

Part 1

Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures

Overarching institution-level approach and policy for QA (ESG 1.1)

1. Overarching Institution Quality Policy

A brief synopsis of the overarching institution quality policy which sets out the links between QA policy and procedures and the strategy and strategic management of the institution.

Founded in 1971, Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) is an autonomous Institute, established under the Regional Technical Colleges Act, 1992. DkIT has ensured a central role for quality assurance and enhancement in its Strategic Plan 2017-19, which affirms the contribution of quality assurance systems in underpinning strategic objectives and continuing to enhance DkIT's reputation.

DkIT is strategically positioned mid-way along the Dublin- Belfast Corridor, on the border with Northern Ireland. Within a 90 minute drive time from the campus there resides an estimated population of 3.29 million, which in 2011, accounted for approximately 52% of the population of the entire island (*A socio-economic profile of the DkIT catchment, AIRO, 2012*). This presents unique challenges and opportunities for the Institute economically, socially and culturally.

The demographic profile of DkIT's regional catchment area shows educational attainment to degree level among the population in a number of counties to be at low levels when compared to the State average of 16.4% (*A socio-economic profile of the DkIT catchment, AIRO, 2012*). While unemployment in the region has decreased, the labour force participation rate for the Border region is the lowest in Ireland at 56.5% (*Regional Skills Bulletin, 2016*). Deprivation indices indicate some of the most disadvantaged areas in Ireland are located in this region. Additionally, the region encompasses rural and urban communities.

DkIT was founded in 1970 and recruits 89% of its learners from the region. As the leading Higher Education Institution in the North-East, DkIT is a major contributor to the educational, economic, social, and cultural development of the region. With circa 5,200 learners, 500 staff and an impressive 90 acre campus and the recent addition of state-of-the-art sports facilities, the Institute is a vibrant learning community.

Through its excellence in learning and teaching, research and engagement, the Institute continues to be a transformational force.

To date, the Institute, through the Strategic Plan, has put particular emphasis on ensuring that the Institute differentiates itself within the sector in a sustainable manner by:

- Strategically positioning itself within the national HE landscape;
- Placing the learner at the centre of its strategy with a particular focus on flexible and lifelong learning provision, while continuing to deliver on its existing provision across all disciplines;
- Growing STEM provision;
- Enhancing the regional agenda and becoming the first port of call for employers and the community to support regional development with accredited and higher level CPD and training;
- Branding and marketing itself as an agile, innovative and responsive Institute.

A core focus in the heart of the DkIT 2017-19 Strategic Plan is on learners. DkIT will continue to facilitate meaningful learner engagement and work with learners as partners. DkIT will provide learners with both discipline-specific and employability skills required for the working world. In particular the Institute will have a clear focus on attracting and supporting a more diverse range of learners. This will require on-going innovation in curriculum development, delivery and assessment. This will be reflected, for example, in the development of common entry level programmes to support the transitions agenda from Further Education (FE) to HE. It therefore requires a holistic and integrated approach to learning and teaching, research and engagement within a flexible, adaptive and responsive organisational structure.

See: <https://www.dkit.ie/presidents-office/documents-policies>

DKIT has commenced work on **Programmatic Portfolio Planning** for the period 2018 to 2028.

The portfolio strategy supports the delivery of the DkIT Strategic goals of providing a career oriented education reflective of addressing the current and future needs of society, community and enterprise. The consultation process towards will guide the Institute towards the development of a set of prioritised actions in the context of ensuring programme design and delivery is relevant to market

needs. The competitive position both nationally and internationally will be established and opportunities for clustering will be recognised as we move forward.

We are working towards ensuring existing programmes are relevant in meeting the needs of business and society and developing and delivering programmes, directly and in collaboration with relevant sectoral partners, to meet specific industry and professional needs

The overall objective is to work towards developing and aligning a suite of programmes in DkIT that is relevant to future needs while simultaneously supporting a distinctive practice-based, research-informed learner experience.

2. Quality assurance decision-making fora

A brief description of institution-level quality assurance decision-making fora

The Academic Council at Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) is established in accordance with the Regional Technical Colleges Act, 1992 and any subsequent amendments. The Council assists the Governing Body in the planning, co-ordination, development and oversight of the educational work of the Institute and protects, maintains and develops the academic standards of the programmes and activities of the Institute. The Academic Council is accordingly, the primary statutory body with direct responsibility for academic quality. The President and Registrar are respectively, Chairman and Secretary of the Council. Academic Council approve action plans following reviews and these plans are then assigned to relevant academic and administrative areas for operationalisation.

The membership of Academic Council consists of ex-officio and elected members with the maximum membership currently standing at 54. See the Constitution of the Academic Council at <https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/quality-assurance/academic-council>.

Once adopted, the minutes of all Academic Council meetings are tabled at Governing Body meetings. Where urgent matters arise, these are brought to the attention of the Governing Body by way of a special motion to facilitate Governing Body approval prior to the formal adoption of the minutes.

The Academic Council has the following sub-committee structure:

- Standing Committee
- Programme Evaluation Sub-Committee
- Academic Quality Sub-Committee
- Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee
- Research Sub-Committee
- Graduate Research Studies Board

All of the above committees contribute to the development of quality assurance policies and procedures at Institute level. They will be reviewed as part of the Institute Review in 2018. In addition

to Sub-committees of Academic Council, working groups are regularly established to scope out best practice and report back to Academic Council in advance of updates to policies. This practice ensures that quality assurance is relevant, current and embedded within the academic and non-academic communities of the Institute.

