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Our Vision

We have an ambitious and challenging vision for the strategic development of our Institute:

AIT will be a technological university distinguished by outstanding learner experience, international focus, distinctive regional contribution and high quality impact of its staff, teaching, applied research and innovation.

Our Commitments

We are committed to the role we play within the Midlands region and nationally. We pursue our mission across our full range of activities and are focused on fulfilling our commitments, which encapsulate our priorities, ethos and values:

- AIT is a student-centred institution
- AIT delivers career-focused education and research
- AIT provides inclusive access to higher education
- AIT plays a regional, national and international role

Our Mission

We are proud of our distinct mission and role in the provision of higher education for the Midlands region and beyond. The mission statement encapsulates and reflects the Institute's core values.

To provide student-centred, career-focused education, training and applied research programmes for our diverse cohort of learners within a professional and supportive environment. We are fully committed to intensive engagement with regional business, enterprise and social communities while maintaining our global orientation.

Achieving Our Goals

Our strategic goals align with broader national goals including those outlined in the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030.

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Message from the Chairperson

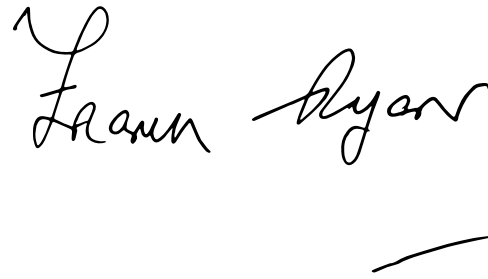
It is with great pleasure that I introduce Athlone Institute of Technology's Annual Report for the year 2018/19. Over the course of its near 50-year history, Athlone Institute of Technology has established itself as a centre of academic excellence with an applied, industry-focussed offering, world-class research and development capabilities, and state-of-the-art facilities. The institute transfers knowledge in a manner that supports entrepreneurs, innovators, SMEs and industry partners, all the while providing students with a training ground for engaging in high technology readiness level research.

The institute has enjoyed considerable successes in the academic arena this year, most notably being Ireland's first institute of technology to accede to the prestigious Advanced Materials and BioEngineering Research (AMBER) centre headquartered at Trinity College Dublin. It also tops Ireland's official league table for research and is listed in U-Multirank's 'Top 25 Performing Universities in the World for Interdisciplinary Research' for the second consecutive year. Further solidifying its success, Athlone Institute of Technology is Ireland's top ranked third level institute for student satisfaction with their educational experience – a rating it has maintained for six consecutive years. This is in large part, thanks to staff, who individually and collectively, make a vital contribution to the enhancement of its educational provision through their attention to students' experiences as learners. These accolades build upon Athlone Institute of Technology's success in winning the Sunday Times Good University Guide 'Institute of Technology of the Year' award in 2018.

The ambitious institute is also on a trajectory to become the country's second technological university (TU). Achieving TU designation is of vital importance to unlocking the potential of the Midlands region and ensuring its continued competitiveness. The Governing Body remains steadfast in its commitment to achieving this key objective. Athlone Institute of Technology, under the direction of its President, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, has already made significant strides in this matter, such as strengthening the institute's research output. This has proven instrumental in helping it develop and expand its growing international reputation as Ireland's leading institute of technology.

As the sole higher education institute serving the region, Athlone Institute of Technology is uniquely positioned to leverage the Midlands for the betterment of the communities that live, work and raise families here. This forward-thinking institute is firm in its resolve to afford learners new opportunities that were previously unavailable in the region by delivering transformative education and achieving TU designation. Athlone Institute of Technology will continue to grow the competitive advantage of Irish-based companies, increase the number of high-growth knowledge-based start-up companies and support the attraction of additional foreign direct investment to the region through its research and industry engagement as it has done so successfully this past year.

Finally, people are at the core of this institute and are integral to its past, present and future successes. On behalf of the Governing Body, I would like to take this opportunity to commend its community of students, staff, and stakeholders in the wider community who have made it what it is today: an education powerhouse that consistently punches above its weight, defying expectations and outperforming competitors across the higher education sector.



Frank Ryan
Chairperson, Governing Body



We are the **Home of Knowledge**
Creators, Innovators and Leaders



THE  TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES
**GOOD
UNIVERSITY
GUIDE
2017**

INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY
OF THE YEAR
RUNNER-UP

THE  TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES
**GOOD
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2018**

INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY
OF THE YEAR

Over the summer we announced our partnership with the prestigious AMBER SFI Research Centre headquartered at Trinity College Dublin. In doing so, we became the first in the technological higher education space and eighth nationally to formally accede to the centre - a testament to our world class materials research and engineering capabilities. This exciting new partnership will foster research and education initiatives between the institute and existing AMBER partners (TCD, RCSI, UCC, DCU, NUIG, UL and Tyndall Institute) promoting academic exchange and the development of research and innovation, particularly in the field of bio-materials for health and the circular economy, an economic system aimed at minimizing waste.

Bringing AIT into AMBER's established research clusters will enable the centre to address current gaps in knowledge, drive advances in materials science and engineering, and translate research excellence into new products and technologies for society and solutions for industry. Our researchers will help develop new sustainable polymer strategies, such as polymer recycling and emerging biopolymers, as alternatives to the reliance on the traditional fossil fuel-driven polymer sector.

We were also awarded €1.1 million in Enterprise Ireland capital funding to purchase specialist equipment for our technology gateways – APT and COMAND (The most successful centres on EI Technology Gateway network). APT, which deals with polymers, will receive the bulk of the funding, €974,000, for seven pieces of highly specialised equipment. This will enable AIT to better serve the needs of the Irish manufacturing industry within the polymer space (valued at €2 billion) particularly in regard to upskilling, research and development techniques, and providing world-class consultancy to those companies, helping them execute their technological road maps.

The equipment approved for funding is aimed at extremely advanced applications and cutting-edge research and development. Receiving this funding is a huge endorsement of the work that we're doing and will enable us to support companies interested in trying out new technologies and techniques, all of which will enable their own innovation agendas. On top of that, this funding will further position us to help upskill companies whether that be through short term training courses, master's degrees or PhD level - wherever they feel there is a gap in their knowledge. The specialist equipment will be fully installed on campus by the beginning of 2020.

As the sole higher education institute servicing the Midlands, we are 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. To this end, we recently established a fourth faculty to facilitate flexible learning. The suite of programmes on offer within the Faculty of Continuous, Online, Professional and Distance Learning furnish learners with the skills and competencies necessary to begin or advance their career in a wide array of sectors and enhance future career prospects. The new faculty has gone from strength to strength, pulling in €3 million in Springboard/ICT Skills funding to deliver 23 exciting undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. In excess of 740 places have been made available to prospective learners looking to upskill, change career or return to employment.

I'm delighted to say that Athlone Institute of Technology was once again named a U-Multirank 'Top 25 Universities in the World' for interdisciplinary research. The U-Multirank university rankings use five key metrics to determine a college's performance. Of this, we achieved a performance profile rating of five 'A' scores (Up from 3 last year). Receiving this award for a second consecutive year further solidifies our status as a fulcrum of research and development and is a testament to the world-class research being carried out across our three research centres and two technology gateways.

In other exciting news, we partnered with the €47 million SFI CONFIRM centre to open Ireland's first polymer test bed open to industry. The cell houses a pilot line which our CONFIRM-funded investigators – Dr Declan Devine, Dr Niall Murray, Dr Brian Lee, Dr Sean Lyons, Dr Enda Fallon and Dr Yuansong Qiao, are using to educate and familiarise industry with new smart manufacturing technologies and the benefits of their subsequent adoption. For Ireland to move forward as a centre of smart manufacturing, it's crucial that industry gets behind it. We're trying to facilitate this by upskilling people in emerging technologies and giving industry a testing-ground to try out these new smart manufacturing capabilities.

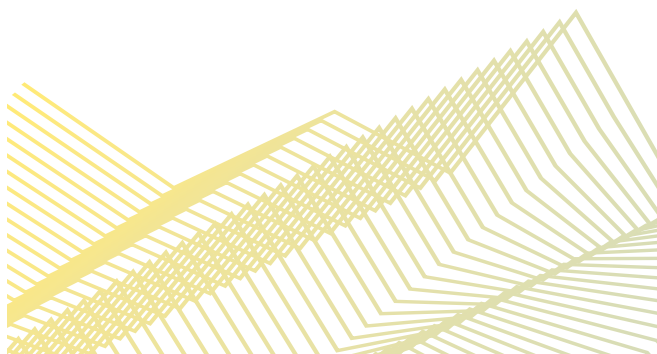
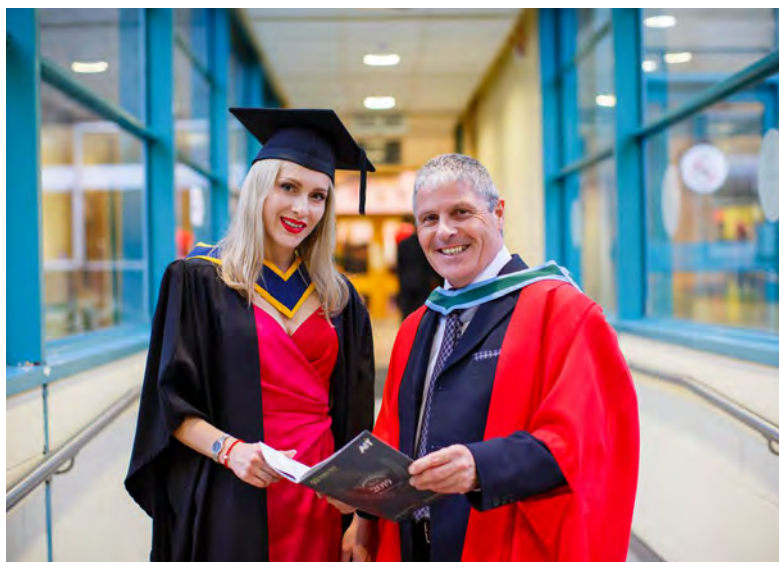
We also signed a cooperation agreement with a renowned early years education provider in Malaysia to facilitate the development of online modules, research projects and curricula for early years care and education degrees and the bilateral flow of students and staff. This educational partnership will greatly enhance the learning of early years care and education students, equipping them with the skills necessary to carve out successful careers internationally and at home and encourage more Malaysian students to study with us.

I'm delighted to also announce that we have just been awarded €5 million in H2020 funding to lead Project BioICEP, a pan European-Chinese collaboration formed to reduce the burden of plastic waste in the environment. The project will be led by one of our post-doctoral researchers Dr Margaret Brennan Fournet. The Bio Innovation of a Circular Economy for Plastics (BioICEP) project will involve 12 partners from eight countries.

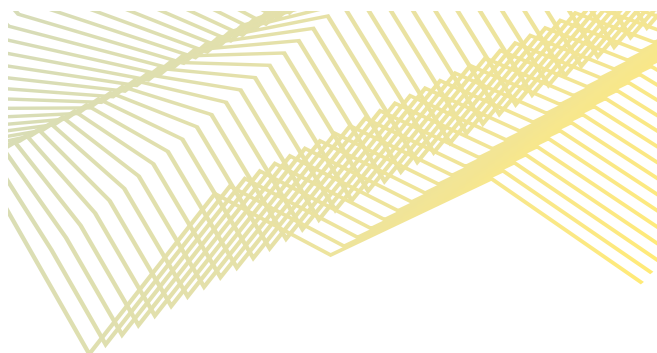
Finally, our ambition of achieving technological university status remains resolute. As leaders in industry, as leaders in the region, we are intent on driving forward the advancement of the midlands and surrounding region which will be instrumental to the success of the Midlands 2040 plan. I would like to pay tribute to our community of staff, students and industry partners - each of whom have contributed to the development of our institute and are instrumental to ensuring its continued success.



Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin
President, Athlone Institute of Technology



2018/19 Highlights





2018/2019 Highlights



AIT Emerges as a **'Top 25 Performing University'** Globally for Interdisciplinary Research

Athlone Institute of Technology has been awarded U-Multirank 'Top 25 Performing Universities in the World' in the category of interdisciplinary research for the second consecutive year. The U-Multirank university rankings, which show how Irish colleges are performing in comparison to their international counterparts, use five key metrics to determine a college's performance: Teaching and Learning, Knowledge Transfer, Regional Collaboration, Research and International Orientation. Of this, Athlone Institute of Technology has a performance profile rating of five 'A' scores (Up from 3 last year).

The award-winning institute is one of only two Irish higher education institutes to make this year's 'Top 25' list in the area of interdisciplinary research which is predicated on the number of times an academic publication of one discipline refers to another from a different field of science. The greater the distance between the two fields, the higher the degree of interdisciplinary research at a higher education institute. Given that the frontiers of research are often at the edge of disciplines, the interdisciplinary nature of research is also reflective of its innovative, cutting-edge character.

"Receiving this award for the second consecutive year further solidifies our status as a fulcrum of research and development and is a testament to the world-class research being carried out across our three research centres and two technology gateways," Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, President of Athlone Institute of Technology, said. "We are firmly committed to further developing our world-leading applied research activities which enrich civic, social and cultural engagement, and continuing to be a catalyst for positive social change within our community,"

AIT Students **'Most Satisfied'** in Ireland, According to National Survey

Students studying at Athlone Institute of Technology are the most satisfied in Ireland, it was revealed in this year's Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE). The annual survey, which looked at twenty-seven public higher education institutions, considered nine aspects of the student experience, including effective teaching practices, higher order learning, reflective and integrative learning, learning strategies, student-faculty interaction, overall quality of interactions, a supportive academic environment, collaborative learning and quantitative reasoning.

Consistently performing well in each of these areas, AIT took the top spot for both collaborative learning and quality of interactions, the latter of which concerns students' experiences of supportive relationships with a range of other people and roles on campus, while the former refers to the extent to which students collaborate with peers to solve problems or to master difficult material, thereby deepening their understanding.

The award-winning institute, which took home the accolade The Sunday Times 'Institute of the Year' in 2018, continues to enjoy the highest ISSE student response rate nationally (60.5% versus 27.2%). In total, 38,371 students enrolled on taught programmes, at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, took part in the survey, amounting to 28% of the target population and an increase of 2,521 over 2017.

Welcoming the findings, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar, Dr Niall Seery, said: "Our continued success in the realm of student satisfaction is indicative of the quality of student experience on offer at our institute. We've worked tirelessly to cultivate a warm, welcoming and inclusive campus environment that lends itself to student well-being. At our award-winning institute, the student voice is a critical part of our quality assurance processes and this translates to overall happiness levels. We're extremely proud of our endeavours in this area and in retaining the title for most satisfied student body."



Banking on Bottles: **AIT Launches Green Team Initiative**

Athlone Institute of Technology launched a brand-new eco-initiative with the intention of educating students, staff and the wider community about the circular economy and responsible consumption of plastic.

Dubbed 'AIT Green Team', the new plastic bottle collection and recycling scheme highlights the importance of 'appropriately sorting and recycling the material used to make clear plastic' for the benefit of the environment. The material, called Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET), is a strong and lightweight plastic often used in the production of food and beverage packaging. Despite this, consumer awareness of its value remains low.

According to Dr Noel Gately, who is the manager of Enterprise Ireland's Applied Polymer Technology Gateway (housed in Athlone Institute of Technology), plastic is actually an incredibly valuable material that, when designed and disposed of properly, can be recycled repeatedly to make new products.

"The clear plastic soft drinks bottles used by brands like Coca Cola, Fanta or Pepsi – are all highly recyclable and can be reprocessed into new products. It's imperative that we start viewing plastic as a natural resource," he explained. Per inhabitant, Ireland is one of the top producers of plastic waste in the EU, with the majority of its waste being exported at a very low cost, landfilled or incinerated, as is the case in most European countries.

"This is devastating for the environment and for the economy and by shipping this material out of the country or landfilling, the potential to upcycle the material is lost," Dr Gately added. With this in mind, Athlone Institute of Technology has partnered with Shabra, a company that has transformed the Irish recycling landscape through the reprocessing of plastic waste film and post-consumer bottles. For every tonne of plastic waste collected, Shabra generously donates to the institute's Student Hardship Fund.

"We're delighted to collaborate with them on this project, which we hope will help educate our staff and students - as a microcosm of Irish society - about sustainable plastic packaging solutions and being more responsible in our consumption of plastic," Dr Declan Devine, director of Athlone Institute of Technology's Materials Research Institute, said. "As we move towards a circular economy, where design and production must fully respect reuse, repair and recycling needs, it is imperative that we raise awareness of sustainability. We're also extremely thankful to our industry partner Teleflex for supporting us in this endeavour and helping incentivise staff and students to recycle by sponsoring prizes."

A leader in polymer research and innovation since the 1970s, Athlone Institute of Technology is making meaningful strides in plastics recycling research and development.





AIT Pays Tribute to Polymer Engineering Benefactor John Goor

Athlone Institute of Technology has unveiled a plaque dedicated to the life and legacy of the late John Goor, whose company JL Goor has supplied the Irish polymer industry with machinery, equipment, and polymer materials for more than 30 years. The ceremony, which took place in the institute's state-of-the-art Engineering and Informatics facility, celebrated the Wicklow man's significant contributions to the higher education landscape, all of which have left an indelible mark on the Irish plastics industry.

"John's enduring interest in polymer education, which began in the 1980s, led to a decades-long partnership with Athlone Institute of Technology that has brought prosperity and economic progress to the Midlands," Dr Sean Lyons, Dean of Engineering and Informatics, said. "He greatly enhanced the practical aspect of our polymer degree programmes through the donation and repairing of equipment and worked with lecturers to inform course content and provide work placements for our students."

Mr Goor also used his influence, both as a businessman and a member of the Institute of Materials (IoM), to attract influential people to speak at the IoM's annual conference with the view to informing attendees, many of them AIT polymer students, about new technologies and developments within the field. "John was invested in cultivating the next crop of graduate materials engineers to ensure the continued success and growth of the plastics industry. His considerable expertise

and industry experience meant that he was very good at identifying gaps in knowledge and so helped us develop course content to fill these gaps," Dr Lyons explained. At the time, Athlone Institute of Technology was one of the only colleges in the country specialising in polymer engineering and supplying a burgeoning industry with a steady pipeline of talented, technically minded graduates. Conscious of this, Mr Goor created the JL Goor Scholarship Fund, supporting students throughout the second, third and fourth year of their degree with a bursary, access to equipment and mentorship.





In naming this theatre and unveiling his plaque, we wish to acknowledge all that John has achieved throughout his life and for his part in helping make Athlone Institute of Technology what it is today - an institute at the forefront of polymer research and development.

"John was an extremely generous man with a strong altruistic core. His legacy will live on through his family, this institute and the students whose lives he was instrumental in shaping. In naming this theatre and unveiling his plaque, we wish to acknowledge all that John has achieved throughout his life and for his part in helping make Athlone Institute of Technology what it is today - an institute at the forefront of polymer research and development," Dr Lyons said. At the ceremony, Mr Goor's son Louis, who 'puts the 'L' in JL Goor', spoke of his immense family pride for all that his father accomplished, his passion for engineering and materials education and his staunch support for the institute, adding: "I pledge to continue the tradition of outreach that my father started and I hope that, in time, each of the engineering students supported through the JL Goor Scholarship will be in a position to 'pay it forward' and help other young polymer engineering students."

JL Goor Materials Ltd Managing Director Gearoid Clarke was also in attendance to see the unveiling of the eponymous plaque and lecture theatre. A graduate of Athlone Institute of Technology's Polymer Engineering degree, Mr Clarke met the Goors in 1994 following an introduction from Paul Blackie, one of the institute's polymer engineering lecturers. From the encounter sprang an employment opportunity concerning a survey of resin requirements in industry – which ultimately led to the formation of JL Goor Materials LTD and a long-lasting friendship with the Goor family.

"John's passion and willingness to share his extensive industry knowledge and years of experience is, in large part, why we stand here today. His relationship with Athlone Institute of Technology was extremely important to him and consequently remains extremely important to JL Goor today. Given the institute's pivotal role in the development of the Irish polymer industry and in producing the next generation of polymer engineers, this is a wonderful way to honour John, ensuring that his legacy lives on through those whose lives he has touched," Mr Clarke said.

Mr Goor's wife and family attended the unveiling ceremony, as did key members of the Irish polymer industry, such as Declan O'Rourke (Longford Tool and Plastics), Catherine Collins (First Polymer Training) and former JL Goor Scholarship recipients, many of whom now work in industry themselves. Commemorating the occasion, the Goor family were presented with an engraved bog oak sculpture from the Celtic Roots studio in Ballinahown.





AIT Secures €3 Million in Springboard Funding for More Than 700 Places

Athlone Institute of Technology was awarded €3 million in Springboard+ funding across 23 exciting, industry-focussed programmes ranging from level 6-9. In total, more than 742 places have been made available to prospective learners looking to upskill, change career or return to employment. Some of the programmes on offer include emerging technologies such as Blockchain, Augmented and Virtual Reality, Data Analysis and Visualisation, as well as Civil Engineering and Construction, Advanced Polymer Materials, Cybersecurity, Culinary Arts and Applied Laboratory Science.

According to Dr Michael Tobin, Dean of Faculty of Continuous, Online, Professional and Distance Learning, each nationally-accredited, flexible programme has been designed in response to the current and future needs of industry in the Midlands and presents a unique opportunity for learners to avail of free or heavily subsidised upskilling or reskilling. "Lifelong learning is crucial to being 'job-fit' in the modern workforce.

As we move towards a digital economy, new technologies and opportunities are emerging which mandate that workers upskill to maintain the competitiveness of industry and business," he said. "Our Springboard+ offering will furnish learners with the skills and competencies necessary to begin or advance their career in a wide array of sectors and enhance future career prospects."

Springboard+ and ICT Skills programmes, which traditionally were only available to those on social welfare, are now also open to those currently in employment and those considering

returning to employment after a prolonged period of absence, such as homemakers. To support learners, and in recognition of changing learner demographics, Springboard+ programmes are offered through a wide range of flexible and innovative learning routes designed to work around career and familial commitments.

As we move towards a digital economy, new technologies and opportunities are emerging which mandate that workers upskill to maintain the competitiveness of industry and business.

One of the key targets set out by Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 includes an ambition to increase Ireland's lifelong learning participation rate to 10% by 2020 and to 15% by 2025. The EU has also set a lifelong learning target of 15% by 2020.

"Springboard+ facilitates the continued growth and development of the Irish workforce, helping future-proof career prospects by keeping learners skills and knowledge up-to-date, which in turn boosts professional credibility and employability," Seadna Ryan, Head of Department of Lifelong Learning, said.



AIT Launches Institutional Repository

Making Research Accessible to the Wider Community

Athlone Institute of Technology launched its official online repository for academic research with the view to demonstrating the impressive footprint of its researchers and making their work accessible to the wider community. The institutional repository acts as a means for collecting, preserving, and disseminating digital copies of intellectual output while representing the centralisation of research and scholarly output under the domain of the institute library.

Under this umbrella, the library is central to the development of scholarly communications, research data management services and digital scholarship engagement. Placing green open access scholarly research in a central repository has been shown to be one of the most impactful research communication strategies. Not only does it preserve academic research, but it also significantly increases one's chances of being cited as it aids discoverability.

Currently, most publishers will allow the final unpublished version (post peer-review) of a paper to be deposited into a research repository like Research@THEA: AIT, meaning that the repository version and the published version of a paper can be published and hyperlinked. In effect, this means that academic papers get double exposure as both versions are discoverable via Google and Google Scholar. It also increases the potential audience for the academic paper as it reaches those who may not have a subscription to the journal in which you have published.

“As knowledge brokers, academic libraries are a critical component of the higher education landscape. Ours is the heartbeat of our institute.”

The new repository will facilitate compliance with the National Open Research Forum (NORF) call for research producing organisations to support open access by making work available in a repository and enable researchers to meet funding stipulations from major funding agencies, such as Horizon 2020, who increasingly have open access requirements pertaining to the publication of research.

Speaking after the launch of the institutional repository, Dr Niall Seery, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Registry, said: “As knowledge brokers, academic libraries are a critical component of the higher education landscape. Ours is the heartbeat of our institute. This repository, which has been driven by our academic librarians, will facilitate the dissemination of research not only within our walls or in specific research communities, but globally. At AIT, we are knowledge creators, innovators and leaders.”

AIT Developing **Zero Gravity 3D Printing** Technology for Use in Space





Athlone Institute of Technology has been handpicked by the European Space Agency (ESA) to develop the world's first large-scale, zero-gravity 3D printing machine for use on the International Space Station as part of a wider European consortium named Project Imperial, which includes German aerospace company Sonaca Group, BEEVERYCREATIVE, a Portuguese 3D printer provider, and OHB, a leading German Space and Technology Group.

Scheduled to run for two years, Project Imperial will draw on the expert knowledge of Dr Sean Lyons, Dean of Faculty of Engineering and Informatics, Dr Declan Devine, Director of the Materials Research Institute and Dr Ian Major, Principal Investigator at the Materials Research Institute, in the areas of additive manufacturing, advanced polymer materials and creating composites for challenging environments. The researchers will use high-strength, functional thermoplastics to develop and deploy a 3D printer capable of creating complex engineering structures larger than itself.

"Traditionally, 3D printers are based around simple materials and applications. They might look the part but they're not hard or strong enough to be fully functional. Using cutting-edge material science, we're going to design components that can be modified or configured for printing in zero gravity conditions on board the International Space Station," Dr Sean Lyons explained.

"There are several applications for this technology, if something breaks on board the spacecraft. It's not feasible to send a payload with spare parts all of the way to the International Space Station. Through Project Imperial, the astronauts will have the capability to print parts as they are needed in situ. So, if an astronaut broke their arm, for example, they would be able to print a bespoke cast themselves."

Additionally, the AIT team will be looking at other applications for this technology, such as areas where printing in zero gravity gives benefit to the material properties that might be useful on earth. "Some cell scaffolds could be printed in a zero-gravity environment and then brought back to earth and implanted into a human. They would perform better than they would if they were printed under gravity constraints on earth. There are loads of potential applications for this," the Dean of Faculty of Engineering and Informatics enthused.

We're delighted to be collaborating on such seminal research with the European Space Agency and our European partners Sonaca Group, BEEVERYCREATIVE and OHB. It's an amazing opportunity to demonstrate exactly what we're capable of and the breadth of skills and expertise on offer at our award-winning institute."



AIT Partners in **€1.5 Million Project** Researching Student Counselling Services



Athlone Institute of Technology has joined forces with Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin to research student counselling services across the higher education landscape in a new €1.5 million project. This seminal research, entitled ‘Student Support Services’ Retention and Engagement Strategy: Consolidation of Best Practice, Centralisation of Data and Innovation in Student Experience’, will be the first of its kind to be carried out in Ireland.

Over the course of a three-year period, Athlone Institute of Technology will receive €600,000 to facilitate research into current practices in higher education counselling services in areas like suicide prevention, intervention and postvention. The team, led by psychologist Treasa Fox, will also investigate critical incident responding, innovative inter-agency collaborations, and international best practice guidance with the view to collating and categorising information and resources for use across Ireland’s 21 higher education institutions.

“Our counterparts in the UK, Europe, and the US have been collecting this kind of information for years, but this is the first time that we, in Ireland, have had the necessary resources. This funding will enable us to investigate, categorise, collate, and articulate what these services do, while also facilitating a knowledge transfer of expertise and knowledge across the sector, ensuring the best outcomes for our students,” Mrs Fox said.

The funding will be delivered through the Higher Education Authority’s Innovation and Transformation fund, which is dedicated to supporting innovation and transformation across the higher education system, specifically in the area of student learning outcomes, student retention and progression - at both an individual and institutional level - and through inter-institutional, sectoral and inter-sectoral collaboration.

“With resources thin on the ground, these objectives are more relevant than ever before. We expect that many of the innovations and actions resulting from this research will be replicable across the sector. All of our colleagues in universities and institutes of technology, big or small, will be able to access training and knowledge transfer that will, ultimately, benefit our students,” Mrs Fox added.

Welcoming the announcement, President of Athlone Institute of Technology, Professor Ciarán O Catháin, said: “We are delighted to partner with TCD and UCD in researching student counselling services across the HEI sector. Third level institutions are the largest providers of psychologically based mental health services in Ireland for young people, so it is crucial that they are supported fully. Today’s students are our future business leaders, entrepreneurs, engineers, IT specialists, medical and pharmaceutical developers, nurses, social care workers and politicians of tomorrow. An investment in their mental health and well-being is an investment in the future of our country.”

“**Third level institutions are the largest providers of psychologically-based mental health services in Ireland for young people, so it is crucial that they are supported fully.**”



AIT Plants Symbolic '**Tree of Hope**' for World Suicide Prevention Day

Athlone Institute of Technology, in association with Midlands Living Links Suicide Bereavement Support Service, planted a symbolic 'Tree of Hope' to mark and commemorate World Suicide Prevention Week. The tree, donated by Fergeal Kealey from Kinnitty, is intended as a symbol of hope to all those affected by suicide or struggling with suicidal ideation to encourage them to reach out and ask for help.

