

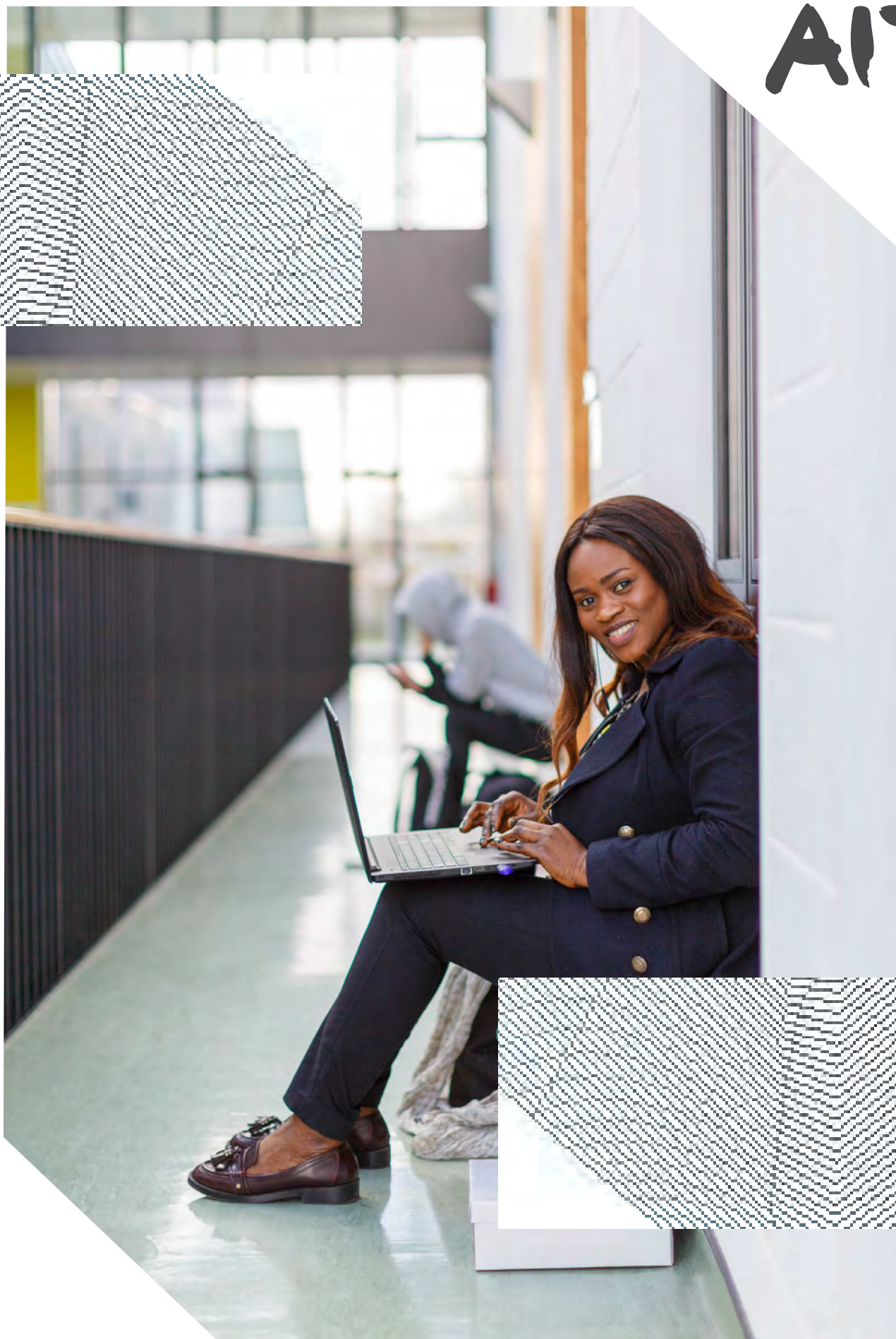






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THE  TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES

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INSTITUTE OF
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OF THE YEAR
RUNNER-UP

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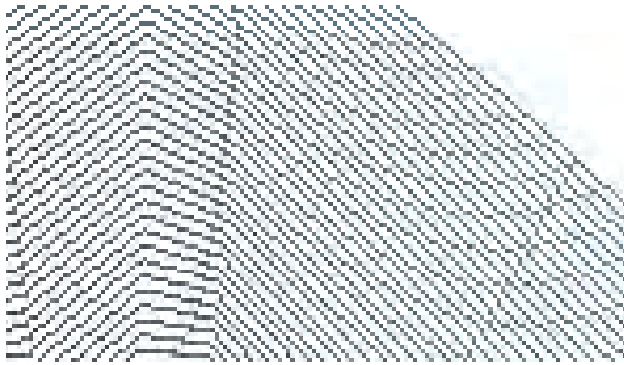
**GOOD
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2018**

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OF THE YEAR

THE  TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES

**GOOD
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2020**

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OF THE YEAR



President's **Introduction**

Welcome to the AIT Annual Report 2020/21. This is our last Annual Report as an institute of technology and inside its pages is a snapshot of the activities that have transpired this past year – from student successes to research, engagement and outreach in the community. Next month, on our appointed day of October 1, 2021, we are due to open our doors as Ireland's third technological university. This is a significant achievement and a testament to the work and commitment of our staff and, indeed, stakeholders in the wider community, each of whom has invested in the continued success of the Midlands region.

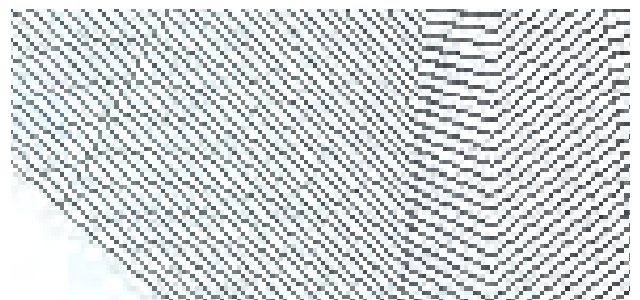
The new university will have transformative effect on the region and will impact positively on lives, both regionally and nationally. It will play a key role in ensuring a better balance of spatial development nationally and will position the Midlands and Midwest to drive this connectedness. Achieving university designation will see us further enhance our research and development capabilities and move from delegated authority to an agenda of authority as we define our own standards and award structures. This will be key to unlocking our significant latent research potential, which will go on to inform teaching and learning at undergraduate level, creating a virtuous cycle.

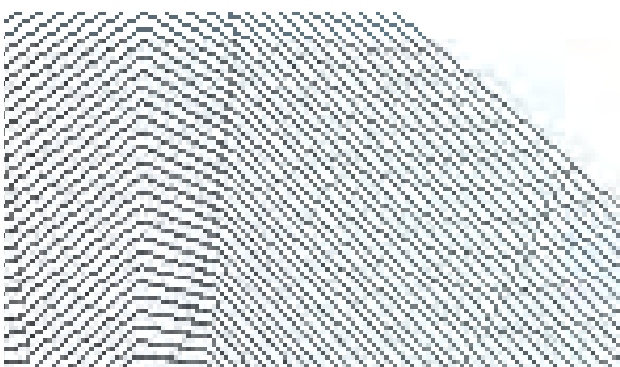
I would like to express my thanks to the staff of AIT who, despite the significant challenges presented by COVID this past year, worked in the spirit of common purpose to deliver for our campus community. I would also like to thank our Governing Body for their unending support throughout this journey and their guidance in helping us realise our TU ambition. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work of our students' union, who have been instrumental in helping shape and define our vision for the new university and in championing the student voice throughout this process.

This is a new beginning for our students, staff and the wider community and while we look to the future with great excitement, it is also a time to reflect on where we have come from. This year, we celebrate 50 years as an academic institution of distinguished achievement. In that time, we have earned a reputation of excellence, punched above our weight on a national and global stage and achieved enumerable accolades. I am incredibly proud of all that has been accomplished during this time. The people of AIT – the staff, students, alumni and stakeholders in the community have made it what it is today and will ensure that it continues to serve the Midlands, providing opportunity, ensuring accessibility and sharing knowledge.

It has been my great privilege and honour to lead AIT into the next phase of its evolution. Just as the Midlands benefitted from getting its own higher education institute in the form of the ARTC in the 1970s and then an institute of technology in the 2000s, it will too benefit from the future graduates of our new university, which will contribute even more to the region and to the civic and social fabric of our communities.

Warm regards,
Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin,
President, Athlone Institute of Technology





Chairperson's Message

As the Governing Body Chairperson, I am delighted to present AIT's Annual Report for 2020-2021. This last academic year has brought about many changes to the world of education, but I am pleased to report that AIT has enjoyed tremendous success despite it all – most notably laying the groundwork for its technological university transformation.

Under the leadership of Prof. Ó Catháin and his team, AIT surpassed the substantive TU metrics set out by Government in October of last year, upskilling staff and more than doubling the number of research-active students in a single year. Shortly thereafter, under the auspices of the AIT-LIT Consortium, AIT applied for TU designation and was successful in its endeavour. The institute now looks ahead to opening its doors as Ireland's third technological university on its appointed day of October 1, 2021.

I would like to commend the staff and students of AIT and all the people in the wider community who have contributed to this success. What has been achieved this past year is nothing short of spectacular, and I am extremely proud to have lent my oversight and guidance to this transition and to have been a part of this history-making process.

There were many other areas in which AIT excelled this year. Following its success in becoming the first institute of technology to ever accede to AMBER, an SFI centred house in TCD, AIT joined colleagues in NUIG, MTU and MU in also formally acceding to ADAPT, the national research centre for artificial intelligence.

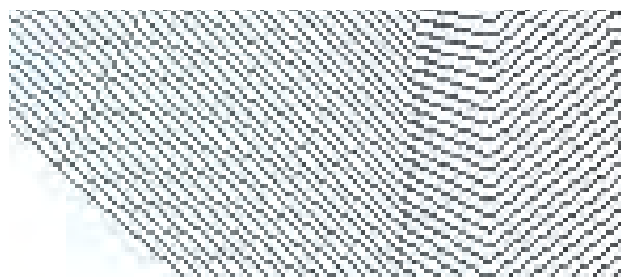
In addition, AIT is now supporting industry through ATIM, a new cluster aimed at accelerating the digital transformation and growth of Irish manufacturing SMEs, software companies, and digital enterprises. The goal of the cluster is to provide support, connect stakeholders and make Irish companies more competitive on the global stage.

AIT has also been extremely proactive in developing new programmes for industry again this year, recognising early on the huge appetite for flexible upskilling opportunities. The institute secured €4 million in Springboard+/ICT Skills funding to support learners in upskilling and reskilling in areas of importance to the Midlands' and, indeed, Ireland's economy. This amounted to more than 930 places across 25 free or part-funded courses, making it among the largest offerings nationally.

In closing, I would like to offer a heartfelt thanks to the members of our Governing Body, who have been instrumental in supporting AIT in making the transition to Ireland's third technological university. I would also like to thank the staff of AIT, especially those who gave so much of their time to the joint TU working groups amid what has been a challenging and, at times, difficult year. I wish them all well in this new beginning for their careers and families.

Liam Rattigan,

Chairperson, AIT Governing Body





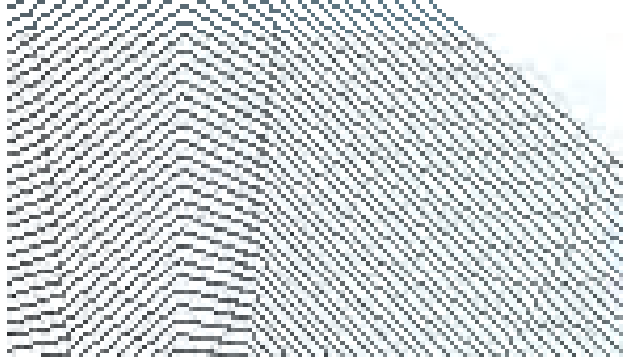
"The will to win, the desire to succeed, the
...these
door to

2020/21 Highlights

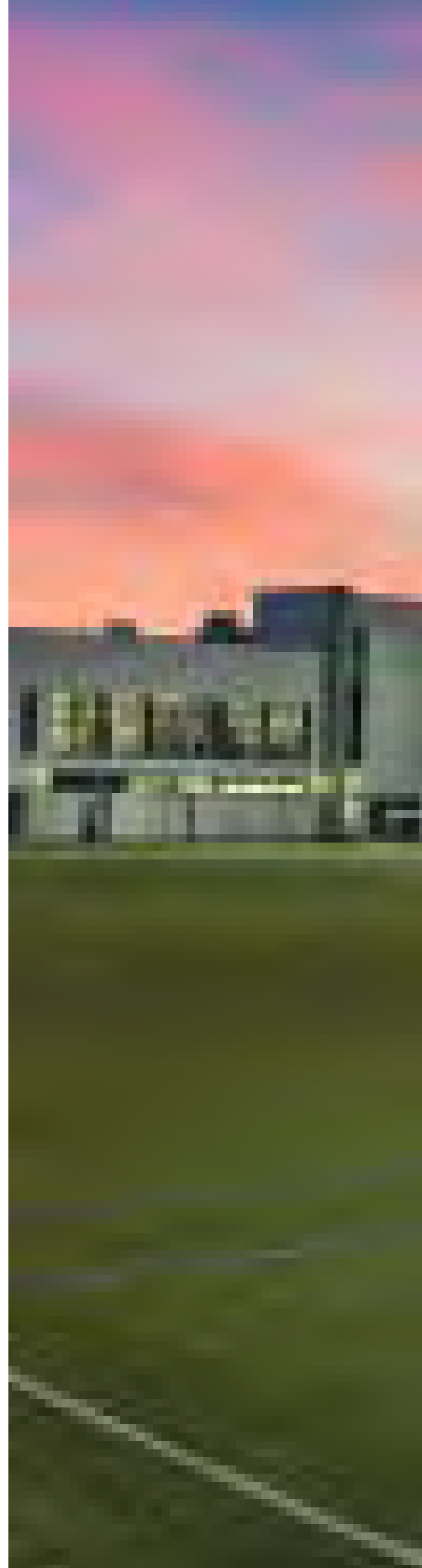
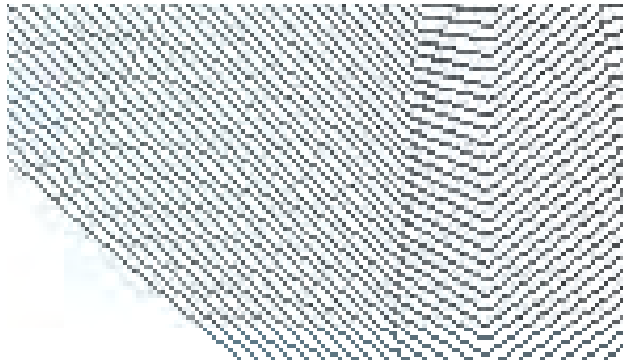




- 1. The Journey to TU** – October 1, 2021 has been announced as the first day of the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (pg. 12).
- 2. Top of the Class: AIT Remains Ireland's Top-Ranked Institute of Technology** – AIT previously won The Sunday Times Institute of Technology of the Year in 2020 and 2018 and came runner-up in 2017. (pg. 24)
- 3. AIT Confers 'Resilient' and 'Courageous' Class of 2020 Virtually** – 2,200+ students were conferred virtually against a backdrop of ongoing global pandemic (pg. 33).
- 4. AIT Records Second Highest Increase in CAO Numbers Nationally** – The Midlands-based institute has seen an increase of almost 29% (pg. 18).
- 5. AIT International Grand Prix joins the World Indoor Tour (silver tier) for the first time** (pg. 58).
- 6. AIT Formally Accedes to ADAPT Centre for AI-Driven Digital Content Technology** – AIT formally acceded to ADAPT, a SFI research centre for artificial intelligence driven digital content technology research (pg. 25).
- 7. Cluster Aimed at Increasing Competitiveness of SMEs Launches at AIT**– A new cluster aimed at accelerating the digital transformation of Irish manufacturing SMEs, software companies, and digital enterprises launched (pg. 44).
- 8. AIT Quantity Surveying Degree Receives Stamp of Approval** – AIT's Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Quantity Surveying has been awarded Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland (SCSI) accreditation (pg. 27).
- 9. 'Game-Changer' PSI Accreditation Awarded to AIT Applied Psychology Degree** – AIT is only the third institute nationally to achieve formal PSI accreditation for an undergraduate psychology programme. (pg. 28).
- 10. AIT Receives €4 Million in Springboard/HCI Funding** – Once again AIT has received over 8.5% of all programmes to be offered nationally, putting it very definitely in the top tier of institutions delivering part-time flexible online and relevant upskilling programmes nationally (pg. 30)



Strategic Developments





AIT – LIT Consortium Awarded €5 Million to Progress TU Bid

The AIT – LIT Consortium received a major funding boost to assist in its progression towards achieving technological university (TU) status.

The consortium was awarded a further €5 million from the Higher Education Innovation and Transformation Fund to help actualise its ambition.

The news was announced by Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris as part of a multi-million euro investment into the higher education landscape.

“This is welcome news and demonstrates confidence in our forthcoming application for TU designation”

AIT President Professor Ó Catháin

Minister Harris called the creation of TUs a “key commitment” for government and said they would deliver “significant advantages to national priorities in relation to access, research-informed teaching and learning, as well as supporting enterprise and regional development.”

“This is welcome news and demonstrates confidence in our forthcoming application for TU designation,” said AIT President Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin. “It is an important juncture in our journey as we prepare to create a new entity capable of sustaining social, economic and industrial growth across the region.”

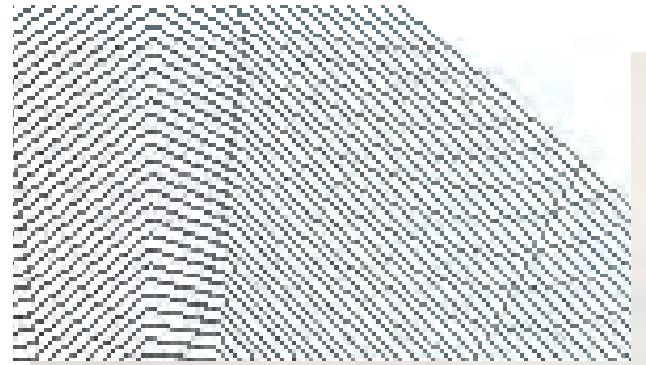
He continued, “Achieving TU status will enable us to connect knowledge creation with industry partnerships to grow and support collaboration, ultimately helping attract investment through a strong talent pipeline of graduates.”

The funding enabled the consortium to build on the significant progress made by the consortium on foot of last year’s €2 million landscape funding, and allowed for deepening interactions, particularly around research attainment, academic endeavours and system-wide integration.

As anchor institutions in their respective regions, technological universities will drive and support social, cultural and economic development, as well as deliver an enhanced student experience and range of options to learners.

A significant body of work has been undertaken on the TU project since the formation of the AIT – LIT Consortium in October of last year.

The consortium has engaged in an extensive stakeholder consultation process, with partners drawn from academic, industry and public life helping to shape the direction of the new TU.



October 2020





University Status One Step Closer for Midlands as AIT – LIT Make TU Application

Combined economic impact of AIT – LIT found to be €420 million

A new technological university for the Midlands and Mid-West is on course for 2021, following confirmation that the AIT - LIT Consortium has formally submitted its application to Government.

The institution is expected to comprise a student population of up to 15,000 and a staff complement of approximately 1,200 people across six campuses in Athlone, Limerick (2), Clonmel, Ennis, and Thurles.

October 2020

An economic impact study commissioned by the consortium has found that the combined impact of the two institutions on the Irish economy is close to €420 million euros in economic output, while they support more than 800 jobs in addition to their own staff complement.

The consortium – which formally commenced in October of 2019 – has targeted a date of 1 September next year for the new university to open and is also embarking on a broad consultation process to name the new technological university.

Academic unions and the Students' Unions across both AIT and LIT have voted overwhelmingly in favour of measures contained in the technological university project plan.

President of AIT Professor Ciaran Ó Catháin said: "This is a transformational development for the Midlands, and once it comes to fruition, it will provide significant social and economic benefit to communities across the region and beyond. Becoming a TU will broaden access to higher education and create opportunities in areas that have previously been underserved with respect to apprenticeships right through to PhD.

"I am immensely proud of the progress that has been made since the formation of the AIT – LIT Consortium a little over a year ago and of our staff, who have worked together in the spirit of common purpose to share knowledge and expertise. This has culminated in us reaching and surpassing the substantive TU metrics set out by Government and increasing our research capacity. Our commitment to our technological mission is resolute and will result in a talent pipeline of professionally and technically skilled graduates capable of propelling regional and national growth."

Professor Tom Collins, AIT-LIT Consortium project facilitator, congratulated the "management, staff and students at both institutes, who in a short time and through all the challenges of the current year, have re-imagined the future of the two institutions around a compelling vision for a new technological university in the Irish Midlands and Mid-West."

Green Light for New TU in the Midlands and Mid-West

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris TD has designated AIT and LIT Ireland's next technological university.

Announcing the designation of the new TU, Minister Harris TD said it was another hugely important day for higher education in Ireland and, in particular, for the Midlands and Mid-West regions.

"The higher education landscape is rapidly evolving, and the people of the Midlands and Mid-West will henceforth be at the heart both geographically and practically of that evolution. This new technological university designate will increase higher education access, provide enhanced research-led teaching and learning, drive enhanced regional development, and increase opportunities for students, staff, business and enterprise, local communities and regional stakeholders, thereby facilitating and promoting deepened socio-economic progression.

"This new TU – our third since 2019 - will now take its rightful place in the higher education landscape in the country's heartlands. I would like to warmly congratulate and sincerely thank the very many people from the two Institutions including their management, governing bodies, staff, students and the wider regional and community stakeholders who have enabled today's announcement and who can now look forward to an exciting future for this new university and the regions it will serve."

"The new TU will be a powerful educational entity that will serve with dedication and distinction, futureproofing higher education across the Midlands and Mid West"

Liam Rattigan, Chair of Governing Body AIT

Welcoming the announcement, AIT President Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin said, "This is a historic day for the Midlands and Mid-West of Ireland, as we see our ambition of achieving technological university status realised. Today's designation will see AIT and LIT come together to form a new educational powerhouse, linked by the River Shannon. Unique in its geography, the new university will border almost half of Ireland's 26 counties, providing unprecedented levels of access to higher education. This will be a transformative change in accessibility and one that we are proud to lead. As a new university, we will be bold and ambitious. We will drive future development and technological innovation across Ireland and on an international stage through cross-cutting, high-TRL research and knowledge transfer to stakeholders in industry. Today marks the start of an exciting future for all."

Chair of Governing Body AIT Liam Rattigan added, "I am delighted to see the progress that has been made over the last 18 months, which has now culminated in the creation of Ireland's third technological university. The new TU will be a powerful educational entity that will serve with dedication and distinction, futureproofing higher education across the Midlands and Mid West through practical learning, applied research and strong industry engagement. The future is indeed bright, and we can now look forward to opening our doors and starting a new chapter in our story."

Professor Tom Collins, Project Facilitator of the AIT-LIT Consortium, said, "It has been a great privilege to have been able to play a small part in the formation of this newest Irish university. The region to be served by this technological university, a region which is unified and defined by the Shannon, will be enabled by this new university to face and shape the future with confidence, resilience and expertise."

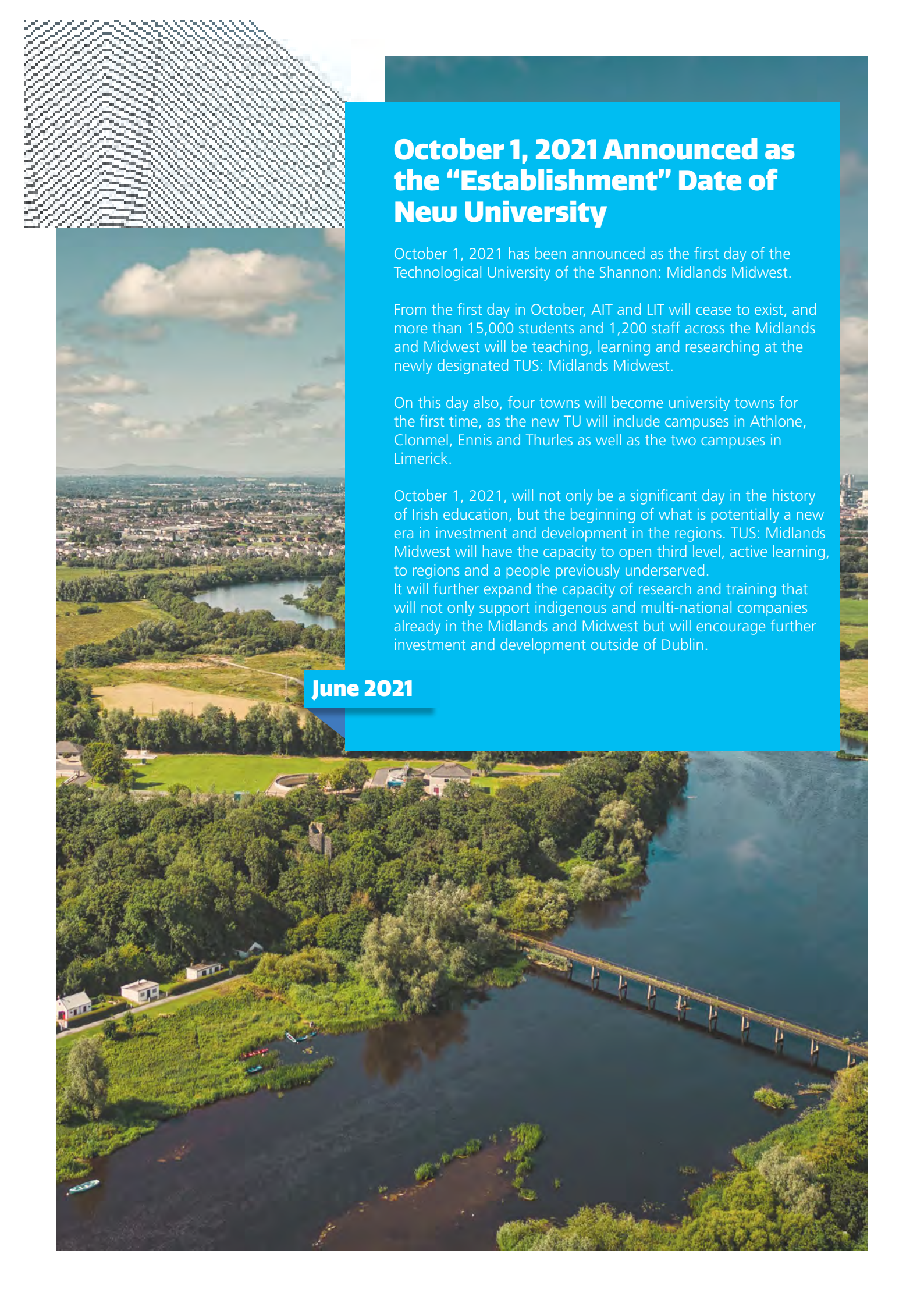
New Beginning for Midlands and Midwest as Name for Technological University Confirmed

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris TD has confirmed the name of Ireland's newest TU as the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest. The name of Ireland's newest TU emerged from extensive independent research carried out with almost 3,500 students, staff, and regional stakeholders over several months.

Welcoming the announcement, AIT President Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin said it was another momentous step in the journey towards the opening of Ireland's newest TU: "This name marks the start of an exciting, bright future for the new university. TUS: Midlands Midwest speaks to our shared geography, heritage, and to the flow of knowledge and ideas that will bring TUS: Midlands Midwest to the cutting edge of higher education in Ireland and beyond.

"As well as providing a geographic reference point, the River Shannon provides a feature of scale with which to communicate our international ambitions and our ability to impact regionally, nationally and internationally.

"The naming signifies an important step forward in our journey to delivering a technological university for the Midlands and Midwest and stems from extensive engagement with stakeholders across both regions. Their passion, ambition and vision for the TU project has been its driving force and their voices have been instrumental in helping shape the new university."

An aerial photograph of a river landscape. In the foreground, a wooden bridge spans a section of the river. The banks are lush with green trees and vegetation. A few small boats are visible on the water. In the background, a town or city is visible under a blue sky with scattered clouds. The image is used as a background for the text overlay.

October 1, 2021 Announced as the “Establishment” Date of New University

October 1, 2021 has been announced as the first day of the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest.

From the first day in October, AIT and LIT will cease to exist, and more than 15,000 students and 1,200 staff across the Midlands and Midwest will be teaching, learning and researching at the newly designated TUS: Midlands Midwest.

On this day also, four towns will become university towns for the first time, as the new TU will include campuses in Athlone, Clonmel, Ennis and Thurles as well as the two campuses in Limerick.

October 1, 2021, will not only be a significant day in the history of Irish education, but the beginning of what is potentially a new era in investment and development in the regions. TUS: Midlands Midwest will have the capacity to open third level, active learning, to regions and a people previously underserved. It will further expand the capacity of research and training that will not only support indigenous and multi-national companies already in the Midlands and Midwest but will encourage further investment and development outside of Dublin.

June 2021



July 2021

TUS: Midlands Midwest SU Charts a New Path in Student Representation

The technological sector's first fully amalgamated students' union has been created in anticipation of Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest opening its doors later this year. The new union, which has already elected its first president and ratified a comprehensive constitutional framework, is expected to be fully operational with officers in situ by July 1, 2021.

The executives of AITSU and LITSU set out almost one year ago to develop a new unitary entity to serve TUS: Midlands Midwest's student body, which is projected to grow to 15,000 by 2024. While similar in size and operating structure, there were a lot of details to be hammered out, including how a multi campus students' union, 120 kilometres apart, was going to work efficiently and effectively.

The unions enlisted the help of an external facilitator, Senan Turnbull, who is an organisational and governance development specialist for the not-for profit sector. A former SU officer himself, some 40 years ago, Senan brought a wealth of experience and knowledge to the role of advising the student executive who, he says, demonstrated an appetite and enthusiasm for the task.

"From the very beginning it was very clear that the two Presidents and their supporting sabbatical officers had a common ambition which made it easy to find common ground. There was an energy there to want to get things done. Even so, we still had a lot of things to resolve – different expectations, different historical styles and approaches that we had to merge into one new approach," he explained.

One of the biggest obstacles to overcome was figuring out how democracy would work across a spread campus, rather than a single campus which has been the Athlone experience to date. "We had to come up with a credible democratic and accountability process that would work

notwithstanding those geographic challenges,” Senan said, adding that they had looked at other multisite campuses, particularly in Northern Ireland, for examples of a best practice approach.

An online system was developed to enable officers across the six campuses, who couldn’t physically sit in the same room without spending wasted time on travel, to conduct business at the highest levels of the council and executive. “I think if we’d done it a year earlier, my own expectations would have been lower – how could you do this if you’re that far apart, but post-COVID, we all unknowingly shifted our mindsets from what was possible online as opposed to face-to-face,” Senan explained.

“We’re extremely grateful for the support we’ve received from the Presidents of AIT and LIT and from the project directors. Everything we’ve asked for or needed, they’ve given us”

Áine Daly, the new SU president-elect

Over the course of nine joint meetings, commencing in July and culminating in December, Senan helped the SU create a new constitutional framework from scratch, including six accompanying schedules which act as “detailed, operating and procedural documents.” The reason for this, he explained, is to enable the union to adjust without having to hold frequent referendums.

Instead, the new student council, which will act as the senior governing body of the SU, will be empowered to amend the schedules, if necessary, in line with the key statements set out in the constitution.

The schedules set out the different roles and responsibilities, from the full-and part-time officers to the SU operations. They detail things like the terms of reference of committees, election regulations, standing orders for the council and executive, and a nominations committee.

The composition of the SU is also changing; currently, in Athlone, there is a president, VP for education and a VP for welfare; in Limerick, they have an overall president, a deputy president and two campus convenors. The campus convenor roles will be turned into VP roles in the new SU.

The new SU will have a president, a deputy president for the Moylish campus, a deputy president for the Athlone campus, a VP for education and welfare for Thurles and Clonmel, a VP for education and welfare for Ennis and Clare Street, and VP for education for Moylish and Athlone.

“The deputies will be my right-hand people,” said Áine Daly, the new SU president-elect, who was elected in March and will start acting in her official capacity from July 1, 2021. I’ll have one in Athlone and one in Moylish; they will be my representatives across the different campuses and will be responsible for the day-to-day operations.”

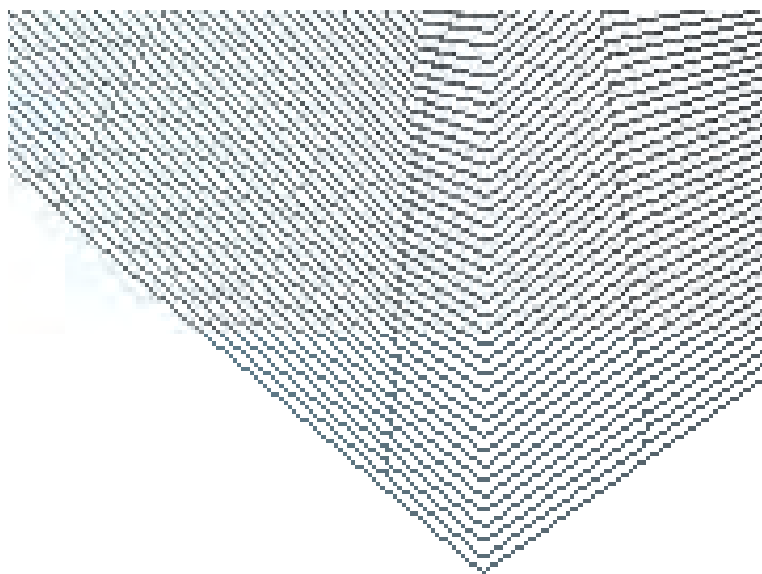
With the help of Senan Turnbull, the TUS: Midlands Midwest SU have agreed on a core executive of nine full-time sabbatical officers and a full-time postgraduate officer. The union’s part-time officers will consist of an EDI officer, a student experience officer, a lifelong learning officer, and an international student officer. There will also be faculty convenors who will fall into the SU executive and work with the TU on quality assurance in each faculty.

“We made them part of our executive to ensure our students’ voices are fully heard and are properly represented within our organisation. They will each have their own work portfolios, so they will all be managing their own working groups and standing committees,” Áine explained. “We want to empower them to run eventually for the full-time officer posts, as we need to ensure sustainability in our structures and that there is always someone to take our place to serve our student body.”

Commenting on what student representation will look like in the new TU, the SU president-elect said it is “all about partnership”, something that already exists very strongly in AIT and LIT and has helped drive the process of amalgamation. “We’re extremely grateful for the support we’ve received from the presidents of AIT and LIT and from the project directors. Everything we’ve asked for or needed, they’ve given us. I think that’s really helped push us on to get our documentation organised so early,” Áine said, citing numerous examples of how the colleges’ executive management supported them throughout the process.

The next couple of years will be a learning curve for the new SU, and in that time, the documents that underpin its new constitution will be reviewed regularly to see what is working and what, if anything, needs amending.

As the new university grows and settles into its new identity, the SU will continue to adapt to complement its structures to best serve the student body.



AIT Records Second Highest Increase in CAO Numbers Nationally

Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) has recorded the second highest increase in CAO numbers nationally across honours degree programmes in its sector.

The Midlands-based institute has seen an increase of almost 29%, or 1,452 applicants, across its level 8 courses; its first preferences are also up 10.4% year-on-year.

Although CAO applications are up 8.6% nationally, AIT has seen an increase of 22% across its level 6, 7 and 8 courses – more than two and a half times the national average.

This breaks down to an increase of 2,111 total mentions and 194 more first preferences, bringing the college's total number of CAO mentions to 18,723.

Several of AIT's level 8 courses have seen a substantial increase in first preferences, including digital marketing (+57%), mental health nursing (+57%), and applied psychology (+25%).