DkIT continued to strengthen its strategic alliance with Dublin City University (DCU) through the further development of the DCU-DkIT Graduate School. During 2015/16 the Terms of Reference for the DkIT Graduate Studies Research Board were changed to increase the membership from Academic Schools, with a view to facilitating cross departmental learning and collective experience. The composition of the committee is now in line with the DCU Graduate Studies Research Board. Both DCU and DkIT also have representatives on the other Institution's GRSB. The sharing of best practice with DCU has served to enhance research quality assurance at DkIT. This has also involved further development of the institute's postgraduate research degree regulations in line with those at DCU and taking in account external developments in terms of national policy development.

Details can be found at <https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/academic-regulations-postgraduate-students-registered-dcu-awards>

The responsibility for ensuring the implementation of these quality policies rests ultimately with the Executive Board and falls particularly within the remit of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar. The Executive Board ensures that activities undertaken by the Institute are in line with its Strategic Plan and that elements of associated risk, governance and resource implications are approved before being undertaken.

At School and Departmental level, Heads of School, Heads of Department and Programme Boards have local responsibilities for implementing and monitoring of quality policies.

The academic management of programmes is the responsibility of the Programme Boards. Opportunities for enhancement of quality policies and procedures are frequently identified through Programme Board feedback and annual reporting to Academic Council. Student representatives from programmes are members of the associated Programme Boards ensuring the student voice is heard at this level. Stage Convenors who provide pastoral care to students and Programme Directors (who

support Heads of Department in the management and operation of programmes) also contribute to Programme Boards, providing a robust front line approach to programme management. Programme Boards provide valuable feedback on all issues including quality assurance and enhancement via their Annual Reports at Institute level and also their participation in Faculty Boards at School level which contain academic faculty members, School management, School administration and student representatives.

Further fora, which contribute to the implementation, monitoring and review of quality policies and procedures, include both (i) the **Academic Heads Forum** – consisting of Heads of Schools and Heads of Departments, and (ii) the **Institute Management and Planning Committee**, consisting of representative academic and functional area managers. In 2018, a **Heads of Function Group** has been established through the Registrar's Office which brings together Registry, Quality Assurance, International Office, Research, Student Services and Library to meet once a month to ensure the seamless integration of services provided through the Office of the Vice President, Academic Affairs.

In 2016/17 DkIT continued to ensure that Quality Assurance was firmly embedded within all day to day aspects of work at the Institute to ensure that a quality culture underpins all of its activities. All staff within the Institute contribute to the culture of quality and there is acceptance that this is a 'continual process' as new challenges and new ways of educating students and developing faculty and staff continue to be central to the work of the Institute. The publication of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), 2015 supported this premise and provided support for the important roles of external stakeholders in addition to internal stakeholders. The role of higher education within society and as a platform for development is elucidated which is useful in the regional and national remit of Institutes of Technology.

Confirmation of QA Policy and Procedures

1. Programme Design and Approval (ESG 1.2)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance policy and procedures for the design and approval of new programmes.

The previous policy on Approval, Design and Monitoring of Awards was replaced with two separate policies to reflect the distinctness of these elements within the ESG (2015). The two policies are as follows:

1. Policy on the Design and Approval of Programmes
2. Policy on the Annual Monitoring of Programmes

These were approved by DkIT Academic Council on 20th June 2016.

See <https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/policy-design-approvalprogrammes>
<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/monitoring-programmes-policy>

As DkIT placed strategic importance on the development of part time programmes during 2015/16, the Registrar's Office developed Guidelines on the Development of Part-Time Programmes. These guidelines provided extensive support on the generation of new programme offerings through the utilisation of appropriate existing modules. They can be viewed at the following link:

https://www.dkit.ie/system/files/guidelines_for_design_of_part_time_programmes_0_1.pdf

2. Programme Delivery and Assessment (ESG 1.3)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance policies and procedures for the ongoing delivery and assessment of programmes.

All programme validation documents are required to present a teaching and learning strategy and an assessment strategy. This ensures that assessment is student centred and presented within the programme in a manageable way to ensure learners are equipped to competently succeed within their programme of study with adequate time allowed for assessment preparation. Associated statistics on student progression within programmes are also reviewed annually and barriers to progression are reviewed at programme level by Programme Boards.

Groupwork Framework Guides were produced through CELT in 2016 and a recent review (2016/2017) took place of the Assessment and Learning policy. A committee was set up by Academic Council in mid-2017 to develop a policy on Student Retention.

See policy on Programme Design and Approval (link above) Sections 2.7 and 2.8.

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/policy-design-approvalprogrammes>

The Institute's Policy on Assessment and Learning 2017 may be found at:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/assessment-learning>

3. Research Quality (ESG 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.9)

Links and/or text relating to any specific quality assurance procedures for the design, approval, delivery, assessment and monitoring of research programmes, if they exist.

At DkIT research students can achieve a QQI award if registered prior to September, 2014 and they are governed by separate policies and procedures from students who registered post September 2014.

