or a doctoral equivalent degree was not satisfactory. However, evaluation of the staff CVs deemed to hold doctoral equivalent degrees should be made by the Advisory panel as this is not our area of expertise (see appendix 6 for details of the sample of 12 doctoral equivalent degree).

Should the Advisory Panel accept the 50 staff deemed to hold a doctoral equivalent degree, the CUA have a total of **380** or **45.08%** of staff holding either a doctoral degree or a doctoral equivalent degree.

Deloitte.

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3. Staff Profile Criteria

CUA Methodology applied to the Staff Profile Criteria

3.1.4 Full-time academic staff engaged in the provision of a programme leading to a doctoral degree and the conduct of research:

> Eligibility Criteria (legislative criteria)
>
> S. 28 (1) (e) of the full-time academic staff of the applicant institutes engaged in both of the following, at least 80 per cent hold a doctoral degree—
>
> (i) the provision of a programme that leads to an award at doctoral degree level, and
>
> (ii) the conduct of research;

Methodology applied by the CUA: The CUA have interpreted:
- S.28(1)(e)(i) as full-time academic staff engaged in the supervision of students registered on a doctoral degree, this is Programme Type 27; and
- S.28(1)(e)(ii) as full-time academic staff who:

1. Published at least two peer-reviewed or externally funded items from the list below in the past five years:
   - Books (in the case of a major monograph, one is sufficient for this criterion)
   - Book Chapters
   - Journal Articles of international standing
   - Major reviews of a field of research
   - Conference publications
   - Compositions, commissions and other creative works
   - Practice -based including recitals, written or recorded works, broadcasts, audio visual recordings, exhibitions
   - Policy papers and commissioned reports.

Figure 2.4

Data	GMIT	ITS	LYIT	External	Total
No. of Programme Type 27 students per CUA's October 2020 Student Records	26	36	10	N/A	72
No. of academic staff supervising the Programme Type 27 students*	25	25	9	23	82
No. of internal full-time academic staff supervising the Programme Type 27 students	23	24	8	N/A	55

*Includes all supervising staff of CUA students, including full-time staff, part-time staff, internal staff and external staff.

2. In addition, the individual must have achieved at least one of the following in the past five years
   - Supervision to completion of one postgraduate research student at either level 9 or 10 to completion as either a lead or co-supervisor
   - Have submitted one research grant application to an external agency
   - Publication of an additional one publication from the above list
   - Demonstration of recognised discipline specific research and scholarly output
   - Presentation at a national and/or international conference
   - Registered for a research degree at level 9 or 10
   - Evidence of contract research, consultancy or industry-led projects
   - Invitation to present at an international research conference.

As the timing of this review occurred while the CUA were collating their student data for the November 2020 SRS return, the CUA used their October 2020 student records from the research offices of the respective Institutes to identify the students registered on a doctoral degree (Programme Type 27). Through review of the records of the doctoral degree students, the supervisors were then identified. A total of 55 full-time academic staff were identified as being engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award at doctoral degree level by the CUA (refer to Figure 2.4).

CUA identified that all 55 were research active through review of the doctoral degree student registrations, as all doctoral degree applications include the CV/experience of the proposed supervisors to demonstrate that they have the relevant capacity to supervise a doctoral candidate. Of the 55 staff, **53** or **96.36%** were identified as holding a doctoral degree (refer to Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5

Supervisor's Highest Qualification	Count	%
L10	53	96.36%
L9	2	3.64%
Terminal	0	0%
Total	55	100%

3. Staff Profile Criteria

Continued . . ./ 3.1.4 Full-time academic staff engaged in the provision of a programme leading to a doctoral degree and the conduct of research:

Deloitte Review: As the November 2020 SRS was not ready at the time of this testing, Deloitte used the CUA October 2020 student records as our basis. Deloitte identified 72 students registered on a doctoral degree. We then matched these 72 students to the doctoral degree students recorded in the November 2020 SRS return submitted to the HEA. We identified 55 internal supervisors associated with the 72 PhD student dataset provided by the CUA.