The 'Tree of Hope' planting ceremony forms part of this year's World Suicide Prevention Week theme which aims to raise and spread suicide prevention awareness by working together as a local, national and global community to get people talking. To this end, students, faculty, and members of the local community were invited to come together to attend the planting of the 'Tree of Hope' to publicly show their support for suicide prevention.

The President of Athlone Institute of Technology, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, was in attendance to plant the tree which he called "a symbol of hope" for people in distress. He also acknowledged the good work done by organisations like Midlands Living Links who offer bereavement support to those affected by suicide in a compassionate, supportive and non-judgemental manner.

Members of the community affected by suicide also came forward to read moving tributes to their deceased loved ones. These tributes were accompanied by live music.

Record Number of Exhibitors Attend AIT Career and Further Study Expo

Athlone Institute of Technology's annual Career and Further Education Expo, which connects Ireland's leading employers with its talent pipeline of students, attracted a record number of exhibitors from a broad cross section of industry.

More than 70 exhibitors from companies like Abbott, Alexion Pharmaceuticals, Almac Group, RBK, Johnson and Johnson Vision, Neueda Technologies, Centre Parcs Longford Forest Park, Harmac Medical Products, Ericsson, PPD, Medtronic, Sidero, Teleflex, and Boston Scientific, attended the event.

"Students and recent graduates were given the opportunity to network with some of the country's largest employers - many of whom count a significant number of AIT alumni among their ranks," Denise Dolan, Careers Officer at Athlone Institute of Technology, said. "Over the course of the fair, they learned about the jobs of the future, graduate programmes, internships, and even further study opportunities."

She continued: "As an institute, we pride ourselves on being finely attuned to the needs of industry and have worked tirelessly to provide our students with the best educational experience. In service of this, we have fostered close links with industry (both multinational and indigenous) to inform our programme offerings and to provide prime placement opportunities for our students."

"This relationship is symbiotic in that work placement provides our industry partners with a gateway for identifying and recruiting talent, while we feed industry a steady pipeline of highly qualified, work-ready graduates. It's no accident that our students enjoy a 95% employability rate within six months of graduating."

AIT Celebrates Academic Excellence at 2018 Conferring Ceremonies





Over the course of its near fifty-year history, Athlone Institute of Technology has established itself as a centre of academic excellence and applied learning. As an institute, it has gone from strength to strength with its alumni powering some of the largest companies in the world, including Boston Scientific, Ericsson, Intel, RBK, PPD, Mergon and Neueda. Companies like these have long recognised the calibre of AIT graduates, valuing them for their talent, technical ability and work-readiness.

This year, another cohort of graduates joined their ranks. Over the course of two days, 1,804 undergraduate and 132 postgraduate students were conferred with awards, of those students, 15 undertook their postgraduate education by research. Athlone Institute of Technology also conferred seven PhDs: five within the Faculty of Engineering and Informatics and two within the Faculty of Science and Health.

One such graduate, Dr Yuanyuan Chen, also won the institute's inaugural 'Women in Research' award for her contribution to the scientific canon in the area of interventional cardiology. Supervised by Dr Declan Devine, Director of the Materials Research Institute within Athlone Institute of Technology, Dr Chen developed breakthrough bioresorbable scaffolding which can be placed in clogged coronary arteries to increase blood flow to the heart. Dr Chen's invention, made from a unique blend of PLA polymer, is 3-D printed in-house and is intended to dissolve in the body after it has fulfilled its function.

During the ceremonies, President of Athlone Institute of Technology, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin gave a rousing and inspiring graduation speech in which he congratulated the recent graduates on their achievement and touched on an issue close to his heart – mental health.

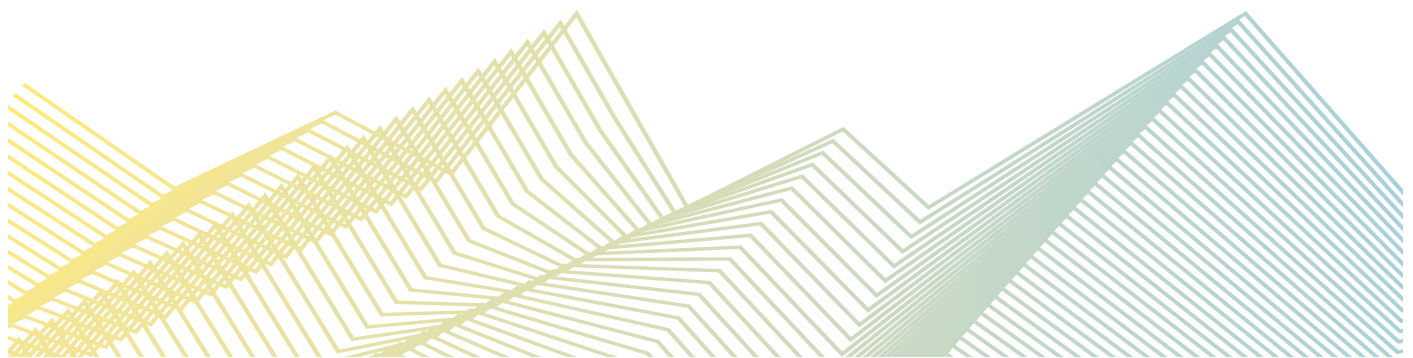
"Ireland is in the grip of a mental health crisis with 1 in every 10,000 young people losing their lives by suicide. Our students today will be our future business leaders, entrepreneurs, engineers, IT specialists, medical and pharmaceutical developers, nurses, social care workers and politicians so it is vital that they are looked after. An investment in our students' mental health and well-being is an investment in the future of our country," he finished.

The 2018 conferring ceremonies also saw the bestowal of the institute's 21st Distinguished Fellowship award to Rita Shah, a successful Indian entrepreneur whose innovative company, Shabra Group, has become the byword for recycling in Ireland. The Distinguished Fellowship is the institute's highest honour and is bestowed upon individuals who, through active leadership, have made significant contributions to society, Ireland and the Midlands region.

Other awards handed out over the course of the two-day event, included overall 'Student of the Year'. Within the Faculty of Engineering and Informatics, Sebastian Makowiecki took home the accolade, while Roslyn McDonnell received the award within the Faculty of Business and Hospitality. In the Department of Lifelong Learning, Karen Flanagan took home the 'Student of the Year' award. The Patricia Kearney Memorial Award was bestowed upon Richael Timothy within the Faculty of Science and Health.

Over the course of its near fifty-year history, AIT has established itself as a centre of academic excellence and applied learning.

Other notable graduates include RTE News Midlands Correspondent, Ciarán Mullooly, who graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Business and Social Enterprise, Leadership and Management and Shane Francis took home the award for 'Best Student in BEng (Hons) in Mechanical and Polymer Engineering'. Shane is a prime example of the benefits of an applied, industry-focussed education. Since his exams finished in May, Shane has been working for global MedTech company Boston Scientific in the capacity of Graduate Manufacturing Engineer and recently came back to Athlone Institute of Technology to participate in the award-winning institute's 'Jobs of the Future' Career and Further Study Expo. Shane is just one of many graduates that have benefited from the institute's close links with industry.



Our Year in **Numbers**





**Undergraduate
Students**

4,818

**Postgraduate Taught
Students**

412



**Postgraduate Research
Students**

86



**International
Students**

562



52% Female

Gender Division



48% Male



Areas of Growth

**Part-time
1,491**

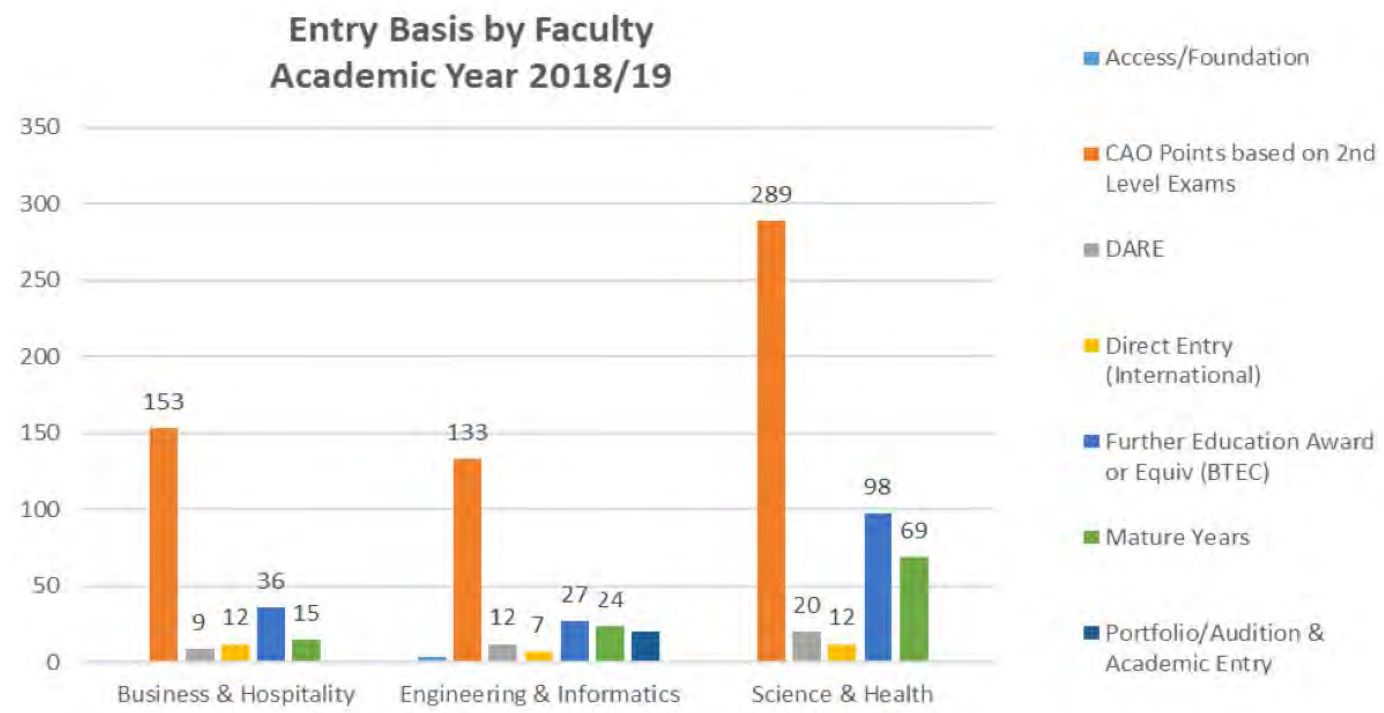
(+ 15% since March 2016)



**E-learning
260**

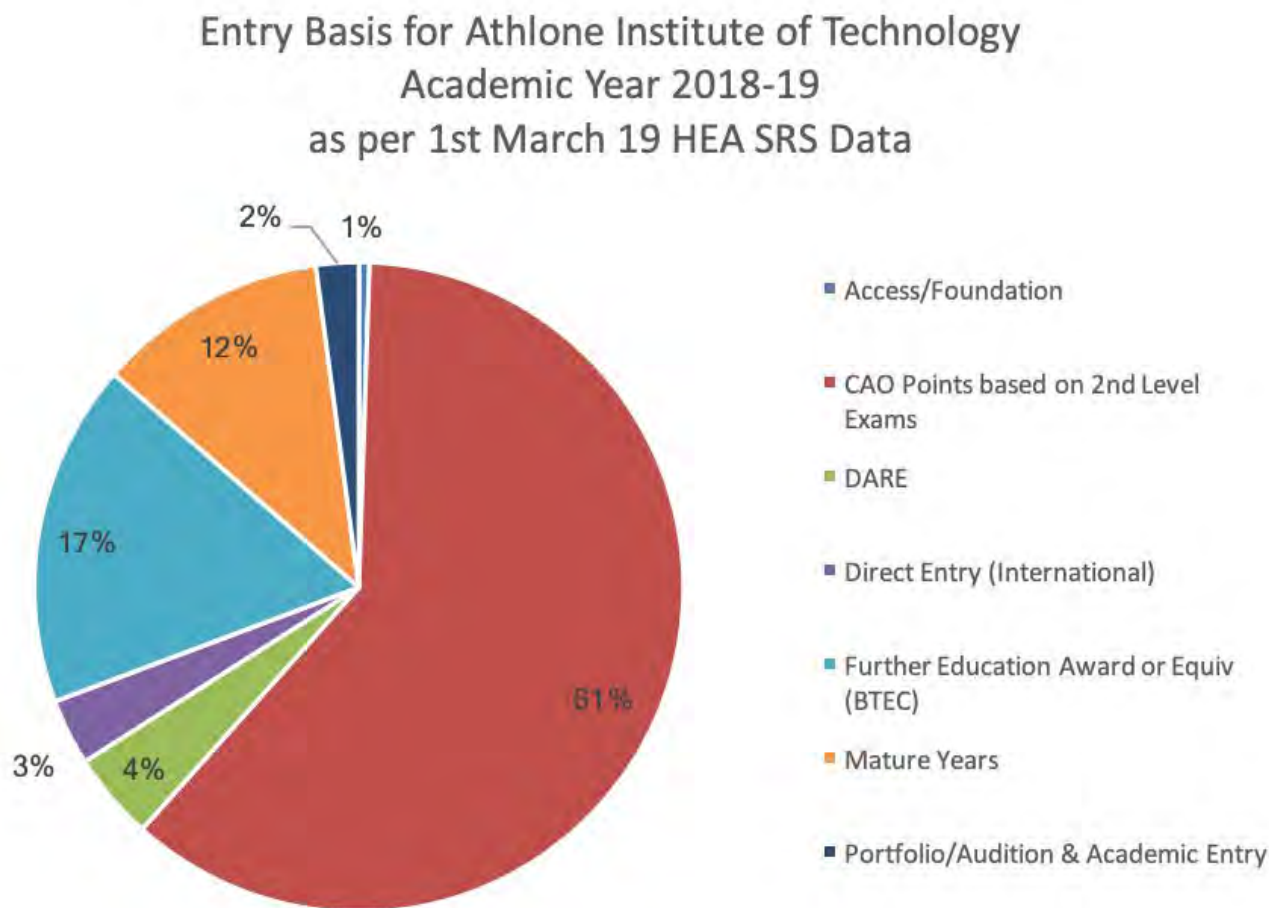
Student Numbers

Entry basis for full-time new entrants by faculty for 2018/2019 academic year.



Student cohort by entry basis for full-time new entrants for 2018/19 academic year.

Students by degree level and gender across AIT and in STEM departments in 2018/19



Academic Year 2018/19					
	Level	Male	Female	Total	Female %
ALL AIT	Undergraduate	2296	2522	4818	52%
	Postgraduate Taught	214	198	412	48%
	Postgraduate Research	48	38	86	44%
AIT Total		2558	2758	5316	52%
STEM AIT	Undergraduate	1472	1119	2591	43%
	Postgraduate Taught	158	127	285	45%
	Postgraduate Research	46	37	83	45%
STEM Total		1676	1283	2959	43%
AHSS AIT	Undergraduate	824	1403	2227	63%
	Postgraduate Taught	56	71	127	56%
	Postgraduate Research	2	1	3	33%
AHSS Total		882	1475	2357	63%
% STEM AIT 2017/2018		59%	41%	50%	
% STEM AIT 2018/2019		66%	47%	56%	

In 2018/2019, AIT had a population of 5,316 students. Females represented 52% of AIT students in 2018/2019, a similar percentage to the 2017/2018 cohort. Of the female cohort, 43% are in STEM, which is an increase from 41% in 2017/2018.

Faculty Trends to 2018/19

Student numbers by Department 2016/17 to 2018/19 (including exam only)

DEPARTMENT	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019
Accounting and Business Computing	568	529	574
Business and Management Studies	673	613	659
Civil Engineering and Construction	117	127	148
Lifelong Learning	415	623	626
Design	112	109	134
Electronic Computer Software	534	497	425
Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure	351	377	338
Humanities	580	611	618
Life and Physical Science	485	498	550
Sport and Health Sciences	341	372	355
Mechanical and Polymer	244	262	334
Nursing and Health Sciences	367	415	463
Trades	174	192	263
TOTAL STUDENTS AS PER MARCH	4961	5225	5487



Postgraduate Data

Breakdown of Postgraduate Student Body by Faculty

FACULTY	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT				
Business and Hospitality	84	99	91	221
Engineering and Informatics	85	83	52	45
Science and Health	99	48	68	58
Lifelong Learning	0	0	0	7
TOTAL	268	230	211	331
HIGHER DIPLOMA				
Business and Hospitality	68	40	29	65
Engineering and Informatics	0	11	22	16
Science and Health	7	0	0	0
Lifelong Learning	7	0	0	0
TOTAL	82	51	51	81
RESEARCH				
Business and Hospitality	0	0	1	1
Engineering and Informatics	49	53	56	58
Science and Health	26	27	29	27
TOTAL	75	80	86	86
TOTAL POSTGRADUATE	425	361	348	498

Breakdown of Postgraduate Research Student Body by Faculty and Level

FACULTY	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
LEVEL 10				
Engineering and Informatics	15	17	17	23
Science and Health	5	5	7	9
TOTAL	20	22	24	32
LEVEL 9				
Business and Hospitality	0	0	1	1
Engineering and Informatics	34	36	39	35
Science and Health	21	22	22	18
TOTAL	55	58	62	54



Staff Numbers

In 2018/2019, AIT had a total of 588 staff members (54% F) Staff 2018/2019 by gender and category

Category	2018/2019			
	Male	Female	Total	Female %
Academic	145	147	292	50%
Research	47	12	59	20%
Professional/Support	80	157	237	66%
	272	316	588	54%

Academic staff breakdown across STEM and Non STEM by gender

	2018	2019			
	Female %	Female	Male	Total	Female %
STEM	40%	82	110	192	43%
Non-STEM	62%	65	35	100	65%

Academic STEM staff breakdown by Faculty and Gender in 2018/2019

Faculty	2018	2019			
	Female %	Female	Male	Total	Female %
Engineering & Informatics	19%	21	79	100	21%
Science & Health	70%	54	23	77	70%
Business & Hospitality*	33%	7	8	15	47%
	40%	82	110	192	43%

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

Academic Staff by Grade Profile

	2018		2019	
	Total	F %	Total	F %
Assistant Lecturer	66	56%	68	60%
Lecturer	200	48%	206	49%
Senior Lecturer 1 (Teaching)	3	33%	3	33%
Senior Lecturer 2 (Head of Department)	12	25%	11	27%
Senior Lecturer 3 (Dean of Faculty)	4	0%	4	25%

Student Experience And Participation

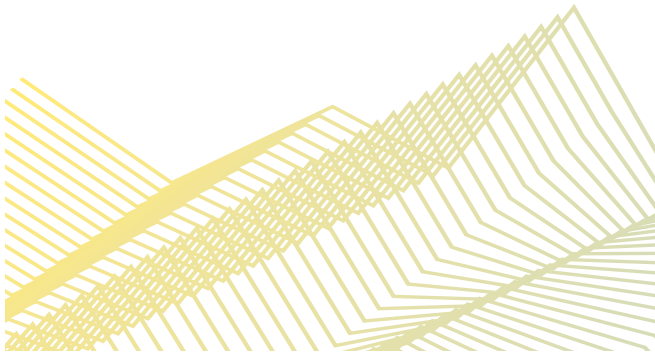
Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE)

AIT's response rate to ISSE, achieved via a strong partnership approach between the Quality Office, Academic Staff and the Students Union, continues to be the highest in the country by a considerable margin. In 2019 there was an increase in participation of 3.4% on 2018, with a total of 1802 (1779 in 2018) first and final year responses and a total of 142 (114 in 2018) postgraduate responses.

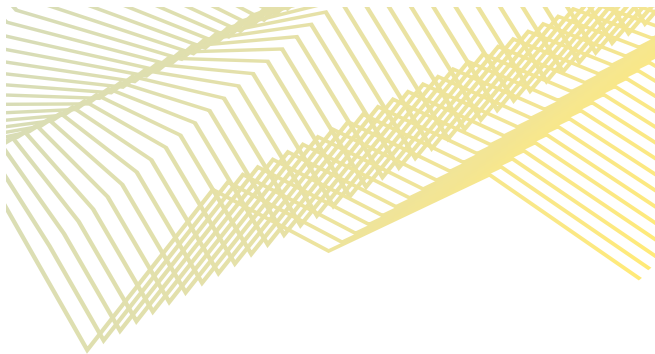
Completion Rates Table

Year	AIT Response Rate	National Response Rate
2017	61%	27%
2018	65%	28%
2019	68.5%	35%

The results for AIT continue to be positive with 86% of students rating their overall academic experience as being good or excellent. This rating has increased from 84% in the first year of ISSE in 2014. In addition, 84% of students would choose AIT if they were to start again in Higher Education. This rating has remained constant since 2014.



Strategic Developments







Athena **SWAN**

In a major national initiative supported by the Higher Education Authority, the Athena SWAN Charter was launched in Ireland in early 2015. Figures published by the Higher Education Authority highlight gender inequality as an issue for the sector. Athena SWAN, however, is about more than ‘fixing numbers’ and ‘fixing women’ – it represents a way of changing the culture in Irish Higher Education. The Bronze Award recognises that an institution has a solid foundation for eliminating gender bias and developing an inclusive culture that values all staff.

Athlone Institute of Technology has applied to and been accepted as a member of the Athena SWAN Charter and will submit its application for Bronze Award in November 2018. In preparation for the self-assessment process and application, members of the SAT team attended a workshop on Recognising and Managing Unconscious Bias in October 2017.

“
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 ”

AIT to join **Higher Education Access Route**

AIT was successful in its application to the IUA to join the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) in the academic year 2019/20. HEAR, a college scheme, offers places on reduced points and extra college support to school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. HEAR applicants must meet a range of financial, social and cultural indicators in order to be considered for a reduced points place and extra college support and applications can only be made online through the CAO. AIT has been a member of the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) since its inception. Joining HEAR, is in keeping with the institutes strategy and access policy.

AIT Allocated €250K to Facilitate Technological University Vision

Athlone Institute of Technology was awarded €250,000 in Government funding to help facilitate its transition to becoming a technological university for the Midlands region. As part of its restructuring process, the award-winning institute will continue to grow its postgraduate research capacity and provide further upskilling opportunities to staff in line with the relevant eligibility criteria set out in the Technological Universities Act 2018. With a burgeoning postgraduate research offering, the funding will help Athlone Institute of Technology bolster its metrics through initiatives like the President Seed Fund.

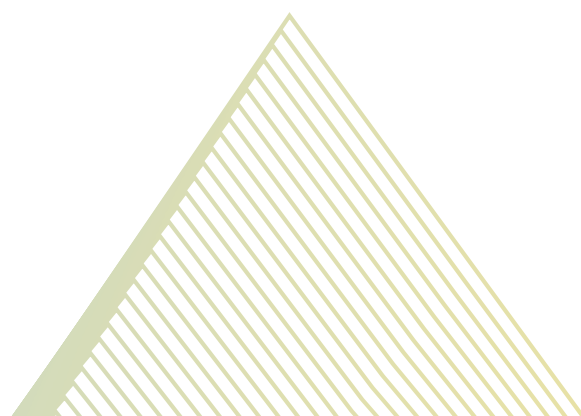
With research, innovation and enterprise all central tenets underpinning this transition, Athlone Institute of Technology has already made huge strides in achieving TU status. Finely attuned to the needs of industry (both multinational and indigenous), the institute has been extremely focussed on building its research and innovation profile in core areas of growth such as disruptive technologies over recent decades and has put conduits in place to transfer knowledge and technologies in a manner that supports its regional and national industry-based partners. Its growing number of industry projects and consistently strong performance in Innovation Vouchers demonstrate that the institute is already a considerable distance on the journey to meeting the relevant TU criterion.

Welcoming the funding, the President of Athlone Institute of Technology, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, said: "We are fully committed to fulfilling our ambition of achieving technological university status. As the sole HEI in the region, the critical relationship between the ambition of our Institute to become a technological university and the success of the industry in our region is at the forefront of our priorities in order to maintain, develop and evolve contemporary and relevant educational, training and research provision.

"This funding will help us continue our efforts to upskill our talented workforce and supply industry with a pipeline of technically-minded, work-ready graduates. We are an extremely ambitious institute with aspirations to become a transformational educational provider in the new HE landscape, as well as furthering our status as a leader in applied education, industry-focussed research and innovation output, all of which is regionally impactful."

Minister of State Mary Mitchell O'Connor said: "Capacity building of both research capacity and staff qualifications will enable institutions to advance regional collaborative approaches, including in terms of technological university development. The emphasis here is to increase the number of staff with cutting-edge technical and research-based skills and on institutional research linking back into teaching excellence and the formation of more work-ready graduates with the skills required regionally and nationally in strategic industries".

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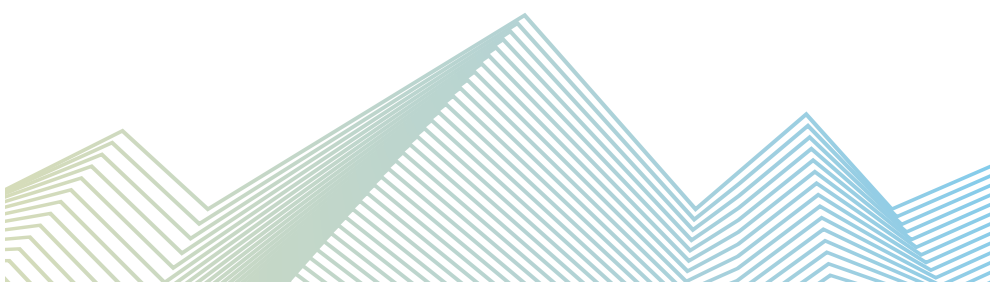
AIT Partners With **€47 Million SFI-Funded CONFIRM** to Open Ireland's First Polymer Test Bed

Ireland's engineering industries are set to be boosted with the opening of a new facility for them to develop as part of a wider industry 4.0 remit. The Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) smart manufacturing research centre, CONFIRM, announced that it has partnered with the Athlone Institute of Technology to develop a polymer test bed that is the first to be made open to industry.

Athlone Institute of Technology has been allocated €4.5m to build the site, including an advanced smart manufacturing cell complete with pilot lines for industry to use. All types of industry – from SMEs to multinational companies – will be able to use the test bed once operational.

CONFIRM said it has also developed special training software to work in tandem with the smart manufacturing cell to show users how to set up and operate the smart manufacturing machines. Companies interested in utilising the pilot line can work collaboratively with the CONFIRM team either through equipment licensed out to companies based on site or equipment they bring to the facility. For example, a robot can be installed into the cell to learn how it works in tandem with other technology before taking it back and implementing it in a company's own facility.

The development of polymer technologies is important to many industries established in Ireland. The majority of medical devices require at least one polymer component making it a core technology in the MedTech sector which itself is 400 companies strong and employs over 12,000 people nationally.





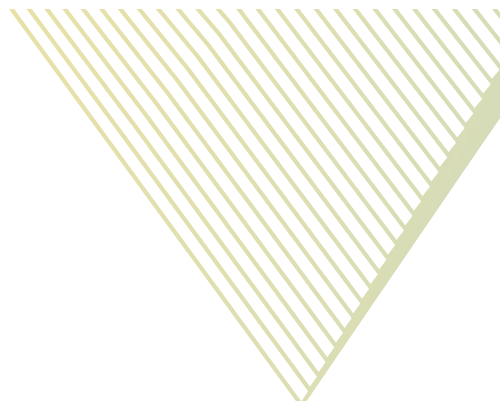
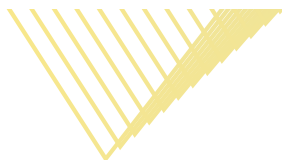
Artist's Impression

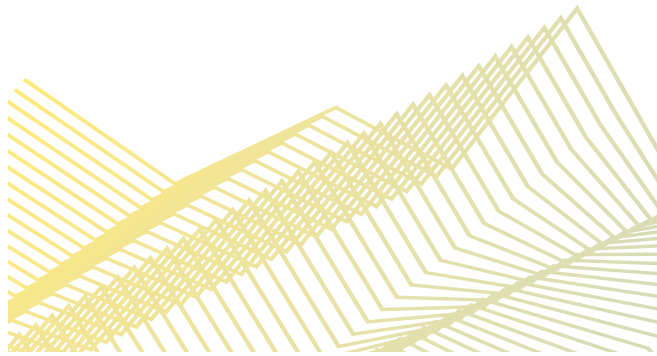
Government Investing **€25 million** in AIT STEM Facility

Athlone Institute of Technology's new €25 Million STEM building will create additional capacity for up to 1000 additional students and 70 staff enabling the institute to meet increased demand for STEM programmes such as pharma, biopharma and microbiology. The building of this state-of-the-art three storey facility is expected to commence shortly.