For students who are submitting for QQI Research Awards, see:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/academic-regulations-postgraduate-students-registered-qqi-awards>

Since September 2014, registered postgraduate research students are studying for DCU awards through the DCU/DkIT Graduate School. The regulations applying to these latter awards are aligned to DCU regulations for research awards. These regulations were modified during 2016/17 to:

- Include regulations for submission by Music Performance Practice or Artefact
- Amend the requirements for supervisory teams to bring this into line with DCU requirements.
- Implement inclusion of an independent panel member for each postgraduate research student

The amended regulations are available at: <https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/academic-regulations-postgraduate-students-registered-dcu-awards>

In terms of the development of structured PhD provision, the Research and Graduate Studies Office in collaboration with the academic schools and the Graduate Research Studies Office in Dublin City University, are currently developing a suite of discipline and generic skills modules which will allow all of the institutes postgraduate cohort to attain structured accredited training during their postgraduate research studies.

In line with QQI Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines published in July 2016, DkIT ensures an integrated system of quality assurance in relation to its research activities and has a very successful track record in relevant metrics and peer review.

The current research strategy of the institute (2017-2019) is founded upon three strategic imperatives, associated actions and a set of key performance indicators. Dundalk Institute of Technology is

committed to driving research excellence in a number of prioritised areas to include Health, Ageing and ICT, Energy and the Environment and the Creative Arts. A crucial strategic objective is to ensure that learning and teaching remain research informed. This aligns with the overall vision of preparing learners for the working environment whereby learners are informed of the latest thinking and innovation within their discipline area and its application to the real world. To achieve this, DkIT must encourage and empower its staff to excel in their discipline area through engaging in research. In this way staff, are not only engaged in new discovery but also work directly with industry in applying new technologies and innovations with real world impact. In addition, the Institute will seek to increase the number of staff with PhDs through its learning and teaching supports and its recruitment strategy. DkIT's Research Strategy has been aligned to the Institute three year Strategic Plan launched in 2017.

Through the Research Office, Dundalk Institute of Technology was awarded the HR Excellence in Research Logo in October 2015 in recognition of its commitment to be an attractive, supportive and stimulating environment in which to carry out research and which understands the importance of providing its researchers with the training and means to be competitive and mobile. The award was made in light of DkIT's commitment to aligning its HR policies and practices with the European Commission's European Charter for Researchers and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, one of only 4 Institutes of Technology to receive such an award.

DkIT continues to build its research supervision capacity through staff development to PhD qualification level. Standing at 34% DkIT exceeded the sectoral average of the proportion of full-time academic staff with Level 10 qualifications in 2016/2017. This figure is expected to rise to 37% in 2018 with the completion of doctoral studies by a further 5 staff drawn across the schools. In addition, the institute was the first across the sector to roll out the national pilot programme in research supervisory development and professional training. To date in excess of 65 academic members of staff have completed this formal training programme.

- The primary benchmark employed for measuring the impact of the institutes research was the Scopus database (<https://www.scopus.com>). Through this analysis the following Overall the institute is ranked 4th in the sector in terms of total citations.
- For the calendar years 2016 and 2017 the institute is ranked third for peer reviewed conference presentations.
- For the calendar years 2016 and 2017 the institute ranked 2nd for book chapters.

4. Student Lifecycle (ESG 1.4)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures that are encompassed by the student lifecycle.

DkIT aims to provide an efficient and student-friendly service on a range of matters from Admission through to Conferring and Transcripts Provision. The Institute does not currently have one overarching policy for all of these matters, but a range of individual policies apply as follows:

For applications, admissions and registration see:

<https://www.dkit.ie/academic-administration>

For Transfer and Progression see:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/transfer-progression-policy>

For Recognition of Prior Learning, see:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/recognition-prior-learning-rplpolicy-practice>

For Equal Access and Participation see:

https://www.dkit.ie/system/files/Access_Policy_v2.pdf

For Student Supports see:

<https://www.dkit.ie/home-page/student-supports-dkit>

In order to extend the range of supports provided by DkIT to students with particular needs, the Academic Council adopted the Policy, Guidelines and Procedures for the granting of reasonable accommodations in examinations to learners with disabilities.

See <https://www.dkit.ie/staff-portal/disability-office>.

For Child Protection see:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/child-protection-policy>

For On-line Communication and Social Networking Policy, see:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/communicating-online-use-socialnetworking-sites-policy>

For the Institute's Ethics Policy, see:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/ethics-policy>

For the Academic Integrity Policy, see:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/academic-integrity-policyprocedures>

This was amended in 2015/16 to modify the penalty grid to improve consistency of penalties across academic schools. The change was approved by Academic Council on 20th June 2016.

For the Examinations and Assessment Policy and Procedure, see:

<https://www.dkit.ie/examinations-office/documents-policies/examinations-policy>

For the Student Voice Policy, see:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/student-voice-policy>

For Exit Awards see:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/exit-awards-policy>

For Conferring see:

<https://www.dkit.ie/conferring>

5. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring the competence of teaching staff, including staff recruitment and staff development.

