Strategic Plan 2014–2018
Global Focus – Regional Impact
Vision
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.
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Mission
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.
This strategic plan is alive; it is alive with possibility; it is alive with the vibrancy of the vision and mission it espouses for AIT; it is alive with the goals enumerated in the seven strategic pillars.

In developing this plan, we wanted goals that we will have to stretch to reach; we wanted to hear the voices of our students, our staff, our communities on every page. Some 45 years after the establishment of Athlone Regional Technical College, we wanted to ask why; and I believe in posing that question, we have arrived at truly exciting answers.

Our new vision sets out the type of higher education institution we desire to be. One that is distinguished by an outstanding learner experience, an international focus, a distinctive regional contribution, with our staff, teaching and applied research and innovation having a high quality impact. Our vision says that we will be a technological university.

That desire for TU status is borne from a deeply held belief that such a recalibrated role will enable us to deliver to the maximum extent for our stakeholders and communities. That conviction is captured in the title of this plan, “Global Focus – Regional Impact”.

The goals set out in this strategic plan are ambitious. However, the process by which it was developed enables us to set them forth with confidence. That process centred on an inclusive, institute-wide approach that took account of all aspects of AIT’s community. Teams comprising staff and students were afforded the responsibility to identify the strategic goals and related actions and performance targets.

The result is a plan wholly created and owned by the AIT community. It is one we believe in, one that reflects our core values of excellence, partnership, transparency and accountability, professionalism and inclusive focus.

This is a plan that will guide the future development of AIT through the next four years, however challenging and rewarding they might be. This is our future, the strategic plan sets out how we will attain it.

Beir bua – seize success.

Professor Ciarán Ó Cathain
President
2 Introduction and Context

2.1 Introduction

This strategic plan is launched in a period of significant change for higher education in Ireland. The drivers for that change include continuing constraints on public finances and a fundamental reenvisioning of the purposes of higher education with increasing emphasis on pragmatic measurable outcomes including support for employment creation and innovation, the embrace of digital technologies, greater sensitivity to global mobility, and democratisation of knowledge and access to further and higher education.

In responding to this dynamic context, AIT invites you to consider its ambitious intention in contributing a distinctive response to a complex yet integrated system of higher education. This strategic plan covers the inclusive period 2014–2018 and references an evaluation of our performance set out in the preceding 2009–2013 plan. The institute proposes this as a logical progression from that previous iteration. It is a reaffirmation of a dynamic institution which imbues its scholarship and learning with an applied focus.

With increasing national attention on a realigned system of higher education comprising fewer providers with distinctive but complementary missions, this plan focuses on the distinguishing contribution to be made by AIT and centrally on the character and quality of that provision. It also seeks to benchmark and measure that contribution consistent with emerging good practice. This proposes that AIT is on a path with mission distinctiveness and quality enhancement as the lodestar.

The format of Strategic Plan 2014–2018 reinforces our commitment to identify key performance indicators, with milestones, and to embed these in the plan; our obligation is to review and renew our goals and targets annually. We are confident that this will realise a dynamic and relevant plan that will inform the focus of a committed learning and research community.

2.2 AIT Profile

Athlone Institute of Technology is the sole higher education institution in the midlands of Ireland. Established in 1970 as Athlone Regional Technical College, it has expanded in size, scope and influence. It now offers some 200 programmes on a full-time and part-time basis ranging from higher certificate (Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)) to PhD (Level 10) across the Schools of Business, Engineering, Humanities, Science and the Department of Lifelong Learning. Programmes are offered on an ab-initio basis as well as through the "ladder system". The institute has remained solidly supportive of progression pathways and offers a suite of undergraduate programmes from Level 6 to Level 8, with every school offering options at Level 6.

In 2011 the Department of Education and Skills published the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030. This report represents the adopted policy on the development of higher education in Ireland over the next decades. As an integral element within that system, AIT is responding to the heightened expectation and requirement for change and especially the maintenance and enhancement of quality at a time of considerable expansion in higher
education. The resulting recommendations inform this strategic plan, to the forefront of which is the institute’s unambiguous commitment to achieve, over the lifespan of the plan, the criteria established by the HEA for technological university (TU) status (HEA, 2013).

Registration data for 2013/2014 indicate a total learner population of 5,300 on third-level programmes. The undergraduate population is spread more or less evenly across the four schools and there are approximately 600 undergraduates registered in the Department of Lifelong Learning. There are some 400 postgraduates registered at the institute, 80% of whom are on taught programmes with the remainder engaged in research.