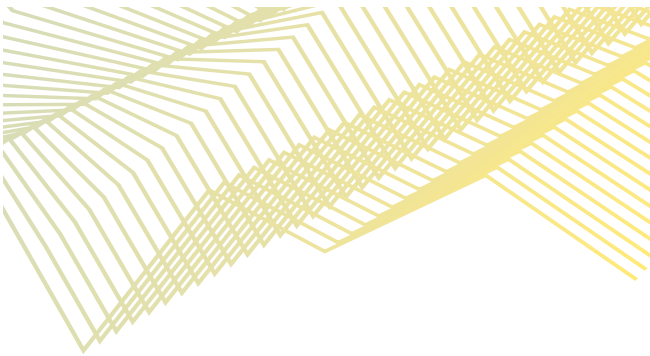
As the sole higher education provider in the midlands, Athlone Institute of Technology plays a catalytic role in the social, economic and cultural development of its catchment area. This new STEM building will help meet the needs of its stakeholders in a holistic way through an interdisciplinary approach to the programmes. It is a priority development under the AIT Campus Masterplan and represents a significant future growth of the institute and the midlands region.

The funding for this new STEM building was originally announced in January 2018 as part of a Department of Education and Skills €200 million investment into the IoT sector. The STEM building and its academic, industry and research capabilities will bolster Athlone Institute of Technology's transition towards becoming a technological university.





Awards & **Honours**



Athlone Institute of Technology

Bu

Sci

Eng

ng



AIT

AIT
Award of Excellence
2017/18

AIT Scholarship of Excellence Awards

Every year, AIT bestows Scholarships of Excellence upon high achieving Leaving Certificate students to celebrate their outstanding academic achievement. This year, eleven first-year students, each of whom had received 500+ points, were awarded a bursary of €500 and a comprehensive gym membership - giving them access to the institute's state-of-the-art facilities for the year.

Congratulating the students on their scholastic achievement, Dr Niall Seery, VP for Academic Affairs and Registrar, said: "Each of you have shown a remarkable level of diligence and commitment to your studies which has resulted in significant academic achievement. As we celebrate your success, take a moment to recognise and give credit to your parents, teachers, principals, and guidance counsellors, all of whom have played an integral role in nurturing and assisting you in your academic development to date."

AIT Partners with Radisson Blu to Address Severe Labour Shortage in the Irish Hospitality Industry

Last year was another record year for tourism in Ireland with more than 10.6 million people visiting from overseas (representing a 6.7% increase on 2017). This increased demand is leading to significant job creation within the industry. By 2021, over 40,000 new hospitality and tourism jobs will have been created and graduates are needed to fill them.

As the sole provider of hospitality and tourism education in the Midlands Region, Athlone Institute of Technology is helping to address skill shortages in the sector by providing high calibre chefs, bar and hotel management staff who will go on to work in the some of the country's best hotels and restaurants. One such employer, the 4-star Radisson Blu, is taking steps to support the college in its efforts to address the skills and labour shortage through a brand-new scholarship programme designed to incentivise students to pursue a career in the hospitality and tourism industry.

Prospective students interested in obtaining a qualification such as a Higher Certificate in Culinary Arts, Higher Certificate in Bar Supervision, and Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Hospitality Management are eligible to apply for a scholarship, which are valued at €1000 each.

"The Radisson Blu is looking to pinpoint and nurture up-and-coming talent within the hospitality and tourism industry so that they can secure talent for employment in their hotels. They want to get access to the best people early on – this is an incredibly progressive initiative. We already have strong links with them in terms of work placements, guest lectures, site visits, graduate jobs and Springboard+ courses, this is a further extension of that relationship," Dr Anthony Johnston, who heads of Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Studies, explained.

Commenting on the pivotal role the institute plays in supplying industry with a steady pipeline of suitably qualified graduates, Fergus O'Donovan, Radisson Blu General Manager, added: "Athlone Institute of Technology has a forward-thinking, industry-focussed approach to education that produces agile and adaptable graduates that are highly valued. In a recession, the hospitality and tourism industry is often one of the first areas to suffer, but it is also one of the first to recover – the economy is flourishing again, so rather than letting a continued skills shortage impede growth, we're making a prudent investment in our future talent pipeline."



AIT SURE Wins 'Best Academic Partnership' at National Education Awards

Ireland's first academic network dedicated to promoting STEM research across the technological higher education sector claimed a top prize at the prestigious national Education Awards in Ballsbridge, Dublin earlier this year.

The Science Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE) Network, which comprises nine institutes of technology, was awarded 'Best Academic Partnership' for its work in encouraging undergraduate research through the delivery of workshops, an annual conference, curriculum development and a newly established academic journal.

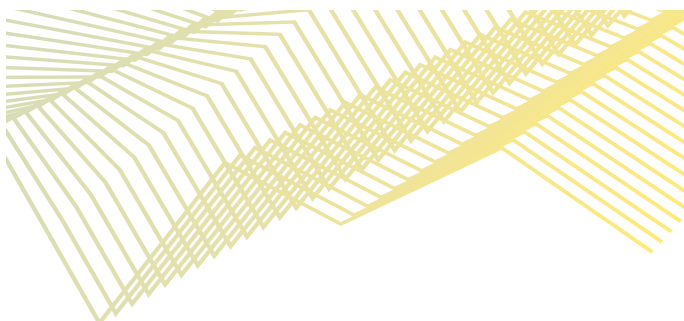
The Best Academic Partnership category rewards innovative, bold, and creative strategies and initiatives used to foster effective collaborations. To be successful, the awardees must provide evidence of exceptional performance within each partner organisation against specific indicators, such as innovation, teaching and research standards, and the student experience.

Welcoming the news, Dr Therese Montgomery, SURE Network member and lecturer in the Department of Life and Physical Science at Athlone Institute of Technology, said: "The SURE Network provides an excellent platform to highlight the quality and diversity of research being conducted and supervised at undergraduate level across the technological higher education sector."

Her colleague and fellow SURE Network member, Dr Anne Marie O'Brien, who is also a lecturer in the Department of Life and Physical Sciences, added: "SURE affords aspiring young academics the opportunity to showcase their talent, not only to academia and industry, but to the wider community."

Established in 2017, the SURE Network forms a community of institutions and academics interested in enhancing practice in undergraduate research in the sciences. Its inaugural conference, which was co-ordinated by Dr Montgomery and Dr O'Brien on behalf of Athlone Institute of Technology, was simultaneously held across three SURE Network sites - Athlone Institute of Technology, TU Dublin and Waterford Institute of Technology - last September and attended by more than 500 undergraduate students and academic staff.

Commenting on the award, Dr Don Faller, Dean of Faculty of Science and Health at Athlone Institute of Technology, said: "The SURE Network is instrumental in bringing the incredible undergraduate research taking place across the technological higher education landscape to the fore. This ground-breaking initiative is vital to the advancement of STEM research and the development of young academics who gain presenting experience in a supportive and encouraging environment."



AIT Construction Management Course Shortlisted for National ICE Awards

Athlone Institute of Technology's Special Purpose Award (SPA) in Construction Management was shortlisted for the Irish Construction Excellence (ICE) Awards in the category of best 'Third Level Course - Postgraduate or CPD'.

Developed in close consultation with the construction industry, the SPA in Construction Management responds directly to identified skills gaps in the modern construction industry. The programme focusses on contemporary challenges such as the implementation of lean management processes, construction economics and proficiency in Building Information Modelling (BIM) technology and is delivered using a blended learning format.

The delivery model for the course was developed to ensure that the students could upskill without negatively impacting their work/life balance. This is achieved by mixing online lectures with traditional classroom-based lectures which are delivered by a team with extensive industry experience. The SPA in Construction Management is offered via the Springboard+ funding mechanism, enabling a wide range of individuals to upskill without the burden of excessive cost.

Commenting on the calibre of the shortlist, ICE Awards Director Colin Walsh said: "It has been another strong year for Irish construction and we're witnessing continued industry growth. The ICE Awards are an excellent opportunity to take stock and applaud the achievements in the public and private sectors. The standard was exceptionally high this year and the shortlist reflects this. The future's looking bright too, with AECOM's latest figures predicting a 20% growth in the industry in 2019. It's an exciting time to work in construction in Ireland."

At the height of the Celtic Tiger, 220,000 people were employed in Ireland's construction sector, a number that fell by more than 150,000 during the recession. Since its lowest point in 2013, the construction industry has made a significant recovery with the 134,000 people once again employed in construction jobs. The sector has entered a period of significant growth with increased demand for the skills and talents of construction workers.

"During the recession, more than 100,000 construction workers emigrated, which has made it extremely difficult for employers to source staff. The industry is crying out for civil engineering and quantity surveying graduates, if you're considering a career in these lucrative areas, you'll be almost guaranteed a job," John Costello, Midlands Regional Skills Manager, said.

The ICE Awards recognise and celebrate excellence in the Irish contracting sector in areas such as Innovation in Construction, Public or Heritage, Commercial, Residential, Healthcare and Academic.

AIT Confers Distinguished Fellowship on **Harmac CEO**



A Distinguished Fellowship was conferred on John Somers, CEO and President of Harmac Medical Products, at a special ceremony at Roscommon County Council in October 2018.

This award is Athlone Institute of Technology's greatest academic honour and is bestowed on individuals who, through active leadership or scholarly pursuits, have made significant contributions to Ireland, the Midlands region and, indeed, their local communities.

Through the conferring of the Distinguished Fellowship, Mr Somers, who has a notable record of achievement in business, has been granted life-long membership of the institute, with whom he has established a close relationship.

In 1998, under the leadership of Mr Somers, Harmac Medical Products expanded their US operations to accommodate the needs of a growing international client base. Castlerea, Co. Roscommon was chosen as the location for their European Headquarters.

The medical device manufacturer, often referred to as the "hidden partner of Fortune 500 companies", now employs more than 300 people (many of whom are polymer graduates from Athlone Institute of Technology) at its Irish base, making Harmac one of the biggest employers in the region.

Attending the conferring ceremony, Mr Eugene Cummins, Chief Executive of Roscommon County Council, commended Mr Somers on his "unique contribution to the community" and expressed his gratitude for the "jobs he has created and for the peace of mind and security that he gives to hundreds of employees every day".

Harmac's investment in Castlerea and in the wider Midlands Region has also played a catalytic role in the development of Ireland as a medical technology hub with 13 out of the top 15 global medical technologies companies now based in Ireland.

Ireland's world-class capabilities in research in tandem with intensive collaboration between companies, research institutions and clinicians, make it the perfect platform for the industry to start, innovate and continue to scale.

Philanthropic to his core, Mr Somers has left an indelible mark on the people whose lives he has touched. His employee-focussed attitude to business, handed down to him by his father and founder of Harmac, Lewis S. Somers III, has helped him achieve global success.

Awarding the Distinguished Fellowship was President of Athlone Institute of Technology, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, who commented on Mr Somers' remarkable leadership ability, generosity, and commitment to the communities in which his employees live and work.



"Great leaders have the ability to motivate employees, and to help others see and believe in a vision and lead innovation in their company. John, through his role in Harmac, has gone beyond that. He has embedded a wonderful culture within his worldwide 1,000 employees, of value, appreciation, and respect.

"He is changing the lives of his employees through mentoring and leadership opportunities for development, health awareness, encouraging their social conscience and ensuring that he supports his staff on their journey of continuing, professional development and lifelong learning."

Also commenting on the conferring was Councillor Ivan Connaughton, Cathaoirleach, Roscommon County Council, who said: 'It is fitting that Athlone Institute of Technology is bestowing this prestigious award on John Somers. Roscommon County Council and AIT have an excellent relationship and mutual respect for each other which has grown over the years and we will continue to work in partnership for the benefit of the region.'

“Great leaders have the ability to motivate employees, help others see and believe in a vision and lead innovation in their company, and John, through his role in Harmac, has gone beyond that.”

Serial Entrepreneur Conferred with Institute's Highest Academic Honour

In receiving this honour, Mr Somers joins the ranks of esteemed luminaries such as former President Mary McAleese, Mary O'Rourke, Paddy Cooney, Dr Don Panoz, Stephen Grant, Eamonn Coghlan, Barry McGuigan, Sonia O'Sullivan, Mark Rohan and Professor Dato' Kamarudin Hussin.

Successful Indian businesswoman and serial entrepreneur Rita Shah was honoured during Athlone Institute of Technology's 2018 conferring ceremony with the institute's highest honour, a Distinguished Fellowship. The title, which grants Rita lifelong membership of the institute, was bestowed upon her for her significant contributions to Irish society.

Rita is the co-founder of Shabra Plastics, a company that has transformed the Irish recycling landscape through the reprocessing of plastic waste film and post-consumer bottles. A company with modest roots, Shabra now boasts clients ranging from blue-chip companies to SMEs in a variety of sectors, including the food industry, local county councils and semi-state bodies, and has earned the reputation as one of the finest recycling plants in Europe.

Over the last twenty years, Rita has grown the Co. Monaghan-based company into a recycling powerhouse with a firm eye on home and export markets. Through Shabra, Rita and her business partner, Irishman Oliver Brady, have provided job security and peace of mind to many employees and their families.

Through her selfless actions, Rita has immeasurably improved the lives of people on two continents through the creation of educational opportunities, careers and bright futures with nothing more than her ingenuity, dedication and determination.

A philanthropist at heart, Rita has given generously of her time and spirit over the years, though her charity work is often unheralded and unpublicised. Under the auspices of Shabra Charity, Rita has built schools in Kenya, provided shelter, security and educational scaffolding to hundreds of children, funded research into deadly diseases and helped upgrade the facilities at the Mater Hospital in Dublin.

With the backing of the Shabra Charity, the Mater Hospital opened its Genetic Sequencing Department in 2017. This flagship facility is a first for Ireland and has the capability to diagnose and treat patients before symptoms have progressed which in turn mitigates the chance for negative outcomes. Previously, these types of tests had to be sent abroad and could take anywhere between 18 months and 2 years to produce results.

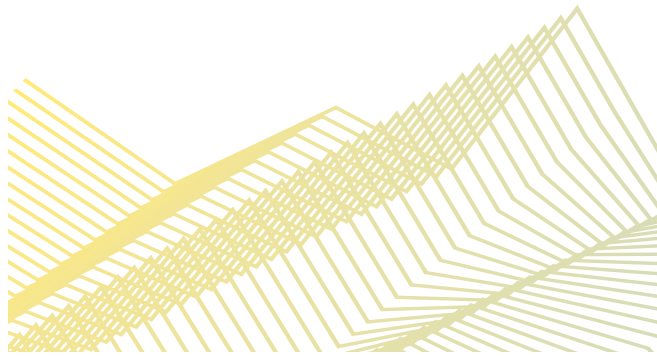
Awarding the Distinguished Fellowship, Dean of Faculty of Engineering and Informatics, Dr Sean Lyons commended Rita for her charitable endeavours, empathy for those less fortunate, business leadership and dedication to her employees. "Rita has given so much to the global community, whether it be helping those less fortunate through the efforts of the Shabra Charity, protecting the environment through her company's recycling efforts, caring for employees, or just caring for people on a holiday in the Moyvalley Hotel, she genuinely believes that care is a word that has no boundaries," he said.

President of Athlone Institute of Technology, Professor Ciarán O Catháin added: "Through her selfless actions, Rita has immeasurably improved the lives of people on two continents through the creation of educational opportunities, careers and bright futures with nothing more than her ingenuity, dedication and determination."

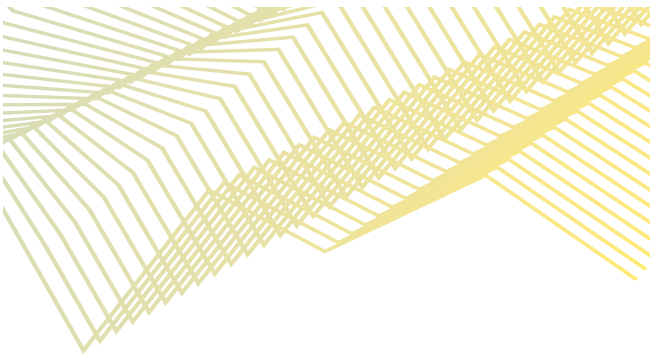
In receiving this honour, Mr Somers and Ms Shah join the ranks of esteemed luminaries, former President Mary McAleese, Mary O'Rourke, Paddy Cooney, Dr Don Panoz, Stephen Grant, Professor Dato' Kamarudin Hussin, Eamonn Coghlan, Barry McGuigan, Sonia O'Sullivan, Mark Rohan, Nicky McFadden, Professor Tan Sri Dato' Wira Dr Mohd Shukri Ab Yajid, Professor Liu Gong Hui, Dr Mary Guinan, Pat Beirne, Mary Burke, James McGee and John Gorman.







Student Successes







AIT Business Psychology Students Shortlisted for Smarter Travel Campus Awards

Athlone Institute of Technology Business Psychology students, Lisa O'Brien and Rory Donlon, were shortlisted for the Smarter Travel Campus Awards in the categories of 'Multimedia Animation' and 'Multimedia Video'. The third-year students' respective entries were intended to encourage their peers to avail of alternative modes of travel, such as carpooling or cycling.

Ms O'Brien's video highlighted the benefits of sustainable transport, including a decrease in traffic congestion and an increase of quality of life to the individual, while Mr Donlon's focused on the benefits of 'travelling smart' by 'pedalling to success'. His video shows him going about his day forgoing his car in order to cycle to college. He lists the myriad reasons one might choose to cycle, including decreased stress and increased cardiovascular fitness levels.

The projects were originally created as part of a Social Media module which forms part of the Bachelor of Business Psychology degree. Upon the successful completion of their assignments, module leader, Geraldine McDermott, who was also shortlisted for a Smarter Travel Camps Award, encouraged the students to enter their projects.

"As Business Psychology students, they have a unique insight into consumer behaviour and were able to use this acquired knowledge to their advantage in this assignment," she explained. "The students really engaged with the project and were clearly mindful that this was more than just a submission for a college assignment and could potentially have a much broader reach. What's even more impressive is that they were competing against animation and design students from all around Ireland."

These projects demonstrate Athlone Institute of Technology's commitment to applied education, further exemplifying how lecturers integrate real-world assignments into the curriculum. All shortlisted candidates were awarded a 'Finalist' certificate and a 'Finalist' logo to use on their CV and LinkedIn page.

The Smarter Travel Campus Programme is implemented by the National Transport Authority with funding from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and is aimed at third level campuses across Ireland seeking to develop workplace travel plans.



AIT Trades Students Compete in **WorldSkills 'Olympics'** in Russia

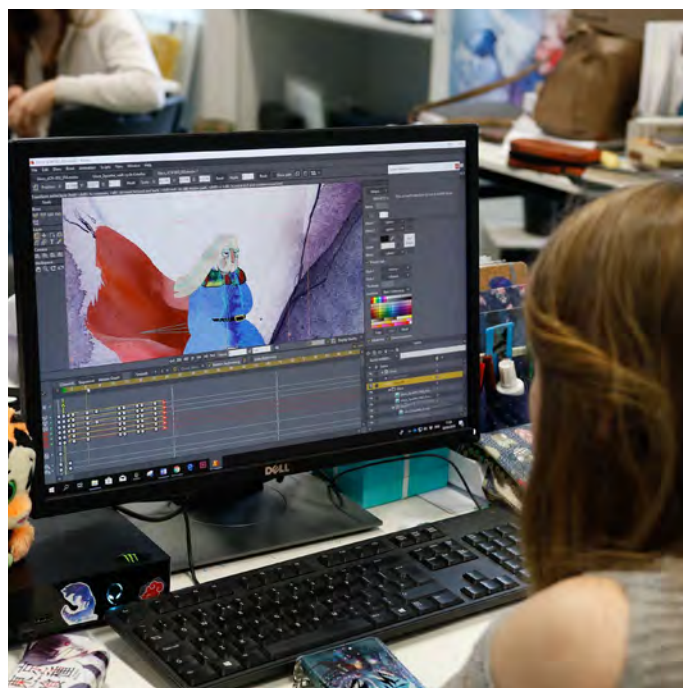
Two students from Athlone Institute of Technology's Department of Civil Engineering and Trades were selected to represent Ireland at the 45th WorldSkills 'Olympics' in Kazan, Russian. Jack O'Donnell and Daniel Curtin, competing in plumbing and heavy vehicle maintenance respectively, were among 16 Irish competitors chosen to compete in the prestigious international competition which is widely regarded as the 'Skills Olympics'.

Jack, from Lettermore, Co Galway, and Daniel, from Tnagh, Co Clare, spent ten weeks undergoing intensive training in preparation for the competition. The pair, both under the age of 25, secured their spot on the WorldSkills Team Ireland by demonstrating significant expertise in their fields at the Irish Skills Live qualifier.

The competition, which saw entrants showcase their skills in a wide array of areas, including aircraft maintenance, beauty therapy, cabinetmaking, cookery, construction metal work, electrical installations, joinery, plumbing and heating, restaurant service, welding, freight forwarding, visual merchandising, cloud computing, brick-laying, industrial millwright mechanic and building information modelling, aims to promote college courses, apprenticeships and traineeships that offer skills and on-the-job learning.

"We're incredibly proud of what Daniel and Jack have achieved. This competition gives prospective students, parents, and guidance counsellors an excellent idea of what an apprenticeship entails and the career opportunities available from them," said Joe Lawless, Head of Department of Civil and Trades at Athlone Institute of Technology. "This is vitally important to addressing our national skills shortage."

The WorldSkills competition, which is held every two years, is the world's largest professional education event. Some 1,600 competitors from 60 countries competed at this year's event.



WATCH: **'Uisce - The Animated Short'** Screened at Still Voices Film Festival

'Uisce', a five-minute short film produced by third year Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Animation and Illustration students studying at Athlone Institute of Technology, was selected to screen at the prestigious Still Voices Film Festival in Co Longford in the category "Made in the Midlands".

'Uisce', which translates to 'water' in Irish, tells the story of its eponymous hero - a temperamental, old witch, her familiar Corr and an amazing twist of fate. Every full moon, the sea god causes chaos for Uisce's homeland, but as the blood moon encroaches, she must do her best to stop the manic storm.

According to animation and design lecturer Yvonne Hennessy, the collaborative short film project, which is the culmination of twelve weeks of design and development work, was a mammoth undertaking, one that put her trainee illustrators and animators to the test.

"Over the course of the semester, our animation and illustration students improved their skillset and developed new skills in traditional artistry and software. From research, character design and storyboarding to recording sound effects and voice overs, our students pulled together as a collective and rose to the challenge, ultimately producing a piece of art that they can all be extremely proud of," she said.

So, is Uisce in over her head? Watch the trailer teaser here: <https://vimeo.com/336064127>



The Challenge of Being a First-Generation College Student

For many first-generation college students, the realm of third level can be uniquely challenging, particularly if they don't have a mentor who can guide them through the complexities of college life. This was the case for Jessica O'Brien, a final-year accounting student from Arklow, Co. Wicklow. While her own road to third level education wasn't linear, she hopes her story will show other young people that it's not the road you start on that matters, but your attitude and commitment to bettering yourself, and your unwillingness to give up.

Jessica will soon be graduating, having previously attended two other colleges and undertaken four courses in areas like software and computer games development, and office administration. At just 17, she enrolled in a computer games development course in Carlow, but her time there was short-lived and following a bout of health complications, she fell behind on her course work and was forced to drop out.

While she had enjoyed her course, her heart wasn't really in it as she didn't see herself working as a games developer and wondered what else she could turn her hand to. "I was always extremely good with numbers but wasn't sure how to put it into practice in the real world," she said.

While in Carlow, Jessica met her partner whose mother became an incredibly influential figure in her life. She encouraged Jessica to consider undertaking an accounting degree a little further afield, which she did. Unfortunately, when Jessica initially applied for Athlone Institute of Technology and several other colleges, she wasn't accepted. "I was absolutely gutted when I didn't get a first or a second-round offer and utterly perplexed," she said. "I had the points; I had the subjects – I thought to myself 'what's going on here?'"

A chance encounter with an AIT lecturer turned it around, changing Jessica's life forever. He explained to her that despite having more than enough points for the accounting degree, she didn't meet the additional criteria and would never be accepted through the typical admissions process – something she hadn't been aware of. Instead, he recommended that she enrol in the accounting technician course – a two-year level 6 programme designed to provide an alternative access route into a third level degree.

"The Leaving Certificate is not the be all, end all; I realised that there are many ways to skin a cat, so I enrolled in a two-year Accounting Technician programme which I successfully completed before advancing into the second year of the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Accounting," she explained. "Accounting is a challenging field, but the lecturers here are extremely supportive and helpful. They're on the journey with the students which makes it hard not to feel encouraged!"

For many first-generation college students, the realm of third level can be uniquely challenging, particularly if they don't have a mentor who can guide them through the complexities of college life.

Jessica's father runs an extremely successful taxi business while her mother minds children. "My parents came of age at a time when most jobs didn't require a degree, now you practically need a postgraduate qualification to compete in the jobs market," she explained. "Back then working a minimum wage got you by, nowadays two people working on that wage can barely afford to live. I'm not striving to be wealthy, but I would love to be comfortable – to be able to take a holiday once a year and not have to live pay cheque to pay cheque."

While Jessica's parents were incredibly supportive of her educational aspirations, having not been through the process themselves, they advised Jessica to speak to a guidance councillor to see what her options were and to help her apply for funding mechanisms like SUSI. "I had so many questions about where to go and who to talk to about this course and that course and while they couldn't help me with those things, they tried to facilitate me as best as they could," she explained.

"I'm extremely lucky to have such supportive parents; they were there for every college information evening and I remember the morning I left for college, my mam and dad packed the car and drove down with me for the big send off. They were so excited for me to enrol - my mam joked that she wanted to move down here with me!"

For Jessica, education is a tool of social mobility, a means of getting to where she needs to go so that she can carve out a better life for herself and her family. "It's the one great equalizer," she said. "It doesn't really matter where you start but education will take you wherever you need to go. It opens doors."

After graduation, Jessica aspires to do a master's degree, but not yet, she says. She's going to go and see some of the world first.

Culinary Entrepreneurship

Student Wins Gold at Blas na hEireann Awards

A Culinary Entrepreneurship student from Athlone Institute of Technology took home the top prize at this year's Blas na hEireann awards for his 'Slow Roasted Smokey Pulled Pork' sensation. Ciaran Kiveney, an accomplished chef with more than 15 years' experience under his belt, developed the artisan 'ready meal' product for Irish pork producer Waldron Meats as part of his final year culinary placement.

The culinary creation, which won gold in the 'Ready Meals & Prepared Foods, Hot (Meat)' category, was dreamt up while he was working at a local gastro pub. "I did my market research and looked at what was popular on restaurant menus in the locality. At the time, I was working as a chef in one of the well-known eateries in Athlone, so I had an idea of what pork-based dishes were popular," Mr Kiveney explained.

After speaking to his culinary peers and to Waldron's owners, the culinary entrepreneur decided to create an accessible product capable of bringing the restaurant experience into the everyday person's dining room. "I tried to consider the needs of the average consumer who doesn't have the time to make proper pulled pork - a slow and lengthy process that can take more than five hours. This new pulled pork dish is slow-roasted, smoky and delicious, and best of all, it's fuss-free. Just pop it into the oven and hey presto! Anyone can make a pulled pork dish in less than 20 mins - you don't have to be a chef," he added.

“Close collaboration with AIT is of huge benefit to our company and, in turn, gives us the opportunity to showcase the wealth of talent we have here in the Midlands.”

Mr Kiveney, who took a 'stepping stone' approach to his education, returned to Athlone Institute of Technology in 2016 as a mature student to complete his undergraduate studies. He enrolled in the institute's Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Culinary Entrepreneurship with a view to upskilling and transitioning into a career in the food product development sector. His work placement formed an integral part of the industry-focused culinary entrepreneurship degree.

In creating this new product, Mr Kiveney implemented many of his new skills in market research, development, and scientific testing to ensure the product was suitable for market. He needed to understand the product's target audience and the practicalities around distribution and storage. Working closely with husband and wife team, Yvonne and Michael Waldron, he carried out myriad tests, including batch testing and shelf-life testing, to great success. "When we vacuum packed the product and left it, we were getting around three weeks out of it, making it ideal for distribution to supermarkets," he said.

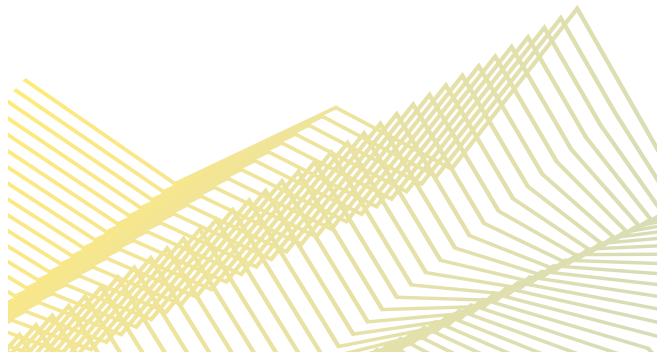
Bord Bia approved, Waldron Meats has a longstanding reputation for producing only the highest quality, Irish pork products. So confident are they in their range, the Waldron's enter all new products into the Blas na hEireann awards for blind taste testing. "It's a good test to see if products are viable; if they'll be well received by the public," Mr Kiveney said. "When we entered my pulled pork product and made the shortlist, we knew we were onto a winner. To win the gold award for Waldron Meats is incredible, we're all delighted."