By reviewing the CUA raw CORE data for October 2020, Deloitte re-calculated that of the 55 PhD supervisors, 53 or **96.36%** hold a doctoral degree (refer to figure 2.5). The remaining **2** or **3.64%** of PhD supervisors hold a masters degree and neither are the principal supervisor of a doctoral degree student.

Of these 55 supervisors, we selected a sample of 10 supervisors on a pro-rata basis for review, four from GMIT, two from LYIT and four from ITS. To ascertain that the 10 selected supervisors were the supervisors of the 10 students assigned to them on the CUA PhD register, we requested the PhD application forms of the 10 students. These 10 application forms allowed us to identify the principal supervisors of the respective students. Through review of these application forms nothing came to our attention that would indicate that the information recorded on the CUA PhD register was not satisfactory. Deloitte also reviewed the student banner system and ascertained that all 10 research students were currently registered on a doctoral degree for this academic year (2020/2021).
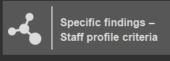
To ascertain that the 10 selected staff were research active, Deloitte reviewed the various research profiles of each supervisor including their ORCID (record of research and publications), Research Gate, Taylor and Francis, Springer Link and PubMed profiles. Deloitte identified that all of the selected sample meet the CUA's conduct of research criteria.

Figure 2.5

Supervisor's Highest Qualification	Count	%
L10	53	96.36%
L9	2	3.64%
Terminal	0	0%
Total	55	100%

3. Staff Profile Criteria

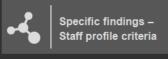## 3.1.5 Supervision of students registered on programmes leading to an award to doctoral degree:
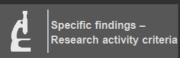
Eligibility Criteria (legislative criteria)

S. 28 (1) (f)   each of the full-time academic staff of the applicant institutes engaged in the supervision of students registered on a programme that leads to an award to doctoral degree level—

    (i)   holds—

        (I)   a doctoral degree, or

        (II)   a terminal degree, as well as sufficient practical experience gained in the practice of a profession to which the programme relates, such that the degree and experience together can reasonably be viewed by the advisory panel as equivalent to a doctoral degree,

Methodology applied by the CUA: CUA have interpreted (i) above as those staff who are engaged as supervisors of students registered on a doctoral degree - Programme Type 27.

Through the records held by the Institute research offices, the PhD supervisors were. A total of 55 full-time academic staff were identified as being engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award at doctoral degree level by the CUA. Of the 55, 53 or **96.36%** were identified as holding a doctoral degree (refer to figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6

Supervisors	Count	Hold a L10 Qualification	Hold a L9 Qualification	% holding a L10 Qualification
Number of Supervisors both Principal and Co	55	53	2	96.36%
Principal Supervisors	36	36	0	100.00%
Co-Supervisors Only	19	17	2	89%

Deloitte Review: Our interpretation of the above legislation is that all (**100%**) of PhD supervisors, should hold a doctoral or a doctoral equivalent degree. We have ascertained from our review of the PhD supervisors dataset, that of the 55 PhD supervisors, **53 (96.36%)** hold a doctoral or doctoral equivalent degree. There are 2 staff supervising PhD students who hold a masters qualification. Neither of these two staff are principal supervisors.

We identified that of the **55** supervisors, **36** are principal supervisors. We selected a random sample of 10 supervisors for review from the 36 principal supervisors, four from GMIT, two from LYIT and four from ITS to ascertain that they held the qualification per the CUA staff profile database provided. We ascertained having reviewed the parchments that all 10 supervisors' qualifications matched the recorded qualification on the CUA dataset and all 10 of our sample held a doctoral degree. By reviewing the relevant students' PhD applications, we ascertained that these 10 supervisors were the principal supervisors of the students noted on the CUA PhD register, therefore the sample of 10 supervisors selected are full-time academic staff of the applicant institutes engaged in the supervision of students registered on a programme that leads to an award to doctoral degree level.

Deloitte by performing an analysis of the PhD student datasets and cross referencing the supervisors to the CUA staff profile database, Deloitte re-calculated that of the 55 supervisors:
- **36** are principal supervisors and **100%** of the principal supervisors hold a doctoral degree;
- **53** or **96.36%** hold a doctoral degree; and
- **2** or **3.64%** hold a masters degree and both of these are co-supervisors of a PhD student.