2.2.1 Our Learners
The profile of the student population is quite diverse. The importance of AIT’s role as a tertiary education provider in the midlands can be gleaned from an analysis of the annual feeder school data. More than 60% of first year learners registered in AIT in 2013/2014 came from the five counties in the immediate hinterland of the institute: Westmeath, Offaly, Galway, Longford and Roscommon. Also noteworthy has been the increased intake of mature students attending AIT, which now stands at 29% of new full-time undergraduate entrants.

The institute is committed to providing opportunities for all, especially those learners from groups underrepresented in higher education, including mature learners, those with disabilities, migrants and the socio-economically disadvantaged. This approach is reflected in the institute’s access policy. At present 38% of our total learner population are grant funded, in comparison to a national average of 30%.

AIT is deeply committed to the principle of mobility of learners and staff between partner institutions in Europe, and indeed, on a wider international level. It has over the past decade developed a consistent record in building global relationships and in supporting its population of international learners. Through participation in trans-community consortia, the institute aims to give direct and meaningful international experiences to all learners and staff involved in EU exchange programmes. The institute is also active in receiving and facilitating learners from outside the EU, from countries such as China, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and Brazil. It has forged international partnership agreements and works closely with reputable HEIs in Europe, the Middle East and Asia. AIT has taken a pioneering approach to internationalisation and over the past decade its ratio of international students has been growing and currently it represents some 11% of the institute’s full-time learner cohort.

“AIT has taken a pioneering approach to internationalisation and over the past decade its ratio of international students has been growing and currently it represents some 11% of the institute’s full-time learner cohort.”
2.2.2 Character of our Education

There is a determined focus on applied education and training; AIT equips learners for their careers. With a focus on real-world engagement, our approach to learning and teaching provides our learners with the knowledge, skills and competencies identified and sought by employers. This professional orientation is embedded across all schools, through placements, work-based learning (WBL), project work, and is informed by an applied research focus.

AIT describes itself primarily as a learning and teaching organisation. We are committed to promoting excellence in learning and teaching so as to underpin a high quality learner experience. In order to achieve this, we commit to dedicate resources to building capacity in this area, to ensure that our learners at undergraduate and postgraduate levels develop the requisite knowledge, skills and competencies for their discipline and programme of study. We will continue to articulate strategies for building and exploiting digital capacity. A related target has been the enhancement of professional development for staff and we continue with our collaborative strategy to provide substantial supports to increase the percentage of staff with additional pedagogical competencies and qualifications.

Transition in a variety of contexts such as retention, progression and completion is also a key priority. This is consistent with the theme adopted by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and includes defining learning pathways and engaging and encouraging learners in the use of enquiry-based and problem-solving approaches from the commencement of their programmes in order to develop skills for employment and for active citizenship. Supporting retention will be a key theme through the cycle of programmatic reviews1 that will take place during the life of this plan.

Quality enhancement has been identified as the guiding principle in this plan. The institute will recalibrate its resources to deliver this goal and to ensure that the existing strong infrastructure and culture is further strengthened in the interests of this and future generations of learners.

2.2.3 Research-informed Environment

A strong quality infrastructure and tradition of focused inquiry has earned AIT considerable research autonomy with awarding authority to doctoral level. Research capacity and capability is being continually strengthened in Athlone. AIT has three strategic research institutes in materials research (MRI), bioscience research (BRI) and software research (SRI). Further research clusters exist at school level. The research institutes, which have developed international collaborations with leading multinational companies and universities in Europe, Asia and the US, have attracted significant multimillion euro funding.

Providing support to the economic, social, cultural and environmental development of the region is

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1 Programmatic review (PR) is the institutional process that invites external objective evaluation of the programmes offered by the institute. This process marks one of the institute’s principal quality instruments and is centrally informed by a self-evaluation report by each of the academic units and supporting units of AIT. The next iteration of PR will take place in 2015–2016.
“...the recent growth in science numbers has been responded to with a major refurbishment of the laboratories and instrumentation in the sum of €3 million.”

a priority for AIT. Our strategy is to be a partner of choice for enterprise, focusing our applied research, innovation and enterprise support activities on addressing the needs of regional and national industry by proactively collaborating with start-ups and established companies and by providing a comprehensive range of knowledge intensive services, with a focus on SMEs. The Midlands Innovation and Research Centre (MiRC) is located on campus and operates as a converging hub for innovation, research and enterprise. It provides incubation facilities for innovative and knowledge-based enterprise, an enterprise programme for entrepreneurs and start-ups, and makes available the resources and expertise of the institute to support client companies.