Dundalk Institute of Technology has adopted a learner-centred approach to its educational provisions, aimed at enhancing the student learner experience and supporting learners through the adoption of innovative learning and teaching strategies. See the Institute's Strategic Plan (2017-2019) at:

<https://www.dkit.ie/presidents-office/documents-policies>

Recruitment and training of staff, including teaching staff, is managed through DkIT's Human Resources Department. Teaching staff are recruited in line with the Regional Technical Colleges Act, 1992, Section 11 (1) (b). Additional detailed information is given to Selection Boards on Conflict of Interest and detailed Selection Procedures for Institute and Appointment Process of Staff following Selection Board. All managers are routinely updated on these procedures and their adherence to (a) The Employment Equality Acts, 1998 and 2004; (b) The Freedom of Information Act, 1997 and as amended and (c) The Protection of Employee (Fixed Term) Act, 2003.

<https://www.dkit.ie/human-resource>

<https://www.dkit.ie/human-resource/policies-procedures>

The Institute values excellence in pedagogical standards and applicants with teaching qualifications, in addition to their academic/professional qualifications, are scored higher at application stage than those without teaching qualifications.

The Institute is committed to excellence in teaching and learning and actively promotes continuous professional development in this regard. The Institute offers a Master of Arts in Learning and Teaching and to date, 54 members of the Institute's academic staff have completed this programme, while the number of Certificates awarded to DkIT staff is 13, giving an overall total of 67 awards to DkIT staff. The Institute's Centre for Learning and Teaching (CELТ) delivers these programmes.

The Institute is committed to ensuring that learning and teaching remain research informed. Staff associated with the Institute's Research Centres teach on undergraduate programmes, supervise

postgraduate students and engage with undergraduate research projects ensuring they are at the forefront of their field of knowledge.

Standing at 34% DkIT exceeded the sectoral average of the proportion of fulltime academic staff with Level 10 qualifications in 2017. This supports the strategic goal of achieving academic and research excellence.

6. Teaching and Learning (ESG 1.4, 1.5, 1.6)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring the quality of teaching and learning.

Teaching and Learning is a constantly evolving activity at DkIT supported by the Institute's Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT). CELT provides online and face-to-face learning and teaching advice and supports for staff and students. See <https://www.dkit.ie/centre-learning-teaching>

DkIT continued to prioritize continuing professional development for teaching staff. Master Classes and Professional Development events in Learning and Teaching are organised each semester.

Learning and Teaching enhancement activity in 2016/17 was focused on assessment and professional development of staff. Considerable work has been undertaken to enhance assessment across the institute. This work emphasised 'assessment for learning' and the importance of a programmatic approach to assessment.

- DkIT has been/is a lead or partner in a number of National Forum funded enhancement projects concerned with enhancement of assessment (<http://y1feedback.ie/>, <http://teamshp.ie/>, <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/assessment-for-learning-resources-for-first-year-undergraduate-mathematics-module>).
- The outcomes of these projects are now both informing policy and enhancing practice. This is evident in the new [Assessment and Learning Policy](https://www.dkit.ie/system/files/assessment_learning_policy_23-05-17.pdf) (approved by Academic Council May 2016) https://www.dkit.ie/system/files/assessment_learning_policy_23-05-17.pdf. This policy emphasises the importance of programmatic approaches to assessment and considerable work has been undertaken in promoting and supporting this.
- A notable development in this area is the DkIT Framework for Assessed Group Work https://www.dkit.ie/system/files/groupwork_framework_guidelines_2016.pdf, approved by Academic Council in December 2016. It was developed in response to student feedback and is informed by significant consultation. It has been recognised as an example of good practice and features as a case study on leading change in assessment in the National Forum's resource on

programme approaches to assessment <http://www.teachingandlearning.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Final-Programme-Assessment-Resource-with-doi-and-author-290617-1.pdf>. Funding, under the National Forum's 2017/18 seminar Series , was also granted for a workshop exploring how to implement this framework <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/t-l-scholarship/national-seminar-series/national-seminar-series-20172018-list/> and it will also be presented to the SEDA Spring Assessment Conference 2018. The implementation of this framework is now being evaluated (2017/18) and a proposal to report this to the journal *Higher Education Pedagogies, Special Issue on Transforming Assessment* has been accepted.

DkIT has a long standing commitment to the professional development of staff in learning and teaching. The impact of the accredited MA Learning and Teaching has been recognised nationally.

- DkIT was awarded funding under the National Forum's 2016 Enhancement fund for two projects concerned with applying the PDF. L2L, led by DkIT, is exploring professional development in learning and teaching for librarians who teach: <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/l2l-librarians-learning-support-learners-learning/>. The ATLAS project <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/atlas-aligning-teaching-learning-across-technological-sector/>, is concerned with mapping and aligning existing accredited provision, including the MA Learning and Teaching, to the PDF framework.
- Two DkIT staff were partially seconded to the National Forum to work on implementing pilots to test the PDF <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/pilot-study-implementation-national-professional-development-framework/> and their experience will inform future development.
- DELTA Awards: Two applications (School of Health & Science and Department of Hospitality) from DkIT to the National Forum's DELTA awards <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/priority-themes/learning-impact-awards/disciplinary-excellence-learning-teaching-assessment-delta-2017/> were successful in getting to the second stage. The outcome of this stage will be known in March 2018.

The Institute's Policy on Assessment and Learning may be found at:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/assessment-learning>

7. Resources and Support (ESG 1.5)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring funding and resources for learning, teaching and research. Also, links and or text relating to the quality assurance procedures for learning resources and student support.