Commending the institute on the calibre of its students, Mrs Waldron said: "Close collaboration with Athlone Institute of Technology is of huge benefit to our company and, in turn, gives us the opportunity to showcase the wealth of talent we have here in the Midlands. We will continue to work closely with the college in the years to come."

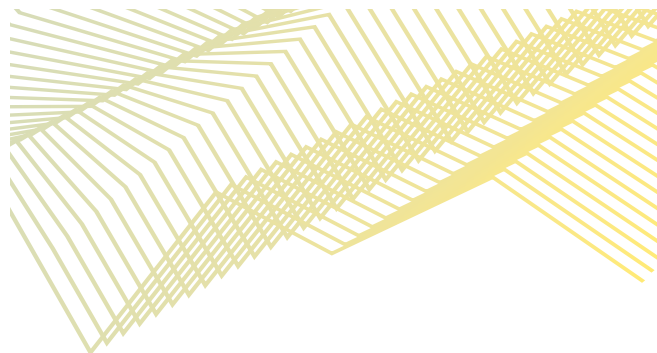
Congratulating Mr Kiveney on the award, Kevin McLoughlin, a lecturer in Strategic Management and Applied Culinary Science, said: "Ciaran has levered all the skills and knowledge he gained whilst studying for his degree in Culinary Entrepreneurship, using his internship to develop Waldron Meats portfolio and now his own business to custom deliver dietary requirements for his clients. We're extremely proud of what he has accomplished to date and wish him all the best in his entrepreneurial endeavours as he moves onto this exciting new chapter."



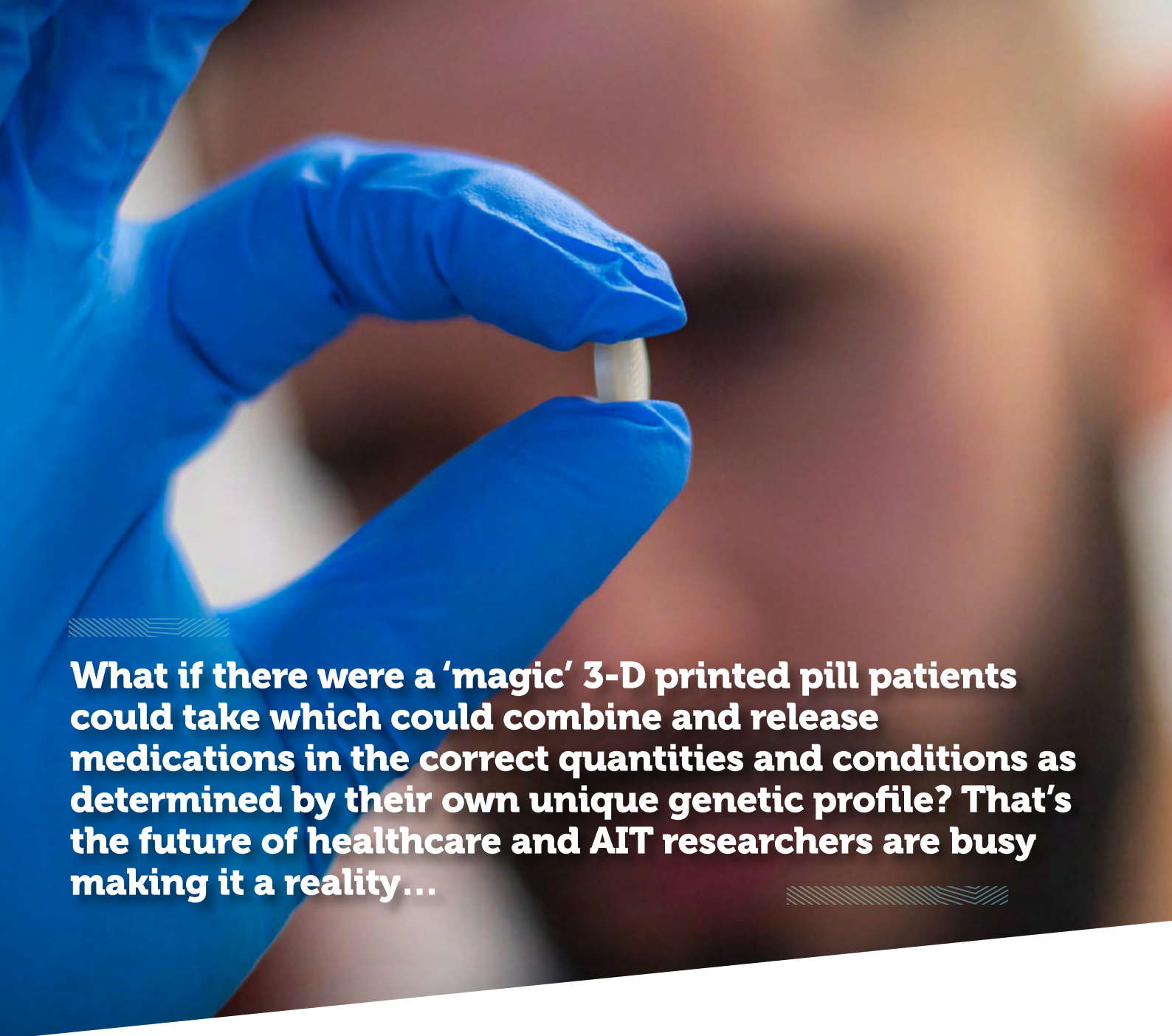
Dedicated to the celebration of quality Irish produce, the Blas na hEireann awards constitute the largest blind tasting event in the country. Its rigorous judging system, developed in line with international industry standards, requires that all packaging and identifying features are removed from products before being presented to ensure a level playing field for both large and small producers. The competition's judges include chefs, restaurateurs, academics, journalists, authors, food champions, caterers, and enthusiastic home cooks. More than 2,500 products were entered into this year's competition.



Research & Innovation Impact







What if there were a 'magic' 3-D printed pill patients could take which could combine and release medications in the correct quantities and conditions as determined by their own unique genetic profile? That's the future of healthcare and AIT researchers are busy making it a reality...

One Pill to Cure Them All? AIT Researchers Develop 'Made to Order' Personalised Healthcare Technology

Researchers have long suspected the concurrent prescription of medications, otherwise known as polypharmacy, to be a leading cause of therapeutic non-compliance among patients. For many, remembering to take a cocktail of medications can be confusing and overwhelming, leading to a poorer quality of life and estimated compliance rates of between 50-70%.

If prescribed, dosed and managed correctly, the benefits of polypharmacy can far outweigh the costs, leading, among other things, to an increased life expectancy. With this in mind, researchers from Athlone Institute of Technology's Materials Research Institute combined their extensive knowledge of material science, additive manufacturing, and injection moulding to 'fix' the issue of high pill burden and poor therapeutic compliance.

Doctoral candidate Evert Fuenmayor and his supervisor Dr Ian Major have developed a blueprint for customisable tablets, capable of combining and releasing drugs in the correct quantities and conditions over a prolonged period of time. This drug delivery technology, which can be either ingested orally or sub dermally implanted, can be tailored to the specific needs of the patient as determined by their genetic profile. "Using pharmacogenomics, we can use the patient's genetic profile to predict drug efficacy and guide dosages," Evert, whose background is in mechanical engineering, explained. "It essentially tells us how an individual will respond to medications."

The duo began by questioning if biocompatible, biodegradable polymers via 3D printing would be suitable vehicles for customisable drug delivery. At the time, researchers were using it for things like rapid prototyping and making parts, not drug delivery. "When we started this

research, the idea that 3D printing with polymer could be used to deliver drugs to the body was really novel – no one was doing it,” the 29-year-old Venezuelan man said. “What we’ve managed to create is highly personalised, adaptable healthcare technology.”

It took three years for Evert to perfect the printing 3D technology for tablets which relies on specific polymers and printing parameters to deliver active ingredients and formed the basis for his first two PhD publications. He started off using caffeine as an active ingredient and soon realised that he could change the tablet’s release profile – how and when it was delivered - by making small, incremental changes to the settings on his 3-D printer.

This new technology heralds an era of modern, highly specialised healthcare that has the capacity to help people live longer, healthier lives.

“We blended and melted the material, made filament with it and fed it into the printer. Depending on which settings we selected, we’re able to get entirely different drug profiles,” he explained. “With as little as two clicks, I could make it so that the tablet could last three days in the body or six hours - it just depended on the needs of the patient.”

The next phase of research, which focussed on bilayer tablet development for the delivery of multiple drugs, saw them experiment with more clinically relevant drugs, such as Lovastatin and Hydrochlorothiazide. Collectively, these medications are prescribed for metabolic syndrome, which is an amalgamation of diseases that can occur over a person’s lifetime and combines cardiovascular diseases, high blood pressure, cholesterol, and fluid retention.

“People don’t even necessarily realise it, but metabolic syndrome is actually the number one cause of preventable deaths in Ireland. There’s a reason why people are being told to cut down on processed foods and saturated fats,” Evert explained. “Aside from the high pill burden associated with polypharmacy, non-compliance can also stem from people who think “Oh, I’m feeling ok today, I don’t need to finish my prescription,” but the reality is with strokes, heart disease and heart failure - they just happen. You won’t feel them coming; it’s not like having a head cold and having symptoms.”

Heralding a new era of modern, highly specialised healthcare, 3-D printing technology has the capacity to help people live longer, healthier lives. Potentially, customisable drug technology could be brought to the high-street and tablets of different drug profiles could be 3-D printed in-situ by pharmacists all over the country.

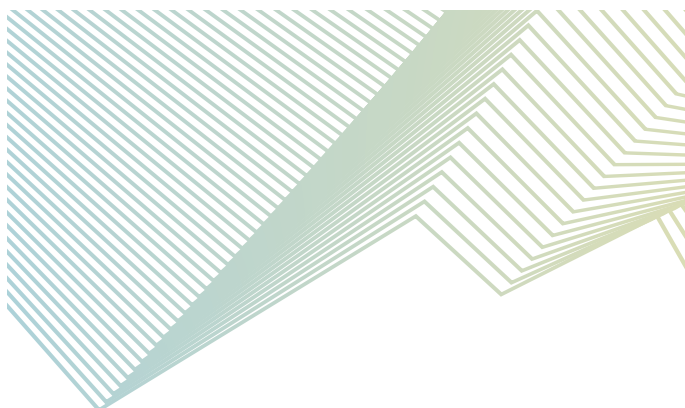
“Pharmacists will be able to make up the drug profile based on a patient’s unique needs there and then. With the right drug-loaded polymers in stock and a small 3-D printer, they’d be able to print your tablets in the actual pharmacy itself,” he explained. “We’re still learning about how different people react to different drugs and dosages and therapy approaches so while we’re not there just yet in terms of making this a reality, this is where medicine dispensing is going and what we’re hoping for.”

A key enabling technology for this new frontier of personalised medicine, 3-D printing can easily and cheaply produce tablets that are customised for individual patients or population sub-groups. As exciting as this new technology is, however, it’s not without limitations: “For Evert to print a batch of 30 tablets on a desktop printer takes something in the region of four hours,” Dr Major pointed out, adding: “Whereas traditional methods of production can produce thousands of tablets an hour on one tableting machine.”

To tackle this issue, the researchers have adopted a mass-customisation approach which combines a high-volume process, injection moulding, with 3-D printing to produce customised tablets at a significantly higher rate of production. While still at an early stage, this work has shown considerable promise in being able to produce customisable tablets which will facilitate revolutionary ‘made to order’ personalised healthcare.



Evert, who is a recipient of Athlone Institute of Technology’s President’s Seed Fund, was recently awarded the Materials Research Institute’s ‘Best Overall Paper 2019’ award for his seminal PhD research.





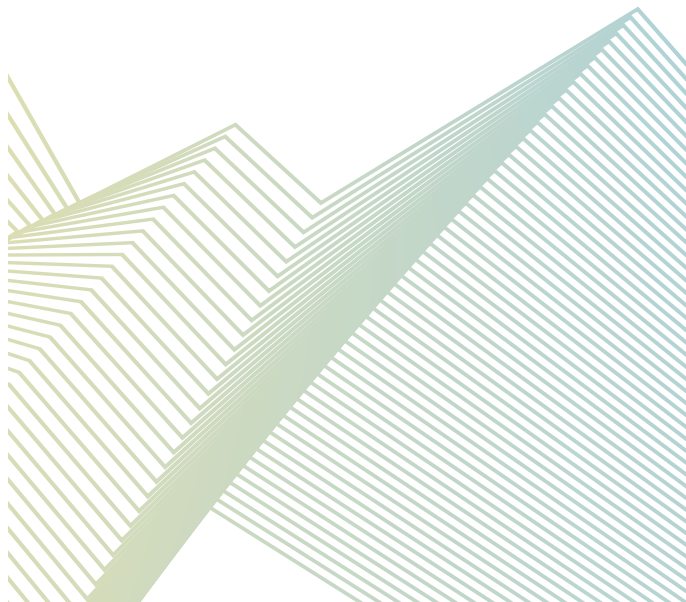
Ireland's **'Polymer People'** Lead Smart Manufacturing Revolution

Ireland is on the precipice of a fourth industrial revolution driven by advances in smart manufacturing – a convergence of the digital and physical world which enables machines to ‘talk’ to one another through the internet.

Ireland is on the precipice of a fourth industrial revolution driven by advances in smart manufacturing – a convergence of the digital and physical world which enables machines to ‘talk’ to one another through the internet.

At the epicentre of this seismic technological shift is Athlone Institute of Technology's brand-new smart manufacturing cell, which aims to take ‘people out of the process’, instead using robots, intelligent sensors and complex algorithms to improve the accuracy, reliability and speed of production lines.

The smart manufacturing cell, which is funded by CONFIRM, a €47 million SFI-funded smart manufacturing research centre aimed at improving Irish manufacturing competitiveness through technological advancement, is currently Ireland's only polymer-based test bed open to industry.



Smart manufacturing still seems very abstract – we need to educate industry

CONFIRM's six funded investigators – Dr Declan Devine, Dr Niall Murray, Dr Brian Lee, Dr Sean Lyons, Dr Enda Fallon and Dr Yuansong Qiao - all of Athlone Institute of Technology - are using the cell to educate and familiarise industry with new smart manufacturing technologies and the benefits of their subsequent adoption.

"While there's a lot of talk about smart manufacturing and industry 4.0, from a practical industry perspective, people's perceptions of it are still very vague. It feels intangible," Dr Declan Devine, who is the director of Materials Research Institute, explained.

"For Ireland to move forward as a centre of smart manufacturing, it's crucial that industry gets behind it. We're trying to facilitate this by upskilling people in emerging technologies and giving industry a testing-ground to try out these new smart manufacturing capabilities."

Robotics and AI mean that we can compete with low-cost labour

Athlone Institute of Technology has long been at the forefront of polymer research and innovation, producing generations of highly skilled polymer engineers who now form the backbone of Ireland's thriving medical technology sector – a sector which is heavily reliant on polymer technology.

Seen as an early adopter of responsive, connected manufacturing, Ireland is ideally situated for a smart manufacturing revolution thanks to its strong manufacturing and ICT base. A microcosm of this, Athlone Institute of Technology houses two Enterprise Ireland-funded gateways on its campus: COMAND, which specialises in ICT engineering, and APT, which specialises in polymer processing.

It's not a question of if we act, we must act

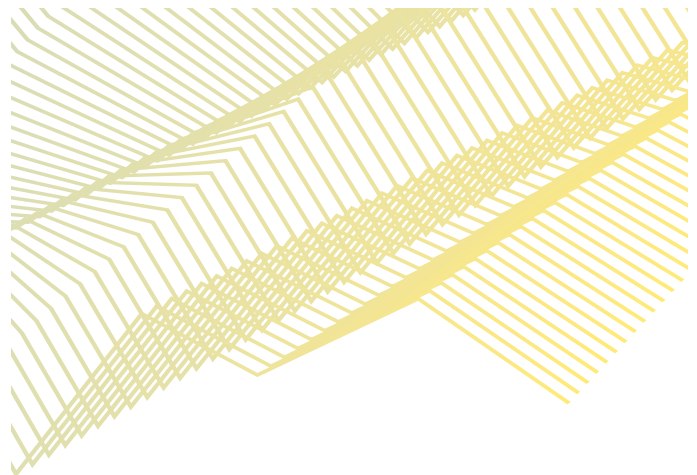
In the Western world, where the cost of labour is high, the only way for companies to compete with countries with low-cost labour is through highly sophisticated, automated processes i.e. smart manufacturing.

"If Ireland wants to remain competitive, we have to act now before we get squeezed by low cost and high-tech economies already embracing smart manufacturing. It's not a question of if we act; we must act or else we'll hemorrhage jobs. People might fear automation, but the reality is smart manufacturing will have an incredibly positive impact on the Midlands and the Irish economy.

Current research indicates that for every robot brought into a company, three highly-skilled jobs are created. None of these jobs are going to be minimum wage – they'll be highly skilled, well-paid polymer, automation and software engineering jobs.

As a primary member of the CONFIRM consortium, being selected to establish this new smart manufacturing cell and subsequent pilot line speaks volumes about Athlone Institute of Technology's reputation as an innovation partner of choice for industry – demonstrable by the sheer volume of Enterprise Ireland Innovation Vouchers it completes every year.

"We're known as the 'polymer people' across Ireland and Europe for good reason. Our smart manufacturing cell is a national resource for industry to utilise. We want companies big and small to know that we are open for business. We have the funding, we have the people and we have the expertise," Dr Devine finished.



AIT becomes first IoT to accede to Trinity College AMBER SFI Research Centre

Athlone Institute of Technology is the first institute of technology to formally partner AMBER, the SFI Research Centre for Advanced Materials and BioEngineering Research headquartered at Trinity College Dublin.

The partnership will foster research and education initiatives between the institute and existing AMBER partners (TCD, RCSI, UCC, DCU, NUIG, UL and Tyndall Institute) promoting academic exchange and the development of research and innovation, particularly in the field of bio-materials for health and the circular economy, an economic system aimed at minimizing waste.

AIT's engagement will grow the centre's world leading academic and industry-orientated materials science research in critical and emerging sectors of the economy related to polymers for applications in the life sciences, sustainable materials and industrial manufacturing. Bringing AIT into AMBER's established research clusters will enable the centre to address current gaps in knowledge, drive advances in materials science and engineering, and translate research excellence into new products and technologies for society and solutions for industry.

The AMBER Centre's second phase of research will span from 2019-2025. AIT researchers will help develop new sustainable polymer strategies, such as polymer recycling and emerging biopolymers, as alternatives to the reliance on the traditional fossil fuel-driven polymer sector. This will allow the centre to work with companies across multiple sectors in the area of waste reduction and efficient resource utilization. Crucially, AIT will enhance AMBER through its extensive polymer processing expertise so that the span of materials discovery through to application can be studied.

AIT joins AMBER at a critical time in its expansion. AMBER currently partners with 40 companies across the fields of ICT, medical technologies and devices, as well as those in sustainability and manufacturing. AMBER will continue to significantly scale its industry investment during the Centre's second phase, aligning its vision with Enterprise 2025, Ireland's national policy document by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

AMBER will play a crucial role for both multi-nationals and SMEs in driving innovation and will demonstrate economic impacts through retaining Irish-based multinationals, driving their research and development agendas as well as helping catalyse and grow new industry engagements. It will also attract new foreign direct investment to Ireland and investment from foreign-owned businesses within Ireland, strengthen SME investment in research and develop and create new spin out businesses.

Welcoming the announcement, Professor Mark Ferguson, Director General of Science Foundation Ireland and Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government of Ireland, said: "This partnership marks a significant opportunity for research collaboration, bringing diverse talents together to forge economic and social progress and the translation of research to industry. Science Foundation Ireland looks forward to continuing to support the world leading AMBER SFI Research Centre, increasing Ireland's ability to positively impact both society and the economy through excellent scientific research."

Dr Declan Devine, Director of the Materials Research Institute at Athlone Institute of Technology, said: "We have a long-established reputation for excellent science with translational potential. Partnering with the AMBER SFI Research Centre will further enable us to grow research in our areas of expertise, through the Applied Polymer Technologies (APT) Gateway, Ireland's National Centre for Polymer Materials and Processing Research, which is hosted in our Materials Research Institute, and our development of materials for biomedical applications, such as bone regenerations and biodegradable polymer stents, and structural thermoplastic composites."

Professor Mick Morris, Director of AMBER, added: "As part of AMBER's second phase, the centre will demonstrate significant impacts which will benefit individuals, communities, organisations and society both in Ireland and around the world. We are delighted to welcome Athlone Institute of Technology into the centre to deliver world-class materials science research and form strategic alliances with industry. The quality of our scientific research is critical for AMBER in attracting and sustaining long term engagements with industry, providing a skilled workforce competing for non-exchequer funding and tackling global challenges. AIT will play a significant role in delivering these ambitious goals as part of the centre."

This partnership marks a significant opportunity for research collaboration, bringing diverse talents together to forge economic and social progress and the translation of research to industry.

Arran Chemical Company and AIT Collaborate on **Unique Industry-Academia Research Project**

Athlone Institute of Technology and Arran Chemical Company, a member of the Almac Group, are collaborating on a unique PhD project investigating the use of biocatalysis in the asymmetric synthesis of chiral amines and diamines. Leading the project is Lauryn Bracken, a graduate of Athlone Institute of Technology's Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Pharmaceutical Sciences and a recent recipient of the institute's President's Doctoral Scholarship.

Lauren, from Tullamore, Co. Offaly, will be jointly supervised by Dr Noreen Morris and Dr Sean Reidy, both lecturers in chemistry at Athlone Institute of Technology, in collaboration with Professor Tom Moody, Vice President of Technology Development and Commercialisation, Almac Sciences and Arran Chemical Company, and Dr Peter Cairns, Technical Manager, Arran Chemical Company.

Due to commence in October 2019, the project will focus on greener and more economic alternatives to chemical production methods for the synthesis of chiral amines and diamines. Welcoming the funding, Dr Noreen Morris said: "This project has the exciting prospect of exposing both the student and supervisors to new and exciting areas of research. A collaboration with Arran Chemical Company, an established chemical company with a wealth of experience which works with clients globally, will raise the profile of Athlone Institute of Technology as a base of research and development excellence and lead to further opportunities for collaborative research in the future."

Commenting on the announcement, Professor Moody said: "We are delighted to support Athlone Institute of Technology in this endeavour and look forward to working together over the next four years. Our intention is to supply the institute with all the necessary biocatalysts needed for this investigation and, of course, guidance and expertise from our specialists in this field."



Enterprise Ireland Awards Massive Capital Funding in Excess of **€1 Million to APT and COMAND** for Highly Specialist Equipment

Athlone Institute of Technology has been awarded €1.1 million in Enterprise Ireland capital funding to purchase specialist equipment for its two technology gateways – APT and COMAND (The most successful centres on EI Technology Gateway network).

APT, which deals with polymers, has been awarded the bulk of the funding, €974,000, for seven pieces of highly specialised equipment. This will enable AIT to better serve the needs of the Irish manufacturing industry within the polymer space (valued at €2 billion) particularly in regard to upskilling, research and development techniques, and providing world-class consultancy to those companies, helping them execute their technological road maps.

The equipment approved for funding is aimed at extremely advanced applications and cutting-edge research and development. "Receiving this funding is a huge endorsement of the work that we're doing and will enable us to support companies interested in trying out new technologies and techniques, all of which will enable their own innovation agendas," Dr Sean Lyons, Dean of Faculty of Engineering and Informatics at Athlone Institute of Technology, explained.

As a member of the EI Technology Gateway Network, this new technology is a national resource available for everybody to use regardless of where they are located. "Our fully trained staff have decades of experience in R&D for the polymer industry and are there to help companies promote their research agendas. On top of that, this positions AIT to help upskill those companies whether that be through short term training courses, master's degrees or PhD level - wherever they feel there is a need of a gap in their knowledge," Dr Lyons added.

For COMAND, the Enterprise Ireland backed capital funding will enable industrial partners to develop and verify Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics solutions across the edge and cloud.

The specialist equipment is expected to be fully installed and operational on campus by the beginning of 2020.





Shiitake Mushrooms May Hold **Cure to Tackling Pneumonia and Sepsis**

With superbugs poised to become humanity's greatest threat, shiitake mushrooms hold the key to preventing 'global disaster' of increasing antimicrobial resistance - the ability of bacteria to resist the effects of a medicine previously used to treat them, says Professor Neil J Rowan, Director of the Bioscience Research Institute at Athlone Institute of Technology and Adjunct Professor of the School of Medicine at NUI Galway.

The culmination of a five-year, €600,000 research collaboration investigating the use of beta-1-3, 1-6-D-glucan - a naturally occurring sugar found in the cell walls of fungi - to combat chronic bacterial infections, such as sepsis and pneumonia, has led to the development of a new therapeutic innovation that could drastically improve patient care and may provide a complementary or alternative intervention to using front-line antibiotics.

"We've managed to successfully harness the immune-priming properties of medicinal mushrooms to treat lower respiratory tract infections caused by bacteria, such as *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, that possess multiple resistances to antibiotics. Our findings have the capacity to radically transform our approach to dealing with antimicrobial resistance and human illness more generally" Professor Rowan said.

"The overuse of broad-spectrum antibiotics has contributed to a dramatic spread of sophisticated multiple drug resistant bacterial pathogens that, if left unchecked, could cause a global disaster - In less than 30 years, antimicrobial resistance could cause even more deaths than cancer," he explained. "The findings from this research, which exploits the immune stimulation properties of medicinal mushrooms, are key to addressing this increasingly global problem."

Under the lead supervision of Professor Rowan, Emma Murphy, a doctoral candidate undertaking research at Athlone Institute of Technology, has developed the world's first biotechnology process capable of producing high purity quantities of this fungal compound in a sterile formulation that's suitable for intravenous usage. The team is currently in the process of exploring commercial development of the process for scale up and is also considering future needs for route to market.

The overuse of broad-spectrum antibiotics has contributed to a dramatic spread of sophisticated multiple drug resistant bacterial pathogens that, if left unchecked, could cause a global disaster.

Welcoming the news, President of Athlone Institute of Technology, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, said: "This internationally-leading, collaborative project reflects the creativity, ingenuity and commitment of our immensely talented scientists and clinicians, and befitting our status as the number 1 institute of technology for research across the technological higher education sector, it places us at the forefront of global innovation and knowledge creation."

This research was funded by the Irish Health-Research Board (HRB) over a five-year period.





What **Irish Centenarians** Can Teach Us About Longevity and Aging

Once an exclusive club, the number of people living to celebrate their hundredth birthday has grown exponentially across both the developed and developing world - to the point where centenarians are now the fastest growing demographic globally. In Ireland, the centenarian population has exploded - rising 20% in just four years. This number, which currently stands at 456, is expected to increase 10-fold by 2050. By the turn of the next century, it is estimated that there will be more than 25 million centenarians living worldwide.

While this remarkable phenomenon can be attributed, in part, to advancements in healthcare, technology, living conditions and improved economies, Alison Fagan, an MSc researcher in the Department of Nursing and Healthcare at Athlone Institute of Technology, believes there's more to extreme longevity than meets the eye. "Centenarians have long been regarded as paragons of successful aging. I wanted to know what they did, beyond the norm, to extend their lifespans," she said.

Under the stewardship of Dr Mary McDonnell Naughton and Lorraine Gaffney, both lecturers in the Faculty of Science and Health, Alison set about finding and interviewing a sampling of Ireland's centenarians. She soon discovered a range of psycho-social factors that have an incredibly potent impact on the aging process.

Loneliness: a silent killer

The first commonality to emerge from her research was the importance of social connectedness and having close ties to friends, family and the wider community. "I'm not talking about how we would rank social connectedness today - I could say I'm extremely socially connected because I have 700 friends on Facebook and 300 people like my Instagram page - but that's a foreign world to them. They're talking about real-time connections, face-to-face interactions with the people around them," she said. "In the modern world, where people appear more 'connected' than ever, we're actually totally disconnected - it's a cruel irony and something I've become more aware of since I began this research. Look around any coffee shop and you'll observe people sitting together in groups completely ignoring each other - every one of them preoccupied by their phones."

Loneliness and social disconnect is an incredibly pervasive problem that affects all strata of society. Irish women aged between 65 and 85 are considered particularly at risk of withdrawing into themselves following retirement or the loss of a spouse. Meanwhile, at the other end of the scale, 16-24-year-olds are experiencing record levels of depression and anxiety with more than 10% of them reporting feeling often or always lonely. "Loneliness is worse for your health than smoking - it's a silent killer. We need to listen to the centenarians who are telling us to develop our social relationships and put down the phones and actually talk to one another," Alison said.