At level 7, mechanical engineering and renewable energy (+79%), graphic design (+43%), and music and sound engineering (+37%) are among the college's top performers; at level 6, dental nursing (+40%) has proven to be a strong contender.

"This follows a trend seen in recent years of substantial growth in our CAO numbers and, in particular, a growing number of first preferences across level 8 programmes"

Frances O'Connell, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Registry

AIT President Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin called the increase in CAO mentions and first preferences a "significant achievement" and said he was delighted, although not surprised, to see that AIT was "top-of-mind" for so many students.

"These figures demonstrate a strong appetite for our applied, industry-focussed courses and our growing reputation as a centre of academic excellence. This is further reinforced by the fact that we have been designated Ireland's third technological university – and the first university in the Midlands itself. Students will no longer have to go to Dublin or Galway to access a university education – we can now offer that right here on their doorsteps," he explained.

Vice President of Academic Affairs and Registry Frances O'Connell also welcomed the news and said the strong growth in applications was a "hugely positive" sign:

"This follows a trend seen in recent years of substantial growth in our CAO numbers and, in particular, a growing number of first preferences across level 8 programmes. Achieving growth two and a half times that of the national average is a considerable achievement and a credit to the efforts made right across the institute – from management and lecturers to our marketing and communications team."

She continued: "This is an extremely exciting time for students to join us, as they will be the first cohort of learners in the new university. Our incoming first years will join a vibrant, welcoming community of learners and earn a qualification that is relevant now and into the future. We look forward to welcoming our new students to our award-winning campus in September."

Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest, formed from AIT and LIT, is set to open its doors on October 1, 2021.

On that date, AIT and LIT will cease to exist and more than 14,000 students and 1,200 staff across the Midlands and Midwest will be teaching, learning and researching at the new university.

May 2021



RUN-EU Signs MoU with Regional Government Partners on the Development of a European Zone of Interregional Development

A memorandum of understanding between the Regional University Network -European University (RUN-EU) members and their regional government partners was signed for the development of a European Zone of Interregional Development (EZ-ID) as part of the mission and long-term vision of RUN-EU.

The parties to this memorandum of understanding agreed to the following key principles and objectives with a view to achieving their ultimate goal of the development of the pan-European RUN-EU EZ-ID.

All parties recognise by working together on the establishment of the RUN-EU EZ-ID, which uses a quadruple helix approach to providing collaborative self-help opportunities to raise the potential of the population of member regions; they will be able to enhance their individual and collective capacity to drive key national and EU policy objectives and missions associated with societal transformation, active citizenship, social inclusion, and multiculturalism within and across their regions.

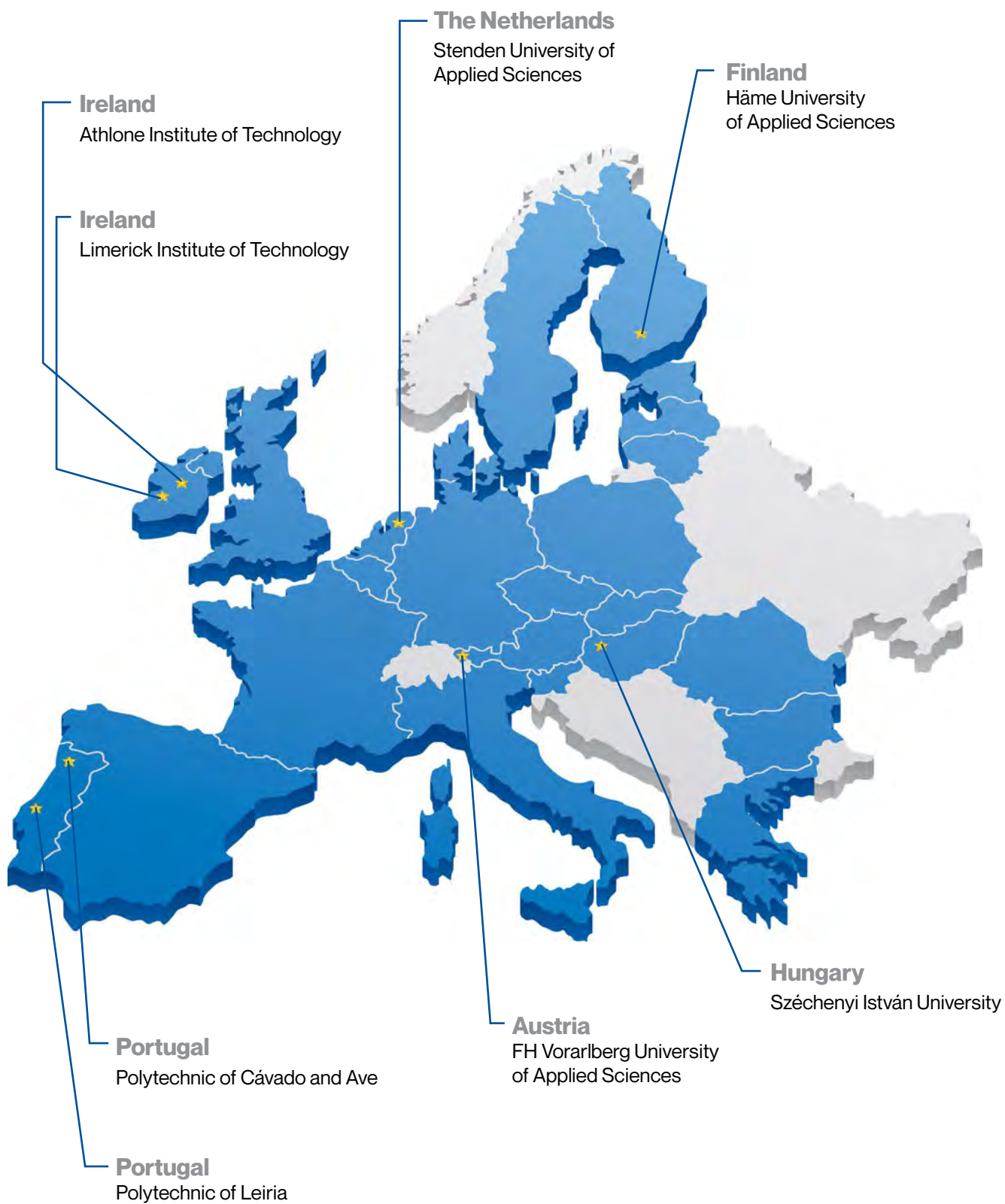
All parties are committed to engaging in negotiations on the best approach to be taken to the development and establishment of the RUN-EU EZ-ID with a view to identifying:

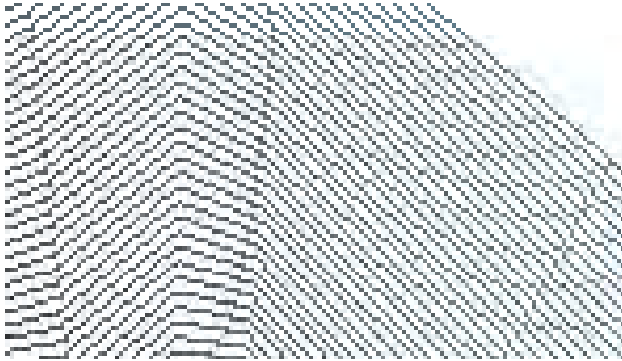
- appropriate organisational and support structures to be put in place.
- relevant collaborative interregional educational, economic, social, and cultural opportunities to be developed.
- potential funding sources and other resourcing opportunities which could be utilised to advance the development of the EZ-ID and its associated activities.

Over a 5-year period all parties will endeavour to collectively establish the RUN-EU EZ-ID and its interconnected zones for interregional activity in education, regional government, business & enterprise and social & cultural development.

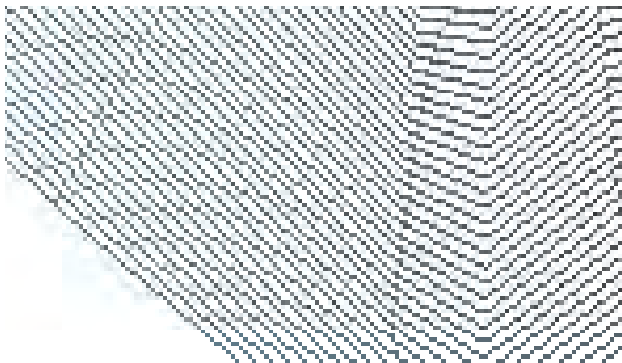
The academic partners under RUN-EU include Politécnico de Leiria, Portugal; Politécnico do Cávado e do Ave, Portugal; Athlone Institute of Technology, Ireland; Limerick Institute of Technology, Ireland; Häme University of Applied Sciences, Finland; NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands; Széchenyi István University, Hungary; Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences, Austria.

The regional government partners include Centro Portugal Regional Coordination and Development Commission (CCDRC), Portugal; Norte Portugal Regional Coordination and Development Commission (CCDRN), Portugal; Clare County Council, Ireland; Limerick City and County Council, Ireland; Tipperary County Council, Ireland; Westmeath County Council, Ireland; Regional Council of Häme, Finland; Province of Friesland, The Netherlands; Municipality of Győr, Hungary; and Vorarlberger Landesregierung, Austria.





Awards & Honours





THE TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES

GOOD
UNIVERSITY
GUIDE
2020

INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY
OF THE YEAR

THE TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES

GOOD
UNIVERSITY
GUIDE
2018

INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY
OF THE YEAR

AIT

Connect & Discover

AIT
Alliance Institute of Technology
A Passport
to your
Future

When
Industry
Leaders
are...



Top of the Class: AIT Remains Ireland's Top-Ranked Institute of Technology

AIT previously won The Sunday Times Institute of Technology of the Year in 2020 and 2018 and came runner-up in 2017.

AIT has retained its position as Ireland's top-ranked institute of technology in The Sunday Times Good University Guide for 2021, the official league table benchmarking the country's 19 higher education institutions.

This is the second consecutive year that AIT has finished top of its class, having previously won The Sunday Times Institute of Technology of the Year in 2020. AIT also held the prestigious title in 2018 and came runner-up in 2017.

Finishing in seventh place, ahead of all other institutes of technology, AIT has outpaced this year's winner, WIT, by eight points. The institute's inclusive campus culture and student-centred ethos are among the reasons for its success.

Student experience scores play a critical role in influencing The Sunday Times rankings for third-level institutes. Introduced into the adjudication criteria in 2018, student experience has the heaviest weighting, giving students direct input into where their college ranks.

AIT has continually elicited the highest participation rates of any third-level provider in StudentSurvey.ie, a national survey which considers the holistic student experience, since its inception seven years ago; its students repeatedly

report the highest levels of satisfaction with their third-level experience nationally.

Welcoming the news, AIT President Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin said: "I am delighted that AIT has once again topped the national higher education rankings and in so doing, further demonstrated that it is a leader in the delivery of technological higher education. I have no doubt that our exceptional performance in this year's league table will stand us in good stead as we look ahead to making our debut as Ireland's newest technological university in future rankings."



According to Alastair McCall, editor of The Sunday Times Good University Guide, the advent of TUs represents "the most radical shake up of higher education in a generation." He added that he expects the new TU for Ireland's Midlands and Mid-West, formed from AIT and LIT, to vie for the top spot among universities in future guides.

The new TU, which will span six campuses across four counties, is on track to open its doors in October 2021.

AIT Formally Accedes to ADAPT Centre for AI-Driven Digital Content Technology

AIT joined colleagues in NUIG, MTU and MU in formally acceding to ADAPT, a SFI research centre for artificial intelligence-driven digital content technology research, bringing the total number of academic partners to eight.

By doubling its academic base of researchers, ADAPT can significantly expand its expertise, capacity, and geographical reach, enabling it to further push the frontiers of knowledge and create technological solutions to societal and industrial challenges.

Driven by a long-term goal of creating a balanced digital society by 2030, ADAPT researchers are pioneering AI techniques and technologies, including personalisation, natural language processing, data analytics, intelligent machine translation human-computer interaction.

The news came as Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris announced an investment of €42 million to extend ADAPT's research activities for the next six years.

According to Minister Harris, the significant government investment reflected "Ireland's position as a world leader in research and innovation" and a need to ensure the country was prepared to address future "global societal and economic challenges."

Welcoming the announcement, Dr Niall Murray, an SFI-funded investigator with ADAPT, said, "We, in AIT, are delighted to formally join this leading global research ecosystem in AI-driven content technology. The scale and scope of ADAPT enables us to collaborate with international researchers based across the eight partner institutions as well as in Europe, but also to apply our own research expertise in new domains, supporting our regional industry partners through the ADAPT centre."

He continued, "AIT contributes its experience and expertise in Quality of Experience of AR and VR to the ADAPT team, and we look forward to further extending our own research ambitions in terms of human-centric artificial intelligence with such immersive technologies and from a team perspective, grow our ADAPT@AIT group here in Athlone through the support of a globally recognised research centre."

This was a sentiment echoed by Dr Máire Brophy, Dean of Graduate Studies and Research at AIT, who added, "This is a great example of collaborative research and the unique perspective AIT researchers bring to that collaboration. The ADAPT centre is widely recognised as a world-leading research centre in digital content technology, and the formalisation of this partnership signifies an exciting new step for research."

Eight academic institutions are now partnered with ADAPT, including TCD, DCU, UCD, TUD, AIT, MU, MTU, and NUIG.

"According to Minister Harris, the significant government investment reflected "Ireland's position as a world leader in research and innovation" and a need to ensure the country was prepared to address future "global societal and economic challenges."



AIT Awarded Athena SWAN Bronze Award for Gender Equality in Higher Education

AIT was recently awarded the Athena SWAN Bronze Award in recognition of its work to advance gender equality in higher education and research.

AIT submitted an application for the award in January 2021, which included a detailed self-assessment of gender equality and a comprehensive four-year action plan for enacting positive culture change.

A self-assessment team, with representatives drawn from across the institute, was established to carry out the work two years ago, under the guidance of its EDI Steering Committee, chaired by AIT President Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin.

“This award is a testament to the work that has been carried out right across the institute and reaffirms our commitment to the Athena SWAN principles of equality and inclusion”

AIT President Professor Ó Catháin

“We are delighted to receive the Athena SWAN Bronze Award in recognition of our commitment to advancing gender equality across higher education,” John McKenna, Vice President for Equality and Diversity at AIT, said.

“Academia cannot reach its full potential unless it can benefit from the talents of all. Our ambitious action plan will ensure that we are continuously striving to create an inclusive culture where all staff can thrive.”

“This award is a testament to the work that has been carried out right across the institute and reaffirms our commitment to the Athena SWAN principles of equality and inclusion,” AIT President Professor Ó Catháin said, congratulating members of the EDI Steering Committee and Self-Assessment Team.

“This award will drive us forward into the new technological university, ensuring that we are fully equipped to develop the university as a leader in EDI. We look forward to the next phase of our Athena SWAN journey and continuing to roll out our ambitious gender equality action plan.”

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris welcomed news of the award, calling the attainment of Athena SWAN accreditation “a significant step forward for gender equality” in higher education.

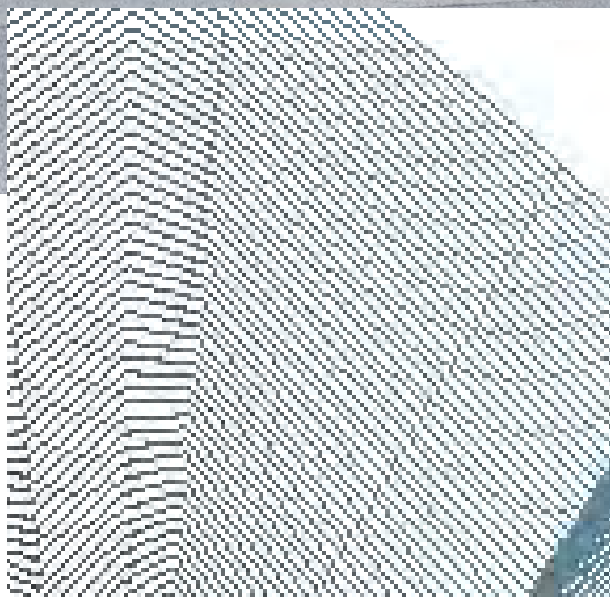
Dr Victoria Brownlee, Head of Athena SWAN Ireland, added that progress on gender equality right across higher



education is essential for retaining talent and ensuring that institutions are representative of society. “It is very encouraging to see so many applicants engage in improvements to support the spectrum of staff roles in the sector,” she said.

The Athena SWAN Charter launched in Ireland in 2015 with a specific remit to encourage and recognise commitment to advancing the careers of women in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM).

This charter has since been expanded to include arts, humanities, social sciences, business, and law (AHSSBL) and staff working in professional, managerial and support roles (PMSS).



AIT Quantity Surveying Degree Receives Stamp of Approval

AIT's Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Quantity Surveying has been awarded Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland (SCSI) accreditation.

Graduates of the QS programme now have a direct route to attaining the professional title of chartered quantity surveyor.

Becoming a chartered quantity surveyor is a significant milestone and brings with it enormous opportunities for career advancement, as many employers set professional accreditation as a requirement for promotion.

The title of chartered quantity surveyor is a valuable designation, a mark of excellence that is valued throughout the construction industry worldwide.

The SCSI is an affiliate of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), so as a chartered quantity surveyor, graduates will possess a globally recognised and respected professional qualification.

The title of chartered quantity surveyor is a valuable designation, a mark of excellence that is valued throughout the construction industry worldwide.

The SCSI regulates the highest standards in education and training, protects members and public through strict regulation of ethics and standards, provides advice to organisations such as government and publishes market information and research.

"We know that our current students and recent graduates will be very happy with this news, as we are fully aware of their commitment to the programme and the career they have chosen," Alan Duffy, a lecturer in the Department of Civil Engineering at AIT, said, welcoming the news.

"For those who are still considering their options for third level programmes at this time, the BSc (Hons) in Quantity Surveying at AIT should be given serious consideration. QS is a particularly well remunerated career. Graduates can expect salaries of €35,000, progressing to €50,000 as junior surveyors within the first few years of work."

AIT's BSc (Hons) in Quantity Surveying covers the core areas of QS, Building Information Modelling (BIM) and the cost management of mechanical and electrical services technology. The programme also includes a nine-month industry work placement.

Graduates of this degree are qualified to work with contractors, sub-contractors, local authorities, government departments or as a consultant in a private practice.

'Game-Changer' PSI Accreditation Awarded to AIT Applied Psychology Degree

AIT's BSc (Hons) in Applied Psychology has been officially accredited by the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI). It is the third institute of technology nationally to achieve such accreditation for an undergraduate psychology programme.

"Parents and career guidance counsellors can now encourage students to pursue a psychology education and career to the highest level without having to leave the region."

Dr Deirdre Walsh, programme director

According to Dr Deirdre Walsh, Programme Director, accreditation "rewards the vision of senior management, confirms the breadth and depth of our programme content, recognises the calibre of lecturers, and most importantly, validates the quality of our students."

"PSI recognition is a game-changer for the Midlands and Midwest," she explained. "Parents and career guidance counsellors can now encourage students to pursue a psychology education and career to the highest level without having to leave the region."

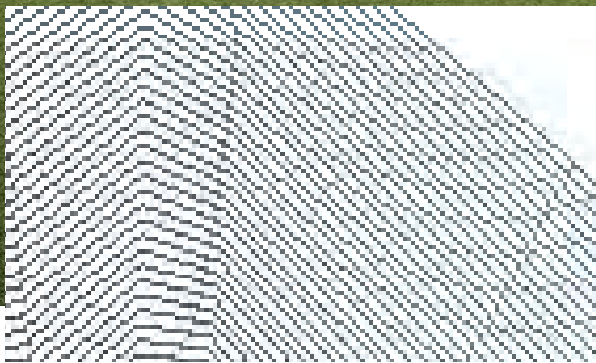
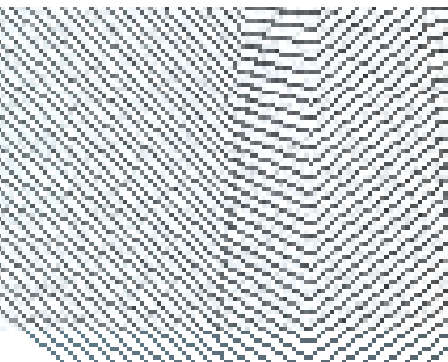
"I am really excited for what the future holds for us," she said, adding that the Department of Social Sciences was looking forward to realising the full potential of the applied nature of its programme through research activity, student work placements and through other forms of engagement with the wider community and region.

Oliver Hegarty, the Head of the Department of Social Sciences, also welcomed the news, calling accreditation a "badge of honour" for the programme, for students, and his team of psychology lecturers, who conceived the idea of launching an undergraduate psychology degree as far back as 2016.

Thanking all those who played a pivotal role in helping secure the prestigious PSI accreditation, Mr Hegarty said it was time for the high calibre team of psychology lecturers to enjoy their moment in the sun, "reminding us that ambitious academic dreams can become reality".

He went on to say that witnessing AIT's first cohort of psychology students graduate in 2022 would be "a poignant moment" and that his department looked forward to "exceeding the expectations of hundreds of future students and career guidance counsellors as we witness our graduates establish and develop flourishing careers as psychologists".





AIT Awarded €4 Million to Provide 900+ Springboard/ICT Skills Places

AIT secured €4 million in Springboard+/ICT Skills funding this year to support learners in upskilling and reskilling in areas of importance to Ireland's economy.

The Midlands-based college, which recently received technological university designation, is offering 930 places across 25 free or part-funded courses for the coming academic year.

Ranging from Level 6 to Level 9 on the national framework of qualifications, the programmes will be delivered in an online part-time, flexible mode.

Areas of study included artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, energy infrastructure, data analytics, product design, financial management, augmented and virtual reality, among many others.

According to Dr Michael Tobin, Dean of Faculty of Continuing, Professional, Online and Distance Learning at AIT, the increased number of places is an endorsement of delivering industry relevant and job relevant programmes, designed in conjunction with industry and Ireland's national skills policies, across all faculties at AIT.

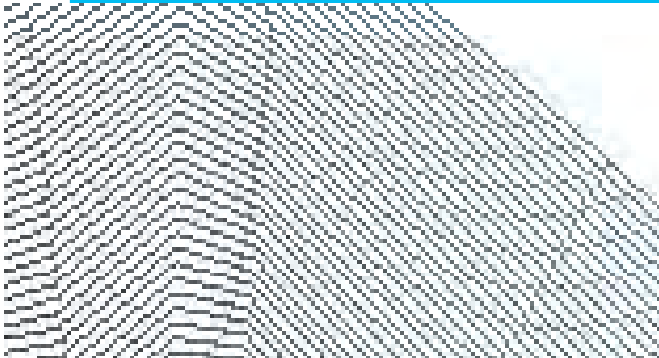
"In these difficult times, it is great to see the level of support from the government to support part-time learning and specifically upskilling initiatives through this call. In all, we have received a 9% increase in learner places and 18% increase in potential income to €4m+."

"Once again AIT has received over 8.5% on all programmes to be offered nationally, putting it very definitely in the top tier of institutions delivering part-time flexible online and relevant upskilling programmes nationally."

In 2020/21, AIT was the highest higher education institute in receipt of this funding. Some 852 students from 26 counties employed across 681 companies benefited from Springboard + and ICT skills places.

Amid a global pandemic and being the sole higher education institute in the Midlands, AIT is uniquely positioned to meet the current and future skills needs of industry and play an integral role supplying a talent pipeline of highly skilled, flexible workers - ultimately ensuring the continued growth and success of the region.

Springboard + facilitates the continued growth and development of the Irish workforce, helping future-proof career prospects by keeping learner's skills and knowledge up to date, which in turn boosts professional credibility and employability.



**€4
Million**

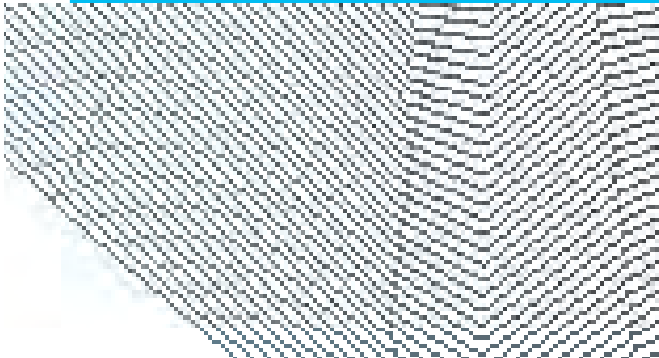
potential income

900+

Springboard/ICT Skills Place

852

People benefited Springboard/
ICT skills places



A portrait of Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, a man with grey hair and a mustache, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a red patterned tie. He is standing outdoors with green foliage in the background. A blue speech bubble is overlaid on the left side of the image.

"Athletics has been a central feature of my life – all my life, and I am indebted to you all for welcoming me into the Athletics Ireland family"

Athletics Ireland Award Bestowed on AIT President

Athletics Ireland bestowed a Life Vice President award on AIT President Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin for his vision of creating a "theatre of dreams for the youth and future stars in athletics" in the shape of the AIT International Athletics Arena.

Professor Ó Catháin, who has served at several senior levels of the organisation, including two terms as president, thanked the board and said he was "deeply moved and profoundly grateful" for such generous recognition.

"Athletics has been a central feature of my life - all my life, and I am indebted to you all for welcoming me into the Athletics Ireland family," he said.

In athletics, he explained that he had found a home and said it is a sport that welcomes people of different talents and encourages them to try to be the best that they can be.

This, he said, endows young people with important life skills, such as self-discipline and perseverance, which have a hugely "positive and lasting impact on their lives."

He also said that the athletics community in Ireland is a community built on volunteerism. Athletics is a force

for "positive social change" he explained, adding that the endless training sessions conducted by voluntary coaches all over the country are hugely beneficial to young people.

During his tenure as president, Professor Ó Catháin developed and enhanced sporting infrastructure, including the AIT International Athletics Arena, to ensure Irish athletes had the best possible opportunities to develop their talents and that Ireland was able to attract the best athletes in the world to its shores.

The AIT International Athletics Arena, established in 2013, has become a springboard for new Irish sporting heroes and legends, inspiring generations of future athletic stars.

Congratulating Professor Ó Catháin on his award, Athletics Ireland President Georgina Drumm said she was delighted to acknowledge his contribution to the organisation by bestowing a Life Vice President award.

She also thanked him for his "commitment" to Athletics Ireland as chair of finance and risk, official starter and national president and for his "leadership" in developing the AIT International Arena.

She added that Professor Ó Catháin had fulfilled each role he held with a "level of professionalism that benefitted all."



Student Successes

AIT Confers 'Resilient' and 'Courageous' Class of 2020 Virtually

2,200+ students conferred virtually against backdrop of ongoing global pandemic

AIT President Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin urged the hundreds of students who graduated late last year to use their knowledge and skills to make "a positive impact" on their communities, the region and the world.

Over the course of four graduation ceremonies, more than 2,200 students were conferred virtually against the backdrop of the ongoing global pandemic.

In his speech, Professor Ó Catháin commended the class of 2020 on their "great strength of character and resilience" and said that it would stand them in good stead as they go out into the world forging lives and careers.

"I am always proud of our graduates, but today even more so as you have overcome such adversity to be here in this moment," he said, acknowledging the difficulties faced by many students this past year.

"The commitment you have shown in the successful completion of your academic studies demonstrates that you are ready for the opportunities and challenges of the world of work and life ahead of you, wherever that may be."

Professor Ó Catháin reminded graduates to be confident in their abilities and to know that the transferable skills and attributes developed throughout their studies will give them an edge in the world of employment.

Vice President of Academic Affairs and Registry and Master of Ceremonies Frances O'Connell echoed this sentiment and said that the last year had brought many changes to the world of education.

Congratulating the class of 2020, she said that they had shown tremendous courage "in the face of considerable adversity" and that "shoulder to the wheel" they had "readily adapted to changes in course delivery."

She also thanked Allied Irish Bank, Bank of Ireland, and Athlone Chamber of Commerce for their

generous sponsorship of this year's special awards "in recognition of our students' achievements." Of the more than 2,200 students conferred across AIT's four faculties, 1889 were undergraduate, 307 were postgraduate, four master's by research and eight PhD.

Over the course of four graduation ceremonies, more than 2,200 students were conferred virtually against the backdrop of the ongoing global pandemic.

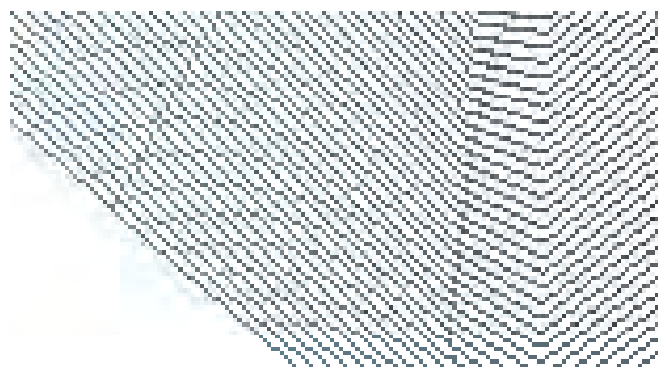
Liam Rattigan, AIT's Governing Body Chairperson,, said that the graduates had been "equipped with the necessary skills and attributes to succeed" in their chosen careers and to become significant contributors to society.

He added that they had demonstrated a "strength of character and determination" far beyond their years and were now ready for the next phase of their journey.

"Despite the challenges brought about by the pandemic, you adapted quickly, showing courage in the process. This adaptability, flexibility and tenacity of spirit are key strengths that will benefit you in your future career," he said.

As the last of the class of 2020 turned their tassels today, a rite of passage that marks the transition from student to graduate, AIT celebrated its final conferring ceremony as an institute of technology.

A link was shared with the public to watch the conferring ceremonies online and share in the joyous, momentous occasion using #AITGrad2020 on social media.



AIT Awards Highest Number of Scholarships of Excellence Since Inauguration

Thirty students received awards at this year's Scholarship of Excellence ceremony, which was the highest number of recipients since the awards' inauguration four years ago.

Scholarships of Excellence are conferred upon first-year students who have distinguished themselves academically at second level, achieving more than 500 points in their Leaving Certificate exams.

Achieving such high results puts such students into the top 20% of CAO applicants and demonstrates a high level of commitment and dedication to their studies.

Congratulating the students on their achievement, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Registry Frances O'Connell said:

"We are delighted to honour the highest number of students receiving a scholarship of excellence award this year. These 30 students have entered a range of degree programmes across all our faculties, a place on which is highly demanded by our CAO applicants annually.

Scholarship of Excellence recipients were awarded a €500 bursary and a yearly gym membership while their associated secondary school was given a commemorative plaque with the recipient's name.

"Thereafter, these awardees will be highly sought as graduates by a wide range of employers and enterprises in the region and beyond or will have the opportunity to continue critical, cutting-edge research in our technological university.

"We look forward to maintaining our recognition of scholarly excellence into the future as a technological university by continuing to formally recognise the high achievement of second-level students from our second level schools right across the Midlands and Mid-West regions and their performance on their Leaving Certificate examination."

AIT President Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin added that their accomplishment demonstrated not only academic achievement but also "adaptability and resilience as you navigated many challenges this past year".

He explained that this fortitude would prove useful as students went further "down the path of life" and said that he hoped that receiving a Scholarship of Excellence would encourage them to continue excelling in their chosen disciplines.

Scholarship of Excellence recipients were awarded a €500 bursary and a yearly gym membership while their associated secondary school was given a commemorative plaque with the recipient's name.

This year marks AIT's 50th anniversary as an institute, and it currently stands as Ireland's top-ranked institute of technology, sitting seventh nationally on the higher education leader board of all universities and institutes of technology.





"College wouldn't have suited me full time to be honest. I enjoyed the way, as part of the apprenticeship, we always had a lot of labs, a lot of hands-on learning."

AIT Degree-by-Apprenticeship Spotlight: Joseph Diffley

Joseph Diffley is among the first cohort of graduates from AIT's Bachelor of Science in Polymer Processing Technology (apprenticeship), developed in conjunction with Ibec.

When he finished his Leaving Certificate in 2012, he had never heard of someone doing an apprenticeship in polymer, not to mind the possibility of doing an apprenticeship by degree.

Though he didn't know what he wanted to do after school, he knew he had no interest in following in the footsteps of friends who had enrolled in business or ICT courses.

"At the time there wasn't much encouragement to do an apprenticeship. It was all CAO, and I had no interest in any of that side of things; my best subjects in school were tech graph and woodwork," he explained.

Joseph started working part-time with his brother, a heavy plant fitter, before a job came up with Aptar, a US manufacturing company based in Ballinasloe, Co Galway.

A year went by and Joseph had worked his way up to moulding operator trainer and later, quality.

He was soon put forward for the polymer apprenticeship by his company's HR manager, who saw value in investing in Joseph's professional development.

"The big appeal was that it was a degree and would be recognised as a degree at the end of the day," Joseph said.

Over the course of three years, Joseph spent 45 weeks in college, and the rest of the time getting on-the-job training with his host company.

The practical and applied nature of the learning is what Joseph felt suited him best: "College wouldn't have suited me full time to be honest. I enjoyed the way, as part of the apprenticeship, we always had a lot of labs, a lot of hands-on learning."

In his final year, Joseph received an award for "The Best Project" for showing how his host company could save money by streamlining the process of drying a material called PBT and cutting down on mould changes.

Joseph graduated at the end of last year and in the same week lost his job due to his host company shutting down; however, he was immediately snapped up by Longford Tool and Plastics as a shift manager, overseeing the entire injection moulding shift.

Six months later, he landed a job with a large medical device company, which makes syringes and the tips of diabetic needles. He is now four months into his new role as an injection moulding technician.

"I spoke to lots of recruiters on places like LinkedIn, and people are very keen to learn more about the course and what we're studying. There's huge demand in plastics for people who have a real understanding of injection moulding," he explained.

According to the Roscommon man, the apprenticeship has opened a "whole new career path and profession" that he had not known existed and suited his interests well.

AIT Pharmaceutical Sciences Student Awarded Prestigious Royal Society of Chemistry Bursary

An AIT pharmaceutical science student was awarded the prestigious Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) Undergraduate Research Bursary for 2021.

Ciara Fitzpatrick, a third-year BSc (Hons) in Pharmaceutical Sciences student from Athlone, Co Westmeath, used the bursary to conduct a research project in inorganic chemistry over the summer months.

The purpose of the RSC Research Bursary is to foster the potential of promising undergraduate students by giving them research experience and, ultimately, encouraging them to consider a career in scientific research.

The RSC Research Bursary scheme is highly competitive and open to students studying chemistry across all the universities and HEIs in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

A student member of the Royal Society of Chemistry, Ciara became interested in the society after undertaking a module in Professional and Transferable Skills for Pharmaceutical Scientists earlier this year.

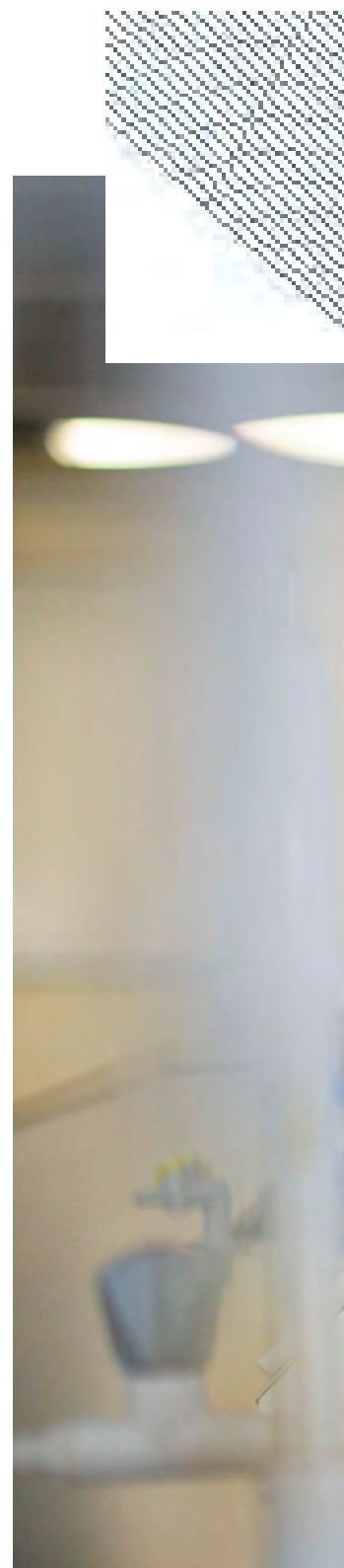
Ciara's outstanding academic grades were cited as among the reasons for her award. She is also an AIT Scholarship of Excellence recipient, having achieved in excess of 500 points in her Leaving Certificate examinations.