Research, innovation and enterprise provide a central theme for this strategic plan. They also inform a key criterion in the profile of a technological university. AIT has been building its research profile over recent decades and has in place the conduits to transfer knowledge and technologies in a manner that supports 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.

2.2.4 Our Campus

AIT is situated in the heart of Ireland to the east of Athlone on 22 hectares. Since 2008, AIT has invested €45 million in the development and modernisation of its campus. The new Engineering and Informatics Building opened in 2010 and has almost 13,000 square metres of floor space over three stories and marks one of the latest additions in a period of considerable expansion. In addition, in 2010 the Research Hub was completed on the East Campus and created a main focus location for AIT’s applied research activities. In support of the 2009–2013 strategic target making AIT the college of choice for learners, considerable resources have been invested in the development of sporting infrastructure, including an outdoor IAAF-approved athletics track and both grass and all-weather sport facilities. The newest building on the main campus is the AIT International Arena opened in 2013 at a cost of €11 million, which was primarily self-funded. Similarly, the recent growth in science numbers has been responded to with a major refurbishment of the laboratories and instrumentation in the sum of €3 million. These developments add to recent improvements in other areas including design, hospitality, tourism and leisure, and in business, all of which offer our learners a modern and appealing setting for study.

2.2.5 Our Partners

Consistent with the government’s national strategy, AIT is contributing to a cluster of higher education (HE) providers in the Midlands, East, and North Dublin (MEND). Within this cluster, we have a formalised agreement with NUI Maynooth, which will constitute the institute’s most significant partnership in the medium term. The partnership builds upon significant existing cooperation and it is planned to develop further in an incremental manner. This relationship
is located within the broader cluster which also includes Dundalk Institute of Technology and Dublin City University. The success of the cluster in winning competitive funding under the HEA’s Strategic Innovation and Development Fund is another input to this strategic plan.

This national collaboration is complemented through a range of academic partnerships with international HEIs reflecting AIT’s pioneering role as an Irish provider with an established record of international engagement.

Over recent years, AIT has built a valued relationship with the further education (FE) sector within its broader catchment. This too has been a time of change for that sector and the institute sees the relationship with these partners as a key element in realising the integrated system of education and training that is proposed within the revised landscape. Over the course of this plan AIT will be continuing to formalise its relationships with FE to enhance further the progression paths for learners. It will also contribute to this within the context of the MEND cluster.

As the sole HE provider in a large region with a declared goal of playing a catalytic role in the social, economic and cultural development of its catchment, AIT has cultivated a range of valued partnerships and here acknowledges the ready input of so many regional and national enterprises and agencies. Such partnership was evidenced in the creation of this strategic plan and AIT will continue to work closely in a collaborative manner; this commitment is evidenced in the strong focus on engagement within this plan.
“...EU countries, including Ireland, are putting considerable emphasis on the central role of higher education institutions in meeting regional economic, social, innovation and development needs.”

2.3 External Context
The launch of this plan takes place against the backdrop of considerable change in the landscape of higher education both nationally and internationally. Education is becoming increasingly global and is responding to the exponential growth of digital technologies. Equally students are becoming more mobile and are seeking more flexibility in their access to education and training. Irish government policy encourages greater system alignment, increasing collaboration, and, in certain circumstances, consolidation (HEA, 2012b). AIT endorses this strategy and is actively contributing to its designated cluster with reputable partners and has within this plan set out its intention to meet the criteria necessary for consideration as a technological university (DOES, 2014). The institute is pursuing this goal while adhering to its distinctive mission and with a central commitment to quality enhancement.