Maintaining identity: hobbies, goals and roles

Staying active in retirement and maintaining “hobbies, goals and roles” was also vital to the centenarians’ longevity. Often, they carried hobbies, like dancing, right through from childhood to adulthood. She recalled her first encounter with one of the oldest participants in the study – a sprightly 106-year-old man with a penchant for gardening: “I pulled up to the house and saw a man flying around his garden on a ride-on mower. I, assuming he was the son, introduced myself and asked to speak to his father. He laughed, hopped off the lawn mower to shake my hand.” Shortly after, Alison discovered that same man still had an active driving licence and drove to mass every Sunday to meet his friends.

She was also struck by how engaged the centenarians were with what was happening in the world around them on both a micro and macro level. Every one of them had an opinion on the big stories dominating the news cycle at the time, most notably #MeToo and #Repealthe8th, and was determined to take an active role in the public discourse. “As a trained nurse working in aged care, I often see patients on the other end of the spectrum - older people who have retreated into themselves because they feel that no one wants to listen to what they have to say, even though they have many years of experience that society could benefit from,” she said.

Resilience and the power of positivity

Many of the study participants also showed a propensity for resilience - a quality that saw them through some extremely challenging times. Some were orphaned, others had experienced difficulties in their married lives and were left rearing children by themselves, while others had never married at all. For Alison, the commonality was not in the event itself but in how they dealt with it: “They took setbacks in their stride, stepped up when needed and didn’t complain about it.” She gave several anecdotal examples, one of which detailed how, when one of the women’s husbands got sick, she took on the role of a full-time carer so that she could nurse him back to health. “What’s even more incredible is that he is two years older than her and she was 96 at the time,” she explained. “That kind of resilience and positive outlook on life is inspiring, it’s something we should all take on board.”

“**By the turn of the next century, it is estimated that there will be more than 25 million centenarians living worldwide.**”

Looking to the future

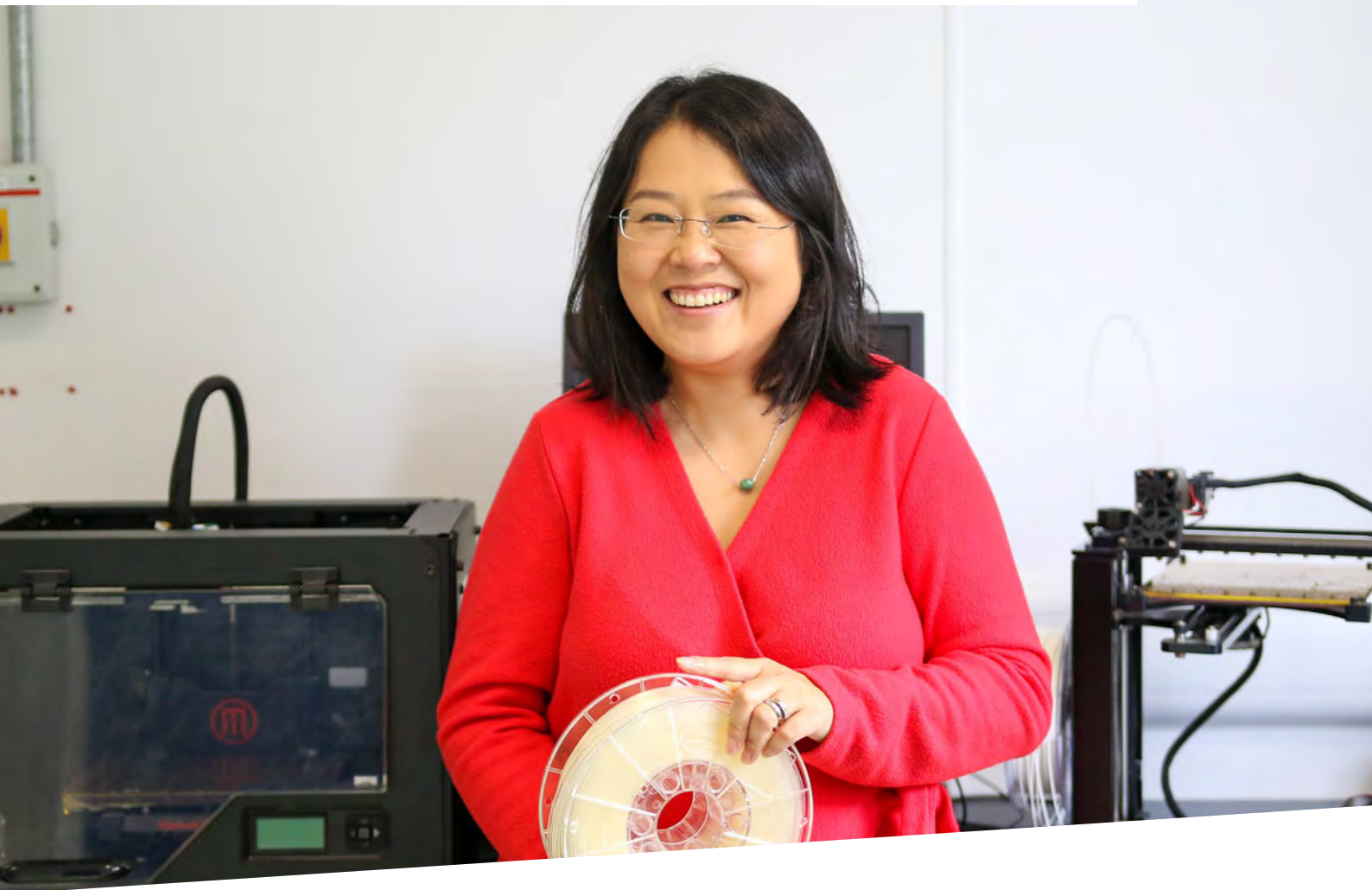
With more and more people making it to 100 and beyond, Irish centenarians are beginning to impact society on a grand level. Through stakeholder-informed research like Alison’s, policy makers will have the tools to plan for the future and put supports in place to meet increased demand on housing, service, medical care and considerations to pension and working age. “These are the conversations that we need to be having now,” she said. “As it stands, the healthcare system is already flummoxed. This problem isn’t just going to go away; it’s only going to be compounded as the centenarian population grows.”

Believing prevention to be better than a cure, Alison maintains that more money needs to be allocated to health promotion and educating people on how to make better choices and stay healthy – something that is atypical across the developed world. “Unfortunately, we have a tendency to treat problems once they arise, not prevent them in the first place,” she said. Other things that can be done to promote successful aging include encouraging people to stay in their homes longer as aging within the community has been proven to be much more beneficial and cost effective. She also recommends that neighbours check in on people most at risk of social isolation – namely widowers and people living in rural areas.

“What I’m hoping to stress to people is that we, as a society and as individuals, can learn from the centenarian population and implement changes right now that will affect our journey to old age and improve our longevity and quality of life. We just need to listen to our older people and afford them the value and respect that they deserve,” she finished.



AIT Researcher Reveals **Revolutionary Dissolvable Heart Stent**



Dr Yuanyuan Chen was awarded Athlone Institute of Technology's inaugural 'Women in Research' award for her contribution to the scientific canon.

A researcher from Athlone Institute of Technology's Material Research Institute has made meaningful strides in stent technology through her work with polymer and biodegradable medical devices. Originally from China, Dr Yuanyuan Chen has designed breakthrough coronary scaffolding which can be placed in clogged arteries to increase blood flow to the heart. With a background in nursing, Dr Chen is all too aware of the growing incidences of coronary and peripheral artery diseases and of the problems associated with the coronary stent solutions currently on the market.

"Most of the coronary stents on the market are permanent and require invasive surgery to fit and can't be removed. Patients fitted with these stents often experience complications such as an auto-immune response. In dealing with this, they are required to take anti-rejection medications to prevent their bodies from rejecting the coronary stent. These tablets must be taken consistently for the rest of the patients' life and can have unpleasant side effects," she said.

Some of the largest medical technology companies in the world, including Abbott Vascular, have been attempting to create fully biodegradable stents that be absorbed by the body with the view to minimizing the need for invasive surgery. One such product, made from an expensive material called PLLA, has made it to market but not without complication. For companies like Abbot, stent thickness is still a major issue as their biodegradable stent is double the size of the permanent stents on the market. With smaller medical devices like stents, size is extremely important as tissue is liable to grow around and compress the artery, resulting in a restriction in blood flow.

“***I'm extremely honoured to be the first recipient of this inaugural award and I feel it's indicative of the institute's commitment to supporting women in STEM.***”

The main difference between the stents Dr Chen is creating and what's currently on offer commercially, is that hers are made from a stronger, reinforced polymer that enables her to create thinner and more durable biodegradable coronary stents. She's quick to point out that this revolutionary medical device technology is still in its infancy and not without its challenges.

Absorbable stents are wonderful in theory and have the capacity to revolutionise the world of modern medicine, but the technology hasn't been perfected.

"Absorbable stents are wonderful in theory and have the capacity to revolutionise the world of modern medicine, but the technology hasn't been perfected. These stents perform an important function and once their job is done, they should break down and be naturally absorbed by the body. Problems arise if they dissolve too early and haven't fully fulfilled their function," Dr Chen said.

The stents Dr Chen is developing at Athlone Institute of Technology's Materials Research Institute (MRI) are made from a unique blend of PLA polymer and are extremely cheap to produce. Using a process called Fused Deposition Modelling (FDM), Dr Chen is 3-D printing the coronary stents in-house and testing them constantly to check their biocompatibility. With absorbable stents currently one of the most promising fields in interventional cardiology, Dr Chen's innovations are particularly pertinent. Her stents are thinner and more durable than others currently on the market, will cost significantly less to produce and will reduce the need for invasive surgeries.

In recognition of her significant contribution to the scientific canon, Dr Chen, who recently passed her PhD Viva, was awarded Athlone Institute of Technology's 'Women in Research' award. "I'm extremely honoured to be the first recipient of this inaugural award and I feel it's indicative of the institute's commitment to supporting women in STEM and to achieving gender parity in our workforce," she said.

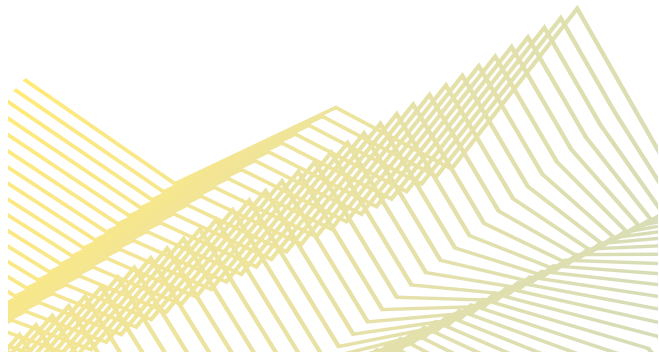
The 'Women in Research' award, which consists of a bursary of €37,000, will fund Dr Chen for a year, enabling her to develop new ideas, apply for further research funding and establish herself as an independent researcher within the MRI. "This bursary has given me the breathing space to figure out if I want to pursue a career in industry or academia. I'm lucky in that the work I've been doing here at Athlone Institute of Technology combines both. Without this award, I would have been under pressure to find full-time employment while trying to finish my PhD thesis and related publications.

"I've received tremendous support from the lecturing and research staff throughout my undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, particularly from my supervisor Dr Declan Devine who has been instrumental in my development as an academic. I was pregnant with my first child during the latter half of my PhD and the team here couldn't have been more supportive," she said.

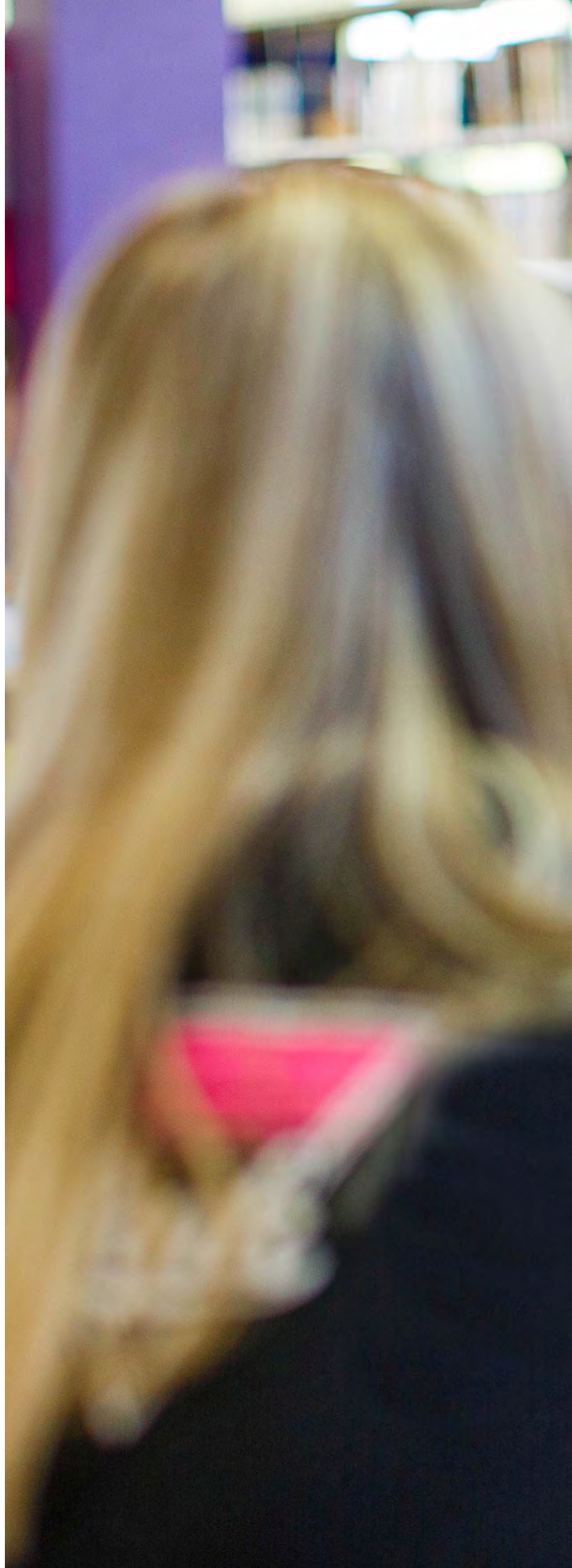
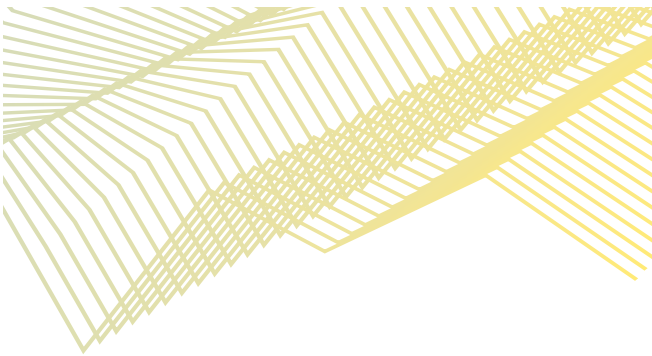
As part of its strategy to retain the best and brightest minds, the Material Research Institute has transparent and fair work-life balance policies in place to ensure employees, such as Dr Chen, enjoy a good work-life balance. Employees can avail of flexible working hours if needed, boosting contentment amongst staff and, crucially, productivity.

AIT is a member of the Athena SWAN Charter and is working toward the bronze Athena SWAN award, the goal of which is to achieve gender parity in the workplace, particularly in STEM where there is a persistent imbalance or 3:1 in favour of men. The Athena SWAN Charter was originally developed in the UK in 2005 by Advance HE to encourage and recognise commitment to advancing the careers of women in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM) employed in higher education and research.





Faculty Successes





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THRIC 2019

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AIT Puts 'Tourism at the Heart of It' With Major International Conference

AIT hosted a major international tourism conference dedicated to the tourism and hospitality research (THRIC) in June. Opened by Minister Kevin 'Boxer' Moran, the conference provided a platform for disseminating thought-provoking and cutting-edge tourism and hospitality research.

Over the course of the two-day event, a range of international keynote speakers drawn from academia, industry and tourism addressed this year's conference theme 'Tourism at the Heart. of It'. They discussed the impact of tourism on the Irish economy and the importance of keeping it at the forefront of the minds of policy makers and regional planners.

"Tourism plays a crucial role in the success of Ireland's economy, supporting around 1 in 10 jobs and contributing billions to the economy. Despite this, as a country, we are still lacking tourism policy insights, particularly the statistical data needed to drive the industry forward.

"Likewise, there is a lack of funding available for postgraduate research. At present, there is no national funding to support postgraduate tourism or hospitality research, in striking contrast to the volume of research funded in agriculture, STEM, foreign investment and the humanities.

Tourism plays a crucial role in the success of Ireland's economy, supporting around 1 in 10 jobs and contributing billions to the economy.

"THRIC provided an opportunity to showcase the depth and breadth of tourism research being conducted in Athlone Institute of Technology, including tourism and adventure activities, tourism and environmental protection and scenario planning for Brexit," Dr Anthony Johnston, Head of Department of Tourism and Leisure Studies, explained.

Several key note speakers addressed these issues, including Professor Caroline Scarles and Professor Richard Sharpley from the University of Surrey and the University of Central Lancashire respectively, world famous entrepreneur Pat McDonagh who is the owner of Supermacs, the Só Group and the Plaza Group, Aileesh Carew, Director of Sales and Marketing at EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum and Mark McGovern, Manager of Fáilte Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand.

In advance of the conference, students, staff and the wider community were invited to capture the essence of 'Tourism in Ireland's Hidden Heartlands' and submit their photography to be displayed in the foyer of the Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure building. Later in the evening, attendees were treated to a barbecue and Jazz music, as well as a showcase of the best epicurean delights and regional produce.





Henshaw Eyewear Gets Branding Boost from Digital Marketing Capstone Project

Ireland rugby player Robbie Henshaw visited Athlone Institute of Technology for the presentation of a final year student's digital marketing project...

For the past year, Mark Lynch, a fourth year Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Digital Marketing student, has been working behind the scenes developing a comprehensive digital marketing strategy for Henshaw Eyewear – an up-and-coming eyewear brand owned by Leinster and Ireland rugby player Robbie Henshaw.

Mark's strategy, which aims to build brand salience and increase e-commerce, forms an integral component of his final year digital marketing capstone project and has given him an opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge and business acumen garnered over the course his degree in a 'real-world' context.

"Working with a real business - helping them set and achieve strategic digital marketing goals - has given me invaluable, industry-relevant experience to add to my portfolio," he explained. "With graduation just around the corner, I'm confident that I've been equipped with the skills, competencies and experience necessary to carve out a successful career in digital marketing."

Mark was one of nine students to collaborate with industry on the newly minted capstone project which gave local businesses the unique opportunity to work with a higher education institute and fill their digital marketing resource gaps using the students' knowledge of cutting-edge digital marketing methods.

As part of the brief, students were tasked with developing and implementing a digital marketing strategy from scratch, showing tangible results using tools like Google Analytics. Whether they were deep diving into analytics or involved in content marketing, their business lecturers were on hand to lend their support and expertise.

To support this process, and feed and inform their digital marketing strategies, the final year students undertook a variety of practical and theoretical modules, including Integrated Marketing Communications, Digital Content, Advanced Analytics, and Ethics and Digital Marketing.

"A successful digital marketing strategy is essential for any business looking to extend their digital footprint and in turn their national and sometimes international market share. In return for sharing their expertise, our final year students were given hands-on, practical experience with the possibility of a job offer at the end of it," said Louise Murray, an AIT marketing lecturer.

An eclectic mix of business across a broad range of industries participated in this year's inaugural capstone programme - from a superfoods importer to a dry ice manufacturer, and a virtual reality arcade lounge - each subsequent digital marketing capstone project was unique to the company and student.

The project was split into two phases, the first of which saw students liaise with their respective company to find what their goals and objectives were. During this phase, students gathered information about the company, researched the business, industry and competitors, and carried out what's known as a situational analysis. They also looked at content and SEO to determine the company's digital footprint.

In the second phase, the students began building out the company's social media channels and began work on the website. The capstone project ran until early April and culminated in the presentation of a fully-fledged digital marketing strategy to each students' respective company.

AIT Sport and Health Science Students Recognised for **Exceptional Academic Achievement**

Athlone Institute of Technology's Department of Sport and Health Science held its inaugural honours list award ceremony recognising the exceptional academic performance of its students. Out of a total of 360 students within the faculty, 54 received commendations from the President of Athlone Institute of Technology, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, in recognition of their scholarly achievements.

Among these were students from the Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Sports Science with Exercise Physiology, Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Athletic and Rehabilitation Therapy, and Bachelor of Science (Honours) Health Science with Nutrition. To be eligible for an award, first- and second-year students must achieve a minimum grade average of 65%, while students in third and fourth year must have an average of 70%.

We're delighted to acknowledge the achievements of students across all years of our undergraduate degree programmes.

Commenting on the awards, Dr Aoife Lane, Head of Department of Sport and Health Science, said: "We're delighted to acknowledge the achievements of students across all years of our undergraduate degree programmes. Each of these students on our inaugural honours list have shown diligence and commitment to their studies which is reflected in their grades, and something they should be extremely proud of. We look forward to building the honours list going forward and continuing to reward excellence in academia throughout the student life cycle."



AIT and French Partner University Encourage Bilateral Flow of Engineering and Science Students

Athlone Institute of Technology welcomes representatives from the Universitaire de Rennes Engineering School to the campus annually. The long-established relationship between the two institutions has facilitated the bilateral flow of students giving many Faculty of Engineering and Informatics students an opportunity to avail of their educational passport and broaden their cultural horizons.

John Barrett, a lecturer in the Department of Computer and Software Engineering who facilitates the placement programme, supervised students from Rennes from April to June 2019. Coming from industry, John has a wealth of knowledge in the high-performance computing, games, and special effects software industries. The placement, which forms an integral component of the Software Engineering degree, gives students an opportunity to gain an insight into industrial practices in the field.

According to Dr Enda Fallon, Head of Department of Computer and Software Engineering, the bilateral flow of students and staff between Universitaire de Rennes and Athlone Institute of Technology over the last number of years has proven "mutually beneficial and culturally enriching".

The institute also hosted Frederic Bon of IUT Rennes who discussed placement opportunities for science students with Dr Nuala Commins, the newly appointed head of Department of Life and Physical Sciences, Dr Brian Murphy, a science lecturer and Mary Simpson of AIT's International Office. As part of their degree, third year Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Microbiology students are required to go out on placement and the IUT Rennes has agreed to host them.

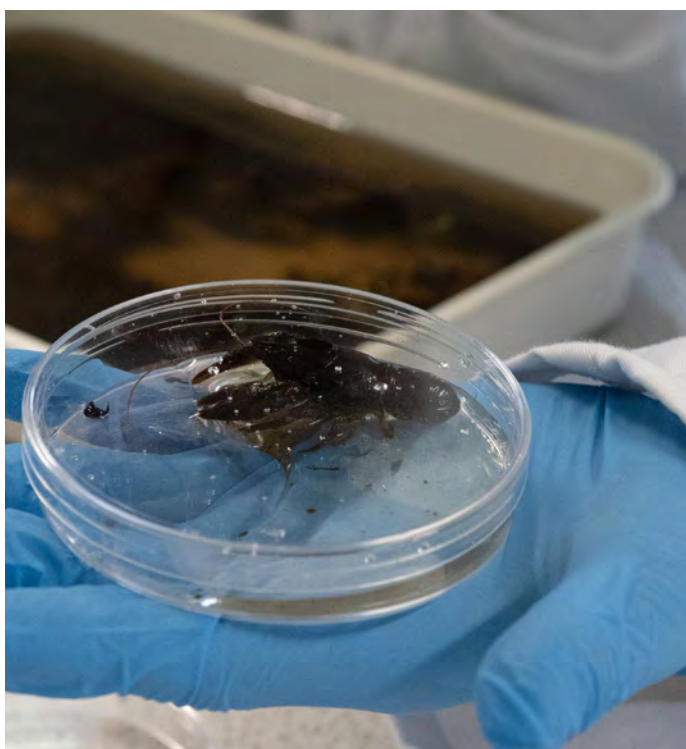




Science Week: **Embracing a Wondrous World**

Athlone Institute of Technology celebrated Science Week 2018 in style with a whole host of activities and events specifically designed to spark imagination and delight secondary and primary school children across the Midlands. From line dancing senior citizens concerned with active ageing and the institute's first intergeneration games, to fermented foods and gut health, ancient earthy pottery, origami from outer space and a rogue crayfish, attendees were treated to a wide array of workshops, talks and interactive learning experiences.

Coordinated nationally by Science Foundation Ireland (SFI), the institute was one of twelve centres across Ireland to celebrate the wondrous world of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) with the view to encouraging the future matriculation of students into these areas. This year's festivities were opened by former Minister for Education Mary O'Rourke, who aside from being a notable luminary in her own right and a trailblazer in the world of Irish politics, is one of the institute's Distinguished Fellows.



Mrs O'Rourke highlighted the importance of events like SFI's Science Week in making science more tangible for people: "When people talk about science it's often 'up there', something that sounds exciting but feels largely unattainable. In truth, science is about a whole host of other things; it's about the interaction between people, it's about aging, active ageing, it's also about cultural and social activity. In other words, it's about people."

“When people talk about science it's often 'up there', something that sounds exciting but feels largely unattainable. In truth, science is about a whole host of other things; it's about the interaction between people, it's about aging, active aging, it's also about cultural and social activity. In other words, it's about people.”

Exemplifying this, the South Dublin Senior Citizens Club were in attendance to give a line dancing demonstration and to participate in the institute's first Intergenerational Games. The group of senior citizens, whose average age is 76, competed against AIT students in three sports: Badminton, Table Tennis and Pool. Aside from the fun and frivolity of it all, the games were intended to highlight the importance of active ageing for the continued health of older people in the community.

According to Dr Niall Seery, Vice President of Academic Affairs, the South Dublin Senior Citizens Group are a testament to the positive benefits of active aging: "As Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw once said, we don't stop playing because we get old. We get old because we stop playing. This is a group who are living their lives to the fullest and inspiring others to do the same through their social and cultural engagement. They are advocating active aging for the health and wellbeing of all individuals and their communities."

From a scientific perspective, Organiser and Lecturer in Sport and Recreation, Joe Tierney, was on hand to take measurements, including heart rates before and after exercise and recovery, as well as the number of steps participants had taken over the course of the events. The same was done for the participating Sports Science students, whose average age is 21.

"Engagement in physical activity enhances people's lives, but it's not just the physical element that's important, the social element is also crucial for active, healthy and happy aging. Physical activity, whether that be through sport or line dancing, brings people together and gives them a reason to communicate. Today's Intergenerational Games, which saw older people mixing with younger people and vice versa, was a huge success and of benefit to both groups," he said.

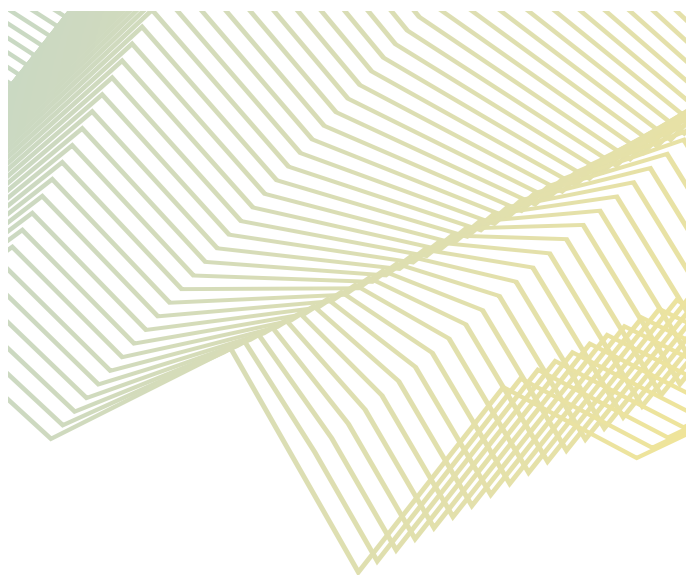
Over the course of Science Week, which ran from November 11th to 18th, attendees were also treated to a series of interactive workshops and talks, including a Junior Cycle Project Event that looked at Athlone's freshwater ecology, a microbiology lab, everyday science in the kitchen, a 'who done it'-style forensic lab and a look at the ingredients in our food.

As part of a series of bitesize lunchtime lectures, attendees also learned about the secret life of bees, origami in and out of outer space, pottery: an ancient earthy science and lastly, drugs: the good, the bad and the ugly, the latter of which was delivered by Lecturer in the Department of Nursing and Health Sciences, Dr Gary Stack. Dr Stack's talk looked at people's experiences with and management of pain, particularly in relation to pain medication.

"Pain is such a broad topic and can range from a toothache to severe and debilitating back pain. As a community pharmacist, I have spent many days helping people to choose the right solution for their symptoms. By understanding more about the science of pain and the medicines we use to treat it, people can be empowered to make better choices for their own healthcare," he said.

“From line dancing senior citizens to fermented foods and gut health, ancient earthy pottery, origami from outer space and a rogue crayfish, attendees were treated to a wide array of workshops, talks and interactive learning experiences.”