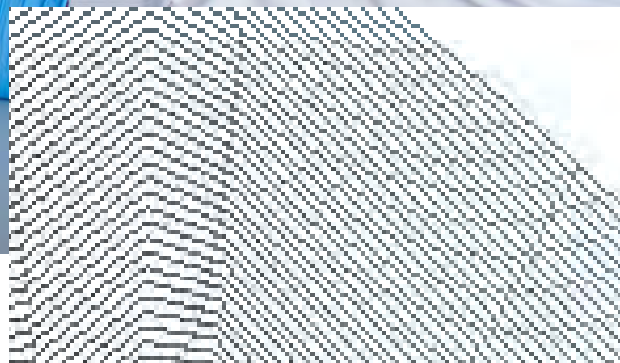
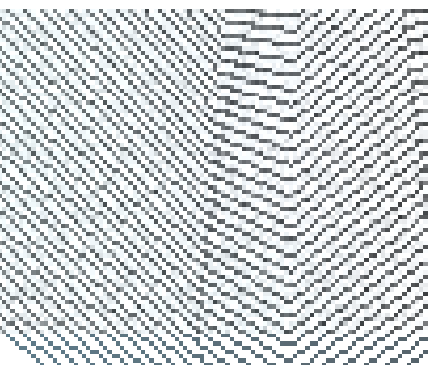
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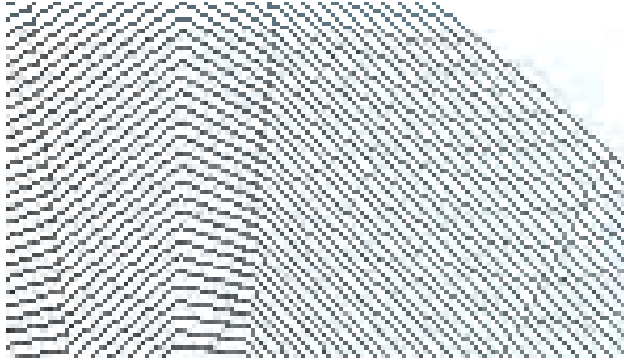
Speaking about the award, Ciara said she was "delighted" and "grateful" to receive the RSC Undergraduate Research Bursary for 2021. "I worked very hard these past three years and getting this award has made it all worthwhile. I would like to thank all the lecturers and staff at AIT and everyone who has helped me along the way."

Congratulating Ciara on her award, Dr Don Faller, Dean of Faculty, Science and Health at AIT, called it a "tremendous achievement" and said it was a testimony to the high standard of students pursuing AIT's BSc (Hons) in Pharmaceutical Sciences programme, which is accredited by Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences (APS) in the UK.

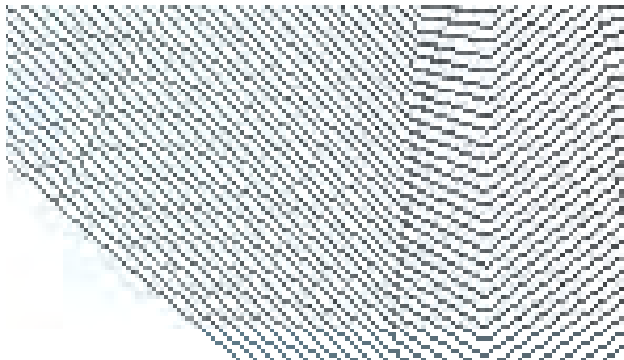
Dr Brian Murphy, a specialist in coordination chemistry and a senior lecturer in the Department of Life and Physical Sciences at AIT, supervised Ciara's research.







Supporting **Students**





AIT Counselling Service Partners with 24/7 Crisis Text Helpline

The new text-based mental health support is available to all third-level students. Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) has partnered with Text 50808, a free, anonymous 24/7 text service, to provide a new mental health support for third-level students.

The crisis textline, which has been in development since March 2020, provides everything from a calming chat to immediate support for people going through a mental health or emotional crisis – big or small.

Counsellors are hopeful that 50808 will attract these students, who can text anonymously in a way that feels safe for them as a first step to further support.

A recent USI report National Report on Students and COVID-19, showed that almost 27% of students would use a text support service provided by the college, while 26% indicated that they would use a text support service facilitated externally.

Counsellors are hopeful that 50808 will attract these students, who can text anonymously in a way that feels safe for them as a first step to further support.

"Students who don't feel comfortable talking about their problems can text "AIT" to 50808," explained Treasa Fox, Head of Student Counselling at AIT. "We are extremely pleased to be able to further support our student body through this partnership with 50808 and engage with them in a mode that feels familiar and comfortable to them."

Text 50808 will return high level, anonymised data at the end of the year on the kinds of concerns facing students across the institute. This information will help AIT's student counselling service plan for future services and better support its student body.

The partnership will also enable volunteers to signpost students to AIT's student counselling service, where trained psychologists and counsellors provide emergency appointments daily, and during COVID-19 restrictions, provide daily phone in brief consultations with a counsellor. "Text 50808 is available to everyone. While we are encouraging our students to use the AIT keyword, anyone can avail of the text support service by simply texting "Hello" to 50808. You may want to promote this service to family members and friends, it's a really valuable resource for all," Treasa Fox added.

Volunteers are supervised and supported by qualified mental health professionals.

3Set Delivers Ireland's First Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework

The framework was developed by the SynthSCS project team from AIT - a 3Set work package. Ireland's first student mental health and suicide prevention framework aimed at improving the provision of student mental health services was launched today by Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris.

The new national framework will help higher education institutes identify where further improvements for student mental health are needed, provide good practice guidance and resources, and help standardise approaches across the country.

The project, supported by the HEA Transformation and Innovation Fund, was developed in collaboration with students, mental health specialists and academics under the aegis of the SynthSCS project team from AIT - a 3Set work package.

3Set is a collaborative higher education project led by Trinity College Dublin and supported by University College Dublin and Athlone Institute of Technology, aimed at addressing increasing demand for student mental health services in higher education.

"The number one health issue for young people in Ireland today remains concerns or worries around their mental health. These concerns have been compounded by the isolation and uncertainty brought forward by the COVID-19 pandemic"

Minister Simon Harris

According to Treasa Fox, Head of Counselling Service at Athlone Institute of Technology and SynthSCS project lead, the framework is key to identifying gaps in the suicide prevention in higher education, thereby improving student mental health services nationally.

"This framework emphasises that to effectively address higher education student mental health needs and prevent suicides we must adopt a whole system approach," she explained. "Mental health and suicide prevention among students is not the responsibility of any one unit or department; it is a whole-of-campus responsibility."

For the past 18 months, the SynthSCS project team has been investigating student mental health interventions and suicide prevention on campuses, innovative inter-agency collaborations, and international best practice guidance with the view to collating and categorising information and resources for use across Ireland's higher education institutions.



Dr Deirdre Flynn, 3Set project lead and the director of counselling at Trinity College Dublin, says that the new national framework will provide a valuable resource for all HEIs to review and develop their mental health services for students.

"We know students are a high risk group for mental health difficulties because of their age. Research tells us that almost 75% of serious mental health conditions emerge between the ages of 15 and 25," she explained. "This is an especially timely document given the enormous pressure students are facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic."

At the launch, Minister Harris expressed concern at the impact of COVID-19 on young people's mental health and stressed the importance of the framework in helping colleges to identify and respond to gaps in student mental health services.

"The number one health issue for young people in Ireland today remains concerns or worries around their mental health. These concerns have been compounded by the isolation and uncertainty brought forward by the COVID-19 pandemic," he said.

"Mental health has been defined by the World Health Organisation as 'a state of wellbeing in which the individual recognises their own abilities and is able to cope with normal daily stresses in life. This framework builds on this premise and encourages our HEIs to act in nine specific areas – to lead, collaborate, educate, engage, identify, support, respond, transition and improve'".

The launch of the national framework coincides with World Mental Health Day - the theme of which is Mental Health for All – Greater Investment – Greater Access.



AIT Access Graduate Awarded Uversity Scholarship to Pursue Higher Education

Scholarship recipients must demonstrate academic potential and a clear motivation and ambition for returning to education

A graduate of AIT's Access programme has been awarded a Uversity scholarship to pursue a bachelor's degree in engineering at Athlone Institute of Technology.

Mature student Darren Muldoon is one of 41 recipients of the higher education scholarship, awarded to adult learners by registered charity Uversity.

Darren, who returned to education in 2015 to complete the AIT Access programme, will commence his programme of study in September 2021.

The AIT Access pathway is specifically designed to equip early learners with the necessary skills, knowledge, and confidence to return to education and obtain employment.

Now, with the support of a Uversity scholarship, Darren will continue his study, after which he intends to complete a master's degree and then secure his dream job as an engineering manager.

"Uversity's scholarship programme is continuously evolving and adapting. This year, we received close to 650 applications and are astounded by the ambition and determination of the candidates to pursue their degrees despite the challenges posed by COVID"

Colleen Dube, Uversity's scholarship programme CEO

Uversity scholarships are intended to remove financial barriers so that adult learners can unlock their potential and realise their ambitions.

Scholarships can be in any subject area and are tailored to recipients' financial circumstances to cover the costs associated with higher education.

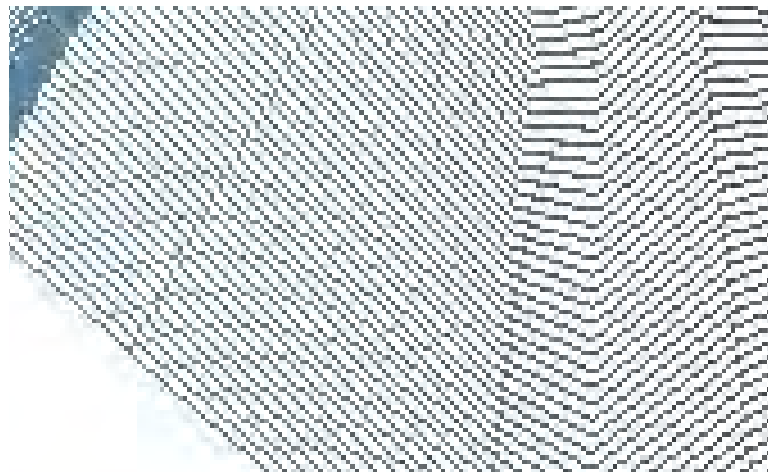
Successful candidates must be able to demonstrate academic potential, a clear motivation and ambition for returning to education, a drive to succeed, strong work ethic and financial need.

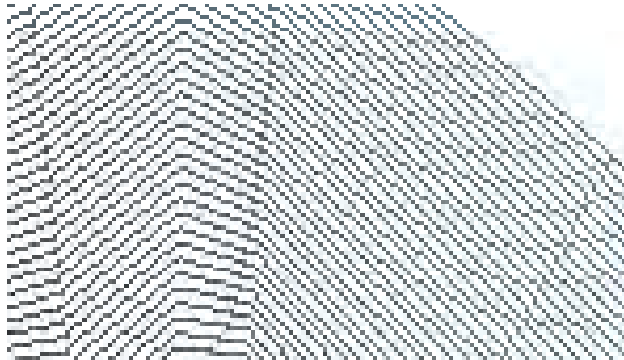
Congratulating this year's scholarship recipients, Brian O'Sullivan, Uversity's interim chair, said, "We're really delighted in this difficult year to have found 41 individuals with the drive and the ambition to take the courageous step to change course and attend university having not had that opportunity at an earlier stage."

"Uversity's scholarship programme is continuously evolving and adapting. This year, we received close to 650 applications and are astounded by the ambition and determination of the candidates to pursue their degrees despite the challenges posed by COVID," the charity's CEO, Colleen Dube, explained.

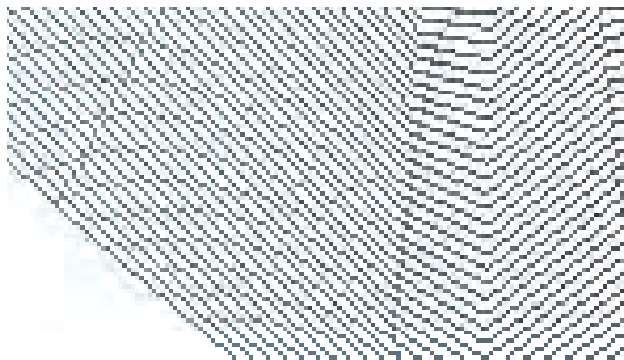
Since its inception, more than 700 students have benefited from AIT's Access programme, with many going on to complete master's degrees and even PhDs

For more information on AIT Access and student supports, visit the AIT Access Office webpage.





Research and Innovation **Impact**





Cluster Aimed at Increasing Competitiveness of SMEs Launches at AIT



Creating clusters of strength is a key part of industrial strategy

A new cluster aimed at accelerating the digital transformation and growth of Irish manufacturing SMEs, software companies, and digital enterprises has launched at Athlone Institute of Technology.

The Advanced Technologies in Manufacturing Cluster (ATIM) will help companies increase their productivity and efficiency by taking advantage of advanced technologies, such as automation and machine learning, along their value chain.

The adoption of these advanced technologies will be critical to maintaining a competitive manufacturing sector and supply chain in the future, Caitríona Mordan, the cluster's education and outreach manager, explains.

"In the Western world, where the cost of labour is high, the only way for companies to compete with countries with low-cost labour is through highly sophisticated, automated processes, namely smart manufacturing."

"The newly formed cluster will be key to unlocking the region's latent manufacturing potential by accelerating the adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies and increasing growth potential through its services."

ATIM will build on the Midlands' strong manufacturing and ICT base, helping companies improve their products and services, which will, in turn, ensure their competitiveness, provide high-value employment and grow exports.

"Dynamic industry-led clusters have proven, in many parts of the world, to benefit their members in terms of lower transaction costs, quicker negotiations, fewer delays, improved tacit information flows and the ability to influence their supporting infrastructure," Caitríona says.

"This cluster is a great opportunity for the SMEs and the region, but it must work collectively, engage meaningfully to deliver a strategic work plan that member companies drive."

ATIM, which has received €377,520 from Enterprise Ireland's Regional Technology Clustering Fund, will first connect and engage companies to identify their commonalities and pain points before assisting them in figuring out how they might best work together to win business in global markets.

ATIM will build on the Midlands' strong manufacturing and ICT base, helping companies improve their products and services, which will, in turn, ensure their competitiveness, provide high-value employment and grow exports.

Through the cluster, AIT will also be better equipped to respond to the talent and skills needs faced by SMEs in embedding advanced technologies into operations in all aspects of digital transformation, Dr Seán Lyons, Dean of Faculty of Engineering and Informatics at AIT and a member of ATIM's ignition team, explains:

"AIT is home to two Enterprise Ireland-funded gateways, COMAND and APT, which represent the convergence of the technologies underpinning industry 4.0."

"With a wealth of experience to draw from, we are uniquely situated to host the ATIM Cluster and assist Irish manufacturing SMEs in their digital transformation. This capacity will further increase as we look ahead to opening our doors as Ireland's newest technological university this autumn."

Andrew Lynch of Irish Manufacturing Research (IMR) added: "The advent of industry 4.0 means that skills needs are rapidly changing. We will work closely with service providers to identify pain points and put services in place to enable companies to proactively respond to the skills faced by embedding digital technologies into business."

The kick-off session, held on Tuesday, 6 July, introduced industry in the Midlands to the cluster and its plans to support the digital transformation and growth of manufacturing SMEs, software companies, and digital enterprises.



From Ocean to Plate: AIT Scientists Working to Boost Sustainability of Irish Seafood Sector

When it comes to the collection of data about Ireland's €1.25 billion seafood sector, we are lagging behind many of our European counterparts, that's according to Irish researchers heading up a new seafood sustainability initiative.

Dr Sinead Mellett and Prof. Neil J. Rowan at the AIT Bioscience Research Institute are working with Neptunus, a €2.3 million Interreg Atlantic Area project, to improve sustainability and resource efficiency in the seafood sector.

The seafood sector is of vital importance to the Irish economy, particularly in rural, coastal communities, and accounts for 16,000 jobs, either directly or indirectly. Despite this, it faces serious challenges and threats, including climate change and rising fears of marine debris.

Previous research has shown that two of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions from wild fish is fuel consumption, while feed is the biggest culprit for farmed fish due a significant quantity of it being imported.

Working with NUIG Morefish researchers and Neptunus project leads, Dr Eoghan Clifford, Dr Ronan Cooney and Alan Kennedy, are making these processes more sustainable – from ocean to plate. "We are looking at the different inputs, outputs and impacts associated with seafood production all along the value chain, and this helps with process efficiency, energy efficiency and decision support systems," Dr Mellett explains.

Smoked salmon is one of Ireland's largest seafood exports. Dr Mellett and her colleagues are carrying out a lifecycle assessment of smoked salmon production to see how it can be improved. "We're undertaking scenarios to show whether it is more sustainable to smoke the salmon in Ireland or whether it would be more economical or sustainable to do so in the country where it's actually going to be consumed."

With the global population growing by about 80 million every year, it is estimated that by 2030, we will need 30% more water, 40% more energy and 50% more food.

Neptunus draws on the expertise, knowledge and experience of eleven academic partners across five countries, all based along the Atlantic coast. Several Irish companies are also involved with the project, including Wild Atlantic Oysters, Irish Seaspray, Hexafly, and Sure Engineering. Bord Iascaigh Mhara, Ireland's seafood development agency, is also a partner in the project, providing expert opinion and links to public bodies.

"With all of the skills of all the partners, we're able to develop strategies and recommend policies to help companies transition from a linear economy – which is where you harvest, produce, consume and dispose – to a circular economy, where you recycle instead of disposing of the waste," Dr Mellett says.

The researchers hope that by modelling the environmental impact of recycling versus putting product into landfill, they can demonstrate to companies what their resource usage is from a water and energy perspective.

With the global population growing by about 80 million every year, it is estimated that by 2030, we will need 30% more water, 40% more energy and 50% more food.

"Food, water and energy are some of the most important resources we have and need to be managed more efficiently," Dr Mellett stresses, adding that transitioning to a circular economy will benefit companies economically.

The team are also looking for ways to help consumers make better choices when buying seafood, including the development of eco labels. "This is great for the consumer because they'll be able to make more informed, sustainable and environmentally conscious decisions based on what's on the label," she explains.

Funded by the European Regional Development Fund, the project will run for three years and result in increased sustainability and economic benefit in seafood production in the Atlantic region.



Irish and French-led Researchers Kickstart a Global Plastics Revolution

An international academic and industry research consortium securing €12 million across two EU and China-funded projects targeting problematic multi-layered plastics. Researchers at Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) and Sigma Clermont began joint work on two projects to develop novel technologies which will separate, treat and repurpose multi-layered plastics.

The two projects, entitled BioICEP and TERMINUS, have been awarded a total budget of €11.6 million under Horizon 2020, EU's Framework Programme for Research and Innovation and the National Science Foundation of China.

The scale of the problem is immense but often goes unseen. Multi-layered packaging, for example, crisp bags and other ready-to-eat snacks within shiny packets, account for up to 56% of plastic packaging in developed countries.

It is estimated that every residence in the U.S.A uses 27kg of multilayered plastic films each year. While they cover many supermarket foods and other perishable products, multilayer plastics are notoriously difficult to separate into discrete layers that can be effectively recycled.

By the end of the projects, in four years, researchers hope that the combined outputs from both projects will herald in a new generation of green technologies transforming how we live with plastics. The projects each focus on a specific aspect of the plastics life cycle that when combined

will close the loop from our linear processes into one of circularity. The TERMINUS project is the starting point.

It aims to develop a new biotechnology specifically designed to separate out the layers of plastic from multi-layered plastics and packaging using enzymes to degrade the layers of adhesive holding the plastics together.

The technology developed through BioICEP will take the individual layers of plastic generated through TERMINUS and break these down further into their chemical constituents (a process known as depolymerisation) using combined green mechano-chemical and enzymatic technology.

In essence, the two projects will turn petroleum derived plastic waste into individual building blocks for new replacement eco-plastics that are not harmful to the environment. Combining the BioICEP and TERMINUS technologies provides a route to upcycling multi-layered plastics and using their constituent molecules to create products that are perpetually regeneratable delivering full plastics circularity.

The BioICEP-TERMINUS collaboration is a compelling ecological-based proposition to address the global environmental plastics challenge, simultaneously creating new opportunities for industry to transition from a linear model of petroleum-based plastics production to a production model based on circularity.

AIT researchers believe that the outputs from these projects could open up potential new markets for eco-based technologies and product development: the cornerstone of a circular economy that works for business, society and the environment.

Dr Margaret Brennan Fournet, who coordinates BioICEP and leads the AIT plastics circularity team, said: “We are absolutely delighted to have joined forces with the TERMINUS consortium and begun work on these exciting projects which will create an end-to-end waste management solution deal with multilayered plastics. The combined BioICEP and TERMINUS technologies provide a seamless route to resolving pervasive plastic pollution, particularly multi-layered plastics, converting it to Eco-plastic products.

“In essence, we’ll be taking in multi-layered plastic waste at one end, separating it using TERMINUS triggerable enzymatic technology then sending it on to the BioICEP technologies which will treat it, mechanically, green chemically and enzymatically to recover the molecules and building blocks, and use this as the starting point for new fully sustainable bioplastics and bioproducts.”

“By the end of the projects, in four years, researchers hope that the combined outputs from both projects will herald in a new generation of green technologies transforming how we live with plastics.”

Dr Declan Devine, Director of AIT’s Materials Research Institute, which is focused on next generation polymeric innovation said: “Plastics packaging is the largest polluting plastic sector with multilayer packaging posing particularly intractable challenges. The disruptive green eco-technologies we are developing at AIT with our international colleagues will address this challenge and will enable us, as a society, to resolve the multifaceted problems posed by post-consumer plastics.”

Dean of Graduate Studies and Research at AIT Dr Maire Brophy said, “This is an outstanding example of how research collaboration can bring significant impact. This project will transform our relationship with plastics and plastic waste pollution, while opening up new technology markets.”

Prof. Vincent Verney, who coordinates TERMINUS, said, “This is an excellent opportunity to work together and fuse our considerable research efforts, and ultimately provide new disruptive green technologies to deliver plastic circularity for the future prosperity of our people and the planet.”

Pr. Sophie Commereuc, director of SIGMA Clermont, French Engineering Graduate School, which manages TERMINUS on behalf of the 12 partners involved in the project, said: “SIGMA Clermont combines advanced mechanics and chemistry to serve its commitment to sustainable development. TERMINUS bases its innovative and challenging objectives on a cross disciplinary team, what is the DNA of SIGMA Clermont. The association with BioICEP is a real opportunity to multiply our scientific and technological advances.”

The BioICEP and TERMINUS projects involve 28 research institutes and companies in 15 countries funded through the EU H2020 programme and the National Science Foundation of China, supported by Enterprise Ireland.

Researchers Seek Participants for Seafood Packaging Survey



Researchers at Athlone Institute of Technology and NUI Galway have launched a national survey to better understand Irish consumers’ knowledge of seafood packaging and its waste management.

The survey, led by the Portuguese Institute of the Sea and the Atmosphere, is being carried out concurrently in Spain and Portugal.

Ireland has one of the lowest levels of consumption of seafood in Western Europe, with very different consumption patterns than other countries.

For example, Ireland tends to consume, on average, higher portions of packaged or frozen seafood, whereas in other European countries, fresh seafood is consumed.

In 2017, it was estimated that seafood consumption in Ireland was 23 kg/capita; Portugal has the highest consumption rate for seafood in Europe at 57 kg/capita.

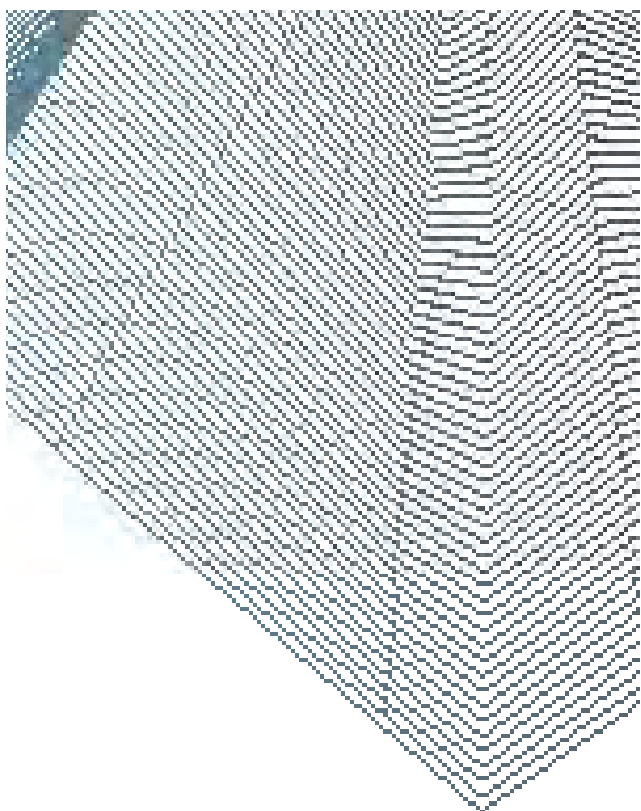
The survey forms part of NEPTUNUS, an Interreg Atlantic Area funded project which aims to support the sustainable development of the seafood sector in the Atlantic area by developing tools for eco-labelling and low impact strategies for production and consumption.

According to Dr Sinead Mellett, a scientific researcher in the Bioscience Research Institute at AIT and NEPTUNUS, the results of the survey will be used to aid in a better understanding of the differences in seafood consumption and waste management in Ireland, Spain and Portugal.

“Given these large differences in consumption and the type of seafood products purchased the results of this survey can help to close a knowledge gap in Irish seafood consumption trends, behaviours, and knowledge of seafood packaging,” she explained.

“These results will be useful for policy makers and for future research into how Irish consumers can increase their intake of this nutritious food and add to their understanding of seafood packaging. Ultimately, the results will support the development of public policies that will promote efficient use of seafood packaging.”

The results are expected later this year.



SHE Research Group to Bridge Gender Data Gap in Sport, Health and Exercise Science

The SHE Research Group furthers commitment to ensuring gender equality in teaching and research activities. An exciting new research group aimed at bridging the gender data gap in sport, health, and exercise science has launched at Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT).

The SHE Research Group, based in the Department of Sport and Health Sciences, will focus on outcomes for women and girls in sport and health – a vastly underrepresented demographic in research.

The group, which encompasses three core units: sports performance, exercise and health, and nutrition and health - aims to disseminate evidence-based research capable of informing policy and practice on a national level.

According to Dr Aoife Lane, the Head of the Department of Sport and Health Sciences at AIT, the group will make a vital contribution to research on women and girls in the area of sport and health.

"Currently, in these disciplines we do not understand men and women equally. To achieve gender equity, at SHE, we will prioritise female-based research studies and we will ensure equal male and female representation in mixed gender studies," Dr Lane explained.

"Our goal is to embed gender equality in how we do things in research, learning, leadership, partnership and our daily interactions."

The disparity in the number of female versus male participants in sports performance research, though traditionally accepted, has led to a lack of available data and understanding of female athletes' sports performance.

Consisting of researchers across the discipline of sports science (physiology, biomechanics, rehabilitation, psychology, nutrition), the SHE Research Group aims to address this imbalance by increasing knowledge of female athletes and their performance to better support them in achieving their athletic goals.

According to Dr Niamh Ní Chéilleachair, project lead for SHE's Sports Performance unit and a lecturer at AIT, the idea for the flagship project resulted from "the impact of the menstrual cycle on training and performance not being well understood.

"We need to gain a deeper understanding of female physiology and reduce the ambiguity surrounding the menstrual cycle and how hormonal fluctuations during the menstrual cycle may, or may not, impact on training and performance. This will allow us as sports scientists to better support female athletes," she said.

A significant imbalance also exists in the understanding of gender differences, specifically in relation to physical activity behaviours.

While there is a wealth of evidence detailing how physical activity levels differ between males and females, why these differences exist, their impact on health, and how they can be reduced remains unclear.

SHE's Exercise and Health unit, which includes researchers in chronic disease prevention, exercise in chronic disease rehabilitation, physical activity epidemiology, youth sport and physical activity and sport as a health-promoting environment, will tackle this by targeting specific gender data gaps.

One such project, highlighting the visibility of female sporting role models and promoting participation in sport and physical activity in young Irish females, is already underway. "International studies on role models offer mixed evidence on the prevalence of sporting role models among girls," said Dr Kieran Dowd, project lead for the Exercise and Health unit and a lecturer at AIT.

"The visibility of high-performance athletes in female Gaelic games is increasing and with it, potential for a greater 'trickle down' effect to participation, especially given the community-based context of role models in Gaelic sports."

"By understanding the challenges women face throughout their lives we can also understand how chronic disease affects women. This will allow us to innovate and design bespoke interventions and strategies for optimal female health."

Dr Patricia Heavey, Nutrition and Health unit, AIT

He continued, "This project aims to develop and evaluate an evidence-based, context appropriate role model programme in a Gaelic games setting to positively influence the contribution of organised sport to physical activity levels in female adolescents."

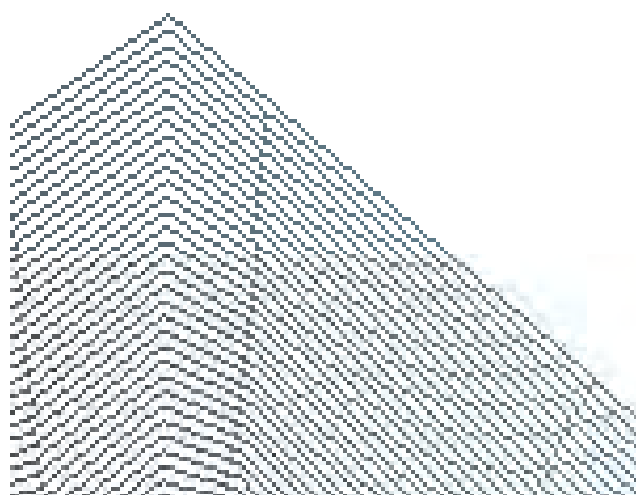
The SHE Research Group will also explore the role of nutrition on health, wellbeing, and disease through collaborative interdisciplinary research with other leading research institutes. Throughout their lives, women have unique nutritional requirements and a flagship project for SHE is to look at how women experience menopause.

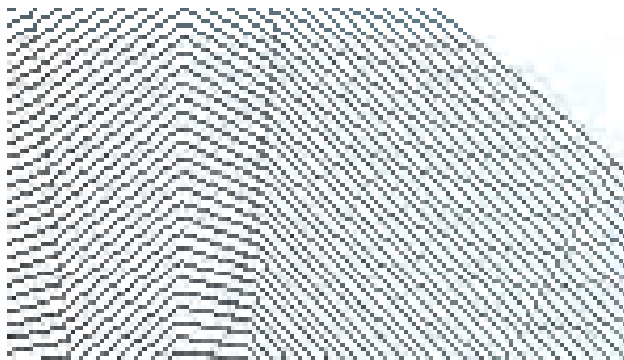
Dr Patricia Heavey, who guides the Nutrition and Health unit, explained: "We want to explore the nutritional needs and challenges of women throughout the lifecycle with a particular emphasis on the menopausal transition period.

"By understanding the challenges women face throughout their lives we can also understand how chronic disease affects women. This will allow us to innovate and design bespoke interventions and strategies for optimal female health."

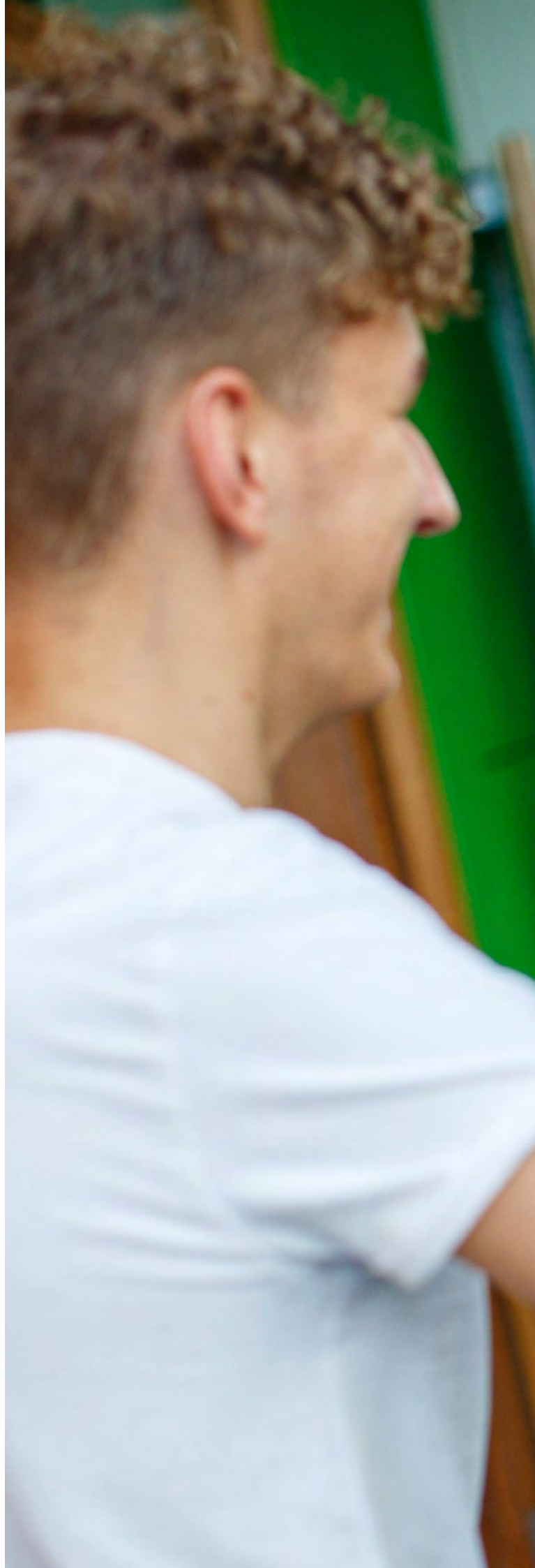
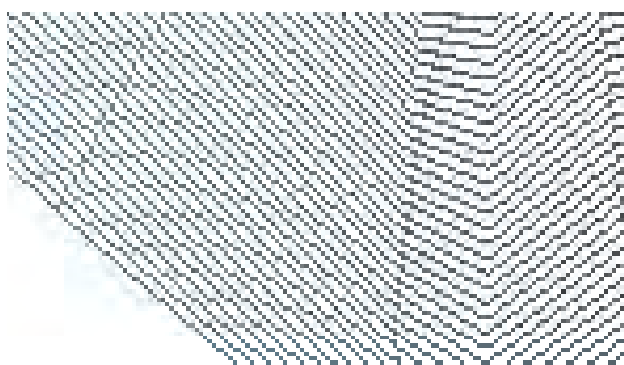
The team brings together a diverse research portfolio and will conduct fundamental innovative research that contributes to the scientific evidence, ultimately supporting practice and policy.

The Department of Sport and Health Sciences at AIT consists of five undergraduate programmes, a research-active and community-engaged faculty, world-class facilities for sports science and a vibrant community of 15 doctoral students. Follow the SHE Research Group on Twitter @SHE_AthloneIT.