We did not identify any staff deemed to hold a doctoral equivalent degree holding the position of a principal supervisor.

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- Specific findings – Research activity criteria
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3. Staff Profile Criteria

CUA Methodology applied to the Staff Profile Criteria

Continued . . ./ 3.1.5 Supervision of students registered on programmes leading to an award to doctoral degree:

Eligibility Criteria (legislative criteria)

S. 28 (1) (f)   each of the full-time academic staff of the applicant institutes engaged in the supervision of students registered on a programme that leads to an award to doctoral degree level—

(ii)   Has a record of continued conduct of research in an area relevant to the programme.

Methodology applied by the CUA: As defined in section 3.1.4, CUA interpreted 'conduct of research' as full-time academic staff who:
1. Published at least two peer-reviewed or externally funded items from the list below in the past five years:
- Books (in the case of a major monograph, one is sufficient for this criterion)
- Book Chapters
- Journal Articles of international standing
- Major reviews of a field of research
- Conference publications
- Compositions, commissions and other creative works
- Practice -based including recitals, written or recorded works, broadcasts, audio visual recordings, exhibitions
- Policy papers and commissioned reports.

2. In addition, the individual must have achieved at least one of the following in the past five years
- Supervision to completion of one postgraduate research student at either level 9 or 10 to completion as either a lead or co-supervisor
- Have submitted one research grant application to an external agency
- Publication of an additional one publication from the above list
- Demonstration of recognised discipline specific research and scholarly output
- Presentation at a national and/or international conference
- Registered for a research degree at level 9 or 10
- Evidence of contract research, consultancy or industry-led projects
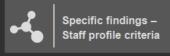- Invitation to present at an international research conference.

As mentioned previously in S.28(1)(f)(i) CUA identified their supervisors of PhD registered students through review of their October 2020 student records and the PhD records held by the respective institutes research offices for each doctoral degree student.

These records identified that **55** staff are engaged in the supervision of students on a programme leading to a doctoral degree. In order to identify the research activity of these supervisors, the CUA through review of the doctoral degree student registrations, identified that all **55 or 100%** of the supervisors have a record of continued conduct of research in an area relevant to the programme based on their definition of S.28(1)(f)(ii).

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3. Staff Profile Criteria

CUA Methodology applied to the Staff Profile Criteria

<u>Continued . . ./ 3.1.5 Supervision of students registered on programmes leading to an award to doctoral degree:</u>

Deloitte Review: Deloitte set out in the page 26, how we identified the number of supervisors. We selected a sample of 10 supervisors for review on a pro-rata basis, four from GMIT, two from LYIT and four from ITS. In order to ascertain that the selected supervisors were research active in accordance with CUA's interpretation. Deloitte reviewed the various research profiles of the selected staff members, reviewed the research articles published on the applicant institutes' web pages in relation to the selected staff members and reviewed the PhD applications of their research students to identify that they are appropriately research active.

As a result of the testing, we ascertained that all 10 supervisors meet the criteria set out under 1 and 2 on the previous page.

Specific Findings – Research Activity Criteria

4. Research Activity Criteria

An overview of the process to collate research activity criteria information applied by CUA together with details of the independent outcome of the review is outlined below.

Overview – Research Activity Criteria

4.1.1 Overview:

To meet the research criteria outlined in the Technological University Act 2018, the CUA have categorised its fields of education in line with the latest version (F2013) of the International Standard Classification of Education Descriptors (ISCED). The research offices of each institute within the CUA reviewed the student applications/registrations of those registered on a doctoral degree (Programme Type 27) to identify the fields of education that the CUA are engaged in, in respect of the delivery of a programme which leads to a doctoral degree.

To determine if the academic staff and students of the applicant institutes conduct research within at least 3 fields of education, the CUA first identified those students registered on a doctoral degree from their Banner system as of October 2020. CUA advised that the October 2020 Banner system records were used for their PhD students as at the time of this review the November 2020 SRS return was not finalised. Then from a review of their research office records of the PhD students, they collated the list of all supervisors.