The week rounded out with the ISTA Secondary Schools Chemistry Quiz Final, which was hosted in the Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure building and a series of Anyone4Science roadshows, which gave students the opportunity to carry out their own scientific investigation or activity during the workshops - giving them a 'hands-on' science experience.





AIT Training Data Analysts for World's Most Sophisticated Radio Telescope Network

Athlone Institute of Technology has partnered with the Local Enterprise Office, Offaly to launch the STREAM Creative Suite, a new €450,000 hub through which data generated by the I-LOFAR – the Irish component of the world's largest and most sophisticated radio telescope network – can be collected and processed.

Based in the Birr Technology Centre, the STREAM Creative Suite is expected to attract data scientists and researchers from around the world, further stimulating the generation of high-tech jobs in the Midlands region. To support this growth, Athlone Institute of Technology will train an additional 360 people in the field of data analytics over the next three years through its Higher Diploma and Master of Science in Data Analytics.

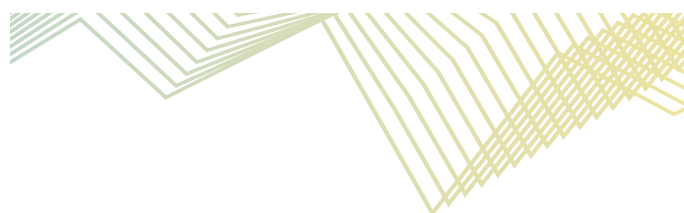
Located adjacent to the historic Leviathan telescope, which was built in 1845 by the third Earl of Rosse on the grounds of Birr Castle, the I-LOFAR is the most westerly antenna in a chain of 52 spanning 2,000 kilometres across Europe. Using these multiple antennae, the telescope facilitates the study of celestial objects such as the sun, black holes and magnetic fields. Each station generates more than 3 gigabytes of data per second, which results in 6 petabytes per year.

This vast body of data feeds into a large supercomputer in Groningen, Netherlands, which uses it to create a unified radio telescope that enables scientists to observe the universe in unprecedented detail through low frequency radio waves. Currently, the I-LOFAR in Birr, which is the 12th and most recent addition to the network, is one of the most significant sources of this data.

According to Trevor Prendergast, who heads Athlone Institute of Technology's business computing department: "This is a significant partnership for the institute, one that will leverage our expertise in delivering programmes in specialist areas, such as data analytics. We relish the opportunity to lead such an important data project and look forward to meeting the training, educational and research needs of the STREAM Creative Suite project, ensuring the continued growth of the Midlands as a burgeoning high-tech hub".

Athlone Institute of Technology will train an additional 360 people in the field of data analytics over the next three years.

Harnessing the latest, cutting-edge research, industry-led training initiatives, enterprising start-ups and FDI clusters, the STREAM Creative Suite project will become a dynamic hub for research and economic development in the Midlands and a testbed for big data in Ireland.



Village Vets Bring 'Real World' Job Scenarios into the Classroom

Village Vets, Ireland's largest private employer of vets and nurses, put final year Athlone Institute of Technology veterinary students through their paces with a series of mock interviews designed to help them secure employment upon graduation.

According to Assistant Lecturer in Veterinary Nursing Gillian Coughlan, the orchestrating of mock interviews with an employer of such stature will help to prepare students for 'real world' scenarios without the pressure of an actual job riding on the interview outcome.

"We have a duty of care to prepare our students for life after graduation and that includes helping them hone their interview skills. Mock interviews are a fantastic way of doing just that in that they enable students to formulate smart answers and figure where their strengths and weaknesses lie. Once they know, they can play to their strengths and take corrective action where necessary," she said.

This forward-thinking, practical approach to education, in tandem with a commitment to academic excellence, is exactly why Athlone Institute of Technology was named the Sunday Times Good University Guide 'Institute of Technology of the Year' in 2018.

With a reputation for being finely attuned to the rapidly evolving needs of industry, AIT uses the close relationships it has cultivated across a range of sectors to inform course offerings and create placement opportunities for students. Typifying this, the BSc in Veterinary Nursing's clinical staff have worked in-step with industry since the programme's inception.

"The programme's structure and content has been written and moulded with the input and collegiality of clinical practitioner stakeholders, and with the benchmarks and competencies set out by the Veterinary Council of Ireland (VCI), the latter of which acts as a guide to what industry demands of veterinary nurses," Ms Coughlan said.

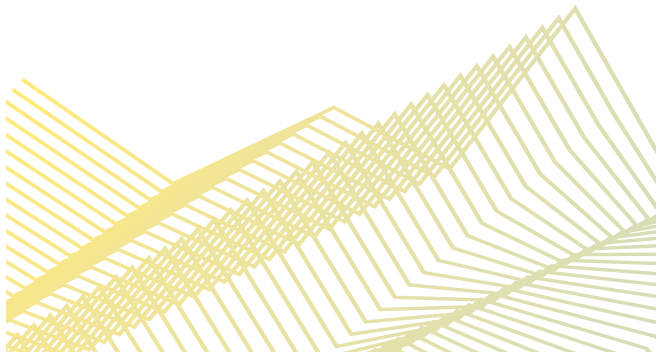
The cultivation of this symbiotic relationship ensures that AIT graduates are work-ready, highly skilled and experienced, making them a highly attractive and sought-after prospect. As a result, AIT graduates enjoy a 93% employability rate six months after graduation.

Employment opportunities for veterinary nursing graduates are plentiful both at home and abroad, with many students finding gainful employment with one of the clinics they have been on placement with. "This is a testament to the standard of student we are sending out on placement and indicative of industry's view of work placement as a gateway for identifying and recruiting talent," Ms Coughlan added.

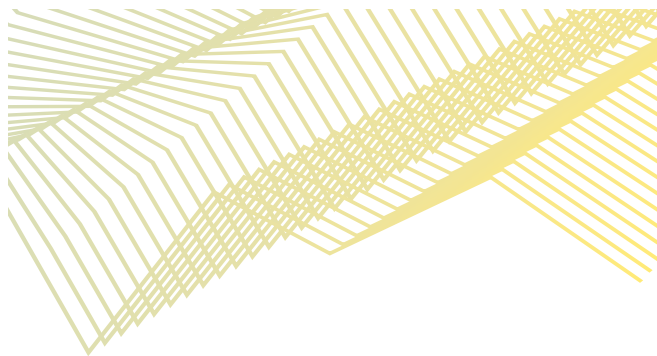
Modern and progressive practices, like Village Vets, offer particularly good employment opportunities for ambitious veterinary nurses who wish to work in a state-of-the-art facility.

Commenting on the quality of the students interviewed by Village Vets during the interview prep sessions, Managing Director, Charles Cosgrove said: "The calibre of the students was superb and really quite inspirational. Their passion for their course and the industry more generally is infectious. They are a credit to themselves and their lecturers. I would be delighted to work with any one of them again as part of the Village Vets team. We look forward to our continued involvement with AIT."





Global Engagement



ersiti Kuala Lumpur





AIT Signs Cooperation Agreement with Malaysian Early Years Education Provider

Athlone Institute of Technology has signed a memorandum of understanding with an early years education provider in Malaysia to facilitate the development of online modules, research projects and curricula for early years care and education degrees and the bilateral flow of students and staff.

The provider in question, Hansel and Gretel, is known for their quality preschool and childcare programmes which are designed to support childhood learning and development and imbue students with the skills of the future. Their unique education philosophy, which encourages self-directed learning, focuses on five key pillars: critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, cultural diversity, and character building.

Our educational partnership with Hansel and Gretel will greatly enhance the learning of our early years care and education students, equipping them with the skills necessary to carve out successful careers internationally and at home.

The provider is also interested in integrating good practices from the Irish Early Years Care and Education programme of AISTEAR into their learning framework, adapting it to suit both Malaysian and Asian culture. Hansel and Gretel's staff believe that emphasising each child's uniqueness and creativity through experiential learning and play greatly enhances learning and, as such, organise activities, both indoor and outdoor, in safe, nurturing educational environments.

According to Oliver Hegarty, Head of Department of Social Care at Athlone Institute of Technology, early years students will benefit from participating in these education-driven field trips which serve to demonstrate positive contributions to childhood development and outcomes. "Our educational partnership with Hansel and Gretel will greatly enhance the learning of our early years care and education students, equipping them with the skills necessary to carve out successful careers internationally and at home," he explained.

Currently, Athlone Institute of Technology offers a three-year Bachelor of Arts in Early Years Education followed by a one-year 'add-on' Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Early Years Care and Education. Graduates of this programme are eligible to pursue a postgraduate qualification in early years education by way of blended learning.

Commenting on the close academic links forged between Athlone Institute of Technology and the Malaysian education sector, President of Athlone Institute of Technology, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, said: "Traditionally, Malaysian students travelled to Ireland to study medicine, but more and more are choosing to complete two or three years of study at home in Malaysia before transferring to Athlone Institute of Technology to complete the final year of their degrees."

"Areas of interest include accounting, business, hotel management, mechanical and polymer engineering, software engineering, pharmaceutical science and biotechnology. Our Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Applied Psychology has proven immensely popular with Malaysian students."

Currently, more than 60 Malaysian students call Athlone Institute of Technology their 'home away from home' with many receiving funding under the President's seed fund to pursue Master by Research and PhD programmes at one of the institute's three primary research centres - Materials Research Institute, Bioscience Research Institute and Software Research Institute.



Historic: Oman's First Female Minister visits AIT on Trade and Education Mission

AIT was delighted to welcome Dr Rawya Saud Al Busaidi, Oman's first female Minister of Higher Education, to Ireland on an education mission looking to promote the links between Oman and AIT. Dr Al Busaidi, who holds PhD from Oxford, has driven ground-breaking projects for the reform of education in Oman, including access to higher education, gender equality and benchmarking education to international norms.

Accompanied by a delegation of officials from the Ministry of Higher Education of the Sultanate of Oman, Dr Al Busaidi was received by Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, President of Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT), and brought to Ireland's leading robotics and automation centre, Robotics and Drive, one of AIT's industry partners.

Nestled just outside the town of Mullingar, the Robotics and Drive centre has close links to the institute, offering students a range of placement and graduate opportunities in the areas of engineering. Her Excellency, Dr Al Busaidi, expressed her desire to see Omani students benefit from such opportunities, a sentiment that was echoed by Professor Ó Catháin.

"We look forward to students from Oman coming to Athlone and making it their home away from home. Athlone Institute of Technology is well-placed in the heart of Ireland to deliver a practical training component for students. Our college produces socially accountable, job-ready graduates, a fact that employers impress upon us all the time.

"Discussions with the Omani delegation during this visit have revealed that the Sultanate of Oman plans to introduce practical training programmes for graduates and, as such, the Midlands Region is an attractive location for Omani students", Professor Ó Catháin said.

Dr Al Busaidi, who holds PhD from Oxford, has driven ground-breaking projects for the reform of education in Oman, including access to higher education, gender equality and benchmarking education to international norms.

Other placement opportunities were highlighted by Dr Eoin Langan, Dean of Faculty of Business and Hospitality Management, who gave an overview of new honours degree programmes on offer within the Faculty. As some of these programmes offer an international placement opportunity, Dr Langan said Hospitality students will have the opportunity to complete their placements in Oman. He also stressed how welcoming and receptive the Irish hospitality industry is to Omani students studying at AIT looking for training opportunities.

Elsewhere on campus, Dr Sean Lyons, Acting Dean of Faculty of Engineering and Informatics introduced research projects with demonstrations from postgraduate students in the fields of Polymer and Software Engineering, while Dr Niall Murray, Lecturer and Researcher in Software Engineering, demonstrated some virtual reality projects designed with support from local companies. Dr Al Busaidi expressed her pleasure at the success of the visit saying that Omani students could benefit from completing research projects linked to industry.

Her Excellency, Dr Al Busaidi, and her colleagues in the ministerial delegation were accompanied by Mr Giles O'Neill, Head of Education in Ireland and Mr Ikram Ur Rehman, Regional Manager for the Middle East. Over the past six years, AIT has participated in a number of trade and education missions to Oman. These visits, organised by Enterprise Ireland under the branding of Education in Ireland, were intended to promote Ireland as a destination that offers high-quality education and study in international markets.

AIT Celebrates Chinese New Year

Athlone Institute of Technology celebrated Chinese New Year in style with more than 400 students enjoying Asian cuisine, music and dance to mark the Spring Festival, which began on Tuesday, 5 February 2019. Each Chinese New Year is characterised by one of 12 animals which appear in the Chinese zodiac. This year is the Year of the Pig which occupies the 12th position in the Chinese zodiac and is considered a year for success and good fortune.

There are currently 180 Chinese students at AIT, with visiting faculty and researchers from Chinese partner universities. Members of the Chinese Students Society and Asian Society introduced their customs to celebrate the Chinese New Year to students on campus. Restaurant staff at AIT prepared a range of Chinese cuisine for students to enjoy.

Addressing the students Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, President of Athlone Institute of Technology, said: "AIT has long standing relationships with universities in China and we are delighted to celebrate the Chinese New Year with students from these partner universities in Athlone. Our students and staff enjoy learning about Chinese traditions during the Spring Festival. Ireland, like China, places strong emphasis on the family and people coming together to share their cultures during festival periods."

AIT has built long term relationships with Chinese partner universities in recent years in the areas of computer and software engineering, mechanical engineering, civil engineering, design, pharmaceutical science, hotel management, business, and accounting. The universities with which it is associated are: Beijing University of Technology, Beijing; Capital University of Economics and Business, Beijing; 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, to name but a few.

Academic staff from the Faculties of Business and Hospitality, Engineering and Informatics and Life and Physical Sciences have visited these universities during the past year to discuss study abroad programmes. AIT students who wish to complete placement or semester abroad can choose one of these partner universities in China. Programmes are taught in English and students will have the opportunity to become familiar with Chinese culture and business.







Education Mission: **Canada's MacEwan University Students Take a Trip to AIT**

A group of students and academics from MacEwan University in Edmonton, Canada, visited Athlone Institute of Technology to learn about contemporary social care practices in Ireland and explore research synergies as part of an on-going educational co-operation agreement.

Currently enrolled in MacEwan University's BA (Hons) in Child and Youth Care, the students attended a series of lectures with their Irish counterparts and participated in a range of activities associated with Athlone Institute of Technology's Applied Social Studies in Social Care programme.

Among the topics covered was the Irish child welfare and protection system – which provided fodder for a thoughtful discussion between Canadian and Irish students about the differences and similarities of their respective jurisdictions from a preventative perspective.

Students also considered the concept of social exclusion and discussed the value in hearing individual stories about disadvantage. Students were encouraged to listen to the experiences of marginalised individuals, so that they understand how to better support them in a social care context.

Staff and students from MacEwan University have been making educational trips to AIT since 2010. The arrangement also promotes the bilateral movement of staff between Athlone and Edmonton and has given rise to a number of teaching exchanges in recent years.

The Canadian students joined their Irish counterparts in exploring storytelling and its therapeutic uses, such as its potential to build attachments and help in the healing process. The workshop resulted in the students producing a collaborative poem which expressed their feelings on issues of great importance to them.

Over the course of their trip, the Canadian students also attended a lecture on disability and the importance of promoting inclusion. Wolfensberger's theory of Social Role Valorisation was discussed, which points to how people with disabilities are at risk of being devalued in society, and what can be done to counteract it.

Elsewhere, Caroline Nevin, a Traveller health worker with Westmeath Community Development Ltd. delivered a compelling guest lecture on the history of Travellers, Traveller culture and Traveller experiences of discrimination in Ireland. She spoke about her own heritage, describing how her strong family network is a hallmark of Traveller culture.

Accompanied by Dr Harman Murtagh, a local historian, the Canadian students rounded out their trip with a tour of Birr Castle. They learned about the famous Leviathan telescope and the pioneering discoveries of the Parsons family.

According to Dr Ashling Jackson, a senior lecturer within the department, the annual international visit provides a wonderful opportunity for Irish and Canadian students to interact and discuss their closely linked disciplines: social care and child and youth care. "We highly value our partnership with the Child and Youth Care Department in MacEwan University and look forward to building on mutual research interests to further consolidate the relationship," she said.

Staff and students from MacEwan University have been making educational trips to AIT since 2010. The arrangement also promotes the bilateral movement of staff between Athlone and Edmonton and has given rise to a number of teaching exchanges in recent years.

This year, as part of the MacEwan University visit, Dr Shemine Gulamhusein presented to the MA in Child and Youth Studies students on Diversity and Child and Youth Care in Canada, sharing invaluable and thought-provoking insights on Canadian experiences.

As part of its internationalisation strategy, Athlone Institute of Technology plans to increase the bilateral flow of students and staff between itself and its many partner universities around the world. According to Director of International Relations, Mary Simpson, studying abroad provides ample opportunity for students to improve their language skills, experience new cultures, and enhance their employment prospects.

“An international experience gives students a competitive edge when applying for jobs following graduation. AIT students are interested in learning more about practices in the Canadian education system and such partnerships with MacEwan University will promote outward mobility of students when considering study abroad on international placement opportunities,” she said.

South East Asia Education Mission Proves a **Success for AIT**

Athlone Institute of Technology President, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, met with top Indonesian and Malaysian universities to discuss collaborations at undergraduate and postgraduate level and the development of new academic and research partnerships.

The meetings, which took place during a five-day Enterprise Ireland Education Mission led by Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton, resulted in the signing of bilateral agreements with Binus University, University of Malaya (UM), Asia Metropolitan University (AMU), KDU Glenmarie (KDU) and Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL).

Accompanied by Jack Meng, Director for Asia, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin began his Education Mission in Jakarta, Indonesia where he signed an agreement of cooperation with Binus University.

The aim of the agreement is to facilitate the flow of students and staff by growing links between the two colleges. On the next leg of the Education Mission, Professor Ó Catháin met with the Vice Chancellor of the UM, Dr Abdul Rahim Hashim, to discuss cross-institute collaboration in the areas of mechanical engineering, polymer technology, software engineering, cooperation on postgraduate programmes like Nursing and Data Analytics, and hosting postdoctoral researchers. The bilateral agreement that was successfully reached between the two colleges will enable UM postgraduate students to study at Athlone Institute of Technology in the new academic year.

Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin commented: “The signing of this agreement will establish opportunities for bilateral staff and student mobility programmes. Kuala Lumpur would be a wonderful destination for AIT students considering international placements. This relationship will also present opportunities to explore funding for bilateral student and staff exchanges between AIT and UM.

“The selection of excellent postgraduate students to complete research programmes at AIT has already commenced and we look forward to welcoming postdoctoral researchers from UM to AIT in the coming months.”

AMU, which is a private university known for its Medical and Health Sciences, Business and Accounting programmes, has signed an articulation agreement facilitating the transfer of students from AMU's Physiotherapy diploma programme to the second year of AIT's Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Athletic and Rehabilitation Therapy.

Students who complete AMU's Business diploma may transfer to the third year of AIT's Bachelor of Business in International Business Management or Bachelor of Business. It is expected that 10-15 AMU students will avail of this pathway next September.

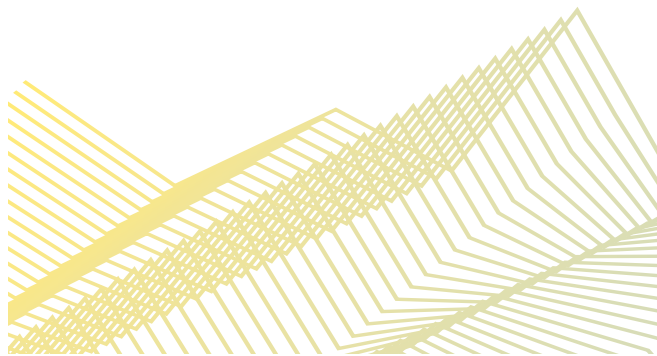
Professor Ó Catháin also signed a Memorandum of Agreement with KDU Glenmarie Campus facilitating the transfer of students from Foundation level programme to first year of undergraduate programmes at the Faculty of Engineering and Informatics at AIT. Once again, 10-15 students are expected to take advantage of this in the new academic year.

Finally, Professor Ó Catháin met with the UniKL to discuss the development of student and staff exchange programmes in Software Engineering, Mechanical and Polymer Engineering, Business, Multimedia and Design. UniKL is a full-fledged university and is owned by Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) or the “Council of Trust for the People,” a government agency under the “Ministry of Rural & Regional Development,” Malaysia.

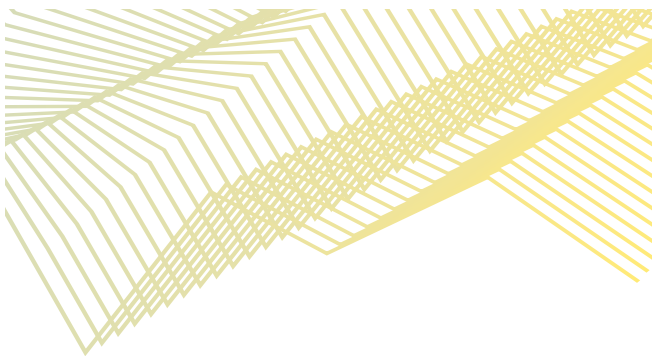
The university presently has over 27,000 local and international students studying at twelve campuses throughout the country that offer high-quality, accredited educational programmes at certificate, undergraduate, and postgraduate levels. UniKL is actively promoting Exchange Mobility Programmes with international partner universities. This initiative has been supported by funds made available by MARA under a programme called ISEM (International Student Exchange Mobility) and through involvement in “ERASMUS+” mobility and capacity building projects.

AIT has actively developed cooperation agreements with Malaysian higher education institutes since 2012. Indonesia is a new market for AIT with four Indonesian students choosing to study at AIT in September 2018.





Sporting Successes







AIT International Grand Prix: **Sixth Edition**

The Irish were on flying form at this year's AIT International Grand Prix, smashing several national and stadium records to the delight of a sold-out crowd. The atmosphere was electric as stand-out star Ciara Mageean outkicked Romanian rival Claudia Boboca in the TG4 Women's 1500m with a tactically brilliant performance. Setting a new Irish and stadium record with a time of 4:06:78, the 26-year-old set herself up nicely for the European Championships in Glasgow.

Also flying the flag for Ireland was Mark English, who scooped first place in the highly competitive Midlands Print Men's 800m. The crowd watched with bated breath as English burst past Eric Sowinski (USA) on the back straight, refusing to relinquish his lead and ultimately setting a time of 1:46:92. Coming in an impressive third, Ireland's Zak Curran posted a time of 1:47:73 - placing two Irishmen on the podium.

Back to defend his Ericsson 400m title, Irish Olympian Thomas Barr narrowly missed out on first place to Dutch runner Tony Van Diepen who edged him out in a dramatic sprint finish. Portuguese Ricardo Dos Santos was third across the finish line with a time of 47.44, while Irishmen Leon Reid and Luke Lennon Ford were also on the start line.

Asia's 'fastest man' SU Bingtian (CHN) certainly earned his moniker in the men's 60m, breaking the stadium record in heat 1 with a slowing up 6.54. He was closely followed by Takuya Kamakawi (JPN) in 6.57. Kyle De Escofet took the win in a slower second heat by running 6.72 and Marcus Lawler (IRL) came in second with 6.58. Bingtian maintained his performance in the final and yet again lowered the stadium record by bringing it down to 6.52 seconds. Kamakawi came in second, posting a time of 7.58, while Confidence Lawson took third place.

Australia's Ryan Gregson, who sought his third consecutive win in the AIT Men's Mile this evening, was faced with stiff opposition in the form Marcin Lewandowski who recently broke the Polish record. He ran a rapid 3.56.41 holding off Stewart McSweyn (AUS) to win the blue riband of the sixth AIT International Grand Prix. Defending champion, Ryan Gregson came in third place, just holding off Ireland's John Travers who chalked up yet another sub-four-minute-mile with a season-best of 3.58.48.

Reigning Olympic Champion Thiago Braz de Silva, came to AIT for the Hodson Bay Group men's pole vault event with the stadium record of 5.77m firmly in his sights but it just wasn't his night as he maxed out at 5.45m. Tommi Holttinen (FIN) was a gleeful winner as he beat off the challenge of Pål Lillefosse (NOR) on countback as both cleared 5.65m.

Heat one of the AIT Sport 60m hurdles was won by Elmo Lakka (FIN) in 7.73 seconds while David King (GBR) was first over the line in heat two with a remarkably close 7.76 seconds. The final saw the stadium record lowered by David King (GBR) to 7.66 seconds in the final. Lakka 7.75 was second over the line and Andreas Martinsen (DEN) 7.95 was third.

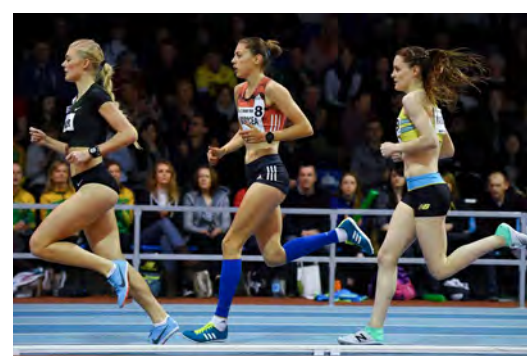
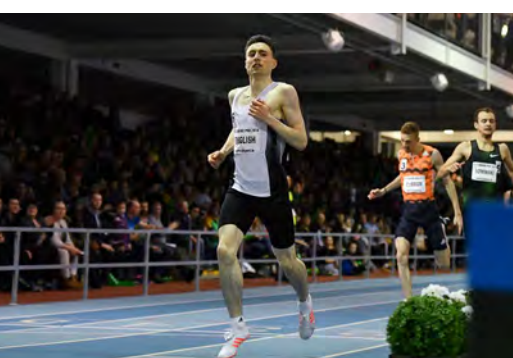
Flings Owoso-Agyapong (Ghanian) and Gayon Evans (JAM) came to AIT for the Alkermes 60m sprint with PBs of 7.18 and 7.14 respectively while Molly Scott and Ciara Neville of Ireland were hoping to upset the odds. Corinne Humphries (GBR) 7.37 seconds edged out Ciara Neville and Evonne Britton in heat one with Gayon Evans 7.33 winning heat two ahead of Ireland's Molly Scott 7.39 and Phylcia George 7.48. Evans flew home for the win in a time of 7.27, heat 1 winner Humphries (7.37) was next over the line but Irish girl Molly Scott wowed the home crowd finishing second in 7.39.

In the women's 400m, Great Britain's Megan Beesley smashed the previous stadium record set by Diane Ramsey (53.87) in 2014, with a time of 53.00. Anita Horvat of Slovenia ran 53.19 coming in second place while Great Britain's Lina Nielsen was a close third in 53.29.

Yet another stadium record was broken in the women's High Jump with the previous record 1.81m being raised to 1.87m by Greek jumper Tatiana Gusin. The second step in the podium went to Ireland's Phillipa Rogan who jumped an impressive 1.84m. Mexico's Ximena Esquivel took home third place from Beth Partridge (GB) on countback with both clearing 1.80m.



World-class athletics returned to Athlone Institute of Technology for the sixth consecutive year for the AIT International Grand Prix - one of the biggest events in Ireland's athletics calendar. Since the Grand Prix's inception, the competition has gone from strength to strength, growing into what is now one of the most prominent athletics fixtures in the Irish and international calendar – as evidenced by the calibre of athletic talent on display at this year's event. Some of the biggest names in athletics battled it out to break records and set newer and even faster times.





AIT Ranked 4th

Overall in the Student Sport Ireland Sports College of the Year Awards

Athlone Institute of Technology ranked fourth overall out of a total of 31 third level universities and institutes of technology at the inaugural Sport Ireland Sports College of the Year Awards. Only two universities and one institute of technology managed to best the institute's impressive score which is reflective of the Sports Department's hard work and dedication to ensuring students enjoy exceptional sport and recreational opportunities.

Welcoming the news, Gordon Brett, Athlone Institute of Technology's Sport and Recreation Manager, said: "We are incredibly proud of our 2018-19 Student Sport Ireland ranking and hope to improve on this in the coming years as we continue to identify ways to connect with new students who wish to participate in sport and recreational activities outside of the classroom."

Of the 35 separate competitions Student Sport Ireland organised throughout the academic year, which included badminton, rugby, volleyball, netball, karting, Olympic handball and pool, Athlone Institute of Technology was successful in winning the Women's Rugby Division 2 title and the Men's Volleyball senior title. The institute also performed well in the Women's Volleyball and Women's 7s Rugby.

The institute also competed in non-Student Sport Ireland competitions, including archery, equestrian, powerlifting, soccer, Gaelic football, hurling, camogie, basketball, athletics, handball, hockey, pool, futsal and recreational soccer.

Over the course of the academic year 2018-19, 926 students competed for Athlone Institute of Technology in both Student Sport Ireland and other student sport competitions. This number does not include other participation activities that students take part in throughout the academic year or, indeed, the large numbers of students who use the institute's state-of-the-art gym and fitness facilities.

President of Athlone Institute of Technology, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin remarked: "Our impressive ranking is a reflection of the efforts that the institute has made to provide facilities and supports for student seeking to compete at a level appropriate to their ability level".