Snapshot from **Faculties**





AIT and DCU to Develop New Teacher Education Degree

AIT President Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin and DCU President Prof. Daire Keogh signed a memorandum of understanding today confirming plans for a new teacher education programme that would draw on AIT's expertise in engineering and design in the Faculty of Engineering and Informatics and the DCU Faculty of Engineering and Computing and the DCU Institute of Education.

This new programme, which will be a four-year undergraduate degree, will prepare students to take up teaching roles in second level schools as teachers of technology, engineering and design and communication graphics. Currently, there is no programme available in the northern half of the country for school leavers interested in a career in teaching these subjects, or those working in industry who want to move into teaching. This new collaboration is designed to fill that gap and support schools in that region looking to recruit teachers and offer these STEM subjects.

We are delighted to collaborate with DCU on the development of this new teacher education programme which will draw on our core expertise in technology, engineering and design.

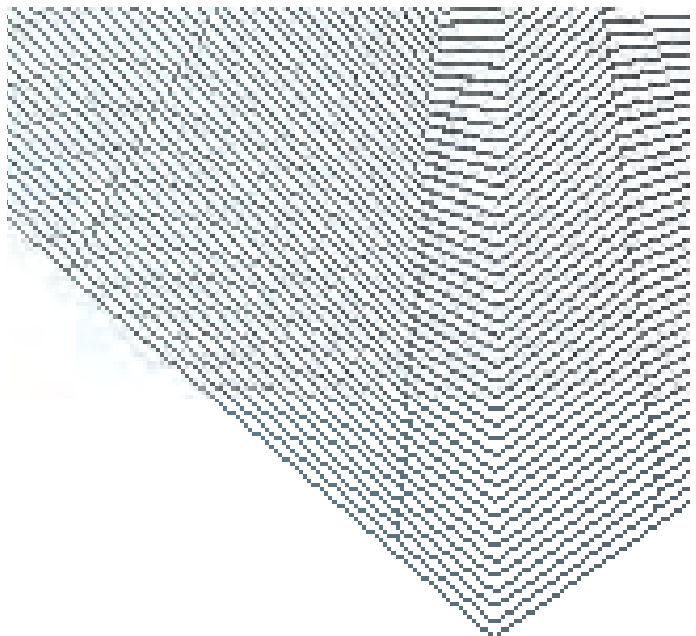
AIT President Professor Ó Catháin

The Institute of Education at DCU is one of Ireland's Centres of Excellence for teacher education and already offers teacher education across a range of subjects. The programme will draw on the latest research and practice in engineering and design education and be informed by industry standards and developments. Students who will spend time in both AIT and DCU will also have opportunities to participate in the DCU STEM Intern Programme (StlNT) that places student teachers in industry settings as part of their teacher education programme.

Speaking about the collaboration, AIT President Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin said: "We are delighted to collaborate with DCU on the development of this new teacher education programme which will draw on our core expertise in technology, engineering and design. Practical and applied in nature, the new four-year programme will pipeline students into teaching roles that themselves have a practical orientation. Applied education, specifically the "T" and "E" in "STEM", supports both the educational and industry enhancement agenda and is vital in helping prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of the future world of work."



Prof Daire Keogh welcomed the development and said that this new programme was a welcome addition to STEM education at DCU. He noted that the partnership with the team at Athlone Institute of Technology who had an established reputation in engineering and design education would mean that graduates of this new programme would be ready to introduce their students to the latest workplace processes and technologies. He added, "Good teachers can really inspire enthusiasm and excitement in their students. We hope that the graduates from this programme will play a key role in forming Ireland's next generation of designers, engineers and innovators."





Cambridge Fellow Delivers Guest Lecture to Pharmaceutical Science Students

Dr Anthony Coyne is world renowned for his use of fragment-based drug discovery for the treatment of infectious disease.

A Cambridge fellow and alumnus of Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT), Dr Coyne returned to his alma mater to deliver the first in a series of exciting guest lectures to final-year pharmaceutical science students.

Dr Coyne, who graduated from AIT in 1996 with a degree in analytical chemistry, covered the intricacies of green, sustainable chemistry and the use of water in organic chemical reaction.

The guest lecture, delivered via Zoom Education, detailed the pros and cons of using water as a solvent and the benefit to industry in terms of cost, environmental issues, safety issues, and scale up.

Dr Coyne is a Fellow of Christ's College at the University of Cambridge and a senior research associate focussed on drug discovery.

Upon graduating from AIT, Dr Coyne went on to complete a PhD in synthetic organic chemistry at NUI Galway before working in industry and then embarking on an exciting career in academia.

"Anthony is world renowned for his work on the use of fragment-based drug discovery seeking treatment for infectious diseases," explained Jim Roche, lecturer in pharmaceutical sciences at AIT.

Every year, AIT invites speakers who have gone on to achieve a positive impact within the pharmaceutical industry to participate in an annual seminar series for the module Contemporary Issues in Pharmaceutical Sciences.

"These seminars represent the ultimate inspiration for current students," Mr Roche said. "They get to witness first-hand (and get to question) graduates who themselves are always appreciative of the framework of cross-sectional theoretical and practical knowledge they were grounded within while studying at AIT."

"It is absolutely superb to see a former student reach such lofty heights in his career. Both lecturers and students benefited hugely from Dr Coyne's lecture on synthetic organic chemistry," remarked Dr Noreen Morris, an organic chemistry lecturer in AIT. "It was really interesting to be the student and not the lecturer for a change!" she added.

"Anthony is world renowned for his work on the use of fragment-based drug discovery seeking treatment for infectious diseases."



Third National SURE Conference Celebrating Undergraduate Research Takes Place Virtually

AIT, as part of the Science Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE) Network, participated in the third annual SURE Conference in October 2020.

The annual conference, which attracts over 500 STEM students and academic research supervisors each year, reflects the work of the SURE Network - a collaborative partnership consisting of members from nine Irish higher education institutions.

Some 13 recent AIT graduates were selected from the Faculty of Science and Health to present their final year research at the conference through either oral or poster communications and will compete with over 70 science graduates throughout Ireland on the day to present their work, under three themes: Analytical, Environmental and Pharmaceutical Science; Health Science and Nutrition; and Biological, Sport, Computing, Mathematical and Physical Sciences.

"This year's virtual and inclusive conference was attended by over 500 undergraduate scientists and academic staff from around Ireland and was testament to the success of the SURE Network as an academic collaboration, with nine higher education institutions working together to embed research practice and excellence into undergraduate teaching in STEM," explained Dr Therese Montgomery, an AIT lecturer and the deputy chair of the SURE Network and Co-Chair of the 2020 National Conference Co-ordinating Committee.

"The annual SURE conference provides an excellent platform from which to showcase the dynamic range of undergraduate research undertaken by STEM students across the IoT/TU sector and this year also highlights the unique adaptability of our STEM graduates, some of whom will be presenting research conducted remotely following the COVID-19 shut down in early March"

Companies Invited to Collaboration with AIT Students on Live Digital Marketing Projects

AIT is again collaborating with SMEs and MNCs nationally to collaborate with digital marketing students on a series of live digital marketing projects over the coming 2021/22 academic year.

Supervised by experienced lecturers, students from the Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Digital Marketing and the Master of Science in Digital Marketing will undertake digital marketing projects for real-life companies.

The live digital marketing projects will begin with students designing a digital marketing strategy for their host company in the first semester, before implementing the strategy in the second semester.

Now in its fourth year, AIT's digital marketing outreach initiative has proven extremely successful and has garnered interest from a wide variety of companies across a broad range of industries.

"This is a fantastic opportunity for companies to collaborate with us and fill their digital marketing resource gaps using our students' expertise and knowledge of cutting-edge digital marketing methods," says Louise Murray, a marketing lecturer with the Faculty of Business and Hospitality at AIT.

Now in its fourth year, AIT's digital marketing outreach initiative has proven extremely successful and has garnered interest from a wide variety of companies across a broad range of industries.

In years past, students have worked with companies such as Henshaw Eyewear, DPD, Neueda Technology, Alexion, and Rye River Brewery; the digital marketing strategies that emerged from these collaborations were bespoke and completely unique to the respective company and their needs.

According to Dr Aisling Keenan Gaylard, a digital marketing lecturer with the Faculty of Business and Hospitality at AIT, the collaboration is extremely beneficial for students.

"Our digital marketing students obtain hands-on industry experience collaborating with SMEs in the region. They get to develop their analytical, creativity, critical thinking and organisational skills working for these companies. This industry-based project has benefited our past students greatly and has provided them with a stepping stone for their future career in digital marketing."





AIT Welcomes Launch of New Five-Year Apprenticeship Action Plan

A new national apprenticeship action plan, launched by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, aims to increase the number of apprentice registrations to 10,000 per year by 2025.

There are currently 60 apprenticeship programmes in Ireland leading to qualifications in areas such as finance, accountancy, laboratory technicians, engineering, heavy vehicle mechanics and healthcare.

The five-year action plan will also examine the potential development of new cross-border apprentice programmes and support apprentice engagement in international programmes, such as Erasmus.

Speaking at the launch, Minister of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris said: "People learn in different ways, and I want to make sure that everyone is aware apprenticeship can be for them as a route to a qualification into the future.

"The overall apprentice population will grow to over 30,000 registered apprentices in the next five years. In particular, we want to ensure that there is equal access for everyone to apprenticeships, irrespective of their background, gender or age.

"This plan has the potential to transform this part of our third-level system. Apprenticeship is good for the learner and the employer."

Welcoming the publication of the action plan, Dr Sean Lyons, Dean of Faculty, Engineering and Informatics at Athlone Institute of Technology, said: "This is a pivotal step in ensuring the long-term sustainability and relevancy of apprenticeship provision in Ireland. Learning through an apprenticeship represents an opportunity for learners to experience all the benefits of third-level education while simultaneously providing them with applied skills gained through on the job experiences.

"The changes represent an exciting opportunity to enhance existing provision and create a platform for the significant expansion of apprentice education across the country"

Sean Lyons, Dean of Faculty, Engineering and Informatics

"AIT has long been a key supporter of apprenticeship programme provision, and currently delivers 'off the job' training for heavy goods vehicle, motor and plumbing craft apprentices, in addition to acting as the lead provider on the polymer processing apprenticeship in collaboration with our partners in IBEC.

"We look forward to engaging collaboratively with other providers and partner stakeholders in delivering on the ambitious and significant changes to the apprenticeship system. The changes represent an exciting opportunity to enhance existing provision and create a platform for the significant expansion of apprentice education across the country."

The plan brings all apprenticeships together under one roof in a new National Apprenticeship office.



AIT 45th Graduate Design Showcase Goes Virtual

AIT held its 45th graduate design showcase virtually earlier this year.

The exhibition featured the work of final year BA (Hons) Graphic and Digital Design, BA Graphic Design and BA (Hons) Animation and Illustration students and covers a breadth of media and topics, including identity, biophilia, climate change, creative chaos, autism, fear and self-worth.

Speaking ahead of the showcase, Tara Cullen, a design lecturer at AIT, said: "Each student brought their individual processes and opinions to the studio sessions and continued this approach while their classes continued over Zoom.

"The group embraced all the challenges in a positive manner, and as the year progressed, each student flourished in different ways. With their new design knowledge and improved skills, the students are ready for the next phase of their design journey."

AIT design lecturer John Benton, who teaches the graduating BA (Hons) in Graphic and Digital Design class, said that his group explored key social issues in their artwork – from people's relationship with technology, a discussion of the socio-economic factors (or social determinants) impacting mental health and poverty to the principles of rights, equity, anti-stigma and non-discrimination to peer support.

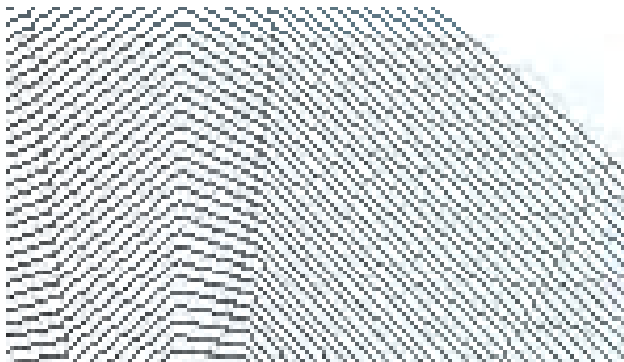
"In these uncertain times, it's so refreshing to see such empathy from these young minds for a social movement towards supporting non-profit organisations in battling these issues," he explained, adding that "acceptance, individualism, and accountability is really the core that drives the class of 2021."

According to animation and illustration lecturer Yvonne Hennessy, the graduating cohort have overcome the significant challenges presented by Covid-19 to produce a wide variety of creative and original artwork for the end-of-year showcase.

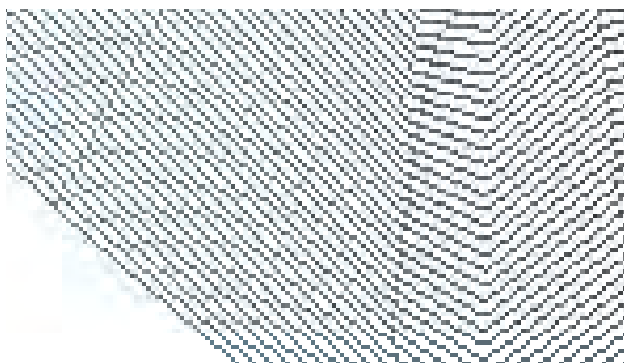
Just some of the work members of the public can expect to see include illustrated children's books, graphic novels and comic books, animated films, tabletop card games and video games.

"The work showcases their individual areas of interest, their study of the world around them and their capturing of story and intrigue through form, colour, texture and movement," Yvonne explained. "Through their unique approaches they have created bodies of artwork that represent their artistic talents.

Members of the public were encouraged to visit the virtual exhibition, the scope of which was particularly ambitious this year.



Global Engagement



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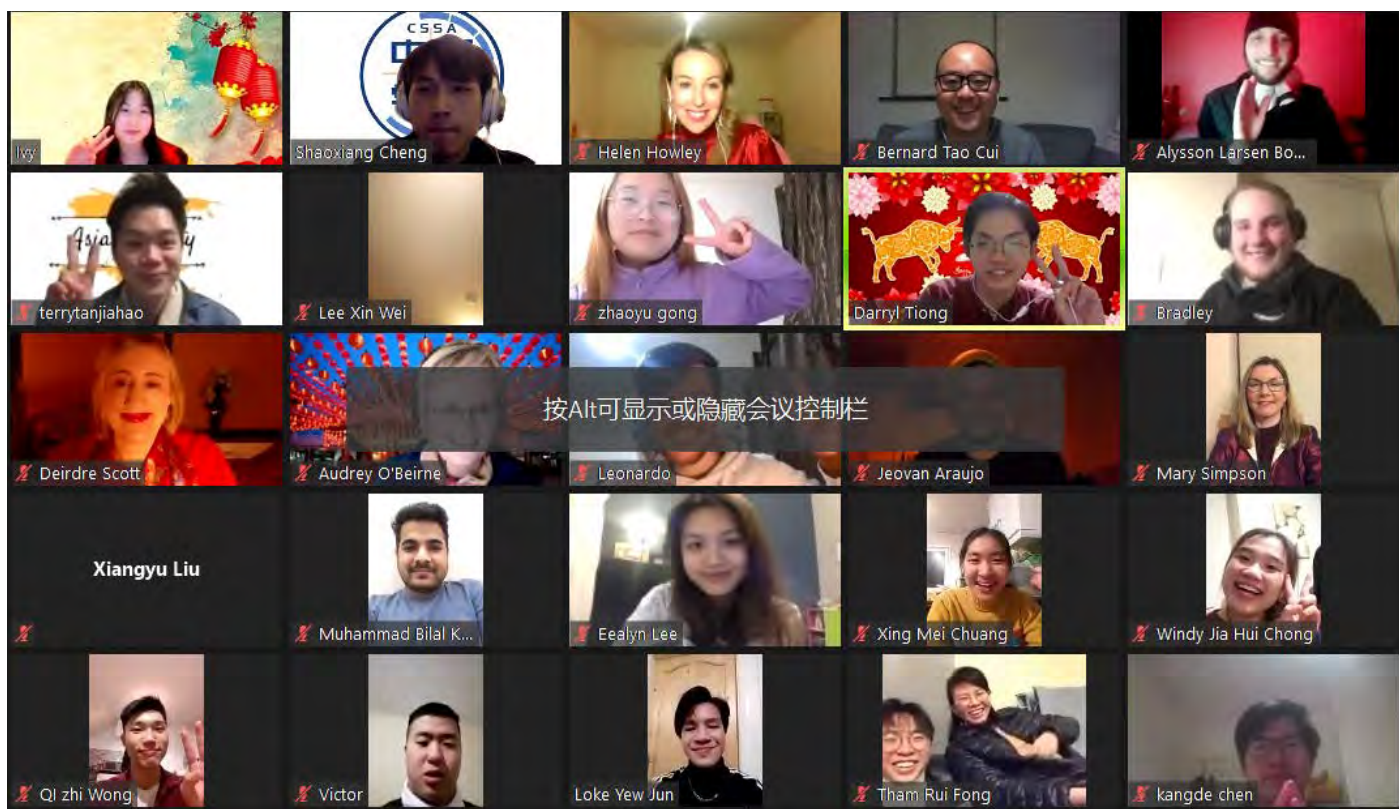
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**A SUSTAINABLE WAY
TO A BETTER WORLD**

AIT Celebrates Lucky 'Year of the Ox' Virtually



AIT students and staff rang in the lucky 'Year of the Ox' virtually on Thursday, 11 February with a special Zoom celebration to mark Chinese New Year. One of the most important holidays in the Chinese calendar – akin to Christmas in the West – Chinese New Year is a cultural celebration with a rich and storied history.

Each Chinese New Year is characterised by one of 12 animals which appear in the Chinese zodiac. This year is the Year of the Ox, which occupies the second position in the Chinese zodiac; people born in the Year of the Ox are thought to be positive, hardworking, and honest.

Organised by the AIT Committee of the Asian and Chinese Societies, the evening of virtual entertainment kicked off with a talent show, followed by an introduction to Asian traditions of how to celebrate Chinese New Year, a demonstration of calligraphy, Chinese riddles, and a cookery competition.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for students to connect virtually and share their customs and traditions at this special time of year," AIT President Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin said of the celebrations. "We have long-standing relationships with many partner universities across China, and we are delighted to continue the tradition of celebrating Chinese New Year, albeit in a virtual capacity."

He continued, "Much like Ireland, China places strong emphasis on family and community spirit during festive periods. It is always great to see people coming together to share their culture and experiences."

China is by far AIT's largest non-EU market. Since the launch of the Asia Strategy in 2000, AIT has facilitated the bilateral flow of students and staff between itself and its many partner institutes for the purposes of academic and cultural enrichment. This is achieved through the promotion of international study and placement opportunities, and international exchange programmes, highlighting the benefits of studying and working abroad.

The institute enjoys one of the highest approval ratings among Irish higher education institutes for Ministry of Education-approved bachelor's degrees in China. There are currently six approved programmes in China across a range of disciplines, including software engineering, mechanical engineering, pharmaceutical sciences, graphic design, hotel management and civil engineering.

Among the universities with which AIT has developed significant partnerships are Beijing University of Technology, Capital University of Economics and Business, Dongbei University of Finance and Economics, East China University of Technology, Southeast University, Capital University of Physical Education, Chaohu University, Luoyang Institute of Science and Technology and Jiangnan University.

In 2019, AIT also launched a joint institute with Wuxi Institute of Technology to cater for increased demand for engineering students. Students in the new joint institute are studying computer engineering, mechanical engineering, mechatronics, and software engineering degree programmes. There is potential to extend the co-operation between the two institutes to programmes in the areas of business, hospitality and tourism with the view to growing their respective tourism sectors.

Samba and Caipirinhas: AIT Celebrates Brazilian Carnival Virtually

COVID-19 proved no barrier to Brazilian students and friends at AIT, who arranged to celebrate Carnival – their country's traditional festival - by Zoom.

More than 50 participants logged in from their homes and student apartments to participate in the virtual displays of music and dancing. They also shared recipes for traditional Brazilian dishes and showed videos of how to prepare many traditional dishes and drinks from their regions in Brazil.

"The show started with a display of how Brazilians celebrate Carnival in different cities in Brazil, a quiz and then a display of music and dance. Participants were encouraged to submit answers during the virtual quiz showing their knowledge of Brazil and prizes were awarded," Karl Turley, Deputy Director of International Relations at AIT, explained.

The Brazilian students prepared a video guide to Samba dancing in the weeks leading up to Carnival and the judging panel from AIT: Elsie Burgoyne and Caroline Coyle, both lecturers at the Department of Social Science, AIT; Áine Daly, AITSU President; Fr. Shay Casey, AIT Chaplain; and Evelyn Bonifacio, a Samba expert, had a tough job separating the contestants.

There are more than 20 Brazilian students studying at AIT, with many undertaking PhD programmes across the institute's Bioscience Research Institute, Materials Research Institute and Software Research Institute.

Carnaval is traditionally celebrated at the start of Lent and coincides with the Christian tradition of having a feast before a period of fasting commences.



AIT Celebrates Eid al-Fitr Festival with Staff and

Students

AIT's international community gathered to celebrate Eid al-Fitr, a festival which marks the end of Ramadan - a month when many Muslims fast, virtually this year. Eid al-Fitr is one of two major festivals celebrated by Muslims around the world annually.

Staff from AIT's International Office and Fr Shay Casey, the chaplain of AIT, joined in as students and researchers from countries such as Iran, Pakistan and Malaysia shared their Eid traditions via Zoom.

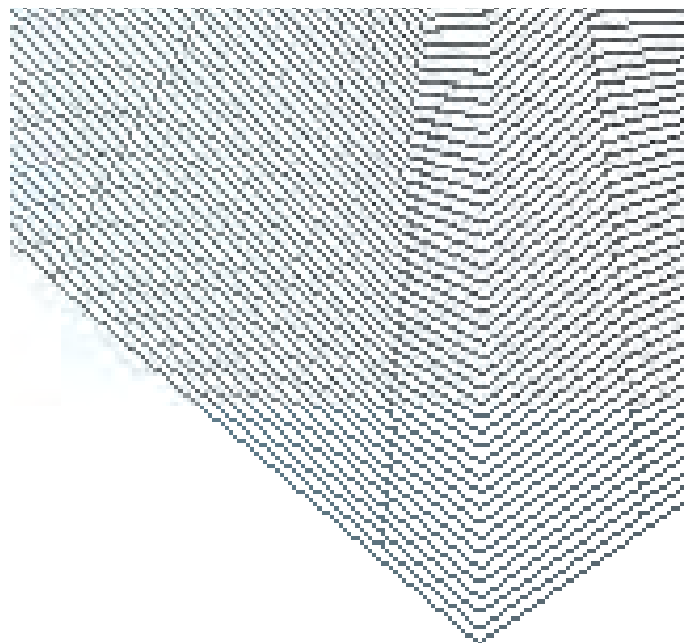
Traditionally, sweet dishes are prepared and shared with relatives and friends; however, due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, AIT's international community were unable to visit



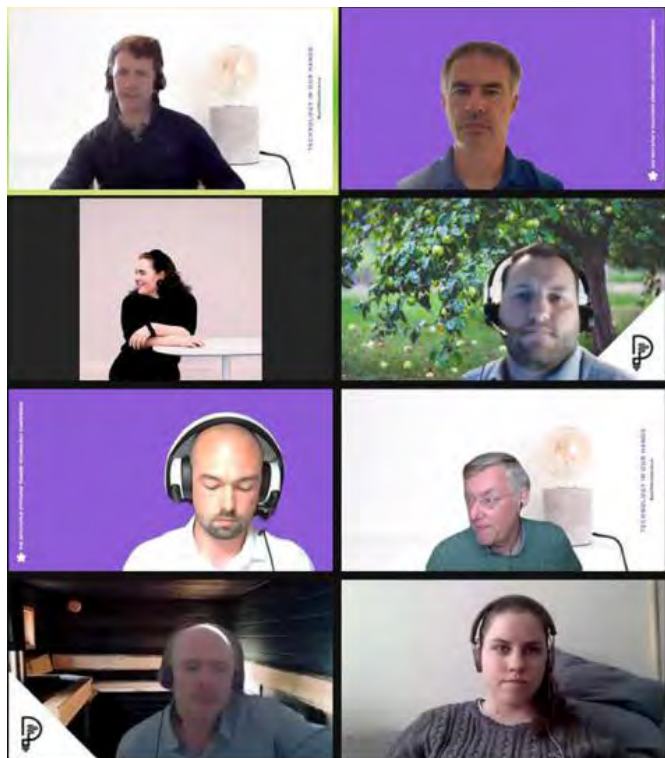
home.

Instead, international students and researchers cooked their favourite dishes over the weekend and took photos of their dishes to be judged by AIT culinary arts lecturers Margaret O' Loughlen and John Killeen.

AIT Academics Win Prestigious Awards at Global



Technology Education Conference PATT38 in Finland



Academics from Athlone Institute of Technology and members of the Technology Education Research Group (TERG) picked up prestigious awards at the PATT38 Conference held virtually by the University of Turku, Rauma Campus in Finland from the 27th – 30th April.

The AIT academics and members of the TERG group received a variety of prestigious awards including the award for best paper, which was presented to Dr Jeffrey Buckley, assistant lecturer at the Faculty of Engineering and Informatics, Dr Niall Seery, Director of the AIT-LIT technological university project and Director of TERG, and Tomás Hyland, postgraduate researcher in AIT.

The winning conference paper, “Examining the replicability of contemporary technology education research” discusses the replication crisis in research and the necessity to adopt appropriate methodological and reporting practices to ensure trust in published results. As there is currently scarce discussion on replicability in technology education, the study served to instigate this type of consideration for research in this space.

The award for best presentation was presented to AIT postgraduate researcher and TERG member Clodagh Reid and AIT academics Dr Jeffrey Buckley and Dr Ronan Dunbar. Their presentation investigated the effect of engineering students’ spatial ability and expertise on general complex problem-solving. Dr Ronan Dunbar was also awarded the award for conference engagement.

Dr Ronan Dunbar said, “we were delighted and very proud to receive these awards from our international peers in technology education research. It highlights and confirms the efforts of the group to make meaningful contributions to the development of technology education through our research activities, not only nationally but also on an international stage.”

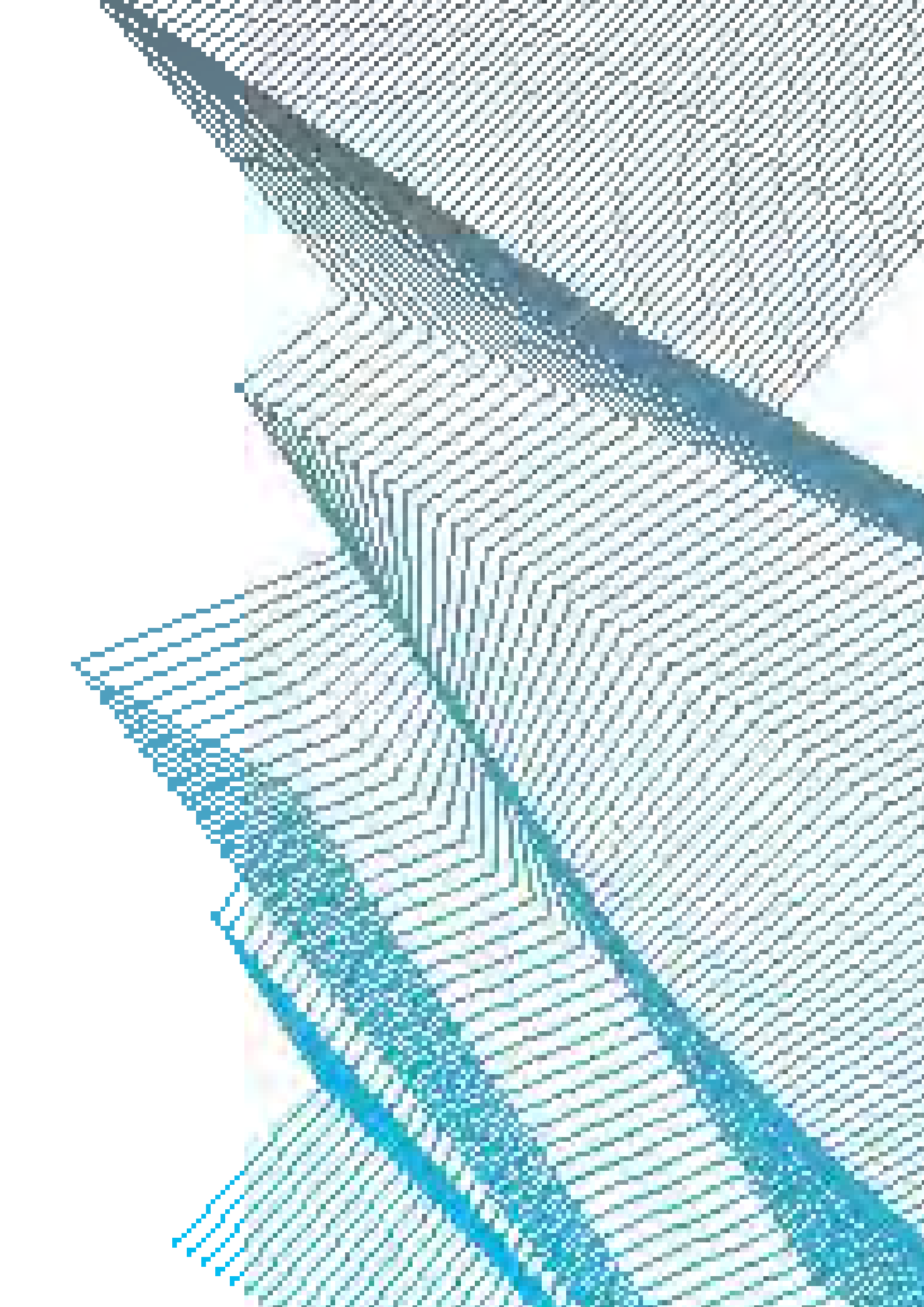
Dr Niall Seery, Director of the TERG research group added, “It was great to see the main agenda of TERG to progress and challenge thinking around teaching, learning and assessment in technological education being recognised on an international stage. I am very proud of the contributions that the members of TERG visibly made at the PATT conference that shows how we strive to push beyond state-of-the-art thinking in our field.”

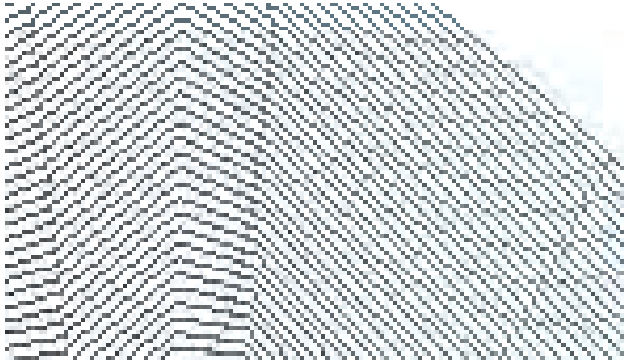
The TERG (Technology Education Research Group) aspires to have an international impact on the advancement and provision of technology education at all levels of education. The nature of research activities within TERG is varied. The group conducts basic research, use-inspired basic research, and applied research in the context of technology education in areas such as human intelligence, development, and cognition, technology-enhanced learning, and pedagogical content knowledge.

More than 60 HEIs with delegates spanning over 15 countries took part in the virtual annual conference organised by PATT (Pupils Attitudes Towards Technology), an international community of technology education colleagues (researchers, teacher educators, and teachers) who are interested in educational research as support to developments in technology teaching.

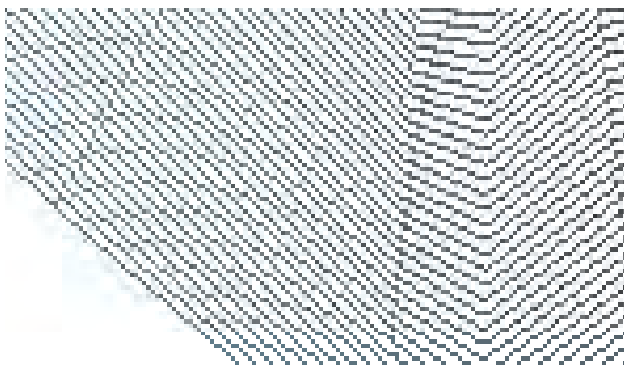
The conference theme was Technology in our hands - Creative pedagogy and ambitious teacher education. World-leading publications were presented by the global audience aiming to highlight the contemporary view of human cognition being ultimately based on bodily experiences. In technology education, this implies the acknowledgment of the importance of physical objects, experiences, and activities in the creation and application of technology.

Commenting on the success of the AIT & TERG delegation





Sporting Successes







AIT International Grand Prix Joins the World Indoor Tour

The AIT International Grand Prix joined the World Indoor Tour (silver tier) for the first time in October; however, the annual Grand Prix had to be postponed until 2022 due to the ongoing pandemic.

The decision was made with the “best interests of athletes” and the “legions of fans who support them” in mind, explained Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin, Director of the premier athletics meet and AIT president, at the time.

“Athletics fans from around the world travel to the Irish Midlands every year to watch history being made as athletes break records and set personal bests.

“Unfortunately, with the need to limit social contact and avoid large gatherings, it simply isn’t feasible to hold an event of this scale in the current climate.

“While we are incredibly disappointed to not be able to press ahead with next year’s event, the long tradition of athletic excellence will continue in 2022, when the AIT International Grand Prix returns,” he added.

Since its inception eight years ago, the AIT International Grand Prix has grown into what is now one of the most prominent athletics fixtures in the Irish and international calendar.

This is evidenced by the calibre of athletic talent on display year after year. Some of the biggest names in athletics have graced the top tier event, battling it out to break records and set even faster times.

Irish Olympians like Thomas Barr are regulars at the athletics meet, while others use the AIT International Grand Prix as a warm-up for an Olympic bid.

Due to the uncertainty around COVID, World Athletics has announced that the World Indoor Championship will also be postponed until 2022.

Thanking fans for their continued support and passion for the meet, Professor Ó Catháin said he looked forward to welcoming them back to the AIT International Arena in 2022 to witness “exhilarating world-class athletics in action.”

AIT Sport Gym Receives Top Tier National Quality Award

AIT Sport was awarded the top tier “Outstanding” accolade at this year’s National Quality Standard Awards (formerly the White Flag Awards), which it received for its dedication and commitment to operational excellence.

National Quality Standard Awards, conferred by Ireland Active, are awarded to leisure and fitness facilities that demonstrate exceptional standards of customer service, safety, and hygiene.

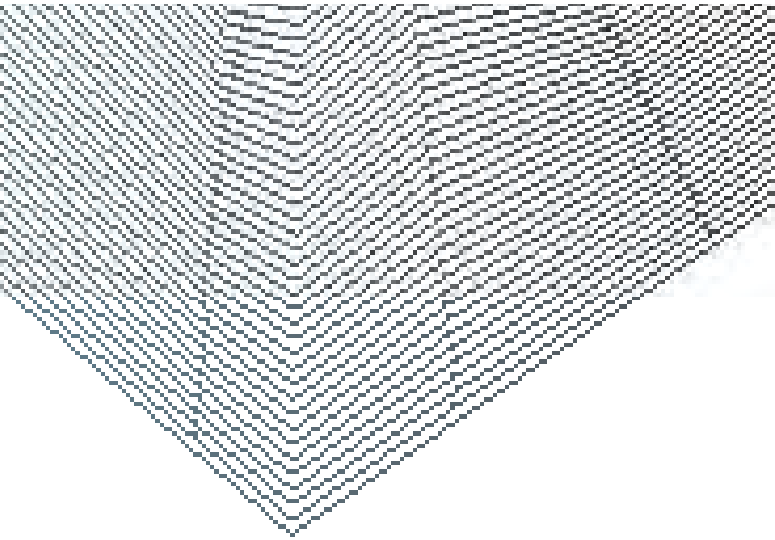
This is the first year that AIT Sport has been audited for the highly sought after and respected award, which is reserved for facilities that meet an exacting 250 quality-based criteria.