These remain challenging times. The reductions in the core grant available to higher education and the student contribution charge increases, along with changes in grant entitlement form elements of a challenging funding environment that impacts both learners and the institute. Alongside this is the growing evidence that EU countries, including Ireland, are putting considerable emphasis on the central role of higher education institutions in meeting regional economic, social, innovation and development needs. Notwithstanding some evidence of economic recovery, the indications are that an institution such as AIT will have to place greater reliance on its capacity to develop additional revenue streams in order to realise the targets within this plan; this reality is captured as a strategic action within one of the plan’s pillars (Grant Thornton, 2014). As with the previous strategic plan, AIT must play a catalytic role in the social, economic and cultural development of its region. In so doing, AIT is mindful of government ambition and employer input into the graduate attributes and skills requirements that are required to support economic recovery (IBEC, 2012). For this reason, the desired graduate attributes will be a theme within the comprehensive programmatic review that will take place during the currency of this strategic plan.

AIT is continually responding to both national and international drivers and a funding initiative such as Horizon 2020 is consonant with the institute’s research ambition and with the stated determination to work increasingly in partnership. The global competitiveness of the region and the country is enhanced through ready engagement with such an important initiative. Similarly, at a national level, AIT is cognisant of the Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland, published in January 2014, which sets out whether the current model of apprenticeship should be retained, adapted, or replaced by an alternative model of vocational education and training for apprentices. This has the potential to bring significant change to the relationship between the worlds of enterprise and academia; AIT, along with its partners both in business and further education, will be cooperating to respond positively to shaping a new order in respect of applied education and training. In addition, AIT has contributed each year to the labour activation schemes initiated by government and the institute will continue to demonstrate the responsive flexibility that such support requires over the course of this plan.
Student mobility is an increasing feature of higher education. AIT has built a deserved reputation for the high quality of its global contacts and the numbers of international students it attracts. It has been a pioneering institution and has a consistent and singular record in this regard. That external focus is strengthened within this plan. There is a renewed commitment to foster diversity and to grow the international cohort from the current baseline of 11%. This focus on numbers is but one element of an integrated approach set within a more holistic approach to internationalisation.

The system changes that have flowed from the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 offer various intersecting instruments that afford an institute such as AIT opportunity for greater insight and analysis of performance. In shaping this strategy and in planning the related implementation, monitoring and reporting phases, AIT is utilising barometers such as the HEA institute profiles, TU criteria, emerging European benchmarking instruments, and the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) to concentrate its key strategic goals and leading action projects which are set out across seven interrelated pillars.

2.4 AIT Context

An element within the context informed by the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 concerns the future evolution of universities and institutes of technology. AIT supports the stated ambition for higher education to realise a coherent system, made up of diverse, responsive and sustainable institutions. Within that strategic roadmap there is the prospect of shaping a form of university that is different in mission from the existing Irish universities. AIT is clear in its mission and in pursuing that, it is seeking to improve its quality performance against national objectives. This performance is guided by the very metrics that are ordained to establish a technological university. The key performance indicators identified within this current plan are centrally informed by such metrics. As such, AIT is on a developmental pathway based on delivering against these performance criteria. AIT’s ambition is that this plan, and the clearly defined deliverables within it, will establish advanced performance within our stated mission. In so doing, AIT is confident that it will continue to make a distinctive contribution to higher education, one that
is consistent with the current ethos and mission focus of an institute of technology. In supporting this mission at the highest quality level, AIT can make a significant contribution to strengthen system coherence, mission diversity and overall performance.

In 2014, the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn TD, published the General Scheme of Technological Universities Bill which sets out the objectives and functions of a technological university. AIT is proposing, and this plan is supporting, the fact that this institute is on a trajectory performing these functions and pursuing these objectives. The very functions and objectives described rhyme with the mission and quality enhancement that are at the heart of this plan.

This Strategic Plan 2014–2018 is informed by AIT’s performance during the period of the preceeding 2009–2013 plan. We have evaluated our performance under the main objectives of that plan, notwithstanding the constraints of challenging economic circumstances; we have achieved significant success through the delivery of a quantifiable result.

There were four overarching goals at the heart of the previous plan covering the five-year period commencing in 2009:

» Achieve a reputation and visibility as a college of choice for students
» Develop excellence in learning and teaching
» Strengthen research capacity and capability Play a catalytic role in the Midlands Gateway and in national economic, social and cultural development

The evaluation of that plan is summarised in Appendix 1.
Members of our community, including staff and students from all areas of the institute and numbering more than 80, contributed to the formation of this plan over the course of some six months.
3 Strategic Plan Development Process

Athlone Institute of Technology has consciously adopted an inclusive process in the creation of this plan. In September 2013, the AIT Executive Management Team (EMT) decided that the Strategic Plan 2014–2018 would be developed as an inclusive institute-wide process, through extensive consultation and collaboration with learners, staff, the Governing Body, alumni and with key external stakeholders and agencies. Members of our community, including staff and students from all areas of the institute and numbering more than 80, contributed to the formation of this plan over the course of some six months. Individual teams were afforded appreciable scope to identify and nominate their own strategic goals and key related actions and performance targets. There was also external input from diverse stakeholder groupings offering separate and important perspectives that have also informed the strategic development.