Launched in 2018-19, the Sports College of the Year Competition is intended to reward colleges for their participation and achievement in all cups, leagues and competitions run by the organisation. Student Sport Ireland is an umbrella organisation and the governing body for third level sport in educational establishments in the 32 counties of Ireland.

AIT Hosts 'Network to Progress' Sport Science Conference for Postgraduate Students

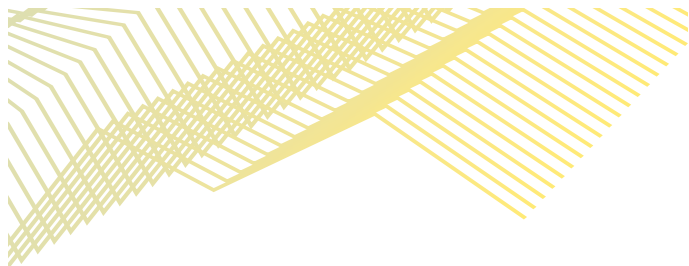
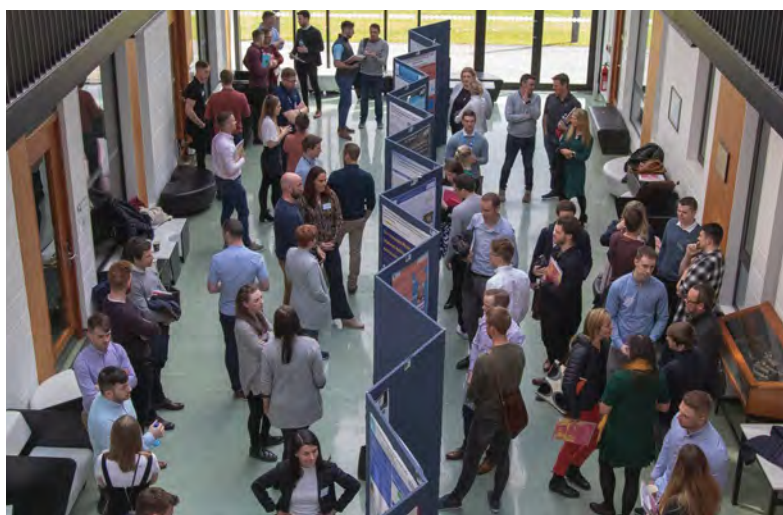
Athlone Institute of Technology's Department of Sport and Health Sciences hosted Ireland's fifth postgraduate conference dedicated to Sport Science, Physical Activity and Physical Education on Friday, May 10th, 2019. Entitled 'Network to Progress', the conference aimed to encourage postgraduate students from third level institutes across Ireland to come together to present their work, share their learning and build partnerships in their chosen discipline.

"We invited all postgraduate researchers in the areas of Sport Performance, Physical Activity and Physical Education, Injury Prevention and Rehabilitation, and Exercise and Health to submit abstracts," said Dr Aoife Lane, who heads the Department of Sport and Health Science at Athlone Institute of Technology. "It gave postgraduate students an opportunity to connect, share ideas and play their part in building a national network of researchers across these disciplines,"

Several prominent academics in the field delivered key note addresses at the conference, including Dr Brendan Egan, Associate Professor of Sport and Exercise Physiology in the School of Health and Human Performance at Dublin City University; Dr Kate Kirby, Head of Performance Psychology at the Sport Ireland Institute, and Robin Healy, a recent addition to Athlone Institute of Technology's Department of Sport and Health Science. Mr Healy recently completed his PhD studies in resistance training for sprint athletes.

"We have an extremely strong commitment to sport science and related disciplines in Athlone Institute of Technology, as evidenced by a continued investment in our facilities, the development of a new department and the recruitment of staff who are specialists in this area," Dr Lane added. "Our department also offers many postgraduate research opportunities which have many real-world links and direct engagement with sporting, health, nutrition and rehabilitation related entities."

The 5th All-Ireland Post Graduate Conference in Sport Science, Physical Activity and Physical Education was supported by Sports Physio and Performance, and was previously hosted at the University of Limerick, Waterford Institute of Technology and Institute of Technology Carlow.



Minister: **Sport is a Language** That Transcends Barriers

300 post-primary age children from across the Midlands competed in Athlone Institute of Technology's inaugural Diversity Games. Supported by the Department of Justice and Equality's Community Integration Fund and the Offaly Sports Partnership, the games were set up to encourage students from ethnic minority and immigrant backgrounds to compete in the sport of athletics.

Opening the event, Minister of State for the Department of Justice and Equality David Staunton spoke about the transcendent nature of sport and its ability to act as a vehicle for integration. "Participation in sports, or joining a sports club, teaches us invaluable lessons, such as teamwork, comradery and a sense of belonging. Communication barriers are overcome because the sport itself becomes the common language. Differences in religion, background or skin colour all become irrelevant."

The games, which were held in the institute's state-of-the-art international arena, saw students from a variety of ethnic minority and immigrant backgrounds compete in a 60m, 200m, 400m, 600m, long jump and a 4 x 200m relay. Commenting at the Games, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Registry Dr Niall Seery said: "We have a unique responsibility to our diverse student body and to the communities in which they reside, to continue driving forward an agenda of social inclusion that embraces, rather than disregards, diversity. As an institute, we have long been characterised by a commitment to academic rigour, innovations in teaching and applied research and an impressive graduate employability rate."

"Now, as the sole higher education institute in the Midlands, we must too be defined by a commitment to social and cultural development with a view to widening third level participation, particularly amongst marginalised groups. It is vital that we encourage our young people to embrace their diversity, their athleticism and boundless, as-of-yet untapped, potential. If nurtured, each of the participating athletes will blossom, unleashing the possibility of a bright and upwardly mobile future. We want to be part of championing that future for the benefit of all."

Commenting on the success of the Games, AIT Commercial Manager Paul Colburn added: "Diversity has many positive attributes, including encouraging innovation and creativity through a sharing of perspectives and worldviews. It makes us, as a community, more powerful. Our inaugural Diversity Games celebrated and encouraged this diversity with the view to bolstering community integration. I welcome the opportunity to build upon the success of this event next year."





TG4's Legendary GAA 'Underdogs' Series Kicks off at AIT

After a decade-long hiatus, TG4's popular 'Underdogs' series famed for uncovering GAA footballing talent, came back to Irish television screens. With the mission of finding club players with enough drive, skill and passion to take on a county team firmly in its crosshairs, TG4 enlisted the help of Dr David Kelly, Lecturer in Exercise Science at Athlone Institute of Technology.

"GAA has moved on quite a bit since the Underdogs last aired, so TG4 reached out to us here at Athlone Institute of Technology to see if we'd be able to carry out some scientific testing for each of the players to determine their fitness level. We have state-of-the-art facilities on campus, so this coupled with my own expertise as a lecturer in Exercise Science and my background in GAA, made it a natural fit," Dr Kelly explained.

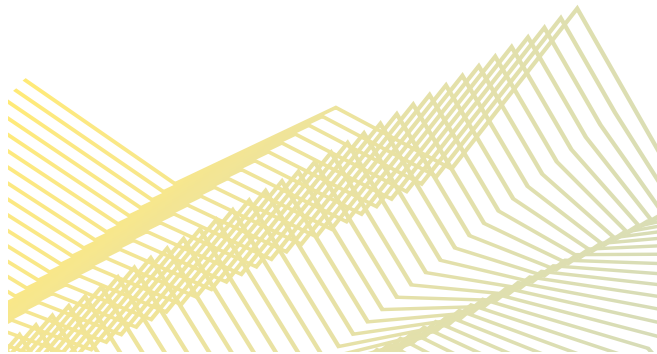
The AIT episode saw Dr Kelly and his colleagues, Dr Niamh Whelan and Dr Kris Beattie, supported by a team of postgraduate researchers, put the Underdogs through their paces with a battery of baseline tests. "We identified a series of field and lab tests most applicable to the needs of Gaelic football, paying particular attention to power, strength and speed.

"We also looked at anthropometric data like weight, height and body fat percentage. Collectively, this gave us an idea of each players' standing in relation to the other Underdogs footballer but also club and inter-county players," the former Sligo GAA footballer said.

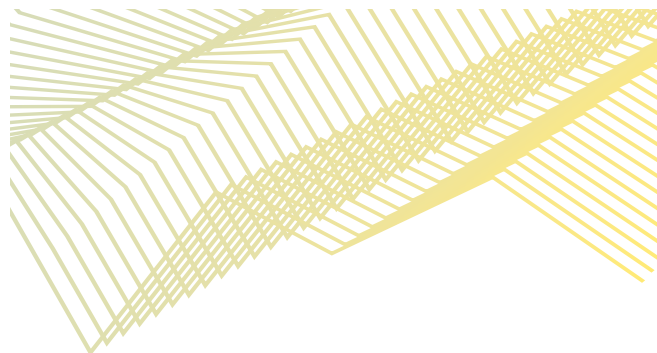
The players' aerobic capacity was also measured using a special VO2max test, the gold standard measurement of aerobic capacity. Certain footballers also underwent an Opto Jump test which uses an infra-red beam to gather precise data about the subject's performance.

The baseline testing was carried out in Athlone Institute of Technology's extensive sporting facilities namely its state-of-the-art high-performance gym and sports science lab. The institute's grass pitch, AstroTurf pitch, elite performance gym and indoor track were also made available to the Underdogs throughout their weekend-long training camp.

Following the baseline testing results, Dr Kelly and his team designed a tailor-made strength and body conditioning programme for each of the players. The AIT sports science team are currently working with TG4 to organise a retest for the athletes to determine the difference in performance at the beginning and end of the show.



Outreach & Engagement

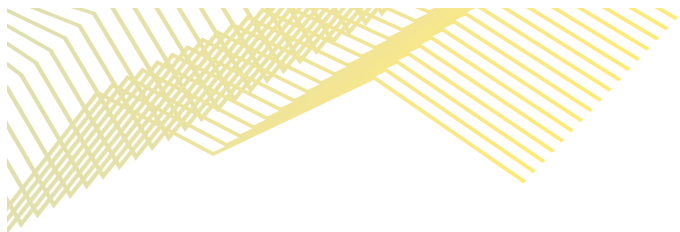




SciFest

As the sole higher education provider in the Midlands, Athlone Institute of Technology plays a pivotal role in the development of the region and continuing to supply industry with a talent pipeline of suitably qualified, work-ready graduates. SciFest, and school outreach activities like it, play a hugely important role in helping cultivate the next generation of scientists, engineers and mathematicians.

Athlone Institute of Technology consistently hosts the country's largest regional SciFest fair. This year, more than 400 secondary school students from 24 secondary schools across the midlands competed, submitting a total of 194 science projects at junior, intermediate, and senior level. Last year, an all-girls team from Athlone Community College were awarded an 'Excellence in STEM' award for their investigation into Irish air quality of air at the SciFest national final.



Midlands CanSat Regional

A CanSat Ireland Regional Partner, Athlone Institute of Technology hosts the Midlands CanSat Regional competition every year. This year, an all-girls team from Our Lady's Bower Secondary School, Athlone, took home the top prize. Competing against five other secondary schools, the aspiring young engineers designed and built a miniature satellite using a soda can - incorporating all the major subsystems found in an actual satellite, such as power, sensors and a communications system, into its minimal design.

Coordinated by the European Space Agency (ESA), the CanSat Ireland competition is designed to simulate all aspects of a real satellite mission, including design, development, testing, launch, operations, and data analysis, by means of teamwork, and foster an interest in STEM careers. Every year, AIT organises multiple workshops to help participating schools build and program their CanSats. Students are given a grounding in electronics, sensors, computer programming, radio telemetry, mechanical design and parachute design, as well as soft skills like problem solving and how to work effectively in a team.



SURE – Science Undergraduate Research Experience Conference

The Science Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE) Network, which comprises nine institutes of technology, is Ireland's first academic network dedicated to promoting STEM research across the technological higher education sector. Its inaugural conference was co-ordinated by Athlone Institute of Technology and was simultaneously held simultaneously across three SURE Network sites - Athlone Institute of Technology, TU Dublin and Waterford Institute of Technology. It was attended by more than 500 undergraduate students and academic staff.

The SURE Network is instrumental in bringing the incredible undergraduate research taking place across the technological higher education landscape to the fore. This ground-breaking initiative is vital to the advancement of STEM research and the development of young academics, particularly female academics, who gain presenting experience in a supportive and encouraging environment, and an opportunity to have their undergraduate research published in a purpose-built academic journal.



Try Science: Third Level Taster Sessions

Every year, Athlone Institute of Technology organises a series of taster workshops designed to encourage second level students' interest in STEM. This year, 60 Midlands-based secondary school students were given a unique opportunity to 'Try Science' in a series of educational workshops and talks designed to inform, excite and inspire.

Organised by Athlone Institute of Technology's Marketing and Communications Department, in partnership with the Department of Life and Physical Science, 'Try Science' was intended to encourage the future matriculation of students into science degrees and, ultimately careers, with the view to supplying the Midlands with a pipeline of highly qualified, capable and work-ready graduates.

Third level taster sessions like 'Try Science' are immensely helpful for students who want to know where a science degree will lead in terms of their future career prospects and opportunities. It has the added benefit of demonstrating to students and other key decision makers, such as parents, teachers and guidance counsellors, our commitment to nurturing students and helping them choose the right career path for them.





Students Explore the World of **Engineering, Gaming and Space Flight** at Athlone IT

Engineers' Week is a national celebration of engineering in Ireland and is dedicated to showcasing the diverse opportunities and career paths open to young people considering a future in STEM.

Secondary school students from across the Midlands got a unique insight into the wonderful world of engineering, gaming and spaceflight through a series of educational workshops and talks designed to inform, excite and inspire.

Organised in association with Medtronic and Midlands Science as part of Engineers' Week 2019, Athlone Institute of Technology's festivities were intended to make the world of engineering, its real-world applications and exciting careers opportunities more tangible and accessible for students.

As part of the week, transition, fifth and sixth-year students, accompanied by their teachers, were treated to a seminal Space Careers Roadshow, where they learned about engineering careers in space, specifically in the areas of materials, robotics and software engineering and what it takes to get there from an academic and industry perspective.

Students also learned about opportunities in space tourism and exploration, and how, by 2027, people could be living permanently in moon colonies. They also heard how invaluable new technologies like artificial intelligence and 3D printing are to the new space economy, and the skills underpinning them.

Elsewhere students buckled up for the Dr Mindflip Ultimate Adventure Experience, an immersive choose your own adventure-style video game designed to make physics and engineering more accessible and engaging for young audiences. Housed in a Tim Burton style 'Physics Caravan', students were taken on a weird and wacky journey, following the story of mad scientist Dr MindFlip and his robot assistant.

Industry partner Medtronic was also on hand to show students how to intubate a dummy patient – a lifesaving procedure often shown on medical dramas like Grey's Anatomy. With some words of encouragement from Shan Perkin and the rest of the Medtronic team, students got the chance to carry out this procedure themselves and learn about the lifesaving equipment Medtronic produces, career opportunities available within the company, and how they use engineering to solve real-world problems.

Commenting on the success of the event, Dr Sean Lyons, Dean of Faculty of Engineering and Informatics, said: "As a country positioning itself as a centre of excellence in areas like Smart Manufacturing, Automation, Robotics and AI, it is vital that our young people are furnished with the skills and competencies necessary to succeed in today's innovation economy. To remain competitive on a global stage, they need to become agile and adaptable - poised for the careers of the future.

"Events like Engineers' Week give students the opportunity to explore the worlds of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and Medicine and their varying intersections, and are instrumental in encouraging the future matriculation of secondary school students into these subjects and, ultimately, careers."

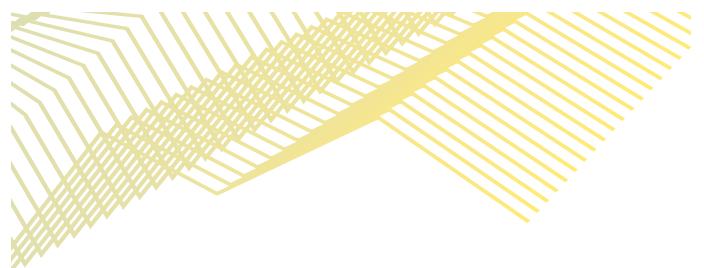
Making the world of engineering, its real-world applications and exciting careers opportunities more tangible and accessible for students.



AIT offers **FREE 'Taster' Summer Schools**

AIT held two free summer schools - Design with Product Innovation and Code 4 Fun – this year to give fifth and sixth-year post-primary students from DEIS schools (and AIT's feeder schools more broadly) a taster of its Software Design and Design, Technology and Innovation courses. Over the course of the week, students explored the worlds of design, technology, business and innovation, participating in brainstorming and ideation sessions, business modelling, user behaviour analysis, branding workshops and prototyping, and coding.

Lecturers placed a strong emphasis on getting students innovating and 'doing' rather than just learning theory. The Design with Product Innovation Summer School and Code4Fun summer schools were a fun and an engaging way to introduce secondary school students to future skill requirements. AIT's approach is to instil wonder, creativity and initiative at the very heart of the learning process to prepare students for Ireland's changing economy.



AIT and Ericsson Collaborate on STEM School Outreach Programme

Athlone Institute of Technology and Ericsson collaborated on a school outreach programme entitled 'Future Careers in Software Development' with the aim of encouraging the future matriculation of second level students into third level software/ICT degrees and ultimately feeding the Midlands with a pipeline of highly qualified, work-ready graduates.

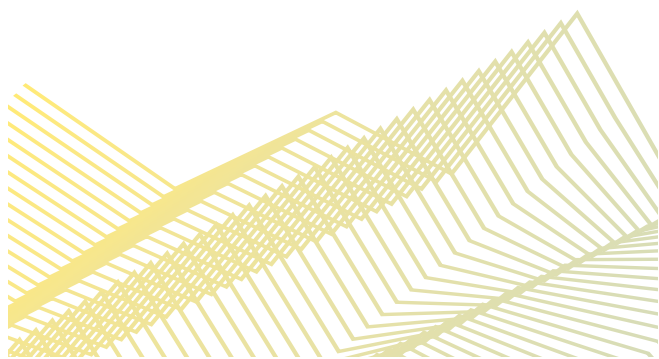
As part of the programme, Ericsson engineers, accompanied by their line manager, give senior cycle students a talk about a career in the industry and why they should consider it, demonstrations of code and software projects, an overview of the company's core product, its employee culture, emphasis on work-life balance and some of the key projects it's working on - namely the roll out of 5G.

The team visited more than 15 schools in Athlone Institute of Technology's key feeder areas, eliciting an extremely positive response from teachers and students alike. Originally scheduled for a two-week run, the programme proved extremely popular and they are now hoping to extend it, this time focussing on encouraging more young women into STEM careers. This next iteration of the school outreach programme will aim to address the massive gender disparity that exists in the hiring pool of software engineers and developers.

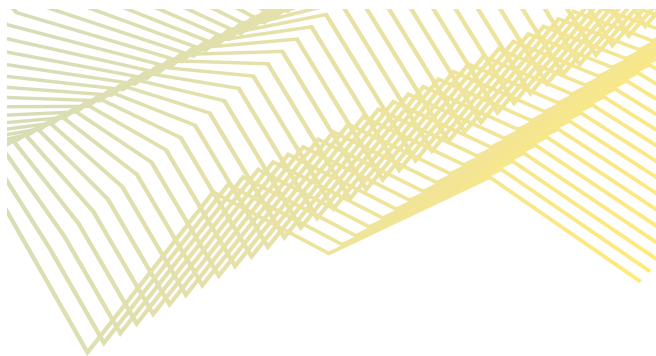
Only 17% of Ericsson's workforce are female, a figure the company is hoping to drastically improve through initiatives like this one and through the reiteration of their inclusive company culture, great work/life balance and progression opportunities.

Dr Enda Fallon, head of Department of Computer and Software Engineering at Athlone Institute of Technology and the co-creator of the school outreach initiative, added: "We've long enjoyed a close, symbiotic relationship with Ericsson, which has been extremely beneficial for both parties. Many of our lecturers gained significant industry experience working for Ericsson, while more than 200 of our graduates are now employed by the company at their Software Campus in Athlone.

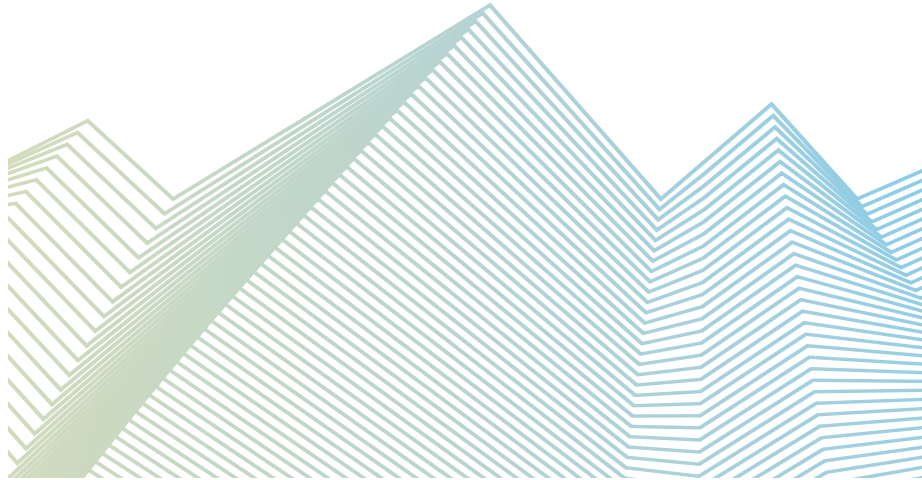
"We also offer a bespoke fully-funded master's programme, which feeds directly into Ericsson's hiring pool of software engineers and host a research programme housed within our Software Research Institute (SRI) that's valued in excess of €2 million and co-funded by the telecommunications company."



Governance & **Leadership**



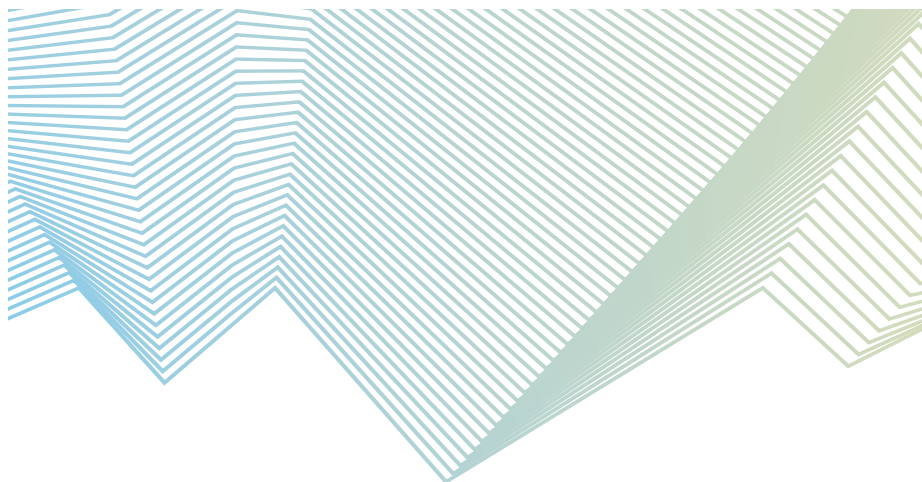




Equality Statement

Athlone Institute of Technology is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity and to creating and sustaining an environment that values the diversity of staff and students at all levels and in all areas of the Institute.

The Institute is committed to the ongoing development of policies and procedures that do not discriminate on the grounds of gender, marital status, age, disability, race, colour, religious belief, ethnic origin or sexual orientation and will always work towards the elimination of unfair practices, and promote and develop an ethos of equality within the Institute.



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 1 April 2015

Mr. Frank Ryan [Chairperson Section 2(a)]

Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin [President, Section 2(b)]

Governing Body Members as per Section 4 of the 1994 Act from 1 April 2015 Under Section 4(1)(a) and (b)

Mr. Pat Gilmore

Cllr. Kathleen Shanagher

Cllr. Tom Farrell

Ms Celine Kearney Medforth (from October 2018)

Mr. Denis Magner

Cllr. Pat O Toole

Under Section 4(1)(c)

Mr. John O Connor (until January 2019)

Ms. Brigid Delamere

Under Section 4(1)(d)

Mr. James Keane

Under Section 4(1)(e)

Mr. Oisín Moloughney

Ms. Aine Daly

Under Section 4(1)(f)

Ms. Geraldine Talty

Under Section 4(1)(g)

Mr. Matt Hamilton

Ms. Colette Ryan

Mr. Liam Rattigan

Ms. Natasha Kinsella

Mr. John Foley

Secretary to the Governing Body

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:

Public Spending Code

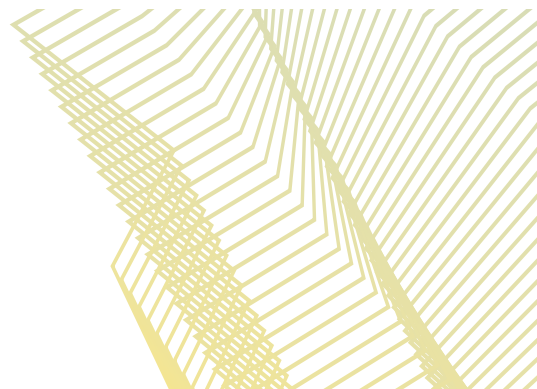
The Chairman of the Institute's Governing Body confirms in our Annual Governance Statement that AIT adheres to the relevant aspects of the Public Spending Code and that the Governing Body has ensured robust and effective systems and procedures are in place in AIT to ensure compliance with the relevant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



Governing Body Meetings

During the period from 1st September 2018 to 31st August 2019 the governing body met on eight separate occasions on the following dates:

September 19, 2018
October 24, 2018
December 5, 2018
February 6, 2019
March 20, 2019
May 8, 2019
May 21, 2019
June 19, 2019



GOVERNING BODY MEETINGS AND ATTENDANCE 2018-2019

September 2018 – August 2019

	19/09/18	24/10/18	05/12/18	06/02/19	20/03/19	08/05/19	Special meeting 21/05/19	19/06/19
Ryan, Frank	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Apologies	✓
Ó Catháin, Ciarán	Apologies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Delamere, Brigid	Apologies	✓	✓	✓	Apologies	✓	✓	✓
O Connor, John	✓	✓	✓	Left				
Keane, James	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kinsella, Nathasha	✓	Apologies	Apologies	✓	✓	✓	Apologies	✓
Rattigan, Liam	✓	✓	✓	✓	Apologies	✓	✓	✓
Ryan, Colette	Apologies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Apologies
Talty, Geraldine	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Apologies	✓	✓
Gilmore, Pat	✓	Apologies	✓	Apologies	✓	✓	✓	Apologies
Shanagher, Kathleen	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Magner, Denis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Apologies
Farrell, Tom	Apologies	✓	✓	✓	✓	Apologies	✓	✓
O Toole, Pat	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Foley, John	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hamilton, Matt	✓	Apologies	Apologies	Apologies	✓	Apologies	Apologies	Apologies
KearneyMedforth, Celine	1 st meet 24/10/2018	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Apologies
Student Union								
Moloughney, Oisín	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Absent
Daly, Aine	✓	✓	Apologies	✓	✓	✓	✓	Absent

Governing Body Expenses 2018-19			
(Total disclosed includes expenses for attendance at Governing Body meetings and participation in interview boards)			
(1 September 2018 – 31 August 2019)	Expenses	Fees (interviews etc.)	Total Paid
Farrell, Tom	155.36	1650	1805.36
Foley, John	1408.45	600	2008.45
Gilmore, Pat	874.66	1200	2074.66
Hamilton, Matt	0	0	0
Kinsella, Nathasha	524.09	0	524.09
Kearney Medforth, Celine	585.51	900	1485.51
Magner, Denis	619.60	1950	2569.60
O'Toole, Pat	246.50	1050	1296.50
Rattigan, Liam	0	0	0
Ryan, Colette	0	0	0
Ryan, Frank	770.98	0	770.98
Shanagher, Kathleen	383.67	1650	2033.67

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:
 - Risk Management
 - Internal Control
 - Internal Audit
 - External Audit
 - Review of its own effectiveness

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.