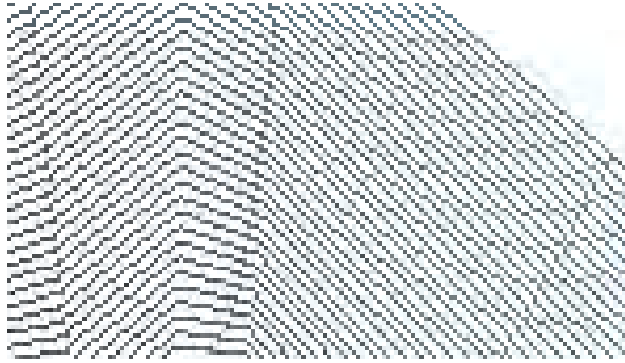
Congratulating the AIT Sport team, AIT Commercial Manager Paul Coburn said the award was a tribute to their “dedication and professionalism” and commitment to maintaining the highest operational standards in the country.

“We set out to create the best gym in the country for our members and this award will spur us on even more,” he explained. “The team at AIT Sport is extremely proud to have received the ‘Outstanding’ award, as it reflects our commitment to consistently delivering at the highest operational standards in the industry.”

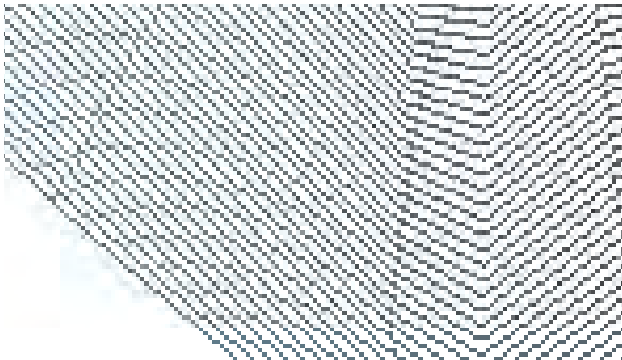
Welcoming news of the award, Marian Kennedy, AIT Sport operations manager, said, “This award demonstrates our commitment and dedication to AIT Sport and all of our members. We are so proud to be recognised for the year-round hard work and dedication of our amazing team. Without them, this would not have been possible.”

Speaking of the decision to bestow AIT Sport with the top-tier award, the National Quality Standards auditor complimented the team’s preparedness, both in terms of online and on-site audits, and said that the supplied documentation was of a high level and without non-conformances.





Outreach & Engagement







AIT Celebrates Unique 'Culture and Identity' of Irish Travellers on Traveller Ethnicity Day

AIT celebrated the unique culture and identity of Irish Travellers on Traveller Ethnicity Day, which coincided with a roll-out of €300,000 in funding to support Travellers in higher education.

The funding, which is aimed at Traveller progression to and retention in higher education during the pandemic, will be used to support students with study spaces, health and social impacts, caring responsibilities or technology supports.

Announcing the funding, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris said that COVID-19 had posed particular challenges for Travellers participating in higher education.

"The aim with this funding is to ensure that the risks associated with COVID-19 do not serve to widen the existing and very significant gap in participation in higher education by Travellers," Minister Harris explained.

The timely announcement falls on the four-year anniversary of the Irish State's recognition of Travellers as a distinct ethnic group.

A 2017 study, led by the Royal College of Surgeons and the University of Edinburgh, revealed that Irish Travellers emerged as a distinct ethnic group approximately 12 generations, or 360 years, ago.

Speaking at the Traveller Ethnicity Day celebrations, AIT President Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin welcomed the funding and reaffirmed his commitment to broadening access to higher education:

"Traveller Ethnicity Day commemorates a pivotal moment in Irish history – one that we, at Athlone Institute of Technology, are proud to celebrate with our students, staff and the wider community.

"We all have a role to play in fighting inequality and discrimination in our communities, and with just 1% of Travellers going on to attend higher education, it is clear that there is much work still to be done to level the playing field.

"We set out on our TU journey with the goal of delivering a university that would not only add value to the Irish higher education system but would positively impact the social and cultural prospects of our region."

"Broadened access to higher education forms an integral part of that commitment, and we will continue cultivating a welcoming, inclusive culture where all students can succeed."

Margaret Hutchinson, an Irish Traveller and the first ethnic minorities officer elected to the AIT Students' Union, represents and advocates for students who are underrepresented in higher education.

"Recognising Travellers as an ethnic minority is a symbolic step forward in our journey in having our unique culture and identity recognised by the people of Ireland," she said.

"The recognition of Travellers as an ethnic minority is a celebration of the diversity of Irish society, and we now have the label of ethnic minority rather than a community or social group to show that our culture is unique and a part of Irish history."

Margaret, who recently graduated from AIT with a degree in early years care and education, welcomed the funding, calling it a "step in the right direction" towards securing equal access to higher education.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has been a tough time for all students and especially Traveller students," she said. "This funding is a welcome support to assist Travellers through higher education".

AIT has a long standing, valued relationship with the Offaly Traveller Movement (OTM), with whom it regularly collaborates. The research partnership, which has spanned 20 years and centres the Traveller voice, has led to several

publications, including 'From the Inside Out': Using Peer Education in Community Development Practice.

Dr Ashling Jackson, who is a senior lecturer in the Department of Social Sciences at AIT and co-editor of the Irish Journal of Applied Social Studies, said that she feels "privileged" to know and work closely with the OTM Traveller community health workers.

"As the relationship [with OTM] has grown and developed in many different ways over the last 20 years, it has created many wonderful opportunities for students - from being able to hear the Traveller voice in guest presentations to placement opportunities in OTM and engaging in collaborative research with Travellers on issues of importance to Travellers."

One key research output resulting from the partnership between AIT and the OTM is a study of how Traveller parenting values, attitudes and practices are socially constructed, as well as how Traveller parenting can be best supported from a Traveller perspective.

Findings from the study will likely be used by social care workers and those working with Traveller parents and families to inform professional practice.

"We have always done positive work with AIT. They have always been very willing and open to working with Travellers. That link goes back a long time," Traveller community health workers in OTM said, reflecting on the long-standing partnership.

"We have built up the trust over the years and know that we could always trust AIT when it came to research," they said, adding that they always felt "consulted" and sure that the research would be of benefit to Travellers.

Calling the link between AIT and OTM "absolutely vital", the Traveller community health workers said that they were delighted to work with social care students on placement, ensuring that they understand "something about Traveller culture".

EDI Officer Jackie Farrell also expressed her support for Traveller Ethnicity Day, stressing the importance of "working together to address the challenges faced by Travellers".

She added that AIT was committed to providing a student-centred and supportive education for a diverse cohort of learners where "every student is valued equally".

AIT Invites Proposals from Artists in the Traveller Community

AIT launched an Open Call inviting artists from the Traveller Community to submit proposals for a visual arts project inspired by the theme of "Identities, boundaries, barriers".

Artists were asked to reflect on the challenges faced by the Traveller Community and come up with a proposal to provoke reflection and challenge stereotypes.

The artist of the winning proposal received a €500 bursary to create a piece of work which will be displayed in AIT for Traveller Pride Week; the runner-up received a prize of €250. The goal is to highlight the Traveller Community's creative contribution, showcase their unique cultural heritage in a modern context, and to provide important representation in public spaces.

The Open Call is part of AIT's latest inclusivity initiative, STATUS Toolkit, which is designed to ensure that the campus and college ethos is welcoming to students from the Traveller Community.

STATUS Toolkit, which stands for Supporting Travellers Advance Through Universal Services, is used to assess the inclusivity of an organisation and put a plan in place to remove barriers to participation.

AIT has partnered with Involve, a Monksland-based youth work organisation with a specific focus on the inclusion and engagement of Travellers in youth services, to adapt the toolkit for use at third level.

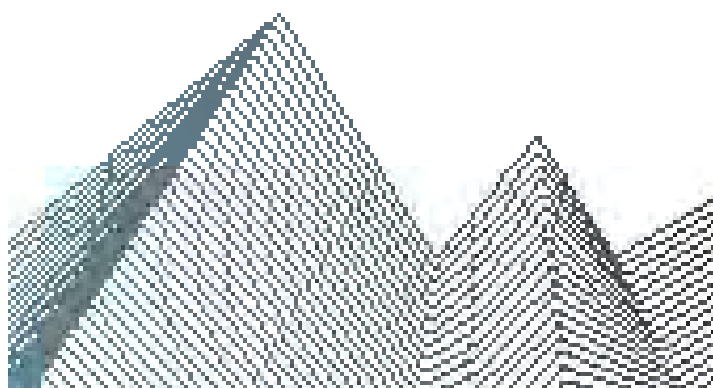
Work on the inclusivity initiative is ongoing and is being carried out by a committee headed up by John McKenna, the Vice President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at AIT.

"With this initiative, we will continue the building of an inclusive, intercultural environment where Travellers feel welcomed and valued and where we can build towards ensuring equality of outcomes for Travellers in education," he explained.

The committee, which will also feature staff across every faculty, will have strong representation from AIT's student Traveller population.

"The launch of this Open Call and the STATUS Toolkit initiative represents an important threshold moment of acknowledgment that improvements in participation in higher education can only happen in equal partnership with historically marginalised groups," Alison Hough, a barrister and law lecturer at AIT, said.

AIT, which will shortly open its doors as the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest, is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment for all students and staff, as evidenced by its recent achievement of an Athena SWAN Bronze award and annual celebration of Traveller Ethnicity Day.



€1.1 Million Empower Eco Project to Mobilise Next Generation of Green Enterprise Innovators and Create Jobs



A new economic and environment partnership led by AIT - LIT is expected to mobilise a new generation of green enterprise innovators and stimulate regional job creation. The Empower Eco project, which recently received a €1.1 million investment from the EU Just Transition Fund and others, will create 100 jobs over the next two years. The project will achieve this by creating new, sustainable opportunities that will positively impact those most affected by decarbonisation, their communities, and the local economy.

Following a “hub and spoke” model, Empower Eco will deliver green-enterprise opportunities through a central innovation hub in Lough Boora, Co Offaly. The project will see the development of “living laboratories” and testing facilities in situ by 2022, with further test beds dotted across Ireland.

The goal is to create a “defined ecosystem” from concept right through to products and services, where “we can encourage and train eco innovators and environmentalists,” Professor Neil Rowan, one of Empower Eco’s chief architects, explained.

“Through Bord na Móna and other partners, we’ll develop more test beds to provide upskilling and training on low carbon transitioning right through to green deal innovations.”

The Lough Boora hub will act as a sustainability business accelerator for high potential scale-ups in bioplastics, nutraceuticals, high-added-value agri-food and other high potential natural resource areas.

One such innovation, due to be launched in 2021, is a “Food for Good” range. Derived from the Irish peatlands, the range will include a bell heather honey and the development of exotic gourmet mushrooms in agroforestry.

According to Professor Rowan, who is the Director of the Bioscience Research Institute at AIT, the unique conditions of the Irish peatlands give rise to powerful medicinal qualities and make it an ideal “future factory for nutraceuticals.” “Plants and herbs are one of the most climate adaptive types of vegetation, but the peat itself can be subjected to extremes of PH and drying and wetting. These stresses can produce extremely interesting bioactives,” he explained. “Many of the products that could be produced from stressed peatland would have superior qualities due to the stress responses from plants and herbs and the nature of the pollen collected.”

Empower Eco is expected to benefit ex-Bord na Móna workers, the unemployed and underemployed who will be trained in biodiversity, design thinking, food production and employed through the social enterprise.

Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, the President of AIT, called the project a “sustainability imperative focused on using the natural world in clever ways to meet human needs” and said it would make the region a hotspot of eco innovation, collaboration and investment.

He added that Empower Eco is an “ambitious” and “transformative” project for AIT and LIT as they transition to becoming a new technological university.

The projects’ early success could see it identified as a flagship project for the RUN-EU network - of which AIT and LIT are founding members – due to its ability to impact on and add value to citizen’s lives.

Empower Eco looks set to become the first regional hub for eco sustainability across the European network. Dr Michael Brougham, Enterprise Ireland’s regional director for the Midlands, Mid-East and West, called Empower Eco an “exciting and far-reaching” project and said he expects it to have a significant impact on SMEs throughout Ireland and Europe.



AIT Designated a National Hub for COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout

The AIT International Arena was one of 37 sites chosen for the mass vaccination programme.

AIT facilitated mass vaccinations on campus as part of the Government's COVID-19 vaccination programme.

The institute's indoor athletics arena was one of 37 locations nationally to have been chosen to support the rollout of the COVID vaccine to the public.

AIT President Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin said that AIT was proud to support the HSE in the implementation of the national COVID-19 vaccination programme.

"The five research arms of our institute have been engaged in the fight against COVID since the beginning of the pandemic, as have many of our staff who were redeployed to help with tracing and testing.

"We answered the call to act as a designated centre for Ireland's mass vaccination programme. We are proud to support the HSE in this endeavour by providing the AIT International Arena as a venue for the safe and efficient vaccination of our community."

Last year, more than 160 AIT staff volunteered to help the HSE fight COVID-19, including nursing staff who were working on the frontlines.

AIT scientists also provided essential services in terms of analytical testing and processing for frontline companies working to produce PPE, ventilators and medical device equipment.

AIT's Code4Fun in Lockdown is a Smash Success

Unleashing Innovation, technology, and fun for transition year students

40 transition year students unleashed their creativity by conceptualising, coding and evaluating technology solutions to real-world problems at AIT's Code4Fun (The Lockdown Edition!) coding camp.

Recreating the dynamic atmosphere of leading software companies, participants experienced the fun, creativity and innovation of a rapidly evolving sector.

This was AIT's second time running the camp virtually for aspiring coders, which kicked off on Monday, 22 February and ran for one week.

Ahead of the week's coding challenges, participating students from Tullamore College, Marist College, Our Ladies Bower, LWETB, Portlaoise CBS, Coláiste Mhuire (Ballygar), Roscommon CBS, Moate CS, and Roscommon Community College received goodie bags complete with pocket-sized computers, known as micro: bits.

The Code4Fun participants also received a Move Motor, a robotic buggy. To create a fully featured robot, they programmed their micro: bits, popped the coded device into their Move Motor buggy and off they went!

Once they built their automated robots, students battled it out in a virtual race-off as they attempted to navigate an obstacle course using their minicomputers to control direction and speed. As one attendee quipped, "It's like the Monte Carlo of robotic racing; it takes a bit of skill!"

Karol Fitzgerald, a lecturer in software engineering and applied mathematics at AIT, explained that Code4Fun was specifically designed to give students a taste of coding while building crucial problem solving and creative thinking skills.

"This is the second Code4Fun we've run virtually and demand for places is ever increasing. We use a problem-based approach to challenge and expand students' knowledge, skills and competences," he said.

"Over the course of the week, students learn about radio comms, distance sensing and coding. They also gain an understanding of the practical application of theory and critical skills in a collaborative environment."

Dr Enda Fallon, Head of Department of Computer and Software Engineering at AIT, added that teamwork is a core component of the Code4Fun coding camp – a skill that is essential in both college and in industry.

"Code4Fun encourages students to work as a team when brainstorming, technical conceptualisation and planning. The goal is to get students to start thinking like software engineers and figure out solutions to problems through effective teamwork and communication," he explained.

"Group work plays an important role at third level as it does in the context of an agile software development environment. Our software engineering courses teach these principles to ensure students are industry ready upon graduating. At Code4Fun, we mimic that environment to give students a flavour of what studying software development is really like in a fun, creative way."

Anonymised feedback from the week-long coding camp was incredibly positive with students citing it as "fun", "informational" and "insightful".

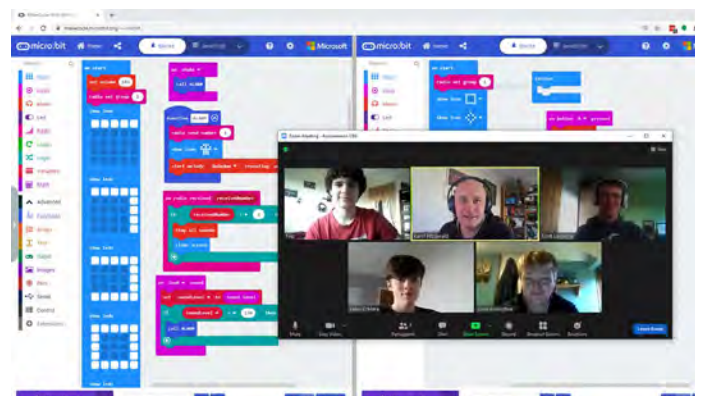
One transition year student said that it had inspired them to pursue computer science in the Leaving Certificate and a degree in software thereafter, while another said that the virtual camp was a great way of meeting new people and practicing their coding skills.

Summing up the experience, a student said, "Coding is definitely something I would love to continue in the future and [it's] all because of this camp."

Online Business Innovation Camp for TY & 5th Year Students interested in studying business and wanting to get a taste of a third-level education environment were invited to attend an online Business Innovation Camp in AIT in February.

Working in small groups, students got a taste of business enterprise, brand development and advertising, while developing knowledge around the key elements required to support a marketable product. Participants worked in teams towards delivering a professional pitch for a product on the final day of the camp.

In addition to developing key skills around teamwork and time management, participants got to sample the third-level learning environment as well as being challenged to consider the ways in which businesses are being required to adapt to the impact of global changes. All participants who completed the full programme received a Certificate of Attendance.





AIT Spring Open Day for CAO Students Goes Virtual

Athlone Institute of Technology hosted a virtual open day on Saturday, 24 April to help prospective students make an informed decision as they navigate the CAO decision-making process.

The virtual event, which ran from 11am - 2pm, featured a series of live departmental talks with heads of department and other academics, live chat sessions with current students across a range of disciplines, panel discussions, and virtual campus tours.

Attendees found a plethora of CAO videos and podcasts relevant to their course(s) of interest embedded onto AIT's bespoke virtual open day platform in addition to a live web Q&A feature, which ran for the full duration of the event.

Though the window for normal CAO applications closed on February 1, 2021, students always have an opportunity to change their mind and make amendments to their CAO application until July 1, 2021.

According to AIT Student Recruitment Officer Claire Connor, it is the time for Leaving Certificate, QQI and mature students to really evaluate their CAO options and ensure that they are making the best decision for them.

"When making your CAO choice, it's important to really think about what you want to do after you finish your two/three or four years," she explained, adding that events like the upcoming open day are the ideal forum to ask lots of questions.

"Attending the event in a virtual capacity actually offers a lot of advantages: you can attend from the comfort of your own home and ask as many questions as you'd like.

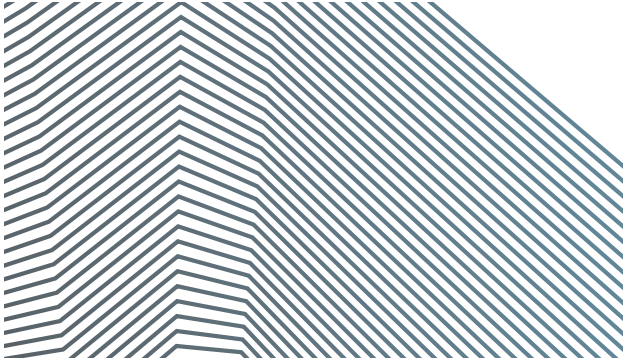
"You might be wondering how many hours a week you could expect to work in a particular field or if you'd be working in an office environment all day; these are just some of the really important questions that you can get answered at an open day."

In advance of the open day, Claire recommended students check out the AIT CAO Hub to learn more about the courses on offer across AIT's four faculties, student supports, sporting and leisure facilities and lots more.

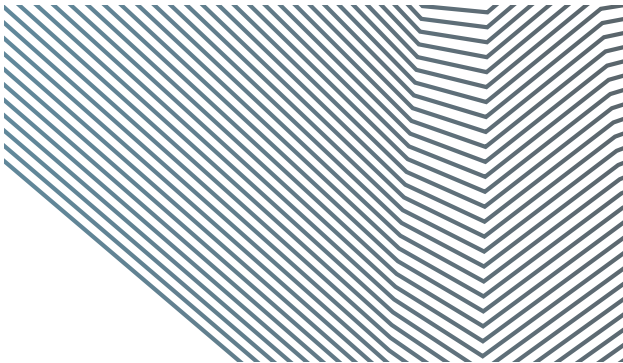
"It's the perfect 'one-stop-shop' for prospective students to find out everything and anything they need to know about the transition to third level and what's on offer at AIT," she explained.

"We have everything from quick two-minute course videos to a podcast series, which gives an in-depth course overview – it's a 10-15-minute chat with a lecturer or a course coordinator about modules, learning style and more."

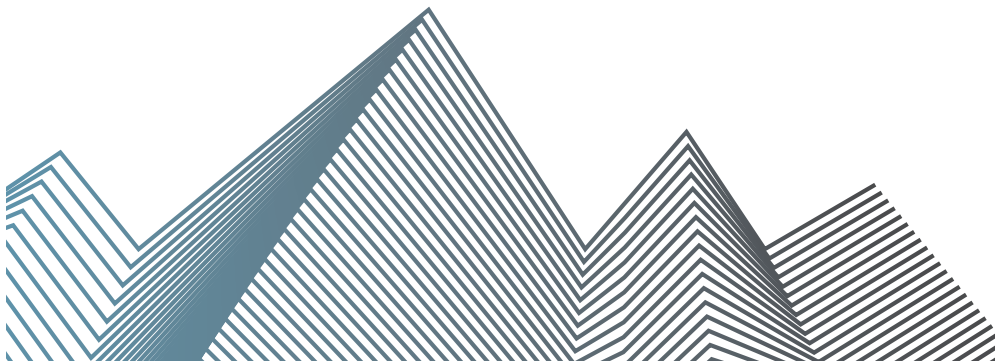
"This is so important as the learning and teaching style of third level is quite different to second level and knowing what you're going to be doing will make that transition so much easier and less intimidating."



Governance & **Leadership**







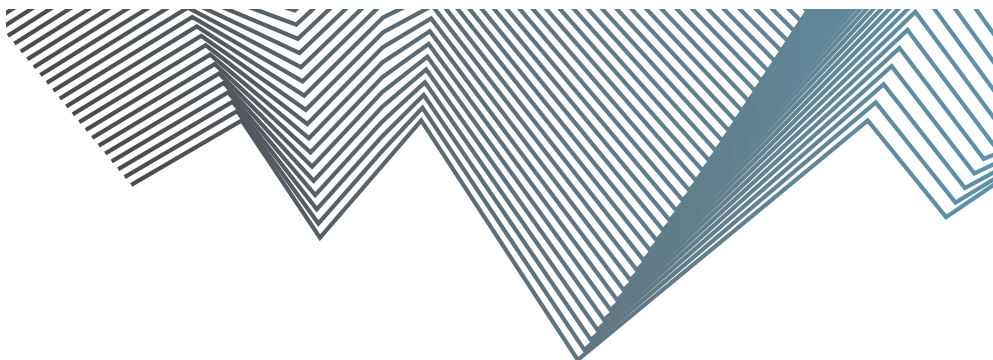
Equality Statement

Athlone Institute of Technology believes in equality, diversity and inclusion and strives for EDI to be at the heart of all we do; promoting and enhancing a culture where diversity is celebrated and everyone is treated fairly regardless of gender, age, race, disability, ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation, civil status, family status, or membership of the travelling community.

Athlone Institute of Technology is committed to fostering and maintaining a safe environment of respect and inclusion for staff, students and members of the communities we serve. As part of our continued commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, AIT strives to create an environment in which all people can thrive, be respected and valued for their unique perspectives and contributions, achieve their fullest potential without prejudice and have a real opportunity to participate and contribute.

Our Institute will reflect our commitment to equality, educational opportunity, social justice, ethical behaviour and academic freedom. We will achieve this by:

- Ensuring fair and inclusive access to our facilities, programmes, resources and services.
- Ongoing development of policies and procedures that are inclusive and equitable.
- Identifying barriers to equality, diversity, inclusion and full participation and addressing any imbalances in practice that arise.
- Provision of integrated and accessible services and information in accessible formats.
- Widening participation and facilitating access to programmes by learners from under-represented groups.
- Advancing and building our workforce by assessing hiring practices and performance review procedures to attract, retain and develop talented staff from diverse backgrounds.



Governance

Governing Body

The composition of the Governing Body is determined by, the Regional Technical Colleges Act, 1992 and 1994. Governing Body is collectively responsible for leading and directing the Institutes' activities and fulfils key functions, including: reviewing and guiding strategic direction and major plans of action, risk management policies and procedures, annual budgets and business plans, setting performance objectives, monitoring implementation and Institute performance, and overseeing major capital expenditure and investment decisions. The Governing Body acts on a fully informed and ethical basis, in good faith, with due diligence and care, and in the best interest of the Institute, having due regard to its legal responsibilities and the objectives set by Government.

Ex-Officio Members as per Section 4 of the 1992 Act from 1st September 2020 – 30th September 2021 **Governing Body Members as per Section 4 of the 1994 Act 1st September 2020 – 30th September 2021** **Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b)**

Mr. Liam Rattigan [Chairperson Section 2(a)]
Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin [President, Section 2(b)]
Mr Peter Roche (from 11th September 2020)
Cllr. Kathleen Shanagher (from 11th September 2020)
Cllr. Frankie Keena
Ms Clare Claffey
Mr. Colm Harte
Cllr. Pat O Toole

Under Section 4(1)(c)

Mr. Brendan Kelly
Ms. Brigid Delamere

Under Section 4(1)(d)

Ms Dymphna Fitzgerald

Under Section 4(1)(e)

Mr Niall Naughton (from 11th September 2020)
Ms. Aine Daly

Under Section 4(1)(f)

Ms. Geraldine Talty

Under Section 4(1)(g)

Mr. James O Meara
Ms. Colette Ryan
Ms. Anna Connaughton
Mr. John Foley
Corporate Secretary
Mr Bill Delaney

Code Compliance and Statement Of Agreement with the HEA

Athlone Institute of Technology confirms that it has formally documented and reached agreement with the HEA, on its adaptation of and compliance with the requirements of the THEA Code of Governance for Institutes of Technology. This compliance includes both the internal practices and procedures of AIT and the external relations with Government, the Minister of Education & Skills and the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

Strategic Plan, Annual Programmes and Budget

The Institutes' Governing Body has formally undertaken an evaluation of actual performance, by reference to the Institutes Strategic Plan and Budget and has subsequently approved an Annual Programme and Budget for the Institute

Governing Body Operation, Reserved Functions and Decisions Delegated to Management

The Institutes Governing Body are collectively responsible for leading and directing the Institutes' activities in compliance with the THEA Code of Governance. It fulfils key functions including; reviewing and guiding strategic direction and major plans of action, risk management policies and procedures, annual budgets and business plans, setting performance objectives, monitoring implementation and Institute performance, and overseeing major capital expenditure and investment decisions. All functions and decisions that are not specifically listed within the Code of Governance (Appendix B, Reserved Functions, Statutory Functions and Regulatory Requirements), are functions and decisions of management.

Annual Report and Financial Statement

The Governing Body has reviewed and approved the Annual Report and Financial Statement and considers the Financial Statement to be a true and fair view of the Institute's financial performance and its financial position at the end of the year. Governing Body affirms that they have conducted a self-assessment evaluation of its own performance and that of the Audit and Risk Committee.

A full detailed copy of accounts can be found through our website: <https://www.ait.ie/about-ait/financial-statements-annual-reports>

Public Spending Code

The Chairman of the Institute's Governing Body confirms in our Annual Governance Statement that AIT adheres to the relevant aspects of the Public Spending Code and that the Governing Body has ensured robust and effective systems and procedures are in place in AIT to ensure compliance with relevant principles, requirements and guidelines of the Public Spending Code.

Governing Body Meetings

During the period from 1st September 2020 to 30th September 2021 the Governing Body met on 9 separate occasions, the details of which are outlined in the Appendix A – 'Institutes Annual Governance Statement'.

Risk Management

Governing Body approves the Institutes risk management framework and monitors its effectiveness. Approval and oversight of AIT's Risk Management Policy including structured and periodic reviews and updates to the Institute Risk Register by the Executive Management Team. This review includes an assessment of the description of principal risks, risk rating and associated mitigations for each of the risks set out in the Institute Risk Register.

Audit and Risk Committee

The Terms of Reference for the Audit and Risk Committee are set by the Governing Body of the Institute and include provision regarding:

- Membership
- Reporting Requirements
- Authority to investigate
- Meetings – timing, conduct and frequency
- Information requirements
- Value for money
- Governance and responsibilities regarding:
 - o Risk Management
 - o Internal Control
 - o Internal Audit
 - o External Audit
 - o Review of its own effectiveness

Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin (Chair)
Mr Bill Delaney
Dr Niall Seery (until April 2020)
Ms Frances O' Connell (from April 2020)
Mr John McKenna
Dr Don Faller
Ms Michelle McKeon-Bennett
Dr Sean Lyons
Dr Michael Tobin
Dr Maire Brophy
Mr Liam Brennan
Ms Orla Thornton
Ms Mary Simpson
Ms Jane Burns (until March 2020)
Dr Johanna Archbold (from March 2020)

The Chairman of Governing Body is satisfied that the Audit and Risk Committee has discharged its role effectively and efficiently and has met the requirements with regard to frequency of meetings in this academic year, the details of the annual work plan and meetings are outlined in the Appendix A – 'Institutes' Annual Governance Statement'.

Executive Management Team

The Institutes Executive Management Team (EMT), chaired by the President, is a non-statutory committee of the Institute, whose role is to assist the President in the management of the Institute and in formulating Institute strategy and policy for approval by Governing Body. EMT meet on a fortnightly basis and any other times deemed necessary. A recording secretary is present at all meetings to record agreed actions.

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Membership of AIT Committees by Gender Academic Year – 2020 – 2021			
	Total	Male	Female
Executive Management Team	15	8 (53%)	7 (47%)
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	14	6 (43%)	8 (57%)
Academic Council	33	13 (39%)	20 (61%)
Academic Standards and Quality	28	14 (50%)	14 (50%)
Research, Innovation and Enterprise	18	10 (56%)	8 (44%)
Research Ethics	14	4 (31%)	9 (69%)
Professional Development	12	5 (42%)	7(58%)

MANAGEMENT AND SENIOR STAFF

The Institute has four Faculties: Business and Hospitality, Engineering and Informatics, Science and Health and Continuing, Professional, Online and Distance Learning, which in turn are further divided into Departments to provide courses/programmes of study to students. Each Faculty has a Dean of Faculty and relevant Heads of Department.

President

Technological University Project Director

Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar

Assistant Registrar

Vice President for Financial and Corporate Affairs

Vice President for Strategic Planning, Institutional Performance, Equality & Diversity

Dean of Graduate and Research Studies

Dean of Faculty of Business and Hospitality

Head of Dept.' of Accounting and Business Computing

A/Head of Dept.' of Business and Management Studies

Head of Dept.' of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Studies

Dean of School of Engineering and Informatics

Head of Dept.' Special Projects

Head of Dept.' Civil Engineering & Trades

Head of Dept.' Computer and Software Engineering

Head of Dept.' Polymer, Mechanical and Design

Dean of Faculty of Science and Health

Head of Dept.' of Life and Physical Sciences

Head of Dept.' of Sport and Health Science

Head of Dept.' of Nursing and Health Sciences

Head of Dept.' of Social Science

Dean of Faculty of Continuing, Professional, Online and Distance Learning

Head of Dept.' of Lifelong Learning

Head of Transitions and Student Success

Director of Communications and Marketing

Director of Enterprise and Innovation

Director of International Relations

Human Resource Manager

Finance Manager

Commercial Manager

Computer Services Manager

Estates Manager

Director of Environmental Health & Safety

Academic Affairs and Student Administration Manager

Librarian

Student Services Manager

MIS/Business Intelligence and Development Unit Manager

Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin

Dr Niall Seery

Ms Frances O Connell

Ms Jane Burns (to 31.01.2021)

Ms Mary Goode (from 01.04.2021)

Mr Bill Delaney

Mr John McKenna

Dr Maire Brophy (from 14.09.2020)

Ms Michelle McKeon Bennett

Mr Trevor Prendergast

Ms Alison Sheridan

Dr Anthony Johnston

Dr Sean Lyons

Mr Marcus Rahilly

Mr Joe Lawless

Dr Enda Fallon

Ms Breda Lynch

Dr Don Faller

Ms Nuala Commings

Dr Aoife Lane

Dr Pearse Murphy (to 07.10.2020)

Dr Des Cawley (from 21.09.2020)

Mr Oliver Hegarty

Dr Michael Tobin

Mr Seadna Ryan

Mr Owen Ross (from 08.06.2021)

Ms Orla Thornton

Mr Michael Lonergan

Ms Mary Simpson

Mr Liam Brennan

Ms Betty Buckley (to 31.08.2021)

Ms Bernardine Murray (from 01.07.2021)

Mr Paul Coburn

Mr Rossa Coleman

Mr Cormac Cloonan

Mr Fergal Sweeney

Ms Mary Goode (to 31.03.2021)

Ms Marguerite Murphy (from 01.06.2021)

Dr Johanna Archbold

Ms Sarah La Cumbre

Ms Dymphna Fitzgerald

Academic Staff and Student Affairs

The Academic Council is the statutory body appointed by the Governing Body to assist in the planning, co-ordination, development and overseeing of the academic/educational activities of the institute. The academic council, and its sub-committees, protect, maintain and develop academic standards throughout the Institute and advise Governing Body on all relevant matters relating to academic standards. The Academic Council met seven times in 2020/2021 on the following dates:

September 25th 2020

October 23rd 2020

December 11th 2020

February 12th 2021

March 26th 2021

May 14th 2021

June 17th 2021

ACADEMIC COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin (Chair)

Ms Frances O Connell

Dr Niall Seery

Dr Sean Lyons

Ms Michelle McKeon Bennett

Dr Don Faller

Dr Michael Tobin

Mr Michael Lonergan

Ms Jane Burns

Dr Maire Brophy (from October 2020)

Ms Mary Goode (from April 2021)

Dr Johanna Archbold

Ms Cora Mc Cormack

Dr Anthony Johnston

Mr Brian O Ruairc

Dr Patricia Gunning

Ms Elaine Walsh

Dr Nuala Commins

Dr Sile O'Flaherty

Dr Patricia Heavey

Dr Therese Montgomery (to December 2020)

Dr Carmel Kealey (from February 2021)

Mr Seadna Ryan

Ms Karen Costello

Ms Colette Kelly

Mr Eoin Conway

Ms Breda Lynch

Mr Paul Dolan

Ms Martina Curran

Dr Ronan Dunbar

Ms Aine Daly

Mr Kevin Pakenham

Ms Anastasia Platonava (PG Representative)

Ms Nicole Shinnors O'Brien (UG Representative)



ATHLONE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY



DEPARTMENT OF HOSPITALITY
TOURISM AND LEISURE STUDIES

Programme Title

Faculty Of Business And Hospitality

BA in Hotel & Leisure Management, Level 7

This is an Exit Award from the current approved BA (Hons) in Hospitality Management with International Placement Level 8 programme

BA Hons Culinary Entrepreneurship, Level 8 ab-initio programme -amalgamation of the existing Level 6, Level 7 and Level 8 offerings into an abinitio Level 8, (Hons), programme offering.

MA in Tourism Management and Destination Leadership with Embedded Award Post Graduate Diploma in Arts in Tourism Management and Destination Leadership

Certificate in inclusive learning, teaching and assessment practice (15 ECTS). This is a combining of two existing modules (Designing the UDL Curriculum (10 ECTS) and Implementing the UDL Curriculum (5 ECTS) which together form the above 15 ECTS Certificate.