The core components of the plan include:

» Our vision, mission and values

» Key goals, which must be achieved to deliver our mission. Goals are set in association with the seven selected pillars which encapsulate all our major ambitions

» Strategic actions and targets that are formulated to deliver each of our goals

» The identification of comprehensive projects, many of a cross-functional nature, that facilitate a system-based approach to executing strategic actions

In formulating this plan, AIT was mindful of the interrelations between this guiding strategy, the mission-based performance compacts instituted by the HEA in 2013, the annual quality dialogue with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), and of the published criteria for designation as a technological university. In respect of the central focus on quality enhancement and the provision of an evidence base upon which performance might be monitored, the institute is determined to put in place the structures that can collect, analyse and publish data that will afford opportunity to benchmark the organisation both nationally and internationally. The purpose of such self-evaluation tools is to enable AIT to improve its own performance, to enhance the accountability of higher education, and to demonstrate how the institute is making its distinctive contribution to key national expectations of higher education. This determination is reflected in the goals and consequences for restructuring that are contained within this strategic plan.

Appendix 2 outlines the overall strategic plan development process.
The new vision statement of AIT sets out explicitly the type of entity the institute aspires to be, consistent with the framework of the Higher Education Authority (HEA) Future Landscape for Higher Education in Ireland. The mission of AIT maps out strategically how this vision of a technological university can be achieved and the vision and mission are intrinsically linked. AIT’s vision is concerned not with status but with the mission appropriate to a TU; in pursuing this vision, AIT is on a journey of focused enhancement consistent with its distinctive contribution within a variegated system of higher education in Ireland.

In carrying out its mission, AIT is guided by a number of core values — excellence, partnership, transparency and accountability, professionalism and inclusive focus. These values were established at the outset of this strategic plan and at the heart of the set of values lie the core belief of the institute, expressed in its central motto “Magna est veritas, et praevalit” (Great is truth and it prevails).
Vision
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.

Mission
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.

*Our mission is encapsulated in the following:*

**We will:**

- Continue to attract, support and assist our diverse cohort of learners throughout their entire educational pathway
- Provide our students with an outstanding learner experience so that AIT graduates will be professionally ready with the requisite skills to enter the global marketplace
- Maintain the breadth of educational programme provision from Levels 6 to 10 inclusive while placing special emphasis on work-based learning and on augmenting Levels 9 and 10
- Focus on attaining the nominated benchmarks required for quality enhancement and the designation of AIT as a technological university
- Further develop and embed digital technology in support of our core mission
- Continue to expand and improve the capacity of our applied research, innovation and enterprise development programmes
- Continue to engage and empower staff and enhance their knowledge-base and skills profile as part of their continuous professional development
- Further strengthen our distinctive regional engagement with business, enterprise and social communities
- Achieve phased collaborative integration through selected strategic alliances and clusters
- Focus and strengthen our global orientation in education, research and innovation.
The architecture of this strategic plan is built on clearly defined pillars. All seven pillars are interconnected, each linked to the mission statement of AIT and reflecting the set of AIT core values.
Athlone Institute of Technology has adhered to best international practice in linking this strategic plan to a series of key performance indicators (KPIs) that can provide an evidence base for ongoing monitoring.\(^2\)

The headings encompass the dominant areas of strategic activity and risk which governors and management will monitor on a continuing basis and these KPIs inform the seven pillars which are central to this strategic plan.

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\(^2\) In the 2013 HEA report, Towards a Performance Evaluation Framework: Profiling Irish Higher Education, a number of high-level KPIs were identified based on best-practice from the UK university sector (CUC Report on the Monitoring of Institutional Performance and the Use of Key Performance Indicators; CUC Report on the Implementation of Key Performance Indicators: Case Study Experience, June 2008). These KPIs define all the key strategic aspects of the institutional health of a university or institute.
AIT offers learners an education that equips them for career success. Our approach to learning, teaching and the educational experience gives learners the knowledge and skills sought by employers. This professional orientation is articulated through placements, project work and an applied research focus.
5.1 Learning, Teaching and Educational Experience

5.1.1 Key Strategic Goal
To sustain and further develop an inclusive learning community that empowers learners to be successful in a dynamic environment.