Audit & Risk Committee Members				
Members	Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3	Meeting 4
	10/10/2018	22/11/2018	06/03/2019	05/06/2019
Kinsella, Natasha (Chair)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kennedy, Colin	Apologies	✓	Apologies	✓
Reidy, Martin	Apologies	✓	✓	✓
O'Toole, Pat	✓	✓	Apologies	✓
Feeney, Brian	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ryan, Colette	Apologies	✓	Apologies	✓

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 2018/2019 on the following dates:

September 14th 2018

October 12th 2018

November 30th 2018

January 25th 2019

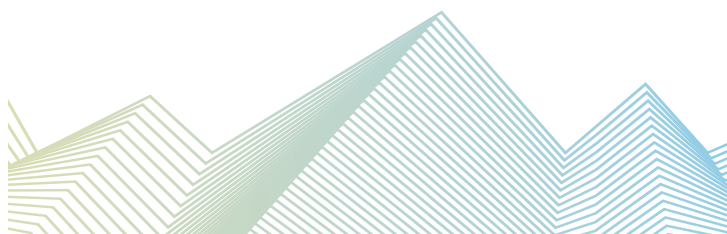
March 8th 2019

May 10th 2019

June 13th 2019

Academic Council Membership

Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin (Chair)
 Dr Niall Seery
 Dr Sean Lyons
 Mr Joe Lawless
 Mr Michael Lonergan
 Mr Eoin Langan (until January 2019 and thereafter Prof. Wallace Ewart)
 Dr Don Faller
 Ms Jane Burns (from October 2018)
 Mr Owen Ross
 Ms Cora Mc Cormack
 Mr Oliver Hegarty
 Dr Michael Tobin
 Mr Seadna Ryan (from 8th March 2019)
 Ms Nicola Ryan
 Mr Mike O'Dowd
 Mr Paul O'Meara
 Ms Niamh Foley
 Mr Pádraig Cooke
 Mr Mike Russell
 Ms Martina Cunningham
 Ms Finola Deavy
 Ms Lorna Mitchell
 Mr Jim Maguire
 Dr Sile O'Flaherty
 Dr Therese Montgomery
 Mr Oisín Moloughney
 Ms Clare Brennan (to March 2019 and thereafter Ms Keira Ward)
 Mr Declan Rodgers
 Ms Catherine Power



Programme/Course Approvals	Academic Council Approval
Faculty of Business and Hospitality	
BBA (Hons) in Food Business and Technology	30.11.2018
Certificate in Mentoring and Facilitation for Recognition of Prior Learning (15 credits) (Special Purpose Award)	13.06.2019
Bachelor of Business (Hons) in International Business Level 8 Ab Initio Programme	13.06.2019
Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Sport Management	13.06.2019
Faculty of Engineering and Informatics	
Bachelor of Science in Music and Sound Engineering Level 7	13.06.2019
Certificate in Robotics and Automation (Level 6) This is a one-year 40-credit Special Purpose Award (Springboard)	13.06.2019
Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) in Civil Engineering (Ab Initio Programme)	13.06.2019
Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Software Design with Virtual Reality and Gaming	13.06.2019
Shared over all Faculties (Research)	
Full-time/part-time structured research programmes leading to the following awards: Master's by Research And Doctor Of Philosophy (PhD)	25.01.2019
Faculty of Science and Health	
Certificate in Checking Accuracy for Pharmacy Technicians Spa (Level 7) (10 credits)	25.01.2019
Faculty of Continuing, Professional Online and Distance Learning	
Certificate in Real Estate Administration (60 Credits)	27.09.2019

The programme development below has been supported by a successful application for Springboard+ funding for the Faculty of Engineering and Informatics		Academic Council Approval
Department of Civil and Construction	Higher Diploma in Science in BIM for Civil Engineering and Construction (60 credits) Level 8	27.09. 2019
Department of Computer and Software Engineering	An Introduction to Networks and Configuration (20 credits) Level 6	27.09. 2019
Department of Computer and Software Engineering	An Introduction to Data Analysis and Visualisation (20 credits) Level 6	27.09. 2019
Department of Computer and Software Engineering	An Introduction to Virtual and Augmented Reality (20 credits) Level 6	27.09. 2019
Department of Computer and Software Engineering	Postgraduate Certificate in Blockchain Security (30 credits) Level 9	27.09. 2019
Department of Computer and Software Engineering	Master of Science in Software Design with Augmented and Virtual Reality with a Postgraduate Certificate in Augmented and Virtual Reality (30 credits)	27.09. 2019
The programme development below has been supported by a successful application for Springboard+ funding for the Faculty of Engineering and Informatics		Academic Council Approval
Department of Computer and Software Engineering	Master of Science in Software Design with Artificial Intelligence with a Postgraduate Certificate in Software Design with Artificial Intelligence (30 credits)	27.09. 2019
Department of Computer and Software Engineering	Master of Science in Software Design with Cloud Native Computing with a Postgraduate Certificate in Cloud Native Computing (30 credits) Level 9	27.09. 2019
Department of Computer and Software Engineering	Master of Science in Software Design with Cyber Security with a Postgraduate Diploma in Cybersecurity (60 credits) Level 9	27.09. 2019
Department of Mechanical, Polymer and Design	New Programme Proposals: • MSc in Advanced Polymer Materials and • Post Graduate Diploma in Advanced Polymer Materials	27.09. 2019
The programme development below (items 1-4) have been supported by a successful application for Springboard+ funding for the Faculty of Continuing, Professional Online and Distance Learning		Academic Council Approval
Department of Lifelong Learning	Bachelor of Science in Quality and Lean Management Level 7 (180 credits)	27.09. 2019
Department of Lifelong Learning	Certificate in Logistics and Supply Chain Management Level 6 (60 credits)	27.09. 2019
Department of Lifelong Learning	Post Graduate Diploma in Business in Executive Management Level 9 (60 credits)	27.09. 2019
Department of Lifelong Learning	Certificate in Applied Laboratory Science Level 6 (30 credits)	27.09. 2019

New Programme Proposals for the Academic year 2018/2019

Programmes Reviewed			
Faculty	Programme	Desk Review	Academic Council Approval
Faculty of Engineering and Informatics	Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) in Civil Engineering	May 2019	13.06.2019
Faculty of Science and Health	Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Health Science with Nutrition	May 2019	13.06.2019

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Institute's 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

Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin (Chair)

Mr Bill Delaney

Dr Niall Seery

Mr John McKenna

Dr Don Faller

Mr Eoin Langan (until January 2019)

Mr Sean Lyons

Dr Michael Tobin

Mr Liam Brennan

Ms Orla Thornton

Ms Mary Simpson

Ms Jane Burns (from February 2019)

Prof. Wallace Ewart (from February 2019)

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

Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin

Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar

Dr Niall Seery

Vice President for Financial and Corporate Affairs

Mr Bill Delaney

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

Mr John McKenna

Dean of Faculty of Business and Hospitality

Mr Eoin Langan (until January 2019, thereafter in an acting capacity Prof. Wallace Ewart until August 2019 when Ms Michelle McKeon Bennett was appointed)

Head of Dept of Accounting and Business Computing

Mr Trevor Prendergast

Head of Dept of Business and Management Studies

Mr Owen Ross

Head of Dept of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Studies

Dr Anthony Johnston

Dean of Faculty of Engineering and Informatics

Dr Sean Lyons

Head of Dept of Electronics and Informatics

Mr Marcus Rahilly (to May 2018)

Head of Dept of Polymer, Mechanical, Civil Engineering and Trades

Mr Joe Lawless

Dean of Faculty of Science and Health

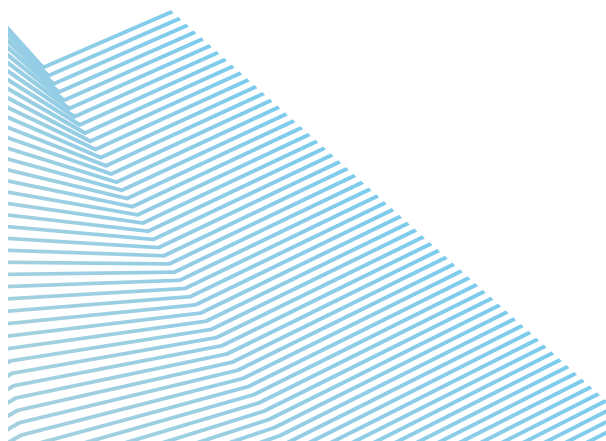
Dr Don Faller

Head of Dept of Life and Physical Sciences

Dr Carol O'Donnell (to January 2019, then Ms Nuala Commings)

Head of Dept of Sport and Health Science

Dr Aoife Lane



Head of Dept of Nursing and Health Sciences
Dr Pearse Murphy

Head of Dept of Social Sciences and Design
Mr Oliver Hegarty

Dean of Faculty of Continuing, Professional, Online and Distance Learning
Dr Michael Tobin

Head of Dept of Lifelong Learning
Mr Seadna Ryan (from December 2018)

Director of Marketing and Communications
Ms Orla Thornton

Director of Innovation and Enterprise
Mr Michael Loneragan

Director of International Relations
Ms Mary Simpson

Human Resource Manager
Mr Liam Brennan

Finance Manager
Ms Betty Buckley

Information Technology Manager
Mr Rossa Coleman

Estates Manager
Mr Cormac Cloonan

Health and Safety Officer
Mr Fergal Sweeney

Academic Affairs and Student Administration Manager
Ms Mary Goode

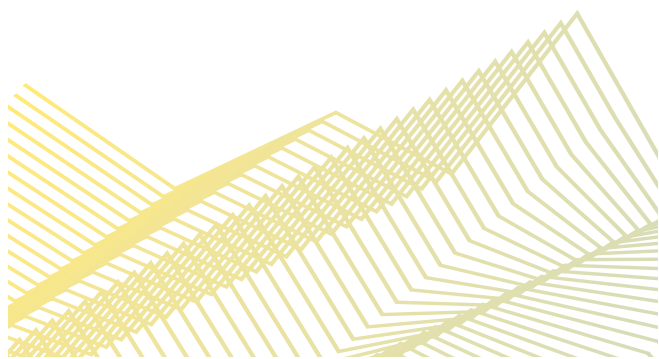
Librarian
Ms Jane Burns

Student Services Manager
Ms Sarah La Cumbre



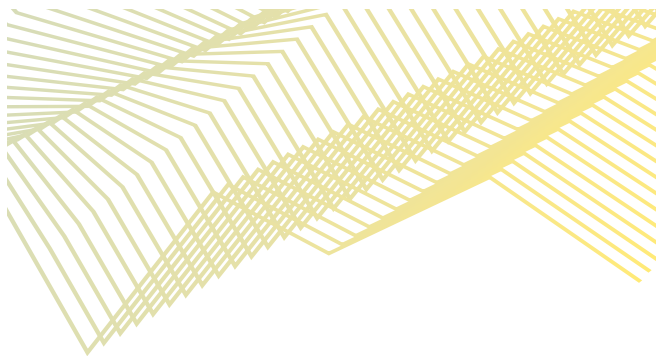
Membership of AIT Committees by Gender 2019

	Total	Male	Female
Academic Council	29	14 (48%)	15 (52%)
Academic Standards and Quality	29	16 (55%)	13 (45%)
Research Ethics	13	4 (31%)	9 (69%)
Research, Innovation and Enterprise	15	11 (73%)	4 (27%)
Professional Development	11	5 (46%)	6 (54%)



Financial Report

(Appendix A)





ATHLONE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY



CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the Year Ended 31 August 2019

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY OF THE INSTITUTE

The Institutes of Technology Acts 1992 to 2006 require the Institute to prepare Financial Statements in such form as may be approved by the Higher Education Authority and to submit them for audit to the Comptroller and Auditor General. In preparing these Financial Statements, the Institute 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 presume that the Institute will continue in operation.
- Disclose and explain any material departures from applicable accounting standards.

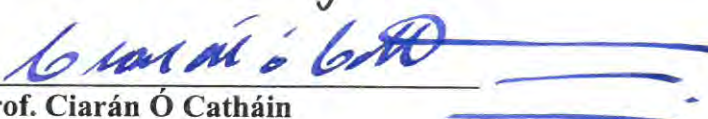
The Institute is responsible for keeping adequate accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Institute and which enables it to ensure that the Consolidated Financial Statements comply with the Institutes of Technology Acts 1992 to 2006.

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

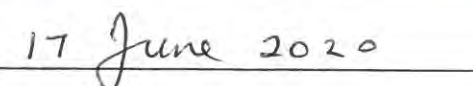
Chairman:


Mr. Liam Rattigan

President:


Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin

Date:


17 June 2020

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Governing Body:

The Governing Body of Athlone Institute of Technology operates in accordance with a Governance Framework which comprises The Institutes of Technology Acts 1992 to 2006, the THEA Code of Governance and other applicable legislation. The Governing Body fulfils key functions including approving and reviewing implementation of the institute's strategic plan, risk management policy, annual operating programmes and budgets, annual financial statements, performance compact and oversees major capital expenditure and investment decisions. The Governing Body also has overall responsibility for the system of internal control in operation within the institute. The Governing Body has a formal schedule of matters specifically reserved for its decision, comprising statutory functions and matters derived from the code of governance. The Governing Body has established an Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) as a sub-committee of Governing Body to support them in their responsibilities for issues of risk management, internal control and other governance matters.

Governing Body Composition:

The Governing Body consists of a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, President (ex-officio member) and 16 ordinary members. There were eight meetings of the Governing Body during the year ended 31st August 2019. The committee's membership for the period under review is provided in the table below:

Review of Governing Body performance

The Governing Body conducted a self-assessment of its own performance during 2018/19 which was concluded on 6th February 2019. The Governing Body utilised the self-assessment evaluation questionnaire contained within the THEA Code of Governance for this purpose.

Governing Body Member	Role
Mr. Frank Ryan	Chairperson
Mr. Liam Rattigan	Vice-Chairperson
Professor Ciarán O'Catháin	President (Ex-Officio Member)
Ms. Brigid Delamere	Member - Academic Staff Representative
Mr. John O'Connor	Member - Academic Staff Representative (to Jan 2019)
Mr. James Keane	Member – Professional, Management & Support Staff Representative
Ms. Natasha Kinsella	Member
Ms. Colette Ryan	Member
Ms. Geraldine Talty	Member
Mr. Pat Gilmore	Member
Ms. Kathleen Shanagher	Member
Mr. Denis Magner	Member
Mr. Tom Farrell	Member
Mr. Pat O'Toole	Member
Mr. John Foley	Member

Mr. Matt Hamilton	Member
Ms. Celine Kearney-Medforth	Member
Mr. Oisin Moloughney	Member - Student Representative
Ms. Aine Daly	Member - Student Representative

Audit and Risk Committee Composition:

The Audit and Risk committee consists of three non-executive members of the Governing Body and three independent external members. There were four meeting of this committee during the year ended 31st August 2019. The committee's membership for the period under review is provided in the table below:

Name	Role
Ms Natasha Kinsella	Chairperson (Governing Body Member)
Ms Colette Ryan	Governing Body Member
Cllr Pat O'Toole	Governing Body Member
Mr Colin Kennedy	External Member
Mr Martin Reidy	External Member
Mr Brian Feeney	External Member

Disclosures required by the THEA Code of Governance in the Annual Report

The THEA Code of Governance requires specified additional governance disclosures in the Annual Report. These additional disclosures includes the following:

- Governing Body responsibility, key duties and reserved functions;
- Governing Body statement of compliance with the THEA Code of Governance;
- Governing Body review and evaluation of institute performance by reference to the Strategic Plan and Annual Operating Budget;
- Governing Body review of compliance with the Public Spending Code;
- Governing Body meeting and attendance schedule 2018/19;
- Governing Body list of expenses 2018/19;
- Governing Body confirmation of approval and oversight of the institute's Risk Management Policy, including review of the institute's principal risks and associated mitigations;
- Governing Body statement on the Audit & Risk Committee membership, role, and effectiveness.

The Annual Report 2018/19 containing the above disclosures is published on the AIT website, www.ait.ie

STATEMENT ON THE SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROL

Responsibility for the System of Internal Control.

The Governing Body acknowledges its responsibility for ensuring that effective systems of internal control are maintained and operated in the Institute. The system of internal control consists of the processes used to identify, evaluate manage and control the significant risks faced by AIT in pursuing its organisational objectives. The system is designed to manage rather than eliminate risk, recognising that only reasonable and not absolute assurance can be provided that assets are safeguarded and material misstatement avoided.

A sound system of internal control contributes to safeguarding the interests of all relevant parties and the Institute's assets. Internal control facilitates the effectiveness and efficiency of operations, helps ensure the reliability of internal and external reporting and assists compliance with laws and regulations.

A sound system of internal control therefore provides reasonable, but not absolute, assurance that the Institute will not be hindered in achieving its objectives, or in the orderly and legitimate conduct of its business, by circumstances, which may be reasonably foreseen.

Effective financial controls, including clear delineation and separation of functions and the maintenance of proper accounting records, are an important element of internal control. They help ensure that the Institute is not unnecessarily exposed to avoidable financial risks and that the financial information used and published is reliable. They also contribute to the safeguarding of assets, including the prevention and detection of fraud.

Key Control Procedures

The Governing Body has implemented procedures, controls and systems to ensure an appropriate control environment exists. These include:

- Major Information Systems including financial management (Agresso), human resource management (Core HR and Core Pay), student record systems (Banner SRS);
- Financial procedures are currently documented, implemented and up to date;
- Regular reviews by the Governing Body of periodic and annual financial reports which include financial performance against budget;
- Clearly defined capital investment control guidelines together with the capital works management framework (CWMF) are in place;
- The Institute has an internal audit function, which operates in accordance with the THEA Code of Governance;
- The operation of an Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) with a defined audit charter and terms of reference, which deal with significant control issues;

- The Audit and Risk Committee approves the internal audit annual work programme and receives and reviews all internal audit reports from the internal auditors (PwC);
- Approval and oversight of AIT's risk management policy including structured and periodic reviews and updates to the institute risk register. In accordance with the Risk Management Policy AIT conducted an assessment of all key business risks which were set out in the Strategic Risk Register and Departmental Risk Registers and included a description of principal risks, risk rating and associated management actions and mitigations for each of the risks. The ARC reviewed the strategic and departmental risk registers at its meetings on 6th March and 5th June, 2019 with reports to the Governing Body on the 19th June, 2019.
- Academic quality procedures are in place for all aspects of the academic programmes. These include a range of processes, which include external examiners, external validation panels and both internal and external review panels at the relevant stages of the academic quality cycle.

Internal Control Assurance Reviews 2018/19

The Governing Body's monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal auditors, the Audit and Risk Committee which oversees the work of the Internal Auditors, audit work and the annual audit report and management letter from the Comptroller and Auditor General, and the Institute's Management who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework.

The AIT Internal Control Framework (ICF) provides a structured approach to the review and testing of controls in place across AIT. The internal audit plan ensures that all areas of the framework are reviewed on a cyclical basis within a three year period.

The internal auditors provide the Audit and Risk Committee with reports of internal audit activity on an ongoing basis against the approved internal audit work plan.

Annual Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Control

The Audit and Risk Committee reported on its activities for the year ended 31 August 2019 to the Governing body on the 23rd October, 2019, which included the opinion of the Audit and Risk Committee that AIT had adequate risk management and internal control systems in place to be an acceptable source of assurance to Governing Body. The Governing Body completed a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control for the year ended 31 August 2019 on 11th December, 2019 and included a statement to this effect in the Annual Governance Statement 2018/19.

Review of the Annual Governance Statement and Statement on Internal Control

The Audit and Risk Committee reviewed the Annual Governance Statement and Statement on Internal Control at its meeting of 27th November, 2019. The Governing Body formally reviewed and approved the Annual Governance Statement and Statement on Internal Control 2018/19 at its meeting of 11th December, 2019. This review included a review of The Annual Governance

Statement and Statement on Internal Control provided to the HEA and the Comptroller and Auditor General as part of the respective annual governance and audit process.

Weakness in Internal Control 2018/19:

During the 2018-19 year three instances arose where the Institute procured goods and services without full compliance with national and EU procurement guidelines. The Institute is working towards full compliance with all relevant guidelines for the procurement activity. Details of non-compliance were reported to the Audit and Risk Committee and are reported in the Annual Governance Statement. Non-compliant procurement for 2018/19 amounted to €276,172.

The institute reported no other areas of non-compliance during 2018/19.

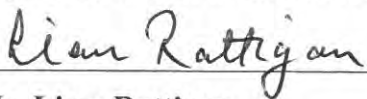
Internal Audit reports 2018/19

The following internal audit reports were presented to ARC in 2018/19:

No.	Report Title	Date
1.	Internal Audit Report: - 2017/18 Findings Follow Up Review - Internal Audit Plan 2018/19	10 th October, 2018
2.	Internal Audit Report: - Code of Governance Readiness Assessment (phase 1)	22 nd November, 2018
3.	Internal Audit Report: - Code of Governance Readiness Assessment (phase 2) - Exam Process Review	6 th March, 2019
4.	Internal Audit Report: - Compliance with Financial Aspects of ICF	5 th June, 2019

All of the above reports were reviewed and approved by the Governing Body at the Governing Body meeting immediately following the ARC meeting. All internal audit reports are subject to internal audit follow up review to assess whether recommendations and management actions are implemented.

Signed on behalf of the Governing Body of Athlone Institute of Technology:



Mr. Liam Rattigan
Chairperson

17 June 2020
Date



Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin
President

17 June 2020
Date



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 for the year ended 31 August 2019 as required under the provisions of the Institutes of Technology Acts 1992 to 2006. The financial statements comprise

- the consolidated statement of comprehensive income
- the consolidated 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 Institute at 31 August 2019 and of the income and expenditure of the group and Institute for the year then ended 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 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 Institute has presented certain other information together with the financial statements. This comprises the statement of responsibility of the Institute, the corporate governance statement, the statement on the system of internal control, and the Institute's annual report for 2018/2019. 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

15 July 2020

Appendix to the report

Responsibilities of Governing Body members

The members of the Governing Body are responsible for

- the preparation of 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 Institutes of Technology Acts 1992 to 2006 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 and, based on the audit evidence obtained, on whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Institute's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Institute to cease to continue as a going concern.
- 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.

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 there are 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 there is 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.

I also 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.

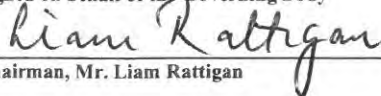
Athlone Institute of Technology

Consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income
Year ended 31 August 2019

	Note	Consolidated 31/08/19 €000's	Institute 31/08/19 €000's	Consolidated 31/08/18 €000's	Institute 31/08/18 €000's
Income					
State Grants	3	20,433	20,433	19,835	19,835
Tuition Fees and Student Contribution	4	18,198	18,198	16,842	16,842
Research Grants & Contracts	5	5,710	5,715	4,180	4,194
Student Support Funding	7	581	581	541	541
Other Income	8	6,319	3,834	6,272	3,746
Amortisation of Deferred Capital Grants	19	3,080	2,919	3,005	2,832
Interest Income		9	9	11	11
Deferred Pension Funding	25	12,182	12,182	16,781	16,781
Total Income		66,512	63,871	67,467	64,782
Expenditure					
Staff Costs	9	38,840	37,875	36,716	35,777
Retirement Benefit Cost	25	12,182	12,182	16,781	16,781
Other Operating Expenses	10	11,083	10,205	9,976	9,063
Depreciation	13	3,682	3,033	3,586	2,921
Total Expenditure		65,787	63,295	67,059	64,542
Surplus/(Deficit) before other gains and losses		725	576	408	240
Experience gains/(losses) on retirement benefit obligations	25	4,823	4,823	(570)	(570)
Reduction in pension liabilities arising from retirements in the year		8,801	8,801	7,257	7,257
Changes in assumptions underlying the present value of retirement benefit obligations	25	(27,236)	(27,236)	(363)	(363)
Total actuarial (losses)/gains in the year		(13,612)	(13,612)	6,324	6,324
Adjustment to deferred retirement benefits funding	25	13,612	13,612	(6,324)	(6,324)
Total comprehensive income/(loss) for the year		725	576	408	240

The Consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.
Notes 1-26 form part of these financial statements.

Signed on behalf of the Governing Body


Chairman, Mr. Liam Rattigan

Date 17/6/2020


President, Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin

Date 18/6/2020

Athlone Institute of Technology

Consolidated Statement of Changes in Reserves and Capital Account
Year ended 31 August 2019

Opening Balance at 1 September 2018

Surplus for the Year before Appropriations
Amortisation of Deferred Capital Grants
State Grant Allocated to Capital
Transfer to Capital Development Reserve
Movement for the Period

Balance at 31 August 2019

Note 19 Consolidated Deferred Capital Grants €000's	Note 19 Institute Deferred Capital Grants €000's	Note 20 Consolidated Capital Development Reserve €000's	Note 20 Institute Capital Development Reserve €000's	I&E Consolidated Revenue Reserves €000's	I&E Institute Revenue Reserves €000's	Consolidated Institute Total €000's	Total €000's
76,705	74,654	202	202	14,913	2,856	91,820	77,712
(3,080)	(2,919)			725	576	725	576
2,375	2,375					(3,080)	(2,919)
(705)	(544)	65	65	(65)	(65)	2,375	2,375
		65	65	660	511	20	32
76,000	74,110	267	267	15,573	3,367	91,840	77,744

Opening Balance at 31 August 2017

Surplus for the Year before Appropriations
Amortisation of Deferred Capital Grants
State Grant Allocated to Capital
Transfer to Capital Development Reserve
Movement for the Period

Balance at 31 August 2018

Note 19 Consolidated Deferred Capital Grants €000's	Note 19 Institute Deferred Capital Grants €000's	Note 20 Consolidated Capital Development Reserve €000's	Note 20 Institute Capital Development Reserve €000's	I&E Consolidated Revenue Reserves €000's	I&E Institute Revenue Reserves €000's	Consolidated Institute Total €000's	Total €000's
77,490	75,315	202	202	14,505	2,616	92,197	78,133
(3,005)	(2,832)			408	240	408	240
2,220	2,171					(3,005)	(2,832)
(785)	(661)			408	240	2,220	2,171
						(377)	(421)
76,705	74,654	202	202	14,913	2,856	91,820	77,712

Notes 1-26 form part of these Financial Statements.

Signed on behalf of the Governing Body

Liam Rattigan
Chairman, Mr. Liam Rattigan

Date 17/6/2020

Seamus Ó Catháin
President, Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin
Date 17/6/2020

Athlone Institute of Technology

Consolidated and Institute Statement of Financial Position Year ended 31 August 2019

	Note	Consolidated 31/08/2019 €000's	Institute 31/08/2019 €000's	Consolidated 31/08/2018 €000's	Institute 31/08/2018 €000's
Fixed Assets					
Property, Plant & Equipment	13	86,738	74,460	87,849	74,954
		<u>86,738</u>	<u>74,460</u>	<u>87,849</u>	<u>74,954</u>
Current Assets					
Inventory	10			12	
Receivables	15	3,201	3,168	2,453	2,440
Cash and Cash Equivalents	16	11,361	9,401	9,895	8,414
		<u>14,572</u>	<u>12,569</u>	<u>12,360</u>	<u>10,854</u>
Less Payables: amounts falling due within one year	17	(9,086)	(9,061)	(8,217)	(8,096)
Net Current Assets		<u>5,486</u>	<u>3,508</u>	<u>4,143</u>	<u>2,758</u>
Total Assets less Current Liabilities		<u>92,224</u>	<u>77,968</u>	<u>91,992</u>	<u>77,712</u>
Less Payables: amounts falling due after more than one year	18	(384)	(224)	(172)	-
Provision for Amounts & Charges: Retirement Benefits					
Retirement Benefits Obligations	25	(218,989)	(218,989)	(191,322)	(191,322)
Deferred Retirement Benefit Funding Asset	25	218,989	218,989	191,322	191,322
Total Net Assets		<u>91,840</u>	<u>77,744</u>	<u>91,820</u>	<u>77,712</u>
Deferred Capital Grants	19	76,000	74,110	76,705	74,654
Capital Development Reserve	20	267	267	202	202
		267	267	202	202
Unrestricted Reserves					
Income & Expenditure Reserve		15,573	3,367	14,913	2,856
		15,573	3,367	14,913	2,856
Total		<u>91,840</u>	<u>77,744</u>	<u>91,820</u>	<u>77,712</u>

Notes 1-26 form part of these Financial Statements.

Signed on behalf of the Governing Body


Chairman, Mr. Liam Rattigan

Date 17 June 2020


President, Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin

Date 17 June 2020

Athlone Institute of Technology

Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows Year ended 31 August 2019

	Year Ended 31/08/2019 €000's	Year Ended 31/08/18 €000's
Net Cashflow from operating activities		
Excess of expenditure over income	725	408
Depreciation of fixed assets	3,682	3,586
Amortisation of deferred capital grants	(3,080)	(3,005)
Decrease in stock	2	11
(Increase) in receivables	(748)	(579)
Increase in payables	1,081	3
Interest income	(9)	(11)
Capital grants received	2,375	2,220
Net Cash Inflow from Operating Activities	4,028	2,633
Cash Flows from Investing Activities		
Payments to acquire property, plant & equipment	(2,571)	(2,329)
Net Cash Flows from Investing Activities	(2,571)	(2,329)
Cash Flows from Financing Activities		
Interest received	9	11
Net Cash Flows from Financing Activities	9	11
Net (Decrease)/Increase in Cash Equivalents in the Year	1,466	315
Cash and Cash Equivalents at 1 September	9,895	9,580
Cash and Cash Equivalents at 31 August	11,361	9,895

Notes 1-26 form part of these Financial Statements.

Signed on behalf of the Governing Body

Liam Rattigan
Chairman, Mr. Liam Rattigan

Ciarán Ó Catháin
President, Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin

Date *17 June 2020*

Date *17 June 2020*