The CUA have defined "conduct of research" as a full-time academic staff who:

1. Published at least two peer-reviewed or externally funded items from the list below in the past five years:
   - Books (in the case of a major monograph, one is sufficient for this criterion)
   - Book Chapters
   - Journal Articles of international standing
   - Major reviews of a field of research
   - Conference publications
   - Compositions, commissions and other creative works
   - Practice -based including recitals, written or recorded works, broadcasts, audio visual recordings, exhibitions
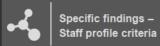   - Policy papers and commissioned reports.

And,

2. In addition, the individual must have achieved at least one of the following in the past five years
   - Supervision to completion of one postgraduate research student at either level 9 or 10 to completion as either a lead or co-supervisor
   - Have submitted one research grant application to an external agency
   - Publication of an additional one publication from the above list
   - Demonstration of recognised discipline specific research and scholarly output
   - Presentation at a national and/or international conference
   - Registered for a research degree at level 9 or 10
   - Evidence of contract research, consultancy or industry-led projects
   - Invitation to present at an international research conference.

In order to ascertain if the supervisors of each PhD student could be deemed research active based upon the CUA definition above, the research offices of each of the Institutes that make up the CUA reviewed the doctoral degree student applications, as all applications include the CV/experience of the proposed supervisors to demonstrate that they have the relevant capacity to supervise a doctoral candidate.

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4. Research Activity Criteria

4.1 Overview – Research Activity Criteria

4.1.2 Supervisors have a record of continued conduct of research:

Eligibility Criteria (legislative criteria)

S. 28 (1) (g)   in respect of not less than 3 fields of education—

(i)   the applicant institutes provide programmes that lead to awards to doctoral degree level, and

(ii)   the academic staff and students of the applicant institutes conduct research;

In respect of S.28 (1) (g), the CUA identified five fields of education based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). CUA have indicated that they meet the following criteria in the five fields of education:
- CUA provide programmes that lead to awards to doctoral degree level, and
- The academic staff and students of CUA conduct research

Upon initial registration for their doctoral degree programme, each student is categorised into the relevant Central Statistics Office (CSO) Standard Fields of Education Classification, this classification was derived from a joint project with Eurostat and UNESCO and was based on the International Standard Classification of Education - ISCED 1997 (Fields of Education).

For the purpose of identifying whether the CUA meets this criteria they used the broad ISCED fields of education, rather than the CSO Standard Fields of Education Classification. To determine the number of ISCED broad fields within which doctoral degrees are offered, the CUA first identified 72 doctoral degree students through a review of research offices records. The ISCED of each doctoral degree student is recorded on the banner system during the student registration process by the research offices which is derived from the initial doctoral degree application completed by each student.

Deloitte Review: In order to identify the number of fields of education that the CUA are engaged in, in respect of the delivery of a programme which leads to a doctoral degree, Deloitte used the Banner System as of October 2020 which records the student's ISCED and initially identified five fields of education. On reconciling the October 2020 student records to the November 2020 SRS return when finalised we identified a number of PhD students who were not included in the initial October 2020 data. The October 2020 PhD Student records was amended to reflect the full number of PhD students (72). Using the updated October 2020 student records, Deloitte identified the students who are currently on a programme that leads to an award of a doctoral degree. Deloitte through this process identified **seven fields of education** that lead to an award of a doctoral degree as indicated in figure 3.1 below.