To the best of its resourcing ability, DkIT seeks to ensure that environments and resources conducive to both individual and group learning are provided to learners and that learners have access to resources for effective study and to resources which increase educational opportunity. Full details of resources and supports are advised to students at induction when they first come to study at DkIT. Institute Open Days also inform prospective students of the supportive learning environment they will experience at DkIT. Supporting learning is continually reviewed and upgraded despite budgetary constraints because it is seen as the central aspect of the functions of the Institute. Robust feedback channels are in operation to ensure that any deficiencies in service to learners are brought to the attention of the relevant manager in a timely manner. This theme is in line with the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016) Section 7 which emphasises the need for adequacy of learner resources on an ongoing basis. Some examples of additional work undertaken in 2016/17 are outlined below.

The Dundalk Institute of Technology Library supports teaching, learning and research with a range of supports to learners including:

- Purchasing, collecting and categorisation of resources in various formats, for which a suite of [search options](#) is provided.
- Making material available to [borrow](#) for varying amounts of time.
- Providing areas for [study](#).
- Helping learners find resources through the Library Information Desk or [Library Subject Support Team](#).
- Offering [Information Literacy training](#).
- Developing [online library guides](#).
- Providing guidance on how to avoid plagiarism by referencing. The library also offer an introduction to the [Mendeley Reference Manager](#).

Many of these supports are available on line to ensure learners can avail of what they need out of

hours. Extensive databases are made available to learners to again support out of hours learning and revision in preparation for examinations. The library extends its opening hours in the two weeks before examination sessions to again support learners and also ensures that core text books can only be borrowed for shorter periods, ensuring maximum sharing of resources.

See: <https://www.dkit.ie/dkit-library/support/support-learning>

Additional study support for numeracy and literacy and ICT is provided by the Student Academic Support Services. See: <https://www.dkit.ie/home-page/student-supports-dkit/student-academic-support-services>

The Institute also provides access to a variety of student supports to promote and support learning and ensure student wellbeing. These are outlined at: <https://www.dkit.ie/home-page/student-supports-dkit>

The procedure for programme-based funding is managed at a School level. Heads of School currently manage non-pay budgets within their areas and award funding on a per programme basis. This model of support, agreed at Executive Board, ensures that learners on every programme within the Institute can avail of the relevant resources to underpin their programme of learning (including specialist training days, site visits, learning support materials (e.g. on-line logins for specialist activities), software licences for programme-specific software (e.g. SAGE for Accounting Students). Reductions in funding to the IoT sector have greatly impacted this resourcing but the procedure remains intact.

Details of Human Resource policies can be found at:
<https://www.dkit.ie/human-resource/policies-procedures>

The Institute strives to maintain its position among the top three performing IoTs within the sector in terms of research funding. It is as a direct result of this funding that the Institute can successfully deliver its strategic research objectives aimed at meeting its three year vision. The Institute currently has strong research collaborations with its counterparts in Northern Ireland and Scotland through its engagement in the EU INTERREG Programmes.

DkIT is committed to driving research excellence in a number of prioritised areas to include Health, Ageing and ICT, Energy and the Environment and the Creative Arts. The formation of these “Research Clusters” has come about through an internal strategic prioritisation exercise and is in line with the National Research Prioritisation exercise and the ambitions set out in Innovation 2020. The strategic development and support of the research agenda at DkIT is led by the Head of research and supported through the Research Office. The supports and resources available to all staff across the institute include:

- Suite of internal support funding schemes
- Suite of targeted training programmes for staff, career researchers and postgraduate students
- Advice and guidance on research proposal writing
- Career framework development for all career researchers
- Support and guidance to all postgraduate researchers during the lifecycle of their degree
- Suite of research related policies and procedures governing research

The Research Office offers a number of supports to emerging and established researchers and details of activities, initiatives and supports are outlined at the links below:

<https://www.dkit.ie/research>

<https://www.dkit.ie/research/research-support>

8. Information Management (ESG 1.7)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for collecting, analysing and using relevant information about programmes and other activities.

Dundalk Institute of Technology has published a set of IT Policy documents to provide advice and direction to its user base in the use of, and the management and delivery of IT systems and services that hold information and data relating to the business of the Institute. These policies have been prepared to advise users on the various governance aspects of using the Institute's IT services and the effective operation and delivery of such IT services.

See: <https://www.dkit.ie/computer-services/policies-procedures>

In relation to Information Management specifically, the Institute is a client of HEAnet and uses Banner, Core, Agresso and Millenium as its information management tools. The HEAnet Network Operations Centre (NOC) is operated from the HEAnet office in Dublin. The NOC implements, maintains and supports the HEAnet network and services. See: <http://www.heanet.ie/services>

The management of information within the Institute is shared across a number of databases, systems and via the DkIT website.

- Data on student registration, progression, success and drop-out rates is held on Banner.
- The Institute assesses student satisfaction through EvaSys (See: <http://www.evasys.co.uk/start.html>) and the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE).
- Detailed information on Study Programmes is held and published on <http://courses.dkit.ie/>
- At student registration, the Institute carries out the Equal Access Survey on the socio-economic, ethnic/cultural and disability background of new entrants on behalf of the HEA.

This information provides for the funding of services and support for students. It also supports the HEA and institutions in fulfilling their core equality functions as set out in legislation.