5.1.2 Strategic Actions to Deliver our Goal

Curriculum and Delivery
1. The curriculum and learning, teaching and assessment processes will support our core mission to provide our learners with career-focused education and research programmes.
2. Curriculum developments will, in line with the mission of a TU, continue to focus on knowledge, skills and competencies developed in conjunction with stakeholders.

Preparing and Transitioning
3. Provide appropriate and accessible advance information for prospective learners to make informed choices.
4. Enhance alternative access routes and greater transfer opportunities both within the institute and through our designated cluster.

Studying
5. Strengthen our capacity to provide current programmes in modern modes that allow for increased flexibility, including the development of flexible learning and digital literacies to enhance the learning experience.³

6. Promote a distinctive set of AIT graduate attributes, thereby helping shape the professional growth of our learners and the holistic development of the individual.
7. Enhance our commitment to support a research-informed learning environment.
8. Implement a holistic institute-wide learning and teaching strategy.

Pathways
9. Continue to embrace diversity, equality of opportunity, and review and implement our access policy focusing on groups who are under-represented in the higher education sector.
10. Provide a balanced portfolio of taught programmes at Levels 6–9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) including future developments from a new national apprenticeship model. There will also be continued focus on taught programmes and research at Levels 9 and 10 and expansion of opportunities for AIT through the MEND cluster.

³ This development will be centrally informed by the institute’s contribution to, and collaboration with, the National Forum for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching.
5.1.3 Performance and Strategic Targets

1. Develop by Q4 2014 an effective model that enhances the institute’s engagement with business/industry and the wider community to be implemented by all schools in Programmatic Review (PR) 2015–2016.

2. Over the duration of the plan, the total student population will grow by 15% from a 2013/2014 baseline of 5,300 to exceed 6,000 learners. The taught postgraduate population is envisaged to grow by 40% from a baseline of some 320 to in excess of 430 by the end of 2018. The lifelong learner population will increase by 15% over this period.

3. Flexible learning systems will be evaluated and enhanced commencing in Q3 2015. In addition, each undergraduate programme will incorporate at least one module requiring significant use of online class facilities. This target will be informed by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching principles and insights on building digital capacity.

4. Foster a distinctive approach in respect of learning, teaching and assessment, and further enhance opportunities for learner engagement and individual development. Identification of a set of AIT graduate attributes will commence in Q4 2014.

5. Increase the numbers of learners coming to AIT from further education by 25% over the lifetime of the strategic plan.

6. Commencing in Q2 2015 carry out annual market analysis relating to student catchment sources and develop strategies to afford prospective learners opportunities to engage with AIT at the earliest in preparation for undertaking a programme.

7. Our programmes will be distinguished by a strong practical focus in which engagement with the workplace, applied industrial projects and internships are central; to be codified by Q1 2015.

8. Incorporate project-orientated elements into appropriate programmes as part of PR 2015–2016.

9. Re-examine teaching norms to free capacity and develop further our blended learning and offer additional targeted supports to those learners who require them by Q4 2015.

10. Increase the number of staff with pedagogical qualifications by 25% over the lifetime of the strategic plan.
5.1.4 Leading Action Projects

1. Development of AIT Graduate Attributes Project
   The identification of a set of AIT graduate attributes will commence in Q4 2014. These will inform all future programme design, curriculum development and assessment strategies.

2. Curricular Development Project
   Comprehensive statistical analysis of programmes will be carried out annually to include input metrics. All new programmes developed by schools will be required to include comprehensive market-needs analysis in advance of submission to EMT/ASQ and incorporate universal design elements. There will be an emphasis on progression pathways (up to Level 9) and transferable skills in ICT, research, innovation and enterprise in line with a TU mission.

3. Integrated Student Recruitment Project
   By Q4 2014 a working group will be established to develop a strategic integrated student recruitment plan to allow the institute to achieve growth targets of 15% in total student numbers and 40% in taught postgraduate population over the lifespan of the plan.