Having previously tested a sample of ten doctoral degree students in section 3.1.5, these students were recorded as being active on a doctoral degree programme across six fields of education. Deloitte reviewed each student's record on banner which depicts their ISCED code and matched it with the November 2020 SRS return. No issue came to our attention with respect to the 10 sample students.
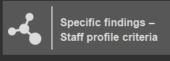
Based on the student dataset held by the Institutes, we identified that the CUA provide programmes that lead to an award of a doctoral degree and conduct of research across **seven fields of education.**

Figure 3.1

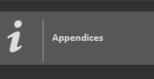| Broad fields of education in ISCED-F 2013	ISCED offered under CUA
00 – Generic programmes and qualifications	x
01 – Education	x
02 – Arts and humanities	✓
03 – Social sciences, journalism and information	✓
04 – Business, administration and law	x
05 – Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	✓
06 – Information and Communication Technologies	✓
07 – Engineering, manufacturing and construction	✓
08 – Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	x
09 – Health and welfare	✓
10 – Services	✓

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Statement of responsibility

WE HEREBY TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS REPORT WHICH IS PREPARED ON THE BASIS OF THE LIMITATIONS SET OUT BELOW.

Eileen Healy

Eileen Healy
Partner
For and on behalf of
Deloitte Ireland LLP
Deloitte & Touche House
Charlotte Quay
Limerick

Date: 15 February 2021

Contact persons:

Eileen Healy, Partner	086 1643082
Mary Rose Cremin, Director	087 3531026

This engagement was not an attest engagement, and was conducted on a sample testing basis as agreed with the Connacht-Ulster Alliance ("CUA") on behalf of Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Sligo and Letterkenny Institute of Technology. The matters raised in this report are only those which came to our attention during our review and are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all weaknesses that exist, or of all improvements that might be made. Should further work have been performed over the course of this engagement, other issues may have come to our attention. The summary of our findings should be evaluated by Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Sligo and Letterkenny Institute of Technology for their full implications.

We have relied on information provided by Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Sligo and Letterkenny Institute of Technology. We do not accept responsibility for such information and have not performed any substantiation or external confirmation procedures to establish its accuracy. Examples of information provided included, but is not limited to, the following:

- Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Sligo and Letterkenny Institute of Technology November 2020 SRS Return
- Approved Course Schedules
- Programme Validation Reports, Panel of Programme Assessors' Final Report, Course Submission Document
- CORE Staff Dataset
- Employment Control Framework Return submitted to the HEA in September 2020
- ORCID, Research Gate, Taylor and Francis, Springer Link, PubMed research profiles
- Other Supporting Data – such as Moodle/Blackboard activity, staff timetables, Staff Contract of Employment, Membership of professional body, Banner System Information, Qualification Parchments, October 2020 PhD Student Records listing and PhD students dataset.

This report has been prepared solely for Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Sligo and Letterkenny Institute of Technology and should not be quoted or referred to in whole or part without prior written consent. No responsibility to any third party is accepted as the report has not been prepared and is not intended, for any other purpose.
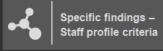
Deloitte.

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Appendix 2 –Technological Universities Act 2018

Extracts from section 28 of the Act

Eligibility criteria

28. (1) The applicant institutes concerned shall, in relation to an application for an order under *section 36* , jointly comply with the following criteria (in this chapter referred to as "eligibility criteria"):

    (a) of the students of the applicant institutes registered on a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level—

        (i) at least 4 per cent are research students registered on a programme which leads to an award to at least masters degree level,

        (ii) at least 30 per cent fall within one or more than one of the following classes of students:

            I.   Students who are registered on a programme that is provided on a flexible basis, such as by means of part-time, online or distance learning

            II.   Students who are registered on a programme that is provided on a flexible basis, such as by means of part-time, online or distance learning

            III.   students who are not less than 23 years of age;

    (c) of the full-time academic staff of the applicant institutes engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level—

        (i) at least 90 per cent hold a masters degree or doctoral degree,

        (ii) at least 45 per cent hold—

            (I)   a doctoral degree, or

            (II)   subject to subparagraph (iii), a terminal degree, as well as sufficient practical experience gained in the practice of a profession to which the programme relates, such that the degree and experience together can reasonably be viewed by the advisory panel as equivalent to a doctoral degree,

            and

        (iii) not more than 10 per cent hold only the qualifications referred to in subparagraph (ii)(II);

    (e) of the full-time academic staff of the applicant institutes engaged in both of the following, at least 80 per cent hold a doctoral degree

        (i) the provision of a programme that leads to an award at doctoral degree level, and

        (ii) the conduct of research;