Each year the Careers Service surveys graduates using the graduate destination survey. This provides the Institute with information on graduate employment and further training. In 2015 and 2016, the Institute piloted a new graduate destination survey with the HEA. DkIT were the only Institute to

complete the Pilot Survey in 2016, for the graduating cohort of 2014-15, with a response rate of 51%. Both the Pilot Surveys, are not considered by the HEA as providing formally publishable results which can be used for comparisons with other IoTs, However, the respective IoT's who have completed the process can use the results for relevant reports, marketing and programmatic/ institutional feedback. The 2016-2017 Survey will be conducted in **June 2018**, and will be the first formal HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey to be completed. This will take place 9 months post-graduation (as stipulated by the HEA) – which means that the 2017 graduating class will not be surveyed until June and results not available until August 2018 at the earliest.

This updated survey will be used across the sector from 2017. For further detail, see:

<http://www.heai.ie/en/statistics/statistics-section-publications>

Management of DkIT's website rests with the Communications Office who work closely with IT Services.

<https://www.dkit.ie/communications-office>

Programme level information detailing validated design, content and assessment is held within the curriculum management system AKARI Document with differing levels of access granted to users. This ensures only authorised and recorded changes are made to modules and programmes.

Obligations under Data Protection legislation are regularly updated and notified to all internal users to ensure compliance with requirements. This theme is in line with the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016) Section 8.7.

At Institute Leadership level in 2017/18 work continues to strengthen the user-friendliness of data outputs for executive decision making. This will be an ongoing focus underpinned initially by the imminent appointment of a Data Officer but in tandem with realignment of IT systems to ensure current and robust data searches are easily undertaken. It is proposed to provide, in time, synchronized data to all levels of Institute management to that there is a greater awareness of key metrics within the Institute.

For research, the institute employs a research management system

(https://dkit.smartsimple.ie/s_Login.jsp). The primary roles of this system are as follows:

- Tracks all research related proposals from development through to post award
- Tracks the progress of each postgraduate research student through their online annual progress monitoring
- Embeds the research track records of active researchers

9. Self-evaluation and Monitoring (ESG 1.9)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for self-evaluation and internal monitoring.

Programme Boards monitor programme delivery. Programme Boards:

- are focused on critical self-reflection;
- make decisions based on the facts derived from the operation of the programme in the preceding period, including quantitative data relating to, for example, student recruitment and performance;
- identify issues which have been critical in the delivery of the programme that year, in particular any operational issues which are significant and/or unresolved;
- show how any issues raised by external examiners or by other external bodies have been addressed;
- identify mechanisms by which student feedback has been gathered, addressed; and communicated back to students (or if not addressed, the reason why); contain student representatives within their membership
- facilitate input from external stakeholders/employers etc, as appropriate
- report on the outcome of actions undertaken as a result of previous reports;
- provide an action plan for the future, as appropriate.

See

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/monitoring-programmes-policy>

The Institute also works with **External Examiners** to quality assure assessment. For the DkIT policy on External Examiners, see:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/external-examiners-duties-procedures>

Programmatic review is a quinquennial quality review process which gives the Academic Schools an opportunity to conduct a critical evaluation and review of their programmes. Such review is a core statutory obligation for the Institute under Section 28(2) of the Qualifications, Education and Training

Act. It is intended to be a positive, supportive and open process and results in the production of a five year plan for the School and should align with the Institute's Strategic plan.

The self-evaluation process, with inputs from experts and stakeholders (internal and external), involves the production of a self evaluation report (SER). The self-evaluation comprises a critical evaluation of all aspects of each programme being reviewed – its strategy, learning outcomes, modules, assessment, resources etc. in keeping with current best practice. Review of the SER by external peers results in a Programmatic Review Report which includes a set of recommendations and conditions. The School provides a response to this report and both the report and the response are published on the Institute website. For the Institute policy in this regard, see: <https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/quality-assurance-enhancement/periodic-review/programmatic-review>

The Institute also undergoes cyclical **Institutional Review** by QQI. See:

<http://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/Institutional-Reviews07.aspx>

The last Institutional Review took place in 2009 and the next one is scheduled for December 2018.

Working groups have been established and the consultation process is underway.

Programme validation reports; programmatic review reports and the 2009 Institutional Review Report are available at:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/quality-assurance-enhancement>

In 2018 the Institute will begin a Programmatic Portfolio Planning Exercise which will support the delivery of the DkIT Strategic goals of providing a career oriented education reflective of addressing the current and future needs of society, community and enterprise.

This consultative process will explore national and societal needs which will shape our programmatic planning and future portfolios and is expected to reach completion by Winter 2018.

Internal self-monitoring of learner satisfaction is moving increasingly towards use of ISSE data and reports (Irish Survey of Student Engagement). While response rates vary annually, this survey is seen as an important benchmarking tool for DkIT to gain insight into learner feedback on a comparative basis. It is important to note that through concerted efforts on the part of the Institute, participation rates increased from 13% in 2016 to 38% in 2017. Feedback from ISSE surveys is presented at Academic Council and recommendations for enhancement are agreed at this level where the academic

community can debate and support each other in these efforts. From time to time external experts in specific aspects of education provision are invited to present to Academic Council to ensure knowledge of best practice is continually enhanced. This theme is in line with the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016) Section 11.2.