July Stimulus Programmes

- Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Digital Marketing, 60 ECTS
- Certificate in Business in Social Media Marketing and Digital Advertising, 10 ECTS
- Certificate in Business in Digital Technology and Design, 10 ECTS
- Higher Diploma in Business in Entrepreneurship, 60 ECTS
- Certificate in Business in Applied (Entrepreneurial) Strategy & Business Model Development, 5 ECTS
- Higher Diploma in Business, 60 ECTS

July Stimulus Programmes

- Certificate in Food Safety and Risk Management, 10 ECTS
- Certificate in Leisure and Spa Management, 10 ECTS
- Certificate in Rooms Division Management, 10 ECTS
- Certificate in Hospitality Cost Control, 5 ECTS
- Certificate in Pastry, Baking and Desserts, 10 ECTS
- Certificate in Culinary Practice, 10 ECTS

Programme Title

Faculty Of Continuing, Professional Online And Distance Learning

July Stimulus Programmes

- Certificate in BioPharma and Med Technology, 10 ECTS
- Certificate in Contract Law, Customs and the Regulatory Environment, 10 ECTS
- Certificate in Customer Service, Management and Value, 20 ECTS
- Certificate in Employee Development, 20 ECTS
- Certificate in Employment and Contract Legislation, 30 ECTS
- Certificate in Good Manufacturing Practice, 10 ECTS
- Certificate in Human Resources Management, 60 ECTS
- Certificate in Marketing, Sales, Theory and Practice, 10 ECTS
- Certificate in Payroll Applications and Management, 10 ECTS
- Certificate in Project Management, 10 ECTS
- Certificate in Social Media and Ebusiness, 20 ECTS

Certificate in Supervisory Management Skills for Team Leaders, 20 ECTS

Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Quality Management & Validation, 60 ECTS

Master of Science in Quality Management and Validation, 90 ECTS

Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Financial Management, 60 ECTS

Master of Arts in Financial Management, 90 ECTS

Postgraduate Diploma in Engineering in Packaging, Innovation & Product Design, 60 ECTS

Master of Engineering in Packaging, Innovation & Product Design, 90 ECTS

Academic Strategy & Quality Committee	External Panel Visit	Academic Council Approval
10.03.2021	13.05.2021	17.06.2021
29.09.2020	13.12.2020 Desk Exercise Review	For approval at meeting of 24.09.2021
29.09.2020	08.10.2020	23.10.2020
19.05.2021	June 2021 Desk Exercise Review	For approval at meeting of 24.09.2021
16.11.2020	26.11.2020 and 16.11.2020	11.12.2020
16.11.2020	20.11.2020	11.12.2020

Academic Strategy & Quality Committee	External Panel Visit	Academic Council Approval
16.11.2020	20.11.2020	11.12.2020
16.11.2020	26.11.2020	11.12.2020

Programme Title

Faculty Of Engineering And Informatics

Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Computer Engineering for Autonomous Systems, 60 credits

Certificate in Computing in Robotics & Autonomous Systems Special Purpose award, 30 credits (July Stimulus offering)

July Stimulus Programmes

- Master of Engineering in Engineering Management, 90 ECTS
- Master of Science in Energy Infrastructure, 90 ECTS
- Master of Science in Environmental Infrastructure, 90 ECTS
- Certificate in Networks for Computer Systems, 25 ECTS
- Certificate in Engineering in Polymer Technology for Medical Devices, 30 ECTS

Inclusion of Exit Awards on the following Masters Programmes in the Department of Computer and Software Engineering

- MSc in Software Design with Artificial Intelligence (full-time)
- MSc in Software Design with Artificial Intelligence (Springboard)
- MSc in Software Design with Cyber Security (Springboard)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Software Design with Cyber Security

Suite of Programmes:

- Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Computer Engineering for Autonomous Systems, Level 8 ab initio programme
- Bachelor of Engineering in Computer Engineering for Autonomous Systems, Level 7 ab initio programme
- Bachelor of Engineering in Computer Engineering for Autonomous Systems, Level 7 add-on (for direct application)
- Bachelor of Engineering in Computer Engineering for Autonomous Systems Level 7 Exit Award
- Higher Certificate in Computer Engineering Level 6 Exit Award

BEng (Hons) in Mechanical Engineering, Level 8 ab-initio
(with Exit Awards at L6, L7)

- BEng in Mechanical Engineering, Level 8 add-on
- BEng in Mechanical Engineering, Level 7 ab-initio
- BEng in Mechanical Engineering, Level 7 add-on
- HC in Mechanical Engineering, Level 6

BEng (Hons) in Mechanical Engineering with Energy, Level 8
ab-initio (with Exit Awards at L6, L7)

- BEng in Mechanical Engineering with Energy, Level 8 add-on
- BEng in Mechanical Engineering with Energy, Level 7 ab-initio

BEng (Hons) in Automation & Robotics (Exit Awards at L6 and L7)

- BEng (Hons) in Automation & Robotics, Level 8 add-on
- BEng in Automation & Robotics, Level 7 ab-initio

Note:

Exit Award L7 = BEng in Automation & Robotics

Exit Award L6 = HC in Mechanical Engineering

Developed as part of the HCI Digital Academy for Sustainable Built Environment (DASBE)

Suite 1: Construction Data Capture and Analytics (Level 8)

Primary Award: Higher Diploma in Construction Data Capture and Analytics (60 credits)

Sub-Awards/Exit Awards:

- Certificate in Construction Data Capture & Analytics, Level 8 (40 credits)
- Certificate in 3D Laser Scan Technology, Level 8, (10 credits)
- Certificate in Digital Surveying Techniques, Level 8 (10 credits)
- Certificate in Post Survey Data Processing, Level 8 (10 credits)
- Certificate in Digital Construction Data, Level 8, (10 credits)

Suite 2: Virtual Design and Construction (Level 8)

Primary Award: Higher Diploma in Virtual Design and Construction (60 Credits)

Sub-Awards/Exit Awards:

- Certificate in Virtual Design and Construction, Level 8, (40 credits)
- Certificate in "Scan to BIM", Level 8, (15 credits)
- Certificate in "Virtual Design & Visualisation" Level 8, (15 credits)

Academic Strategy & Quality Committee	External Panel Visit	Academic Council Approval
27.11.2020	10.12.2020	
27.11.2020	10.12.2020	
16.11.2020 16.11.2020 16.11.2020 16.11.2020 16.11.2020	26.11.2020 26.11.2020 26.11.2020 20.11.2020 20.11.2020	11.12.2020
16.11.2020		
19.05.2021 19.05.2021 19.05.2021 19.05.2021	15.06.2021 15.06.2021 15.06.2021 15.06.2021	17.06.2021 17.06.2021 17.06.2021 17.06.2021
28.04.2021	17.05.2021	17.06.2021
28.04.2021	17.05.2021	17.06.2021
28.04.2021	17.05.2021	17.06.2021
11.06.2021	External Panel Review – September 2021	For approval at meeting of October /November 2021
11.06.2021		

Programme Title

Faculty Of Science And Health

BSc (Hons) in Pharmacology

July Stimulus Programmes:

- Post Graduate Certificate in Manufacturing Technology Systems for BioPharma/Medical Device Industries 1, 30 ECTS
- Post Graduate Certificate in Manufacturing Technology Systems for BioPharma/Medical Device Industries 2, 30 ECTS
- Post Graduate Diploma in Science in Biopharmaceutical and Medical Device Systems, 60 ECTS

Higher Certificate in Dental Nursing

This was an external review of the programme following a number of conditions set out by the Dental Council of Ireland, which is the Accreditation Body, following their visit in March 2018, when they re-accredited the programme.

Bachelor of Science in Bioveterinary Science Level 7

Bachelor of Science in Pharmacology Level 7

Bachelor of Science in Microbiology Level 7

Inclusion of Exit Awards on the following programmes:

BSc (Hons) in General Nursing

Higher Certificate in Science in Health Studies (after 2 years)

BSc. in Health Studies (after 3 years)

BSc (Hons) in Psychiatric Nursing

Higher Certificate in Science in Mental Health Studies (after 2 years)

BSc. in Mental Health Studies (after 3 years)

Matrix mapping between our AIT curriculum and the QQI/NMBI approved Consortium Curriculum for the MSc/PG Dip/PG.

Cert in Advanced Practice and Cert in Nurse Prescribing documents for the following programmes:

- Certificate in Nursing/Midwifery Medicinal Product Prescribing (30 Credits, level 8)
- Postgraduate Certificate in Science in Advanced Practice (Nursing) (30 Credits, Level 9)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Advanced Practice (Nursing) (60 Credits, Level 9)
- Master of Science in Advanced Practice (Nursing) (90 Credits, Level 9)
- Postgraduate Certificate in Science in Professional Nursing (30 Credits, Level 9)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Professional Nursing (60 Credits, Level 9) Master of Science in Professional Nursing (90 Credits, Level 9)

Academic Strategy & Quality Committee	External Panel Visit	Academic Council Approval
16.11.2020	26.11.2020	11.12.2020
16.11.2020	26.11.2020	11.12.2020
28.04.2021	10.05.2021	17.06.2021
10.03.2021	External Desk Review to take place in Sep/Oct 2021	For approval at meeting of Oct/Nov 2021
28.04.2021		
10.03.2021		
27.11.2020	27.11.2020	12.02.2021
28.04.2021	For approval at meeting of September 2021	

Student Numbers

Student Cohort by Entry Basis for Full-Time New Entrants for 2020/21 Academic Year

Academic Year 2020/21						
	Level	Male	Female	Gender Non-Binary	Total	Female %
ALL AIT	Undergraduate	2694	3055	2	5751	53%
	Postgraduate Taught	420	281		701	40%
	Postgraduate Research	94	78		172	45%
AIT Total		3208	3414	2	6624	52%
STEMM AIT	Undergraduate	1804	1349	2	3155	43%
	Postgraduate Taught	331	174		505	34%
	Postgraduate Research	87	74		161	46%
STEMM Total		2222	1597	2	3821	42%
AHSS AIT	Undergraduate	890	1706		2596	66%
	Postgraduate Taught	89	107		196	55%
	Postgraduate Research	7	4		11	36%
AHSS Total		986	1817	0	2803	65%

In 2020/21, AIT had a population of 6,624 students of which females represents 52%. Of the female cohort, 42% are in STEM which is down 1% from that of 2019/20.

Faculty Trends to 2020/21

Student numbers by department 2016/17 to 2020/21 (including exam only)

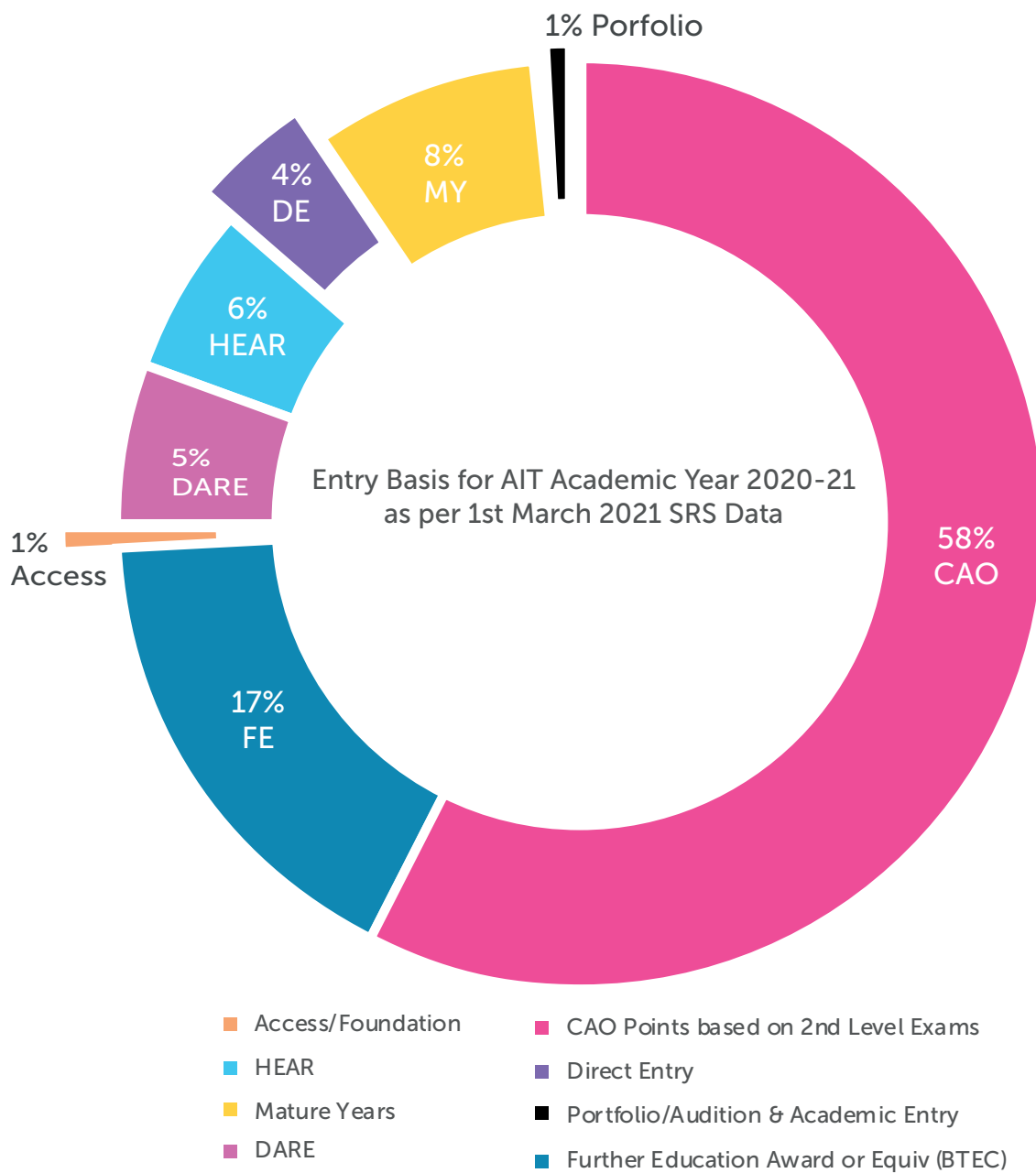
Department	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021
Accounting & Business Computing	568	529	574	633	456
Business & Management Studies	673	613	659	714	640
Civil Engineering & Construction	117	127	148	171	220
Continuing Professional Online & Distance Learning	415	623	626	660	1018
Design	112	109	134	134	138
Electronic Computer Software	534	497	425	674	956
Hospitality, Tourism & Leisure	351	377	338	316	346
Humanities	580	611	618	588	699
Life and Physical Science	485	498	550	579	662
Sport and Health Sciences	341	372	355	359	395
Mechanical & Polymer	244	262	334	435	417
Nursing & Health Care	367	415	463	479	454
Trades	174	192	263	276	223
TOTAL AS PER MARCH 2021	4961	5225	5487	6018	6624
High level Growth/(Decline) year on year		5%	5%	10%	10%

Student Profile Criteria (TU metrics)

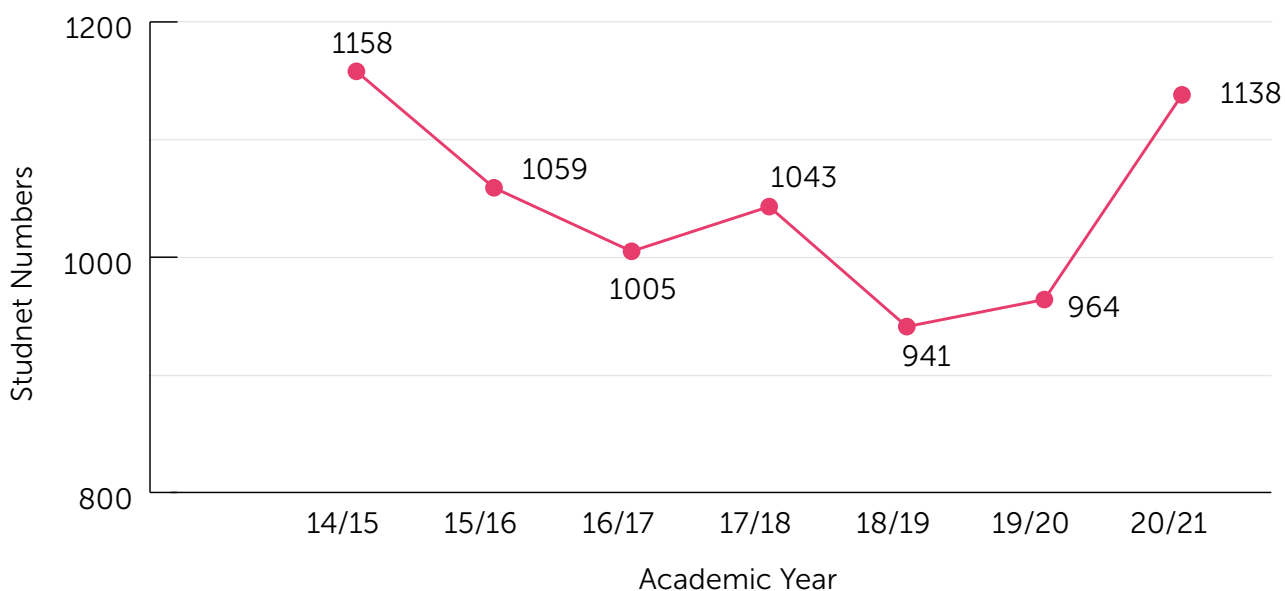
	Full Time	Part Time	Total
FETAC Advanced Certificate	-	223	223
Access (Undergraduate)	18	-	18
Undergraduate General Degree	1,267	280	1,547
Undergraduate Honours Degree	2,216	221	2,437
Undergraduate Occasional Certificate	-	-	-
Higher Certificate	332	62	394
Professional Training Qualification		94	94
Postgraduate Certificate	-	68	68
Masters Taught (Postgraduate)	127	190	317
Masters Research (Postgraduate)	27	22	49
PhD (Postgraduate)	97	26	123
Higher Diploma	16	207	223
Post Graduate Diploma	45	271	316
	4,145	2,479	6,624

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 - At least 4% are research students on application with a capacity to increase within 10 years of the designated date to at least 7%.

TU Metric Calculation		
NFQ	Programme Type	No. of students
	Programme Type	No. of students
8	11 - UG Honours Degree	2,437
9	23 - Postgraduate Certificate	68
	25 - Masters Taught	317
	26 - Masters Research	49
	30 - Post Graduate Diploma	316
10	27 - PhD	123
		3,310
AIT	TU Metric Calculation:	
	Research Students	172/3310 = 5.2%
	Total Eligible Students	3,310

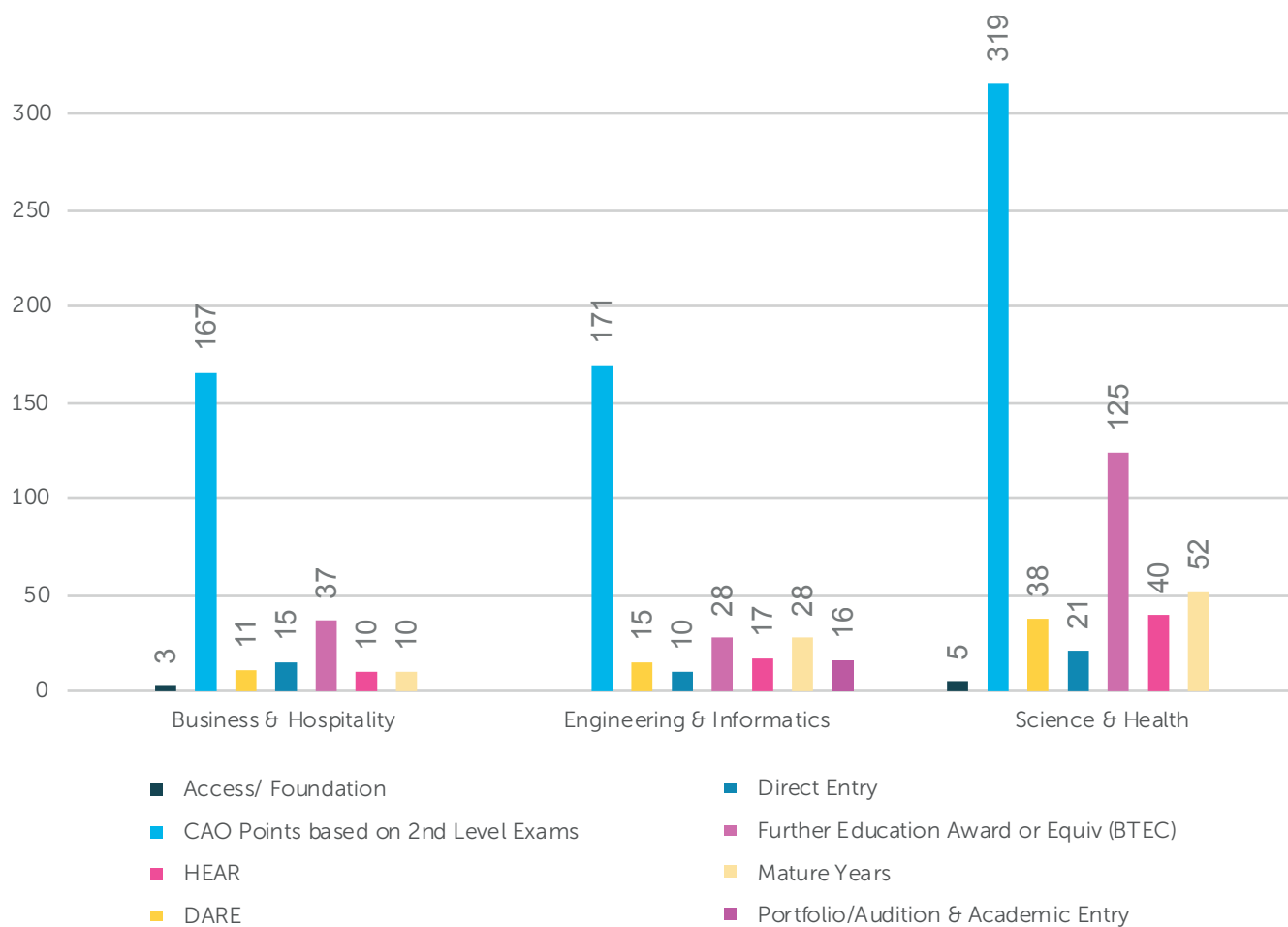


New Entrants Full Time



Student Numbers

Student Cohort by Entry Basis for Full-Time New Entrants for 2020/21 Academic Year

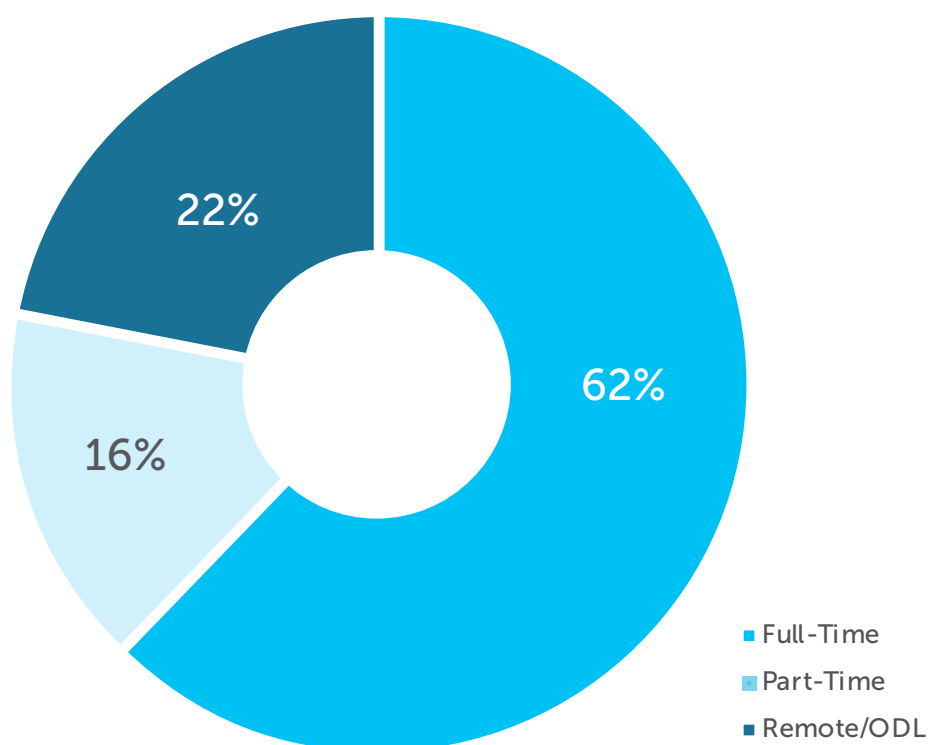


Breakdown by Mode of Delivery 2020/21

Department	Full Time	Part Time	ODL	Total	FT%	PT%	ODL% *
Accounting & Business Computing	169	152	135	456	37%	33%	30%
Business & Management Studies	529	41	70	640	83%	6%	11%
Civil Eng and Construction	143	24	53	220	65%	11%	24%
Electronics & Informatics	644	69	243	956	67%	7%	25%
Hospitality, Tourism & Leisure	256	90	0	346	74%	26%	0%
Life and Physical Sciences	581	57	24	662	88%	9%	4%
Lifelong Learning	0	158	860	1018	0%	16%	84%
Mechanical, Polymer & Design	312	69	36	417	75%	17%	9%
Design	135	3	0	138	98%	2%	0%
Nursing and Healthcare	368	67	19	454	81%	15%	4%
Social Sciences	619	80	0	699	89%	11%	0%
Sport and Health Sciences	389	6	0	395	98%	2%	0%
Trades	0	223	0	223	0%	100%	0%
Grand Total	4145	1039	1440	6624	62%	16%	22%

*ODL is Online, Distance Learning

Mode of Delivery 2020/21



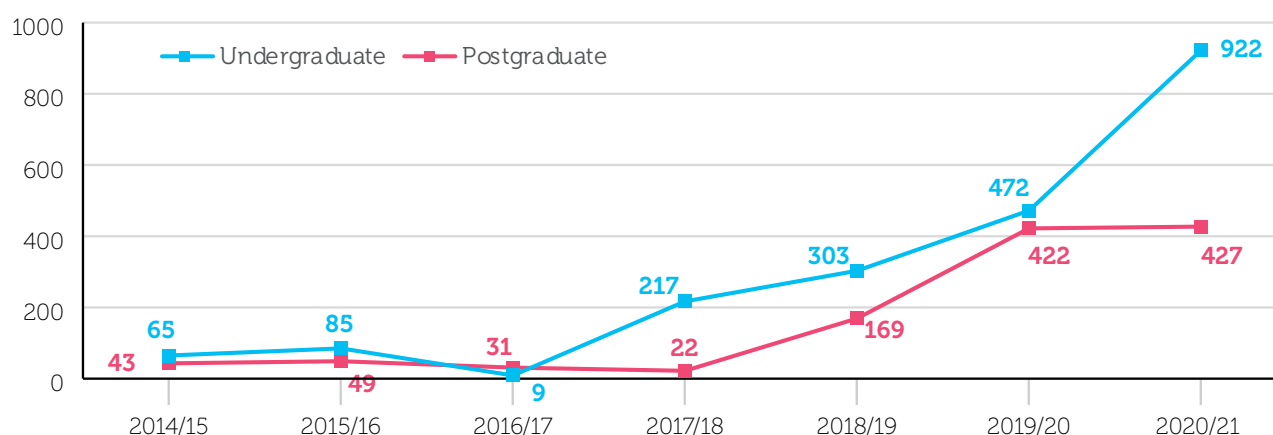
Springboard

Department	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Accounting & Business Computing	17	33	10	0	153	160	102
Business	0	0	0	0	0	79	91
Civil	33	46	19	0	32	43	79
Electronics, Computer & Software	0	0	11	22	16	178	249
Hospitality & Tourism	0	0	0	0	12	54	70
Lifelong Learning	30	23	0	217	245	352	703
Life & Physical Science	0	0	0	0	0	0	24
Mechanical, Polymer, Design	12	15	0	0	14	28	31
Trades	16	17	0	0	0	0	0
Total Springboard & ICT at March SRS	108	134	40	239	472	894	1349

Springboard/ICT Initiatives	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Number of programmes	6	8	4	6		27	43
Undergraduate	65	85	9	217	303	472	922
Postgraduate	43	49	31	22	169	422	427
Total	108	134	40	239	472	894	1349
SB/ICT % Change on previous year	0%	24%	-70%	498%	97%	89%	51%
SB /ICT Numbers change on previous year	108	26	-94	199	233	422	455

*Number of programmes

SPRINGBOARD/ICT STUDENT NUMBERS TRENDING 2014/15 - 2020/21



Postgraduate Data

Breakdown of Postgraduate Student Body by Faculty

FACULTY	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/21
POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT				
Business and Hospitality	91	221	210	182
Engineering and Informatics	52	45	173	283
Science and Health	68	58	51	71
Lifelong Learning	0	7	56	165
TOTAL	211	331	490	701
RESEARCH				
Business and Hospitality	1	1	5	11
Engineering and Informatics	56	58	116	115
Science and Health	29	27	37	46
TOTAL	86	86	158	172
TOTAL POSTGRADUATE	297	417	648	873

Breakdown of Postgraduate Research Student Body by Faculty and Level

FACULTY	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/21
LEVEL 10				
Business and Hospitality	0	0	1	0
Engineering and Informatics	17	23	75	85
Science and Health	7	9	18	38
TOTAL	24	32	94	123
Level 9				
Business and Hospitality	1	1	4	11
Engineering and Informatics	39	35	41	30
Science and Health	22	18	19	8
TOTAL	62	54	64	49

Internationalisation

INTERNATIONALISATION 2020/21					
	Full-time	Part-time	e-Learning	In Service	Total
International - EU	40	4	2	0	46
International - Non-EU	332	21	9	0	362
Europe - Non EU	1	0	0	0	1
Erasmus Incoming (EU and NonEU)	40	0	0	0	40
Other Exchange (EU and NonEU)	0	1	1	0	2
Overseas studies in WXIT	200	0	0	0	200
Total	613	26	12	0	651
% International	15%	3%	0	0	10%



Student Data by Department and Gender for Academic Years 2018/19



2018/19					
STEM (Science Technology Engineering Maths)	Male	Female	Total	% Female	Male
Accounting & Business Computing	146	74	220	34%	154
Dept of Lifelong Learning	64	62	126	49%	55
Business & Management Studies	30	24	54	44%	39
Civil Eng and Construction	131	15	146	10%	157
Electronic Computer Software	333	76	409	19%	514
Mechanical & Polymer	278	28	306	9%	354
Design *	46	81	127	64%	59
Nursing and Healthcare	40	415	455	91%	42
Life and Physical Science	162	347	509	68%	147
Sport and Health Sciences	184	160	344	47%	214
Trades	262	1	263	0%	276
Total Students - STEM	1676	1283	2959	43%	2011
Non STEM					
Accounting & Business Computing	117	251	368	68%	122
Dept of Lifelong Learning	214	282	496	57%	234
Business & Mgmt Studies	291	289	580	50%	340
Hospitality, Tourism & Leisure	171	142	313	45%	178
Social Sciences	89	511	600	85%	94
Total Students - Non STEM	882	1475	2357	62%	968
Grand Total	2558	2758	5316	52%	2979

9 to 2020/21

2019/20			2020/21				
Female	Total	% Female	Male	Female	Non Binary	Total	% Female
78	232	34%	99	66	0	165	40%
80	135	59%	44	43	0	87	54%
32	71	45%	49	53	0	102	53%
14	171	8%	187	33	0	220	15%
173	687	25%	779	177	0	956	18%
49	403	12%	353	64	0	417	15%
75	134	56%	59	78	1	138	57%
440	482	91%	33	421	0	454	93%
385	532	72%	203	459	0	662	69%
189	403	47%	193	201	1	395	51%
0	276	0%	222	1	0	223	0%
1515	3526	43%	2221	1596	2	3819	43%
283	405	70%	88	203	0	291	69%
291	525	55%	309	622	0	931	68%
318	658	48%	268	270	0	538	50%
138	316	44%	203	143	0	346	45%
492	586	84%	119	580	0	699	83%
1522	2490	61%	987	1818	0	2805	65%
3037	6016	50%	3208	3414	2	6624	53%

STAFF NUMBERS

Staff 2020/2021 by gender and category

2020/2021				
Category	Female	Male	Total	% Female
Academic	155	162	317	49%
Research	19	41	60	32%
Professional/Support	175	86	261	67%
Total	349	289	638	55%

Academic Staff breakdown across STEM and NON STEM by Gender

	2019/2020	2020/2021			
Category	% Female	Female	Male	Total	% Female
STEM	43%	86	121	207	42%
NON STEM	63%	69	41	110	63%

Academic STEM Staff breakdown by Faculty and Gender

Faculty	2019/20	2020/21			
	% Female	Female	Male	Total	% Female
Engineering and Informatics	21%	21	86	107	20%
Science and Health	71%	58	25	83	70%
Business and Hospitality	45%	7	10	17	41%
Total	43%	86	121	207	42%

*Business includes academics delivering on Computing, Analytics and Digital Marketing

Academic Staff by Grade Profile

	2019/20		2020/21	
	Total	% Female	Total	% Female
Assistant Lecturer	72	60%	75	49%
Lecturer	206	49%	221	50%
SENIOR LECTURER GRADES *	18	28%	21	33%

* Included are SL1, SL2 & SL3

STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND PARTICIPATION

A total of 43,791 students nationally responded to the 2021 studentsurvey.ie, representing a national response rate of 29%. AIT's response rate of 65%, achieved via a strong partnership approach between the Quality Office, Academic Staff and the Students Union, continues to be the highest across all HEIs, by a considerable margin, even taking into account the difficulties encountered by COVID 19.

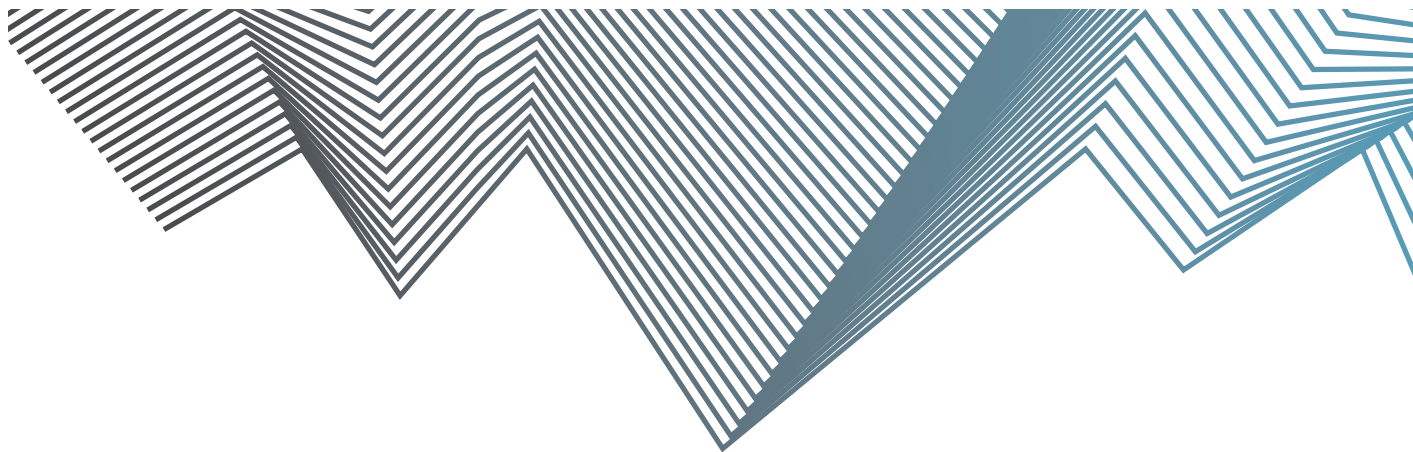
The studentsurvey.ie results for AIT continue to be very positive with 80% of students choosing "excellent/good" when asked about their educational experience at AIT. This is very decisive and illustrates that the student body at AIT value the interactions with their lecturers, the quality of educational provision; the opportunities and support offered to them within the Institute.