    (f) each of the full-time academic staff of the applicant institutes engaged in the supervision of students registered on a programme that leads to an award to doctoral degree level—

        (i) holds—

            (I)   a doctoral degree, or

            (II)   a terminal degree, as well as sufficient practical experience gained in the practice of a profession to which the programme relates, such that the degree and experience together can reasonably be viewed by the advisory panel as equivalent to a doctoral degree,

            and

         (ii) has a record of continued conduct of research in an area relevant to the programme;

    (g) in respect of not less than 3 fields of education—

        (i) the applicant institutes provide programmes that lead to awards to doctoral degree level, and

        (ii) the academic staff and students of the applicant institutes conduct research;

28. (2) (c) A reference, in paragraph (c), (e) or (f) of subsection (1)—

    (ii) to a terminal degree held by a member of staff of the applicant institutes is a reference to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level within the Framework which, in the view of the advisory panel, was at the time the award was made the highest academic award available in the discipline concerned, and if not so awarded within the Framework is, to the satisfaction of the advisory panel, equivalent to such a degree.

Appendix 3 – Extracts from HEA Guidance

Guidance Technological Universities – Proposed process in respect of an application to become Technological University, 2018

1. Research Student Numbers – extract taken from "Appendix 1 Research Student numbers

The legislation defines a research student as 'a student who is registered on a programme of education and training where not less than 60 per cent of the available credits are assigned in respect of a thesis or theses prepared by the student based on research conducted by him or her'.

For the purposes of an application under the Act the understanding of the term 'research' will be as defined in the Frascati Manual - 2015 Edition:

o   Research and experimental development (R&D) comprise creative and systematic work undertaken in order to increase the stock of knowledge – including knowledge of humankind, culture and society – and to devise new applications of available knowledge.

o   The term R&D covers three types of activity:

- Basic research: experimental or theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge of the underlying foundation of phenomena and observable facts, without any particular application or use in view;

- Applied research: original investigation undertaken in order to acquire new knowledge. It is, however, directed primarily towards a specific, practical aim or objective;

- Experimental development: systematic work, drawing on knowledge gained from research and practical experience and producing additional knowledge, which is directed to producing new products or processes or to improving existing products or processes.

For the purposes of an application under the Act the understanding of the term ' thesis or theses' will be as set out in the Quality and Qualifications Ireland Research Degree Programmes Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines March 2017/QG6-V1:

o   8.2 Elements of assessment
Procedures for assessment for research degrees include clarification of research output, most often a thesis (here meaning a coherent body of detailed written work on a specific topic particular to the student) but may also be a written submission with a selection of papers, performance practice or research artefact and, in some cases, performance in a viva voce (oral examination).
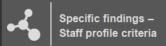
o   8.2.1 Research theses and contribution
Procedures are clear on the variety of formats for capturing research contribution available to students, consistent with international norms in the disciplines in which programmes are offered. Specific contexts are identified in which formats other than a monograph may be appropriate. All permitted formats facilitate assessment against an equivalent standard. Clear guidelines are available to students, supervisors, examiners and members of an examination board on each format, including considerations to be taken into account in choosing it, at what stage a student can indicate the intended format, who can approve the format, standards, length and presentation and conventions and protocols for student vetting of their draft thesis using appropriate software. Procedures are in place which require acknowledgment of the specific contributions of others, if any, to the research project. Procedures are in place for accessing, disclosure, dissemination and archiving of the thesis, subsequent to award."

Guidance Technological Universities – Proposed process in respect of an application to become Technological University, 2018

2. Staff Numbers, qualifications and equivalences – extract taken from "Appendix 2 Staff numbers, qualifications and equivalences

Staff qualifications

- For the purposes of an application under the Act the understanding of the term 'equivalent to a doctoral degree' will be as set out in the 2018 Act as 'a terminal degree, as well as sufficient practical experience gained in the practice of a profession to which the programme relates, such that <u>the degree and experience together can reasonably be viewed by the advisory panel as equivalent to a doctoral degree</u>'.