For the research agenda there are several key elements in self-evaluation and monitoring the institute's research performance, these include but are not limited to:

- Research Centre annual reports
- Research centre and group designation processes
- Establishment of research cluster governance structures centred around the prioritised research themes
- Intellectual Property and research committees
- Research centre review committees
- Benchmarking of research dissemination through employment of the SCOPUS database
- On line surveys to researchers and postgraduate students with respect to training

10. Stakeholder Engagement (ESG 1.1)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for the involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.

Engagement with stakeholders is a central part of DkIT's Strategy. See <https://www.dkit.ie/home-page/industry-communityengagement>

Such engagement is integral to ongoing programme development and delivery. Each School has an Industry Advisory Board which meets annually to exchange information and to feed into the curriculum. Industry and Community Stakeholders/Practitioners are always consulted when programmes are being developed and it is a requirement that an industry representative/practitioner sits on validation panels. See: Sections 2.3 and 3. of the Institute Policy on Programme Design and Approval at:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/policy-design-approval-programmes>

The DkIT Careers and Employability Centre co-ordinates the work placements of over 900 students per year within academic programmes of the Schools of Business & Humanities, Health & Science, Informatics & Creative Arts and Engineering. Work placement is a partnership between the student, the host organisation and the Institute. The Placement Office is the central point of contact for each of these parties in relation to the preparation, logistics, administration, management and on-going development of work placement.

Placement ensures learners are equipped to meet the applied learning outcomes of their programmes. Placement sites are carefully vetted in advance of placement and detailed outlines are provided to the industry partner on the learning required by the student while on placement. Industry sites identify supervisors who are then trained in Placement Supervision by the Placement Office in advance of students going on placement. In some programmes the Placement Supervisors input to the assessment of the student in addition to the academic faculty member. Where this occurs detailed marking schemes and training are provided for industry Placement Supervisors. See:

<https://www.dkit.ie/placement-office>

A working group was established by Academic Council in early 2015/16 to review the student placement procedures. The first of these policy documents (Student Placement Terms and Conditions) was approved by Academic Council in May 2016. <https://www.dkit.ie/placement-office/policy-documentation-publications/dkit-work-placement-terms-conditions>

Guest speakers enhance student learning. The Institute leverages off its strong engagement with industry through the hosting of its Industry Day and Careers Fair on campus. This provides opportunities for industry to meet with students and potential graduate recruits and for academics to meet with industry to discuss future skills needs and thus provide an additional avenue to feed into programme development. DkIT academic schools are also increasingly engaging with Industry and Community organisations in the execution of 'live' student projects.

Similarly the value of tangible links to industry is also reflected in the makeup of interview panels for academic recruitment. Contemporary knowledge in the subject field is tested by industry experts to ensure learners are facilitated in their learning by suitably qualified and experienced academic faculty members.

The Regional Development Centre (RDC) at Dundalk Institute of Technology acting as the commercially oriented interface between DkIT and the industrial, commercial and business life of the region has been an engine for regional economic growth and development since 1989. See: <http://www.rdc.ie/> During 2017, the RDC had an average occupancy rate of 88%. Client satisfaction surveys are conducted annually at the RDC. For 2017, survey results were very positive with the RDC rated 97.5% average across all categories.

The RDC continues to utilise our in-house entrepreneur support programme called the "Ideas Foundry" which is based on "So what? who cares? why you?®" - a proven, systematic methodology to explore the value proposition for business ideas. The methodology is based on more than 20 years of academic and entrepreneurial expertise; and is used by researchers, scientists, entrepreneurs and organisations across 17 countries - including use as a proposal assessment tool by the European Space Agency. This methodology can be tailored for one-to-one or group workshops and has been used most recently in a group format in conjunction with the Creative Spark Community Enterprise Centre. The primary enterprise development programme offered by the RDC is however Enterprise Ireland's New Frontiers Entrepreneur Development Programme (NFP) which supports up to 60 regional

entrepreneurs on a Phase 1 annually and 13-14 entrepreneurs on its Phase 2 annually.

The RDC supported 89 entrepreneurs/start-ups during 2017. These included regional ‘spin-in’ entrepreneurs from across the North East region via the Enterprise Ireland funded New Frontiers Entrepreneur Development Programme, general incubation clients from the region and our spinout companies from research incubating with us, and our collaboration with Creative Spark “virtual incubation” programme.

Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) has been identified as a leading exemplar for embedding entrepreneurship in higher education both Nationally and Internationally. In 2017 the collaborative approach of the Regional Development Centre and School of Engineering to delivering on the Level 8 Engineering Entrepreneurship degree resulted in a significant acknowledgement being awarded National Winner of the European Enterprise Promotion Awards in the category of “Investing in Entrepreneurial Skills”.

In 2017, DKIT staff members from the Regional Development Centre, the Life Long Learning Centre and the School of Business and Humanities were founding members of the “North East Lean Network”. DKIT representation also allows DKIT to be represented in shaping how the network evolves over the coming years and gives us the opportunity to promote DKIT offerings such as the Lean Six Sigma programme to its membership. The formation of this network is a significant initiative and lines up with a national drive for business operations excellence across the country, heavily endorsed by the state agencies Enterprise Ireland, IDA and Local Enterprise Offices.

In 2017 the RDC facilitated 20 Innovation Voucher engagements with industry and 6 Intertrade Ireland Fusion Project engagements with Industry. Two of the Fusion projects developed by School of Engineering staff in DkIT and supported by the Regional Development Centre have been awarded exemplar status by Intertrade Ireland. Of a total of five projects which received awards two of them were from DkIT.