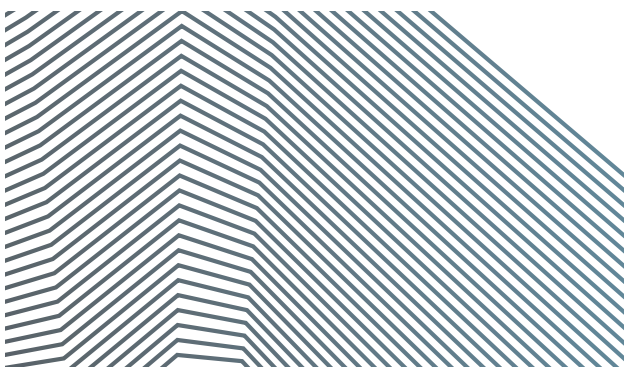
Students were asked if they were to start over again would they go to the same Institution they are attending. 90% of students responded and stated they would "definitely yes/probably yes" attend AIT if they were to start over again. The results from studentsurvey.ie records the experience of students at AIT, allowing the Institute to identify good practice which ultimately enhances the student experience.

Completion Rates Table

Year	National Response Rate	AIT Response Rate
2018	28%	65%
2019	35%	68.5%
2020	31%	68%
2021	29%	65%

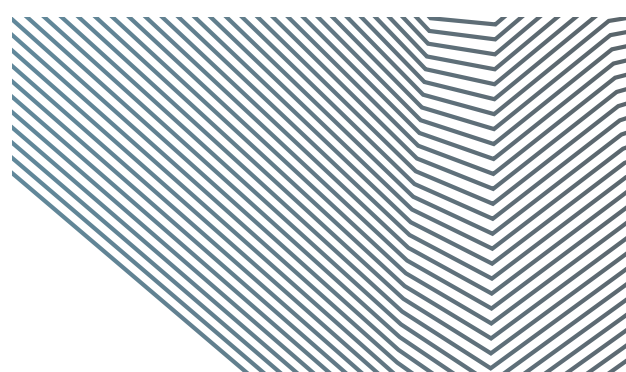
The results for AIT continue to be positive with 85.9% of students choosing good/excellent when asked about their educational experience at AIT. This is very positive showing that students value the interactions with their lecturers, the quality of educational provision; teaching and opportunities afforded to them. Students in AIT have shown appreciation that they have a platform to have their voices heard.





Corporate Governance Statement, Statement on System of Internal Controls and Financial Report

(Appendix A)





ATHLONE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY



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CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
for the 13 Month Period Ended 30 September 2021

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1. Corporate Governance Statement

On the 30th September 2021, Athlone Institute of Technology (the Institute) was dissolved and on the 1st October 2021 the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (the University) was established under the terms of the Technological Universities Act 2018 and the Technological Universities Act 2018 (section 36) (appointed day) Order 2021 (SI 360 of 2021). The University is required under the Act to prepare the final accounts of the Institute. As the Governing Body Chair and President of the University, we make the following statements based on the work of the AIT Governing Body and Management.

Governing Body

The Governing Body of the Institute was established under the Regional Technical Colleges Acts 1992 to 2001 and additional functions were assigned under the Institutes of Technology Act 2006. The Governing Body was accountable to the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and was responsible for ensuring good governance. The Governing Body was collectively responsible for leading and directing the Institute's activities and fulfils key functions, including: reviewing and guiding strategic direction and major plans of action, risk management policies and procedures, annual budgets and business plans, setting performance objectives, monitoring implementation and Institute performance, and overseeing major capital expenditure and investment decisions. The Governing Body acted on a fully informed and ethical basis, in good faith, with due diligence and care, and in the best interest of the Institute, having due regard to its legal responsibilities and the objectives set by Government.

Strategic Plan, Annual Programmes and Budget

The Governing Body formally undertook an evaluation of actual performance, by reference to the Institute's Strategic Plan and Budget and has subsequently approved an Annual Programme and Budget for the Institute.

Compliance with Public Spending Code

Athlone Institute of Technology adhered to the relevant aspects of the Public Spending Code and the Governing Body has ensured robust and effective systems and procedures are in place to ensure compliance with the relevant principles, requirements and guidelines of the Public Spending Code including guidelines for achieving value for money.

Management of Capital Projects

Athlone Institute of Technology's policies and procedures in the management of capital projects were compliant with the relevant principles, requirements and guidelines of the Public Spending Code and the Capital Works Management Framework.

Governing Body Meetings

During the period from 1st September 2020 to 30th September 2021 the Governing Body met on 9 separate occasions:

Figure 1.1 Schedule of Governing Body Meetings and Governing Body Member's Attendance September 2020 – September 2021			
GB Members	Role	Number of Governing Body meetings attended	Number of Governing Body meetings during the period
Liam Rattigan	Interim Chairperson, April 2020	9	9
Prof Ciarán O Catháin	Ex Officio Member	8	9
Brigid Delamere	Under Section 4(1)(c)	7	9
Dympna Fitzgerald	Under Section 4(1)(d)	9	9
John Foley	Under Section 4(1)(g)	9	9
Colm Harte	Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b)	9	9
Frankie Keena	Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b)	8	9
Brendan Kelly	Under Section 4(1)(c)	9	9
Anna Connaughton	Under Section 4(1)(g)	9	9
James O' Meara	Under Section 4(1)(g)	7	9
Pat O'Toole	Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b)	8	9
Clare Claffey	Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b)	6	9
Colette Ryan	Under Section 4(1)(g)	9	9
Geraldine Talty	Under Section 4(1)(f)	6	9
Kathleen Shanagher	Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b)	8	9
Peter Roche	Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b)	3	9
Students Union			
Áine Daly	Under Section 4(1)(e)	7	9
Niall Naughton	Under Section 4(1)(e)	8	9

The Governing Body met 2 times without executive members or management present.

The fees and/or expenses paid to members of the Governing Body were in accordance with guidelines from the Department of Finance.

Governing Body Expenses 2020/2021

Figure 1.2 (1st September 2020 – 30th September 2021)			
Governing Body Member	Expenses	Fees (Interviews, etc.)	Total Paid
John Foley	128.04	300.00	428.04
Pat O' Toole	130.72	5,850.00	5,980.72
Liam Rattigan	-	1,650.00	1,650.00
Kathleen Shanager	102.64	2,850.00	2,952.64
Geraldine Talty	-	300.00	300.00
Claire Claffey	246.21	3,900.00	4,146.21
Frankie Keenan	-	7,050.00	7,050.00
Peter Roche	52.83	-	52.83
Total Expenses	660.44	21,900.00	22,560.44

Risk Management

The Governing Body approved the Institute's risk management framework and monitored its effectiveness, approval and oversight of Athlone Institute of Technology's Risk Management Policy including structured and periodic reviews and updates to the Institute Corporate Risk Register by the Executive Management Team. This review included an assessment of the principal risks, risk rating and associated mitigations for each of the risks set out in the Institute Corporate Risk Register.

Audit and Risk Committee

The Terms of Reference for the Audit and Risk Committee were set by the Governing Body of the Institute and include provision regarding:

- Membership
- Reporting Requirements
- Authority to investigate
- Meetings – timing, conduct and frequency
- Information requirements
- Value for money
- Governance and responsibilities regarding:
 - Risk Management
 - Internal Control
 - Internal Audit
 - External Audit
- Review of its own effectiveness

The Chairperson of Governing Body was satisfied that the Audit and Risk Committee discharged its role effectively and efficiently and met the requirements with regard to frequency of meetings in this period. See figure 1.3 below for details of meetings held during the period.

Other Committee Meetings

See figure 1.3 below for details of meetings held during the period.

Figure 1.3			
Audit and Risk Committee Meeting			
September 2020 – September 2021			
<i>Committee Members (to include External Members where appropriate)</i>	Committee Name	Number of Committee meetings attended	Number of Committee meetings during the period
Colette Ryan (Chair)	ARC	6	6
John Foley	ARC	6	6
Kenny O'Brien	ARC	6	6
Pat O'Toole	ARC	6	6
Brian Feeney	ARC	5	6
Tina Dolan	ARC	5	6

Performance Evaluation of the Governing Body and its Committees

The Governing Body conducted a self-assessment of its own performance and the performance of its committees during 2020/21 which was concluded on 24th March 2021. The Governing Body utilised the self-assessment evaluation questionnaire contained within the THEA Code of Governance for institutes of Technology 2019 for this purpose. The last external review that was carried out on the Governing Body and its committee's performance was on the 25th October 2017.

General Governance and Accountability Issues

Athlone Institute of Technology can confirm that there are no governance and accountability issues that the Institute wish to bring to the attention of the Minister for Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science and the Higher Education Authority 'HEA'.

Asset Disposals

There were no disposals of assets or grants of access to property or infrastructure for commercial arrangements with third parties above the threshold of €150,000 which have not been subject to auction or competitive tendering process during the financial period.

Commercially Significant Developments affecting the Institute

Athlone Institute of Technology was dissolved on the 30th September 2021 under the Technological Universities Act 2018 (TU Act). Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (TUS) was established on the 1st October by Ministerial Order under Section 36 of the Technological Universities Act 2018 and Statutory Instrument (360 of 2021).

Under the TU Act all land, other property, rights in or granted over land or other property, work in progress and pre-existing contractual and other rights and liabilities of Athlone Institute of Technology and Limerick Institute of Technology transferred automatically to TUS on 1st October 2021 and any reference to Athlone Institute of Technology and/or Limerick Institute of Technology in any agreement or other instrument can be read as TUS as of that date.

Other Commercially significant matter: A building contract was terminated in July 2020. The Governing Body were advised on the matter. As provided in the capital works contract the matter proceeded to conciliation which concluded in September 2021. A full and final settlement of €259,000 was approved by Governing Body on the 24th September 2021.

Summary of all Off-Balance Sheet Transactions of the Institute

There were no off-balance sheet financial transactions.

Code of Conduct for Members and Employees

A Code of Conduct for both Members and Employees has been implemented. This includes clear conflict of interest and ethics in public office policies.

Compliance with Government Policy on Pay of the President and Institute Employees

The Institute complied with its obligations under the Government policy on the pay of the President and all other Institute employees.

Please also refer to financial statement's disclosure note 9.

Statement of Compliance

Government Pay Guidelines were complied with in respect of such appointees who served on the Governing Body and any subsidiaries of the Institute.

Confidential Disclosure Reporting - Protected Disclosures Act 2014

Procedures for Confidential Disclosure Reporting have been implemented in Athlone Institute of Technology. These procedures allow employees, in confidence, to raise concerns about possible irregularities in financial reporting or any other matters, as well as ensuring that meaningful follow-up of matters raised this way takes place. The Confidential Disclosure Reporting in place at Athlone Institute of Technology is in line with the Protected Disclosures Act 2014.

The annual report, as required under section 22(1) of the Act has been published.

The Institute had no protected disclosures under the Policy/Act during the 2020/21 period.

Tax Laws

The Institute has complied with its obligations under tax law.

Please also refer to financial statement's disclosure note 11.

Legal Disputes

A breakdown of the legal costs/settlements is included in the financial statement's details below. Athlone Institute of Technology had no legal disputes involving other State Bodies.

Institute Subsidiaries

Athlone Institute of Technology had three subsidiaries which operate for the following purposes:

Figure 1.4		
Subsidiary name	Year of establishment	Purpose / function
CSS CLG	1994	Provision of Catering Services – AIT Campus
AIT SportsCo Ltd	2010	Provision of Sport Facilities and Gym
AIT Training International	2013	To carry on the Business of International, Education & Training. (Dormant)

These subsidiaries continue to operate solely for the purpose for which they were established, they remain in full compliance with the terms and conditions of the consent under which they were established.

An appropriate Code of Governance was in place with respect of trading subsidiaries, with annual statements provided to the Governing Body and the Governing Body received a formal report of compliance from the Chairperson of the Board of each subsidiary.

Please refer to the financial statement's disclosure note 14 for additional detail.

Intellectual Property (IP) and Conflict of Interest

- (i) The Institute confirmed that the Institute had in place a single IP policy, published on its website, which reflects the National IP Management Requirements of the National IP Protocol
- (ii) The Institute confirmed that the Institute had in place a single Conflict of Interest Policy, and that this is published on its website
- (iii) The Institute confirmed that the Governing Body reviewed all IP commercialisation and conflicts of interest on an annual basis.

Gender balance, diversity and inclusion

The Institute recognised the importance of diversity and inclusion for all staff and students of the Institute. To that regard the Institute had implemented a number of initiatives aimed at further promoting an inclusive environment, including:

- Created Equality, Diversity and Inclusion 'EDI' office with Vice-President responsible for all Equality issues within AIT. Appointed EDI Officer to support and assist VP in the promotion of an inclusive environment within AIT.
- Actively engaging in the Athena SWAN Bronze award process and was awarded an Athena SWAN bronze award in March 2021. To this end had convened a Self-Assessment Team (SAT), with staff from all areas of the Institute.
- Appointed dedicated Athena SWAN staff resource to Institute HR department.
- As part of Athena SWAN process the Institute had created an EDI committee (chaired by the President) to oversee EDI activities within the Institute.
- An EDI policy and Gender Identity & Expression policy were approved by Governing Body and were operational within the Institute.

With respect to the membership of the Governing Body, while the Institute engaged in the appointments process, the appointment decisions were made by the Minister. As at 30th September, 2021, the Governing Body had 8 (44%) female and 10 (56%) male members. The Governing Body therefore met the Government target of a minimum of 40% representation of each gender in the membership of boards of state bodies.

Please refer to Figure 1.1 for the listing of Governing Body members and their roles.

Travel and Subsistence

The Government travel policy requirements were being complied with in all respects.

	30/09/21 €'000's	31/08/20 €'000's
Domestic Travel	73	232
International Travel	60	197
Total	133	429

Hospitality Expenditure

	30/09/21 €'000's	31/08/20 €'000's
Staff Events	-	-
Student Events (excluding costs associated with conferring)	-	-
Other External	5	21
Total	5	21

Legal Costs/Settlements

	30/09/21 €'000's	31/08/20 €'000's
Professional Fees	185	104
Settlements	259	-
Total	444	104

During the period additional legal costs and settlements were paid by the Institute's Insurance Company.

Professional fees

	30/09/21 €'000's	31/08/20 €'000's
Professional Fees: Legal	185	104
Professional Fees: Tax and financial advisory	44	77
Professional Fees: Public relations/marketing	-	8
Professional Fees: TU Transformation*	165	-
Professional Fees: Building and related services	165	48
Professional Fees: Other	187	234
Total	746	471

*TU Transformation covers costs associated with TU application and audit of same. Costs associated with recruitment of the first president, marketing costs and other.

Annual Report and Financial Statements

The Governing Body of the University has reviewed and approved the Annual Report and Financial Statements and considers the Financial Statements to be a true and fair view of the Institute's financial performance and its financial position at the end of the period.

Responsibilities of the Institute and the University

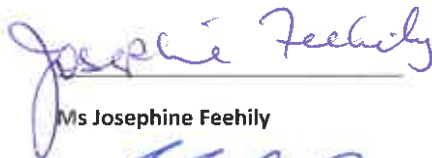
The Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest is required under the Technological Universities Act 2018 to prepare final accounts which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Institute at 30 September 2021 and of its income and expenditure for the period 1 September 2020 to 30 September 2021 and to submit them for audit to the Comptroller and Auditor General. In preparing these Financial Statements, the Governing Body of the University is required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently.
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- Prepare Financial Statements on the going concern basis, unless it is inappropriate to do so.
- Disclose and explain any material departures from applicable accounting standards.

The Governing Body of the Institute was responsible for keeping adequate accounting records which disclosed with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Institute and which enabled it to ensure that the Consolidated Financial Statements comply with the Institutes of Technology Acts 1992 to 2006.

The Institute was also responsible for safeguarding its assets and for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud, corruption and other irregularities.

Chairperson:


Ms Josephine Feehily

President:


Prof. Vincent Cunnane

Date: 20th June 2022


20th June 2022

2. Statement on System of Internal Controls

Athlone Institute of Technology

Statement on System of Internal Controls

Scope of Responsibility

The Institute was dissolved on 30th September 2021 and all assets, rights, obligations and staff were transferred to the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest. Up to the date of dissolution, the Governing Body of Athlone Institute of Technology was responsible for ensuring that an effective system of internal controls was maintained and operated in the Institute and for putting in place processes and procedures for the purpose of ensuring that the system was effective. This responsibility reflects the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016) as encapsulated by the THEA Code of Governance for Institutes of Technology 2019.

As the Governing Body Chair and President of the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest, we make the following statements based on the work of the Governing Body, the Audit & Risk Committee and the Management of AIT.

Purpose of the System of Internal Controls

The system of internal controls was designed to manage risk to an acceptable level rather than to eliminate it. The system can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets were safeguarded, transactions were authorised and properly recorded, and that material errors or irregularities were either prevented or detected in a timely way.

The system of internal controls, which accords with guidance issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, was in place in Athlone Institute of Technology for the period ended 30th September 2021 and up until the date of approval of the financial statements.

Annual Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Control

The Governing Body conducted an annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control for the period ended 30th September 2021 on the 28th March 2022.

Disclosure of Breaches in Internal Control, Weakness in Internal Control and Material Losses or Frauds.

No breaches or weaknesses in internal control were identified which required disclosure in the Institute's Statement of System of Internal Controls.

Review of Statement on System of Internal Control

The Statement of System of Internal Control was reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee and the Governing Body to ensure it accurately reflects the control system in operation during the reporting period.

Appropriate Control Environment

The Governing Body has taken steps to ensure an appropriate control environment was in place by:

- Clearly defining management responsibilities.
- Identifying the principal risks to the achievement of policies, aims and objectives, evaluating the nature and extent of those risks, and managing the risks efficiently, effectively and economically.
- Developing procedures and regulations which were reviewed regularly and were documented, implemented and up to date.
- Establishing formal procedures through various committee functions to monitor the activities and safeguard the assets of the organisation, such as the Audit and Risk Committee.
- Developing a strong culture of accountability across all levels of the organisation.
- Establishing procedures for reporting significant control failures and ensuring corrective action is taken.
- Adopting and adhering to the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016 as encapsulated by the THEA Code of Governance for Institutes of Technology 2019.

- Ensuring the control environment included an active Audit and Risk Committee, management reviews, internal audit function and regular reporting to the Governing Body on financial results.

Business Risks

Athlone Institute of Technology developed processes to identify and evaluate business risks. This was achieved in a number of ways including:

- Adoption of a risk management policy.
- Regular oversight of the risk register, including key risks, risk owners and the controls to mitigate these risks.
- Developing annual and longer term targets and reporting on results achieved.
- Implementation of an Internal Control Framework.
- Regular reviews by the Governing Body and its committees of periodic and annual financial reports which indicate financial performance against forecasts.
- Setting targets to measure financial and other performances.
- Clearly defined capital investment control guidelines.
- Developed and approved a strategic plan and strategic compact with the HEA.
- The institute management prepared and presented the Operational Programme and Budgets to the ARC and the Governing Body in March 2021.

Athlone Institute of Technology has undertaken the following actions in line with its Risk Management Policy:

- Adopted a Risk Management Policy on the 24th March, 2021
- Maintained and reviewed a risk register to facilitate the on-going reporting and monitoring of risk issues by the responsible managers in the Institute including formal review by the ARC.
- Institute Strategic Risk Register and Risk Appetite approved by Governing Body – 24th March, 2021.

Information Systems

Athlone Institute of Technology implemented a number of Management Information Systems to provide a means of comparing actual results to targets and forecasts. These systems included:

- Financial Management – Agresso
- Human Resources and Payroll Management – CoreHR & CorePayroll
- Travel and Expenses – CoreHR
- Student Administration – Banner
- Resource Allocation – Power BI and SSRS
- Timetabling – Syllabus.

Financial Implications of Major Business Risks

Athlone Institute of Technology employed a range of actions to reduce the potential for fraudulent activity. Athlone Institute of Technology's internal control policy framework included written policies and procedures requiring transactions to be properly authorised and providing for sufficient segregations of duties

Compliance with Procurement Rules and Guidelines

One weakness in relation to compliance with procurement rules and guidelines was identified and €27,943.26 of expenditure was incurred where the procedures employed did not comply with the guidelines. The following are the actions and timelines taken by the Institute in order to address the non-compliance with procurement rules and guidelines:

Action: The HEAnet Framework is due in Q4 2022 and it will be examined to see if it is suitable to the needs of TUS.

Timeline: Q4 2022

Review of the Effectiveness of the Internal Control System

The Athlone Institute of Technology had procedures to monitor the effectiveness of its risk management and control procedures. The Governing Body's monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control on the 28th March 2022 was informed by the work of the Institute Executive and Management who had responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework, the Audit and Risk Committee, Internal Auditor and comments made by the Comptroller and Auditor General in his management letter.

As a result of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic business processes were modified by Athlone Institute of Technology in order to support business continuity requirements. These procedures have enabled effective continuation of all services while at the same time maintaining an effective control environment. Athlone Institute of Technology were satisfied that effective controls have been maintained through all relevant transaction cycles. In relation to academic provision the deployment of agreed emergency remote teaching structures and processes had ensured that a blended education delivery model had been maintained to the required and approved academic standards.

Athlone Institute of Technology had an outsourced internal audit function, which is in accordance with the Internal Audit Terms of Reference and the THEA Code of Governance of Irish Institutes of Technology 2019.

Signed on behalf of the Governing Body



Ms Josephine Feehily

Chairperson



Date: 20th June 2022



Prof. Vincent Cunnane

President



Date: 20th June 2022

3. Report from the Comptroller and Auditor General



Ard Reachtaire Cuntas agus Ciste Comptroller and Auditor General

Report for presentation to the Houses of the Oireachtas

Athlone Institute of Technology

Opinion on the financial statements

I have audited the financial statements of Athlone Institute of Technology (now dissolved) for the period from 1 September 2020 to 30 September 2021 as required under the provisions of the Technological Universities Act 2018. The financial statements were prepared by the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest. The financial statements comprise

- the consolidated and Institute statement of comprehensive income
- the consolidated and Institute statement of changes in reserves and capital account
- the consolidated and Institute statement of financial position
- the consolidated statement of cash flows and
- the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In my opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the Group and the Institute at 30 September 2021 and of the income and expenditure of the Group and the Institute for the period 1 September 2020 to 30 September 2021 in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 102 — *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland*.

Basis of opinion

I conducted my audit of the financial statements in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) as promulgated by the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions. My responsibilities under those standards are described in the appendix to this report. I am independent of the Institute and of the Technological University and have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the standards.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Report on information other than the financial statements, and on other matters

The Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest has presented certain other information together with the financial statements. This comprises the corporate governance statement and the statement on the system of internal control.

My responsibilities to report in relation to such information, and on certain other matters upon which I report by exception, are described in the appendix to this report.

I have nothing to report in that regard.

Seamus McCarthy
Comptroller and Auditor General

29 June 2022

Appendix to the report

Responsibilities of the Institute and of Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest

Athlone Institute of Technology was dissolved on 30 September 2021 and its assets, liabilities and staff transferred to the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest.

The corporate governance statement sets out the respective responsibilities of the Institute and the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest for

- the preparation of the financial statements in the form prescribed under the Institutes of Technology Acts 1992 to 2006
- ensuring that the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance with FRS102
- ensuring the regularity of transactions
- assessing whether the use of the going concern basis of accounting is appropriate, and
- such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Responsibilities of the Comptroller and Auditor General

I am required under the Technological Universities Act 2018 to audit the financial statements of the Institute and to report thereon to the Houses of the Oireachtas.

My objective in carrying out the audit is to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement due to fraud or error. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with the ISAs, I exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. In doing so,

- I identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements whether due to fraud or error; design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks; and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- I obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the internal controls.

- I evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures.
- I conclude on the appropriateness of the use of the going concern basis of accounting.
- I evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

I report by exception if, in my opinion,

- I have not received all the information and explanations I required for my audit, or
- the accounting records were not sufficient to permit the financial statements to be readily and properly audited, or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records.

Information other than the financial statements

My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information presented with those statements, and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with my audit of the financial statements, I am required under the ISAs to read the other information presented and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or with knowledge obtained during the audit, or if it otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

Reporting on other matters

My audit is conducted by reference to the special considerations which attach to bodies in receipt of substantial funding from the State in relation to their management and operation. I report if I identify material matters relating to the manner in which public business has been conducted.

I seek to obtain evidence about the regularity of financial transactions in the course of audit. I report if I identify any material instance where public money has not been applied for the purposes intended or where transactions did not conform to the authorities governing them.

4. Financial Statements

Consolidated and Institute Statement of Comprehensive Income

Period ended 30 September 2021

		2021		2020	
	Note	Consolidated 13 month period ending 30/09/2021 €000s	Institute 13 month period ending 30/09/2021 €000s	Consolidated 12 month period ending 31/08/2020 €000s	Institute 12 month period ending 31/08/2020 €000s
Income					
State Grants	3	28,658	28,658	24,221	24,221
Tuition Fees and Student Contribution	4	25,415	25,415	20,607	20,607
Research Grants & Contracts	5	6,347	6,352	5,110	5,115
Student Support Funding	7	717	717	464	464
Other Income	8	5,201	4,170	5,749	3,916
Amortisation of Deferred Capital Grants	19	4,223	4,058	3,392	3,231
Interest Income		-	-	2	2
Deferred Pension Funding	24	14,227	14,227	14,273	14,273
Total Income		84,788	83,597	73,818	71,829
Expenditure					
Staff Costs	9	48,795	48,308	41,440	40,650
Retirement Benefit Cost	24	14,227	14,227	14,273	14,273
Other Operating Expenses	10	12,690	12,496	10,224	9,598
Depreciation	13	4,779	4,168	3,999	3,348
Total Expenditure		80,491	79,199	69,936	67,869
Surplus/(Deficit) before other gains and losses		4,297	4,398	3,882	3,960
Experience gains/(losses) on retirement benefit obligations	24	142	142	(722)	(722)
Reduction in pension liabilities arising from retirements in the period	24	8,208	8,208	3,038	3,038
Changes in assumptions underlying the present value of retirement benefit obligations	24	(7,416)	(7,416)	5,575	5,575
Total actuarial (losses)/gains in the period		934	934	7,891	7,891
Adjustment to deferred retirement benefits funding	24	(934)	(934)	(7,891)	(7,891)
Total comprehensive income/(loss) for the period		4,297	4,398	3,882	3,960

The Consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income includes all gains and losses recognised in the period.

Notes 1-27 form part of these financial statements.

Signed on behalf of the Governing Body



Chairperson, Ms Josephine Feehily

Date: 20th June 2022



President, Prof. Vincent Cunnane

Date: 20th June 2022

Consolidated and Institute Statement of Changes in Reserves and Capital Account

Period Ended 30 September 2021

	Note 19 Consolidated Deferred Capital Grants €000s	Note 19 Institute Deferred Capital Grants €000s	Note 20 Consolidated Capital Development Reserve €000s	Note 20 Institute Capital Development Reserve €000s	I & E Consolidated Revenue Reserves €000s	I & E Institute Revenue Reserves €000s	Consolidated Total €000s	Institute Total €000s
Opening Balance at 1 September 2020	76,617	74,888	2,491	2,491	17,231	5,103	96,339	82,482
Surplus for the Period before Appropriations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Amortisation of Deferred Capital Grants	(4,223)	(4,058)	-	-	4,297	4,398	4,297	4,398
State Grant Allocated to Capital	1,612	1,612	-	-	-	-	(4,223)	(4,058)
State Capital Grants	1,214	1,214	-	-	-	-	1,612	1,612
Other Capital Grants	1,814	1,814	-	-	-	-	1,214	1,214
Transfer to Capital Development Reserve	-	-	2,509	2,509	(2,509)	(2,509)	1,814	1,814
Movement for the Period	417	582	2,509	2,509	1,788	1,889	4,714	4,980
Balance at 30 September 2021	77,034	75,470	5,000	5,000	19,019	6,992	101,053	87,462

	Note 19 Consolidated Deferred Capital Grants €000s	Note 19 Institute Deferred Capital Grants €000s	Note 20 Consolidated Capital Development Reserve €000s	Note 20 Institute Capital Development Reserve €000s	I & E Consolidated Revenue Reserves €000s	I & E Institute Revenue Reserves €000s	Consolidated Total €000s	Institute Total €000s
Opening Balance at 1 September 2019	76,000	74,110	267	267	15,573	3,367	91,840	77,744
Surplus for the Year before Appropriations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Amortisation of Deferred Capital Grants	(3,392)	(3,231)	-	-	3,882	3,960	3,882	3,960
State Grant Allocated to Capital	500	500	-	-	-	-	(3,392)	(3,231)
State Capital Grants	2,274	2,274	-	-	-	-	500	500
Other Capital Grants	1,235	1,235	-	-	-	-	2,274	2,274
Transfer to Capital Development Reserve	-	-	2,224	2,224	(2,224)	(2,224)	1,235	1,235
Movement for the Period	617	778	2,224	2,224	1,658	1,736	4,499	4,738
Balance at 31 August 2020	76,617	74,888	2,491	2,491	17,231	5,103	96,339	82,482

Notes 1-27 form part of these Financial Statements

Signed on behalf of the Governing Body

Josephine Feehily

Chairperson, Ms Josephine Feehily

Date: 20th June 2022

President, Prof. Vincent Cunnane

Vincent Cunnane

Date: 20th June 2022

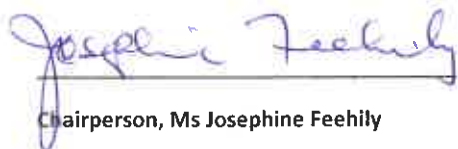
Consolidated and Institute Statement of Financial Position

As at 30 September 2021

		2021		2020	
	Note	Consolidated 30/09/2021 €000s	Institute 30/09/2021 €000s	Consolidated 31/08/2020 €000s	Institute 31/08/2020 €000s
Fixed Assets					
Property, Plant & Equipment	13	86,748	75,693	86,821	75,170
		86,748	75,693	86,821	75,170
Current Assets					
Inventory		3	-	20	-
Receivables	15	3,836	3,731	3,652	3,665
Cash and Cash Equivalents	16	28,463	25,651	17,037	14,586
		32,302	29,382	20,709	18,251
Less Payables: amounts falling due within one year	17	(17,860)	(17,613)	(11,025)	(10,922)
Net Current Assets		14,442	11,769	9,684	7,329
Total Assets less Current Liabilities		101,190	87,462	96,505	82,499
Less Payables: amounts falling due after more than one year	18	(137)	-	(166)	(17)
Provision for Amounts & Charges:					
Retirement Benefits					
Retirement Benefits Obligations	24	(242,932)	(242,932)	(227,334)	(227,334)
Deferred Retirement Benefit Funding Asset	24	242,932	242,932	227,334	227,334
Total Net Assets		101,053	87,462	96,339	82,482
Deferred State Capital Grants	19	77,034	75,470	76,617	74,888
Unrestricted Reserves					
Income & Expenditure Reserve		19,019	6,992	17,231	5,103
Capital Development Reserve	20	5,000	5,000	2,491	2,491
Total		101,053	87,462	96,339	82,482

Notes 1-27 form part of these Financial Statements

Signed on behalf of the Governing Body


Chairperson, Ms Josephine Feehily


President, Prof. Vincent Cunnane

Date: 20th June 2022

Date: 20th June 2022

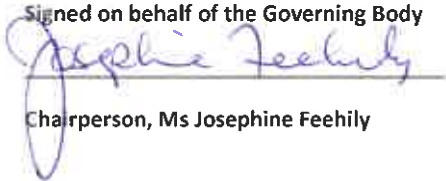
Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows

Period Ended 30 September 2021

	2021 Period Ended 30/09/2021 €000s	2020 Year Ended 31/08/2020 €000s
Cash Flows from Operating Activities		
Excess of expenditure over income	4,297	3,882
Depreciation of fixed assets	4,779	3,999
Amortisation of deferred capital grants	(4,223)	(3,402)
Decrease in stock	17	(10)
(Increase) in receivables	(184)	(451)
Increase in payables	6,806	1,721
Interest income	-	(2)
Capital grants received	4,640	4,009
Net Cash Inflow/(Outflow) from Operating Activities	16,132	9,746
Cash Flows from Investing Activities		
Payments to acquire property, plant & equipment	(4,706)	(4,072)
Net Cash Flows from Investing Activities	(4,706)	(4,072)
Cash Flows from Financing Activities		
Interest received	-	2
Net Cash Flows from Financing Activities	-	2
Net (Decrease)/Increase in Cash Equivalents in the Period	11,426	5,676
Cash and Cash Equivalents at 1 September 2020	17,037	11,361
Cash and Cash Equivalents at 31 September 2021	28,463	17,037

Notes 1-27 form part of these Financial Statements

Signed on behalf of the Governing Body



Chairperson, Ms Josephine Feehily

Date: 20th June 2022



President, Prof. Vincent Cunnane

Date: 20th June 2022

1. Significant Accounting Policies

The accounting policies which are considered material in relation to the financial statements are summarised below. They have been applied consistently throughout the period end to the preceding year.

a. General Information

The primary objective of the Institute is to provide third level education and other associated activities.

b. Basis for Accounting

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, and in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and comply with applicable Financial Reporting Standards 102 issued by the Financial Reporting Council and promulgated for use in Ireland by Chartered Accountants Ireland and with the requirements of the Higher Education Authority.

The functional currency under FRS 102 for Athlone Institute of Technology is considered to be Euro because that is the currency of the primary economic environment in which the Institute operates. The Consolidated Financial Statements are also presented in Euro. Foreign operations are included in accordance with the policies set out below.

c. Basis of Consolidation

The Group financial statements consolidate the financial statements of the Institute and its subsidiary undertakings made up to 30 September 2021.

The subsidiary results include 12 months audited accounts and 1 month unaudited accounts.

The results of subsidiaries acquired or sold are consolidated for the periods from or on the date on which control passed.

Where necessary, adjustments are made to the financial statements of subsidiaries to bring the accounting policies used into line with those used by the group. All intra-group transactions, balances, income and expenses are eliminated on consolidation.

d. Property, Plant and Equipment

(i) Land and Buildings

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost or valuation, net of depreciation and any provision for impairment. Depreciation is provided on all tangible fixed assets, other than investment properties and freehold land, at rates calculated to write off the cost or valuation, less estimated residual value, of each asset on a straight-line basis over its expected useful life, as follows:

Freehold buildings	50 years
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Residual value represents the estimated amount which would currently be obtained from disposal of an asset, after deducting estimated costs of disposal, if the asset were already of the age and in the condition expected at the end of its useful life.

(ii) Equipment

From 1 September 2009, equipment costing less than €3,000 per individual item is written off to the income and expenditure account in the year of acquisition. Where individual items of equipment purchased are below the capitalisation limit (€3,000) and the total purchase invoice is in excess of the limit, these items are individually capitalised in the normal way. All other equipment is capitalised at cost. Capitalised equipment is depreciated on a straight-line basis over its useful economic life as follows:

Fixtures & Fittings including Prefabs	10 years
Computer equipment	3 years
Plant & Machinery	10 years
Equipment	5 years
Motor Vehicles	5 years

All equipment funded from Research Grants and Contracts is depreciated over the life of the assets in line with the policy for all other Fixed Assets.

e. Inventory

Inventory is stated at lower of cost and net realisable value.

f. Impairment of assets

Assets, other than those measured at fair value, are assessed for indicators of impairment. If there is objective evidence of impairment, an impairment loss is recognised in profit or loss as described below.

Financial Assets

For financial assets carried at amortised cost, the amount of an impairment is the difference between the asset's carrying amount and the present value of estimated future cash flows, discounted at the financial asset's original effective interest rate.

For financial assets carried at cost less impairment, the impairment loss is the difference between the asset's carrying amount and the best estimate of the amount that would be received for the asset if it were to be sold at the reporting date.