- It is likely that the applicant institutions will have a wide range of specialisms as part of their existing offerings and their staff mix reflects the recruitment patterns which sought, to date, to resource these specialisms in an appropriate way. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to derive a fully exhaustive set of guidelines to cover all of these specialisms in a detailed way. It appears that the more practical approach is to set out some broadly common criteria and/or categories which are capable of application across a range of specialisms and which offer reasonable guidance to the institutions as to what might be acceptable by the advisory panel in exercise of its statutory function.

- In making a case for 'equivalent to a doctoral degree' applicant institutes are invited to their consideration of terminal degree and practical experience on an individual / CV-based approach. This approach should evaluate the quality of the individual's experience relative to the particular challenges / demands / forms of recognition of the discipline in question. It may incorporate a time-based dimension without considering the latter to be a qualifier or disqualifier in itself.

- This categorisation would include, individuals distinguished by high achievement in the world of industry, business, science, the professions, the arts or public service who have been recognised by peers as outstanding in their field or those clearly recognised and verifiable eminence and leadership in their chosen field of expertise.

- While a broad range of possible categories exists into which the relevant accomplishments may fall, the following list is intended as an example set and is not likely to be exhaustive:
  - o Professional Membership: This category applies in the case of senior practitioners in professional disciplines who have attained the highest level of membership of the professional body concerned. It would include the professional bodies (in whatever jurisdiction) in disciplines (and related sub-disciplines) such as accounting, engineering, law, medicine, veterinary etc. While specific qualification procedures may vary, there would be likely to be a commonality of the requirement on the individual to show a body of professional practical experience which is at the highest level for the discipline and peer evaluation of the individual by accepted experts in the field.
  - o Publication / Exhibition: This category would include publications outside of the traditional academic, peer reviewed domain. It could include output designed for mass readership, appreciation or impact across a variety of genres, including the creative arts. While more qualitative than the earlier category it would, nonetheless, involve demonstrable forms of recognition such as critical review, commercial impact or media commentary.
  - o Performance: This category would involve demonstrable evidence of regular and ongoing performance in the varying performing arts categories in recognised venues, either nationally or internationally. As with the category above, it would be likely to be supported by critical recognition, media impact and / or commercial success.
  - o Built Environment: This category would involve the professional contribution to the creation of significant additions to public space in Ireland or abroad. It could involve any of the wide range of disciplines involved - architecture, engineering, quantity surveying, design etc.
  - o Business / Entrepreneurial Achievement: This category would involve recognisable achievement in the development, growth, acquisition of businesses, either newly created or substantially changed and re-configured, creating resulting value either in terms of shareholder value, employment creation, technological innovation and creativity or social/public service.
  - o Social / Public Service: This category could include the development of services and modes of delivery of service to various categories of the population. Distinguishing features (to mark the achievement off from "regular" service provision) could include the extent of the impact on a targeted category of population or the level of innovation exhibited in the service so as to establish precedent and replicability in other domains or geographies.

- Some of these categories may overlap and would require further elaboration and exemplification in dialogue between the advisory panel and applicant institutions, to the extent that any of the proposed bids may rely on these examples of professional experience or combinations of them.

This guidance is provided to advise the process. The key elements of any case for equivalence should include recognisable and verifiable evidence of proficiency and clearly, the exemplification of this spans a wider range of possibilities than might be set out here."
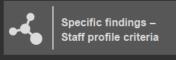
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Appendix 4 – Schedule of Meetings

Name & Title	Date of meeting*
Dr. Sean Duffy, Executive Project Lead	15 October 2020
Ms. Anne-Marie McCormack, CUA Data Analyst	15 October 2020
Dr. Shirley Wrynn, GMIT CUA Project Manager	15 October 2020
Dr. Ciarán Ó hAnnracháin - LYIT CUA Project Manager	15 October 2020
Ms. Ann Higgins, IT Sligo CUA Project Manager	15 October 2020
Mr. Colm McVeigh, IT Sligo CUA Administrator	15 October 2020
Mr. Tony McDonogh, GMIT Human Resources Manager	21 October 2020

* This date represents the date of first meeting. Subsequent meetings were held and/or follow up communications performed as required including via phone and / or email.

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