11. Engagement with Other Bodies (ESG 1.1)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for engagement with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies and other quality assurance and awarding bodies (details of specific engagements should be provided in the online section of the form).

Dundalk Institute of Technology formed a strategic alliance with **Dublin City University** in 2012. In 2014 the DCU-DKIT Graduate School was established and DCU became a linked provider of postgraduate research awards at DkIT. See: <https://www.dkit.ie/research/dcu-dkit-graduate>. DkIT is a partner with DCU in the DCU-led consortium under the national TTSI2 programme (Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative, cycle 2).

DkIT is a member of the **Dublin Leinster II Cluster** (also known as the **MEND Cluster**) together with Dublin City University, Maynooth University and Athlone Institute of Technology. The Cluster has made considerable progress in implementing objectives agreed by the Cluster HEIs with the HEA. These objectives are designed to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, and improve access and transition. They comprise a number of components, namely:

- Coherence of provision: the analytic and preparatory work required to enable a more co-ordinated provision, through mapping of existing provision, development of protocols for collaboration, and preparing for interoperable student records systems;
- Collaboration with Further Education: a network of FE providers, a regional 'one stop shop' portal, a comprehensive mapping of progression paths, and foundation courses to assist transition;
- Enhanced Student Learning Supports: enhanced supports for student learning and retention through increased resourcing and leveraging of complementary expertise across the cluster.

Following the very positive assessment by the Higher Education Authority which reported that "the cluster has both achieved the minimum outcomes and has moved beyond that to deliver more ambitious outcomes", the MEND Cluster was considered a best practice exemplar for the sector.

Dundalk Institute of Technology is a founder member of the North East Further & Higher Education Alliance (**NEFHEA**), which is a major, regional higher and further education initiative comprising higher

and further education institutions in the North East. Other members include Drogheda Institute of Further Education, Monaghan Institute, Cavan Institute, O'Fiaich College, Dunboyne College of Further Education and Beaufort College.

Formed in 2007, NEFHEA is under-pinned by a Memorandum of Understanding. Members are committed to working together to enhance progression opportunities for students from further to higher education; to collaborating on course design and development in response to regional needs and to sharing expertise and resources. NEFHEA has particularly focussed on enabling more students from further education institutes to join DkIT academic programmes. The section on Progression Arrangements details the arrangements currently in place. In general these progression arrangements enable students from further education institutes who have successfully completed their programmes to join the second year of specific DkIT programmes. See: <https://www.dkit.ie/north-east-further-higher-education-alliancenefhea>

12. Provision and Use of Public Information (ESG 1.8)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for the provision of clear, accurate, up-to date and accessible public information.

The Institute's Policy on Public Information is available in Section 7 of the Quality Manual. See

<https://www.dkit.ie/system/files/Quality%20Manual%20December%202011.pdf>

This policy is due for review in to bring it into line with the revised European Standards and Guidelines (2015).

DkIT resolved to fully inform potential learners of full details in relation to all programmes of study offered at DkIT. Each semester academic managers undertake a review of their programme information in published Institute prospectus and also on the DkIT website.

The DkIT prospectus for 2018/19 is available at :

<https://www.dkit.ie/think-dkit/undergraduate-mini-guide-prospectus-201819>

Details of current programmes on offer at DkIT is available at:

<https://www.dkit.ie/home-page/study-dkit/courses-dkit>

Additionally, in line with Section 9 of the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016) written reports on quality evaluations are also published on the DkIT website to ensure that successes and achievement milestones are communicated to the public. Samples of these reports are available at:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/quality-assurance-enhancement>

13. Linked Providers (for Designated Awarding Bodies) (ESG 1.1)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring engagement with linked providers including the procedures for approval, monitoring, review, withdrawal of approval and appeal for linked providers.

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/academic-regulations-postgraduate-students-registered-dcu-awards>

14. DA Procedures for use of QQI Award Standards (IoTs only)

Links and/or text relating to the specific procedures for the approval of programmes in keeping with Core Policy and Criteria for the Validation of Education and Training Programmes by QQI, the Sectoral Protocols for the Awarding of Research Master Degrees at NFQ Level 9 under Delegated Authority (DA) from QQI and the Sectoral Protocols for the Delegation of Authority by QQI to the Institutes of Technology to make Joint Awards, May 2014.

See <https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/policy-design-approvalprogrammes>

15. Collaborative Provision (ESG 1.1)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for engagement with third parties for the provision of programmes.

See:

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/collaborative-provision-transnational-provision-joint-awards>

16. Additional Notes

Any additional notes can be entered here.

Delete this message and insert text here. The box will expand.

17. Internal Review Schedule

The internal reviews schedule or cycle at the level of unit of review within the institution. The units of review can be: module; programme; department/school; service delivery unit; faculty. The cycle will usually run over a 5-7 year period and all units should be encompassed over the full period of the cycle.

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Year | 2018/19 |
| Areas/Units | Institutional Review |
| Number | 1 |
| Link(s) to Publications | https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/quality-assurance-enhancement/periodic-review |

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Year | 2017-2019 |
| Areas/Units | School of Engineering School of Informatics and Creative Arts School of Science and Health School of Business and Humanities |
| Number | 4 |
| Link(s) to Publications | https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/quality-assurance-enhancement/periodic-review |