Where indicators exist for a decrease in impairment loss, and the decrease can be related objectively to an event occurring after the impairment was recognised, the prior impairment loss is tested to determine reversal. An impairment loss is reversed on an individual impaired financial asset to the extent that the revised recoverable value does not lead to a revised carrying amount higher than the carrying value had no impairment been recognised.

g. Taxation

a. Corporation Tax

As an exempt charity, the Institute is not liable for corporation tax or income tax on any of its charitable activities. It is registered for value added tax, but since the supply of education is an exempt activity on which no output tax is charged it is unable to recover input tax on the majority of its purchases. Certain research and commercial activities within the Institute falls into the VAT net, any input or output tax relating to these activities is returned to the Revenue by the Institute.

b. Deferred Taxation

In subsidiary companies, who do not hold a charitable status and are therefore liable to corporation tax, deferred taxation is recognised in respect of all timing differences that have originated but not reversed at the Statement of Financial Position date. Provision is made at the rates expected to apply when the timing differences reverse. Timing differences are differences between taxable profits and results as stated in the financial statements that arise from the inclusion of gains and losses in taxable profits in period's difference from those in which they are recognised in the financial statements.

A net deferred tax asset is regarded as recoverable and, therefore, recognised only when, on the basis of all available evidence, it can be regarded as more likely than not that there will be suitable taxable profits from which the future reversal of the underlying timing differences can be deducted.

h. Recognition of income

State Grants

Recurrent state grants from the Higher Education Authority and other bodies are recognised in the period in which they are receivable. Capital Grants from the Higher Education Authority or other state bodies received in respect of the acquisition or construction of Fixed Assets are treated as deferred State Capital Grants and amortised in line with the depreciation charged over the life of the assets.

Fee Income

Fee income is accounted for on an accruals basis.

Research Grants and Contracts

Income from research grants and contracts is matched to expenditure and included in the year the expenditure is incurred unless the grant has performance related conditions or restrictions associated with it. The most common classes of such transactions are set out below:

a. Donations with No Restrictions

Donations with no restrictions include amounts given to the Institute by way of cash or asset with no restriction as to how the donation should be used. Such donations are recorded in the Statement of Comprehensive Income on entitlement to the income.

b. Donations with Restrictions

Donations with restrictions are recorded within the Statement of Comprehensive Income on entitlement to the income. The restricted income received is held in the temporarily restricted reserve until such time that the expenditure is incurred in accordance with the restrictions.

c. Research grants from non-government sources

Income from grants from non-government sources is recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income when performance related conditions are met. If a restriction is in use but no performance related condition exists, the income is recorded in the Statement of Comprehensive Income when the Institute becomes entitled to the income.

Grants with unfulfilled performance related conditions are held as deferred income until such time as the conditions are met, at which point the income is recorded in the Statement of Comprehensive Income.

Grants with restrictions are recorded within the Statement of Comprehensive Income on entitlement to the income and subsequently retained within a restricted reserve until such time that the expenditure is incurred in line with the restriction.

Minor Capital Works

The Minister for Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science introduced a scheme to devolve responsibility to the Institute for summer and other Capital Works.

In all cases Minor Capital Works funding is matched to expenditure and included in the year the expenditure is incurred.

Income from Short-Term Deposits

All income from short-term deposits is credited to the income and expenditure account in the period in which it is earned.

i. Employee Benefits

a. Retirement Benefits

Pension entitlements of staff recruited prior to 1 January 2013 are conferred under a defined benefit pension scheme established under the Education Sector Superannuation Scheme 2015.

The scheme is operated on a Pay-as-You-Go basis, with superannuation deductions made from employees being retained by the Institute as an agreed part of its funding.

The Institute also operated the Single Public Service Pension Scheme ("Single Scheme"), which is the defined benefit scheme for pensionable public servants appointed on or after 1 January 2013 in accordance with the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012. Single Scheme members' contributions are paid over by the Institute to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER).

Pension costs charged to expenditure in the period reflect the benefits earned by current employees during the period and are shown net of staff pension contributions which, in respect of (i) the Education Sector Superannuation Scheme 2015, are retained by the Institute and (ii) the Single Scheme, are remitted to DPER. An amount corresponding to the pension cost is recognised as income to the extent that it is recoverable.

Pension liabilities represent the present value of future pension payments earned to date. The retirement benefit funding asset reflects the expectation that the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science will continue to pay pensions and retirement lump sums as they fall due.

Actuarial gains or losses arising on scheme liabilities are reflected in the Statement of Comprehensive Income and a corresponding adjustment is recognised in the retirement benefit funding asset.

The financial statements reflect, at fair value, the assets and liabilities arising from the Institute's pension obligations in respect of its current staff only and any related funding. The costs of providing pension benefits are recognised in the accounting periods in which they are earned by employees. Pension liabilities in respect of former employees who are in receipt of pensions are excluded because pension payments are charged to the appropriation account of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The reduction in liability arising from members who retire during the period is reflected as an experience gain. Retirement benefit scheme liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method.

Subsidiary staff are not part of the Public Sector scheme.

b. Short-Term Benefits

Short-term benefits such as holiday pay are recognised as an expense in the period, and benefits that are accrued at period end are included in the Payables figure in the Statement of Financial Position. There is no accrual for holiday pay for Academic staff at period end due to the nature of their contracts.

j. Foreign Currency

Transactions in foreign currencies are recorded at the rate of exchange at the date of the transaction. Monetary assets and liabilities denominated in foreign currencies at the Statement of Financial Position date are reported at the rates of exchange prevailing at that date.

k. Leases

The Institute held no assets under finance leases during the financial period.

l. Deferred State Capital Grants

Deferred State capital grants represent the unamortised value of accumulated funds from State sources used for the acquisition or construction of fixed assets.

Capital Grants from the Higher Education Authority or other State bodies received in respect of the acquisition or construction of fixed assets are treated as deferred State capital grants and amortised in line with the depreciation charged over the life of the assets.

m. Reserves

Capital Development Reserve

The capital development reserve represents funds set aside by the Institute for specified capital development purposes. Such funds arise from Student Registration Fees, non-state capital donations, banking facility fees and transfers from Revenue Reserves. Such funds shall be retained in the Capital Development Reserve Account provided the defined projects to which they are committed are in line with the Institute's Capital Development plan, have been approved by the Governing Body and are time phased and with estimates of costs.

2. Critical Accounting Judgements and Key Sources of Estimation

In the application of the Institute's accounting policies, which are described in note 1, the Governing Body was required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised if the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods if the revision affects both current and future periods.

Critical Judgements in Applying the Institute's Accounting Policies

The following are the critical judgements, apart from those involving estimations (which are dealt with separately below), that the Governing Body has made in the process of applying the Institute's accounting policies and that have the most significant effect on the amounts recognised in the financial statements.

a. Going Concern

Athlone Institute of Technology was dissolved on the 30th September 2021 under the Technological Universities Act 2018 (TU Act). Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (TUS) was established on the 1st October 2021 by Ministerial Order under Section 36 of the Technological Universities Act 2018 and Statutory Instrument (360 of 2021).

Under the TU Act all land, other property, rights in or granted over land or other property, work in progress and pre-existing contractual and other rights and liabilities of Athlone Institute of Technology and Limerick Institute of Technology transferred automatically to TUS on 1st October 2021 and any reference to Athlone Institute of Technology and/or Limerick Institute of Technology in any agreement or other instrument can be read as TUS as of that date. As all of Athlone Institute of Technology's functions, operations, assets and liabilities were transferred to TUS, these financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis.

TUS has completed an Operating Budget for years 21/22 to 23/24 together with cash flow projections to 31st December 2023. This budget has been submitted to the HEA. TUS has considered the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic when preparing those forecasts. There is no material uncertainty regarding TUS's ability to meet its liabilities as they fall due, and to continue as a going concern. On this basis, TUS considered it appropriate to prepare financial statements on a going concern basis. Accordingly, these financial statements do not include any adjustments to the carrying value and classification of assets and liabilities that may arise if TUS was unable to continue as a going concern.

b. Provision for Doubtful Debts

The Institute made an estimate of the recoverable value of trade debtors and other debtors. The Institute used estimates based on historical experience in determining the level of debts, which may not be collected.

These estimates includes such factors as the current rating of the debtor, the ageing profile of debtors and historical experience. The level of provision required is reviewed on an on-going basis.

c. Retirement Benefit Obligation

The assumptions underlying the actuarial valuations for which the amounts recognised in the financial statements are determined (including discount rates, rates of increase in future compensation levels and mortality rates) are updated annually based on current economic conditions, and for any relevant changes to the terms and conditions of the pension and post-retirement plans.

The assumptions can be affected by:

- (i) The discount rate, changes in the rate of return on high-quality corporate bonds
- (ii) Future compensation levels, future labour market conditions

d. Holiday Pay

The holiday pay accrual is calculated by reference to the days' holidays outstanding at the period end. Academic staff do not require an accrual at period end due to the nature of their contract.

e. Establishing Lives for Property, Plant and Equipment Depreciation Purposes

Long lived assets, consisting primarily of property, plant and equipment, comprise a significant portion of the total assets of the Institute. The annual depreciation charge depends on the estimated expected useful life of each type of asset and estimates of residual values. The Institute regularly reviews these expected useful lives and changes them as necessary to reflect generally accepted norms for the relevant category. Changes in expected useful lives can have a significant impact on depreciation charges for the period. Details of expected useful lives for all asset categories are included in Note 1.

3. State Grants

	Allocated for Recurrent Expenditure €000s	Allocated for Capital Expenditure €000s	2021 Total €000s	2020 Total €000s
Recurrent Grant – HEA	24,036	684	24,720	22,257
Recurrent Grant – HEA Nursing	778	-	778	704
Recurrent Grant – Landscape Funding	2,465	44	2,509	957
Recurrent Grant – Covid	1,305	446	1,751	726
Capital Grant – HEA	-	161	161	1,597
Capital Grant – Minor Capital	74	1,491	1,565	754
Total 2021	28,658	2,826	31,484	26,995
Total 2020	24,221	2,774		26,995

Included in the recurrent grant allocation from the HEA in 2021 is an amount of €1,751,000 relates to funding specifically associated with meeting the extra costs incurred to response to COVID-19 while €2,509,000 relates to funding specifically for the TU process; the figures in the prior year are €725,831 and €1,000,000 respectively.

4. Tuition Fees and Student Contribution

	2021				2020			
	Students WTE	State Funded	Non State Funded	Total	Students WTE	State Funded	Non State Funded	Total
		€000s	€000s	€000s		€000s	€000s	€000s
Fees paid by State	3,865	6,634	-	6,634	3,439	4,833	-	4,833
Fees paid by Other State Agencies	23	91	-	91	24	99	-	99
Non EU Fees	298	-	2,719	2,719	362	-	3,025	3,025
Fees paid by students or on behalf of students	1,376	-	1,491	1,491	911	-	1,196	1,196
Life Long Learning and other fees	744	2,103	684	2,787	471	1,338	626	1,964
Student Contribution incl repeat exam fees	-	6,491	5,202	11,693	-	5,491	3,999	9,490
	6,306	15,319	10,096	25,415	5,207	11,761	8,846	20,607
Student Numbers/Net Fee Income								
	6,306	15,319	10,096	25,415	5,207	11,761	8,846	20,607

Where necessary, the comparative figures have been recognised on the same basis as the current period figures.

The Higher Education Authority paid tuition fees in the period of €1,549,096 (2020: €1,306,718) for full-time Degree courses and €319,375 (2020: €303,375) for Higher Certificate and Ordinary Degree courses. The Higher Education Authority paid €958,751 (2020: €946,433) in respect of the tuition fee element for full time Nursing Degree courses. The Higher Education Authority paid €5,909,476 (2020: €3,615,070) in respect of tuition fees for courses under the Springboard/ICT Skills initiative, the total costs of which are part funded by the European Social Fund.

Student Universal Support Ireland 'SUSI' paid student contribution fees €6,133,167 (2020: €5,490,957).

The Fee Income for the period relates to the academic year 2020/2021 and 1/12 of the projected fee income for 21/22.

Student numbers are stated as whole time equivalents based on enrolled credits. Student numbers for the period are based on the March 2021 SRS extract for academic year 2020/21 and 1/12 of the November 2021 SRS extract.

5. Research Grants and Contracts

	2021 Total €000s	2020 Total €000s
Income		
State and Semi State	6,194	5,300
European Union	486	144
Industry	1,094	763
Other	84	116
Allocated to Capital	(1,511)	(1,213)
Total Income	6,347	5,110
Expenditure		
Pay costs	4,444	3,690
Non Pay Costs	2,874	1,842
Total Expenditure	7,318	5,532

Expenditure exceeds Income as both funding received under RFAM Top Slice of €454,043 (2020: €432,887) and funding received under TU Transformation Funding of €1,285,000 (2020: €332,593) are included under Note 3.

6. Analysis of State Derived Income

Name of Grantor	Op Deferral 01/09/2020 €000s	2021 Grant received 2021 €000s	CL Deferral 30/09/2021 €000s	2021 I&E 2021 €000s
Note 3 – State Grant				
Higher Education Authority Recurrent	(479)	33,633	(4,173)	28,981
Higher Education Authority Nursing	-	718	59	777
Higher Education Authority Capital	937	1,613	(816)	1,734
Total State Income	458	35,964	(4,930)	31,492
Allocated for Capital Expenditure				(2,826)
Transfer to Note 8				(8)
				28,658
Note 4 – Tuition Fees & Student Contribution				
Higher Education Authority	189	9,783	(877)	9,095
Student Universal Support Ireland	-	6,224	-	6,224
Total State Income	189	16,007	(877)	15,319
Note 5 – Research Grants & Contracts				
Teaching & Learning	-	6	(3)	3
Enterprise Ireland	(496)	5,966	(687)	4,783
Higher Education Authority	322	1,697	(1,415)	604
Environmental Protection Agency	1	3	21	25
Institutes of Technology Ireland				
Athlone Institute of Technology	32	35	7	74
Health Research Council	(2)	21	(14)	5
Irish Research Council	61	187	(82)	166
Science Foundation Ireland	47	131	283	461
Department of Agriculture	1	-	-	1
BIM	(85)	159	(10)	64
Marine Institute				
Other	(2)	10	-	8
Total State Income	(121)	8,215	(1,900)	6,194
Note 7 – Student Support Funding				
Higher Education Authority	421	587	(56)	952
Total State Income	421	587	(56)	952
Note 8 – Other Income				
Higher Education Authority-IT	-	54	-	54
Higher Education Authority-Entrepreneurial	-	41	(16)	25
Higher Education Authority-Access	-	59	(58)	1
Higher Education Authority-Dormant Account	-	16		16
Total State Income	-	170	(74)	96

7. Student Support Funding

	Disabilities €000s	2021 Student Assistance €000s	Total €000s	2020 Total €000s
Balance at 1 September	148	337	485	158
Receipts				
Higher Education Authority	177	454	631	681
Other	-	3	3	132
Amounts Applied				
Pay Costs	144	-	144	106
Non Pay Costs	64	509	573	358
Total Expenditure	208	509	717	464
Capital	36	267	303	22
Balance at 30 September/31 August	81	18	99	485

Funding is provided by the Higher Education Authority under the National Development Plan and is part funded by the European Social Fund.

8. Other Income

	2021 Total €000s	2020 Total €000s
Superannuation Deductions Retained	1,942	1,727
Rental of Facilities	8	210
Sundry Income	932	1,058
International Administration Fee	713	409
Road Safety Authority	460	374
Subsidiary Company Income	1,146	1,971
Net Outcome	-5,201	5,749

9. Staff Costs

	2021 No. of employees	2020 No. of employees
Teaching and Research	402	378
Technical	42	38
Central Administration and Services	184	168
	628	584
	2021 €000s	2020 €000s
Salaries and Wages	44,094	37,031
Overtime and Allowances	86	176
Employers PRSI	4,117	3,450
Subsidiary Companies salaries and wages	498	783
	48,795	41,440

Key management compensation

For the purposes of this note, key management personnel in the Institute includes the Governing Body, President, Registrar, Secretary/Financial Controller, Heads of School and any other person on these salary grades. This also includes details of any staff on these grades seconded.

	WTE	Salary €000s	Fees €000s	Allowances €000s	Post- Employment Benefits €000s	Termination Benefits €000s	13 month period ending 30/09/2021 Total Compensation €000s	12 month period ending 31/08/2020 Total Compensation €000s
Governing Body Members	18		22	1		-	23	12
President	1	174	-	-		-	174	157
Executive Management	9	1067	-	-		-	1,067	773
Seconded Executive Management	1	174	-	-		-	174	158
	29	1,415	22	1		-	1,438	1,100

Post-employment benefits of key management and the President

Nine members of the executive management team were members of the Institute pension scheme. The pension scheme is a defined benefit final salary pension arrangement with benefits and contributions defined by reference to current "model" public sector scheme regulations only.

One member of the executive management team is a member of single pension scheme. The Single Scheme is the occupational pension scheme for new entrant public servants hired since 1 January 2013. It is a defined benefit scheme with retirement benefits on career-average pay.

The President is a member of the Institute pension scheme and his entitlement does not extend beyond the terms of this scheme.

Termination payments

No termination payments were paid to any staff of the Institute.

Employee Benefits

The table below provides details of employees earning €60,000 or more in salary bands of €10,000:

Salary Bands		Consolidated Period Ended 30 September 2021	Institute Only Period Ended 30 September 2021	Consolidated Year Ended 31 August 2020
From	To			
€60,000	€70,000	54	54	51
€70,001	€80,000	39	38	41
€80,001	€90,000	48	48	153
€90,001	€100,000	144	144	26
€100,001	€110,000	8	8	12
€110,001	€120,000	5	5	2
€120,001	€130,000	2	2	-
€130,001	€140,000	-	-	-
€140,001	€150,000	-	-	-
€150,001	€160,000	-	-	2
€160,001	€170,000	2	2	-
>€170,001		-	-	-
Grand Total		302	301	287

10. Operating Expenses

Analysis of other Operating Expenditure

	Consolidated 2021 €000s	Consolidated 2020 €000s
Materials and other consumables	978	725
Light, heat and power	687	607
Library costs	529	374
Communication, printing and other office costs	446	414
Travel and subsistence	133	470
Security, cleaning and waste disposal	559	444
Rent, rates and insurance costs	403	387
Staff Recruitment and Development	519	298
Audit fees	44	34
Professional Fees	746	472
Settlement Fees	259	-
Computer costs	1,004	644
General educational expenditure	323	333
Commission re International students fees	305	340
Services to students	566	766
Student support	527	353
Buildings, ground maintenance and health and safety costs	970	465
Hospitality	5	20
Marketing and advertising	359	329
Equipment purchases and maintenance costs	460	405
Other expenses	355	314
Innovation Centre participation grants	255	222
Student Scholarships and other stipends	1,466	858
Movement in provision for bad debts	250	34
Refunds and Waivers	21	-
Negative Bank Deposit Interest	125	-
Ancillary activities	396	916
	12,690	10,224

Other Operating Expenses include

Auditors Remuneration

	2021 €000s	2020 €000s
Audit of Institute by the C&AG	44	35
Internal Audit Services provided by a 3 rd Party	32	41
External Audit of Subsidiaries	20	15
Total	96	91

11. Taxation

Athlone Institute of Technology and College Support and Services CLG. are exempt from Corporation Tax under a charitable status order.

AIT SportsCo Ltd has an estimated liability of €62,000 for Corporation Tax for the year.

12. Financial Result for the period

	2021 €000s	2020 €000s
Institute surplus for the period	4,398	3,960
*Loss generated by subsidiaries and other undertakings	(101)	(78)
Surplus for the period	4,297	3,882

Reconciliation to Note 14

	2021 €000s	2020 €000s
*Loss generated by subsidiaries and other undertakings	(101)	(78)
Less		
Amortisation of Deferred Capital Grants	(165)	(161)
Addback		
Grant Income	79	82
Combined results of Subsidiaries as per Note 14	(187)	(157)

13. Property, Plant and Equipment

Consolidated	Land & Buildings	Fixtures & Fittings	Computer Equipment	Plant & Machinery	Furniture & Equipment	Motor Vehicles	Assets in course of construction	Total
	€000's	€000's	€000's	€000's	€000's	€000's	€000's	€000's
Cost								
At 1 September 2020	110,684	7,694	5,847	2,371	14,412	662	490	142,160
Additions in period	298	500	1,038	397	1,319	4	1,150	4,706
Disposals in period	-	(8)	(280)	-	(33)	-	-	(321)
At 30 September 2021	110,982	8,186	6,605	2,768	15,698	666	1,640	146,545
Depreciation								
At 1 September 2020	29,468	6,293	4,803	1,522	12,748	505	-	55,339
Charge for period	2,311	398	903	202	892	73	-	4,779
Eliminated on disposals	-	(8)	(280)	-	(33)	-	-	(321)
At 30 September 2021	31,779	6,683	5,426	1,724	13,607	578	-	59,797
Net book value								
At 30 September 2021	79,203	1,503	1,179	1,044	2,091	88	1,640	86,748
At 1 September 2020	81,216	1,401	1,044	849	1,664	157	490	86,821

There were no lease commitments at 30 September 2021.

13. Property, Plant and Equipment in respect of prior year

Consolidated	Land & Buildings	Fixtures & Fittings	Computer Equipment	Plant & Machinery	Furniture & Equipment	Motor Vehicles	Assets in course of construction	Total
	€000's	€000's	€000's	€000's	€000's	€000's	€000's	€000's
Cost								
At 1 September 2019	109,953	7,521	4,682	2,173	13,427	607	8	138,371
Additions in year	879	180	1,200	212	1,217	55	342	4,085
Transfer from AICC	-	-	-	-	8	-	(8)	-
Corrections	(148)	-	34	-	34	-	148	68
Disposals in year	-	(7)	(69)	(14)	(274)	-	-	(364)
At 31 August 2020	110,684	7,694	5,847	2,371	14,412	662	490	142,160
Depreciation								
At 1 September 2019	27,347	5,873	4,328	1,379	12,272	434	-	51,633
Charge for year	2,121	425	518	146	718	71	-	3,999
Corrections	-	-	26	-	32	-	-	58
Eliminated on disposals	-	(5)	(69)	(3)	(274)	-	-	(351)
At 31 August 2020	29,468	6,293	4,803	1,522	12,748	505	-	55,339
Net book value								
At 31 August 2020	81,216	1,401	1,044	849	1,664	157	490	86,821
At 1 September 2019	82,606	1,648	354	794	1,155	173	8	86,738

There were no lease commitments at 31 August 2020.

13. Property, Plant and Equipment (continued)

Institute Only	Land & Buildings	Fixtures & Fittings	Computer Equipment	Plant & Machinery	Furniture & Equipment	Motor Vehicles	Assets in course of construction	Total
	€000's	€000's	€000's	€000's	€000's	€000's	€000's	€000's
Cost								
At 1 September 2020	96,236	5,891	5,821	2,266	13,362	662	490	124,728
Additions in period	298	491	1,038	397	1,313	4	1150	4,691
Disposals in period	-	(8)	(280)	-	(33)	-	-	(321)
At 30 September 2021	96,534	6,374	6,579	2,663	14,642	666	1,640	129,098
Depreciation								
At 1 September 2020	26,303	4,734	4,779	1,438	11,799	505	-	49,558
Charge for period	1,922	253	902	191	827	73	-	4,168
Eliminated on disposals	-	(8)	(280)	-	(33)	-	-	(321)
At 30 September 2021	28,225	4,979	5,401	1,629	12,593	578	-	53,405
Net book value								
At 30 September 2021	68,309	1,395	1,178	1,034	2,049	88	1,640	75,693
At 1 September 2020	69,933	1,157	1,042	828	1,563	157	490	75,170

There were no lease commitments at 30 September 2021.

13. Property, Plant and Equipment in respect of prior year

Institute Only	Land & Buildings	Fixtures & Fittings	Computer Equipment	Plant & Machinery	Furniture & Equipment	Motor Vehicles	Assets in course of construction	Total
	€000's	€000's	€000's	€000's	€000's	€000's	€000's	€000's
Cost								
At 1 September 2019	95,505	5,718	4,612	2,068	12,174	607	-	120,684
Additions in year	879	180	1,199	212	1,194	55	342	4,061
Corrections	(148)	-	34	-	34	-	148	68
Disposals in year	-	(7)	(24)	(14)	(40)	-	-	(85)
At 31 August 2020	96,236	5,891	5,821	2,266	13,362	662	490	124,728
Depreciation								
At 1 September 2019	24,540	4,456	4,264	1,305	11,225	434	-	46,224
Charge for year	1,763	283	513	136	582	71	-	3,348
Corrections	-	-	26	-	32	-	-	58
Eliminated on disposals	-	(5)	(24)	(3)	(40)	-	-	(72)
At 31 August 2020	26,303	4,734	4,779	1,438	11,799	505	-	49,558
Net book value								
At 31 August 2020	69,933	1,157	1,042	828	1,563	157	490	75,170
At 1 September 2019	70,965	1,262	348	763	949	173	-	74,460

There were no lease commitments at 31 August 2020.

14. Subsidiary Undertakings and Investments

Subsidiary Undertakings and Associates

The Institute held an interest in the following subsidiaries and associates:

Name:	College Support and Services CLG
Registered Office:	Athlone Institute of Technology
% owned by Athlone Institute of Technology :	100%
Activities:	Student Canteen
Loss for the 13 month period:	(€308,762)
Net Assets at statement of financial position date:	€2,333,370

The results for the Company includes twelve months audited and one month unaudited Financial Statements.

Name:	AIT Sportsco Ltd
Registered Office:	Athlone Institute of Technology
% owned by Athlone Institute of Technology :	100%
Activities:	Indoor Sports Arena
Profit for the 13 month period:	€121,433
Net Assets at statement of financial position date:	€10,905,144

The results for the Company includes twelve months audited and one month unaudited Financial Statements.

Name:	AIT Training International Ltd
Registered Office:	Athlone Institute of Technology
% owned by Athlone Institute of Technology :	100%
Activities:	Investment Holding Company
Result for the 12 month period:	Not trading
Net Assets at statement of financial position date:	€3

Name:	Empower Eco CLG
Registered Office:	Athlone Institute of Technology
% owned by Athlone Institute of Technology :	25%
Activities:	Community based Eco Innovation Enterprise Stimulus and Education
Result for the 15 month period:	€2,375
Net Assets at statement of financial position date:	€2,375

15. Receivables

	Consolidated		Institute	
	2021	2020	2021	2020
	€000s	€000s	€000s	€000s
Research grants and contracts receivable	2,136	2,009	2,136	2,009
State grant receivable	636	750	636	750
Academic fees receivable	398	99	398	99
Provision for bad debts	(266)	(33)	(266)	(33)
Prepayments and accrued income	683	619	666	613
Other receivables	249	208	161	227
Total Receivables	3,836	3,652	3,731	3,665

16. Cash and Cash Equivalents

	Consolidated		Institute	
	2021	2020	2021	2020
	€000s	€000s	€000s	€000s
Cash at bank including balances held on Short Term Deposit	28,463	17,037	25,651	14,586
Long term deposit	-	-	-	-
	28,463	17,037	25,651	14,586

17. Payables: Amounts falling due within one year

	Consolidated		Institute	
	2021	2020	2021	2020
	€000s	€000s	€000s	€000s
Research grants and contracts in advance	4,102	2,227	4,102	2,227
Deferred income student support funding	100	486	100	486
Trade creditors	460	816	440	801
State grants received in advance	5,641	1,166	5,641	1,166
Other tax and social security	1,365	1,163	1,352	1,160
Other payables	305	212	305	210
Accruals	1,830	2,002	1,767	1,983
Fees received in advance	3,775	2,289	3,775	2,289
Other amounts received in advance	282	457	131	393
Amounts received in advance under lease agreement	-	207	-	207
Total Payables	17,860	11,025	17,613	10,922

18. Payables: Amounts falling due after more than one year

	Consolidated		Institute	
	2021	2020	2021	2020
	€000s	€000s	€000s	€000s
Other payables	137	149	-	-
Amounts received in advance under lease agreement	-	17	-	17
Total Payables	137	166	-	17

19. Deferred State Capital Grants

	Consolidated		Institute	
	2021	2020	2021	2020
	€000s	€000s	€000s	€000s
At 1 September				
Opening Balance	76,617	76,000	74,888	74,110
State Capital Grants received in period				
Allocated from State recurrent grant	1,612	500	1,612	500
Higher Education Authority	303	22	303	22
Higher Education Authority – Capital	1,214	2,274	1,214	2,274
Research Grants and Contracts	1,511	1,213	1,511	1,213
Total	81,257	80,009	79,528	78,119
Amortised to Income and Expenditure in period				
Amortised in line with Depreciation	(4,223)	(3,400)	(4,058)	(3,239)
Amortisation on Assets Disposed during the period	-	(2)	-	(2)
Corrections	-	10	-	10
Total	(4,223)	(3,392)	(4,058)	(3,231)
At 30 September				
Closing Balance	77,034	76,617	75,470	74,888

20. Capital Development Reserve

	Consolidated		Institute	
	2021	2020	2021	2020
	€000s	€000s	€000s	€000s
Opening Balance	2,491	267	2,491	267
Transfer from Revenue Reserves	2,509	2,224	2,509	2,224
Closing Balance	5,000	2,491	5,000	2,491

21. Capital Commitments

	Consolidated		Institute	
	2021	2020	2021	2020
	€000s	€000s	€000s	€000s
Contracted for but not provided	2,022	-	2,022	-
Authorised but not contracted	-	-	-	-
	2,022	-	2,022	-

22. Related Parties

In the normal course of business, the Institute may enter into contractual arrangements with undertakings in which the Institute's Governing Body members were employed or otherwise interested. The Institute adopted procedures in accordance with the Code of Governance of Irish Institutes of Technology 2019 in relation to the disclosure of interests by members of the Board and the Institute has complied with these procedures during the period.

23. Contingent Liabilities

AIT Sportsco Ltd has a contingent liability to repay in whole or in part grants received from the Department of Transport, Tourism Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht and Sport if certain conditions set out in the grant are not adhered to. The total amount received to date is €925,733.

24. Retirement Benefit Costs

(i) Staffing

Examination of records may identify changes to members' records in the future and these are reflected as past service costs (see (iii) below).

(ii) Description of Scheme

Institute Scheme

The pension scheme is a defined benefit final salary pension arrangement with benefits and contributions defined by reference to current "model" public sector scheme regulations. The scheme provides a pension (one eightieth per year of service), a gratuity or lump sum (three eightieths per year of service) and spouse's and children's pensions. Normal Retirement Age is a member's 65th birthday, and pre 2004 members have an entitlement to retire without actuarial reduction from age 60. Pensions in payment (and deferment) normally increase in line with general public sector salary inflation. Deductions from staff are retained by the Institute.

Single Scheme

New entrant staff, employed by the Institute after 1 January 2013 are members of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme in accordance with Public Sector Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Acts 2012. Deductions from staff salaries under the Single Scheme are transferred to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on a monthly basis in accordance with the Act.

The Single Scheme is the occupational pension scheme for new-entrant public servants hired since 1 January 2013. It is a defined benefit scheme, with retirement benefits based on career-average pay. The scheme generates pension credits and retirement lump sum credits for each scheme member. These money credits,

known as “referable amounts”, accrue as percentages of pay on an ongoing basis. The referable amounts accrued each year are revalued annually until retirement in line with inflation increases (Consumer Price Index).

The annual pension awarded on retirement is the cumulative total of a scheme member’s pension referable amounts, and the retirement lump sum awarded is, similarly, the total of the scheme member’s lump sum referable amounts.

Valuation

The valuation used for FRS 102 disclosures has been based on a full actuarial valuation by a qualified independent actuary taking account of the requirements of the FRS in order to assess the scheme liabilities at 30 September 2021. On retirement members’ pensions are paid by the National Shared Services Office on behalf of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science the payments are charged to that Department’s appropriation account. Therefore, former employees of the Institute who are in receipt of a pension have been excluded from the valuation. The reduction in the liability arising from members who retired during the period is reflected as an experience gain and is separately identified in the liability reconciliation.

The principal actuarial assumptions used to calculate the components of the defined benefit cost for the period ended 30 September 2021 were as follows:

	30 September 2021	31 August 2020
Discount Rate	1.40%	1.10%
Inflation Rate	1.85%	1.40%
Salary Increases	3.10%	2.65%
Pension Increases – Superannuation Scheme	1.85%	1.40%
Pension Increases – Single Scheme	1.85%	1.40%

The mortality basis adopted allows for improvements in life expectancy over time, so that life expectancy at retirement will depend on the year in which a member attains retirement age (age 65). The number of members in the Scheme and the number of deaths are too small to analyse and produce any meaningful Scheme-specific estimates of future levels of mortality. Average future life expectancy according to the mortality tables used to determine the pension liabilities are:

	30 September 2021 Years	31 August 2020 Years
Male aged 65	21.8	21.7
Female aged 65	24.1	24.1

(iii) Analysis of total retirement benefit costs charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Income

	30 September 2021 €000s	31 August 2020 €000s
Current service cost	13,741	11,802
Past service (Gain)/Loss	-	2,410
Interest on retirement benefit scheme liabilities	2,791	2,024
Employee contributions/(benefits paid)	(2,305)	(1,963)
	14,227	14,273

(iv) **Movement in net retirement benefit obligations during the financial period**

	30 September 2021 €000s	31 August 2020 €000s
Net retirement benefit obligation at 1 September	227,334	218,989
Current service costs	13,741	11,802
Interest costs	2,791	2,024
Reduction in pension liabilities arising from retirements in the period	(8,208)	(3,038)
Experience loss/(gain) on liabilities	(142)	722
Past service (gains)/losses	-	2,410
Change in actuarial assumptions	7,416	(5,575)
Net retirement benefit obligations at 30 September / 31 August	242,932	227,334
Split between		
SPSPS	7,464	4,031
ESS	235,468	223,303

(v) **Deferred funding asset for retirement benefits**

The Institute prescribed in S.I. No 581 of 2012 as a relevant authority for the purposes of the Single Scheme. It is the Institute's opinion (in accordance with Section 44 of the 2012 Act) that any liability in respect of the Single Scheme would be offset by an equivalent asset in respect of future state funding.

The Institute recognised amounts owing from the State for the unfunded deferred liability for retirement benefits relating to the Education Sector Superannuation Scheme 2015 on the basis of the set of assumptions described above and a number of past events. These events include the statutory basis for the establishment of the retirement benefit scheme, and the policy and practice currently in place in relation to funding public service pensions including contributions by employees and the annual estimates process. The Institute had no evidence that this funding policy will not continue to meet such sums in accordance with current practice.

The net deferred funding for retirement benefits recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income was as follows:

	30 September 2021 €000s	31 August 2020 €000s
Funding recoverable in respect of retirement Benefit costs	14,227	14,273

The deferred funding liabilities for retirement benefit as at 30 September 2021 amounted to €242,932,000.

(vi) **History of defined benefits obligations**

	30 September 2021 €000s	31 August 2020 €000s
Defined benefit obligations	242,932	227,334
Experience losses/(gains) on deferred benefit scheme liabilities		

25. Post Balance Sheet Events

Athlone Institute of Technology was dissolved on the 30th September 2021 under the Technological Universities Act 2018 (TU Act). Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (TUS) was established on the 1st October 2021 by Ministerial Order under Section 36 of the Technological Universities Act 2018 and Statutory Instrument (360 of 2021).

Under the TU Act all land, other property, rights in or granted over land or other property, work in progress and pre-existing contractual and other rights and liabilities of Athlone Institute of Technology and Limerick Institute of Technology transferred automatically to TUS on 1st October 2021 and any reference to Athlone Institute of Technology and/or Limerick Institute of Technology in any agreement or other instrument can be read as TUS as of that date.

26. Foundations and Trusts

The American Friends of Athlone Institute of Technology was established with the charitable purpose of raising and providing financial support to the Institute and other qualifying organisations.

Whilst Athlone Institute of Technology does not have a shareholding in American Friends of Athlone Institute of Technology Inc., future funding maybe received from this company. This company is currently not actively fundraising and had no revenue for the period ended 30th September 2021.

27. Approval of Financial Statements

The Financial Statements were approved by the Governing Body on 20th June 2022.