4. Establishment of Educational Development Unit (EDU)
   In light of the centrality of learning, teaching and assessment, we will further strengthen and focus our pedagogical approach. Work on the establishment of the EDU will commence immediately. By Q4 2015 an EDU will be developed and the library, IT and online resources will be remodelled. The project will be undertaken in conjunction with MEND partners.

5. Learner Retention Project
   During the plan, AIT will place particular focus on improving our student retention performance; this will inform a central unifying theme of PR 2015–2016. The project will commence in Q1 2015 with emphasis on evaluating and supplementing existing retention initiatives for first-year cohorts. This project is already designed and ready for implementation and will address through an integrated strategy the range of challenges presented at Levels 6, 7 and 8. A retention value of 78% in transition from first to second year across the institute is the target for 2018.

   PR 2015–2016 will be thematic and focus on the first year curriculum, the student experience, retention, research-informed and practice-led teaching, entrepreneurship and learning and assessment strategies using problem-orientated, practice-based methodologies. Work-based learning (WBL) and internship will be emphasised. PR 2015–2016 will inform institutional review and focus on the enhancement of the institute’s ongoing commitment to a quality culture.

7. Flexible Learning and Digital Literacies Project
   The institute will evaluate and enhance by Q4 2016 the use of a learning management system (LMS) on all programmes. By Q3 2017, the institute will incorporate developments with the MEND cluster within this context.

8. National Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning Models
   By Q4 2016, progression routes in defined apprenticeship-based and WBL programmes will be identified and developed incorporating emerging national apprenticeship model initiatives.

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ASQ is the AIT Academic Strategy and Quality Committee, the principal sub-committee of the Academic Council that addresses the academic profile and standards within the institute and supports quality monitoring and enhancement.
Research, innovation and enterprise activity at AIT is real-world oriented, calibrated to meeting the needs of industry through its strategic research institutes in materials, bioscience and software. With a particular focus on supporting start-ups and entrepreneurs, AIT is an innovation partner of choice for industry.
5.2 Research, Innovation and Enterprise

5.2.1 Key Strategic Goal
To support sustainable socio-economic development regionally and nationally, through relevant and internationally excellent collaborative research, innovation and knowledge-based enterprise (RI&E) development.\(^5\)

5.2.2 Strategic Actions to Deliver our Goal
1. The institute will demonstrate a developmental trajectory in line with the research dimension of a TU.
2. AIT has established three research institutes in materials (MRI), software (SRI) and bioscience (BRI). We will create an additional, sustainable research centre in a focused area aligned with regional needs and national research priorities.
3. Deliver targeted numbers of postgraduate research students in areas aligned with our applied, problem-oriented research fields through the integration of practice-led, professional and industrial master's and doctoral structures within MEND alongside traditional routes.
4. Transfer advanced knowledge, technologies and valuable intellectual property (IP) to regional and national industry-based partners via the commercialisation of AIT’s research, innovation and enterprise activities.
5. Increase the number of knowledge-based start-ups in the region by directly supporting regional spin-in entrepreneurs, student start-ups and spin-out companies.
6. Provide a broad range of knowledge-intensive innovation services to industrial and community clients – delivering results in a time frame that matches client needs, with a focus on start-ups and SMEs.
7. Benchmark research, innovation and enterprise activities against appropriate international standards.
8. Develop a cross-institutional framework to capture and strengthen pedagogical research at AIT.
9. Increase the awareness of AIT’s RI&E capabilities, identify and develop strategic partnerships within MEND and with key stakeholders across industry, other HEIs and government agencies.
10. Attract and retain top research staff in areas aligned with AIT’s focused research strategy which will include a defined career path for researchers in line with national initiatives.

\(^5\) The RI&E also refers to the sub-committee of Academic Council charged with supporting activity under this strategic heading.
5.2.3 Performance and Strategic Targets

1. Formulate a strategic plan by Q2 2015, for the advancement of new opportunities afforded to AIT in the areas of RI&E.

2. Increase postgraduate research enrolments at Levels 9 and 10 by 30% (from 90 to 120) by Q4 2018.

3. Continue to build critical mass in existing thematic research areas of materials, software and bioscience, aligned with regional needs and national research priorities to meet the following targets by 2018:
   - Number of projects to increase by 60%
   - Number of companies engaged to increase by 50%
   - Total monetary value of projects to increase by 75%
   - Monetary value of industry contribution to increase by 50%

4. Establish over the lifetime of the plan one new sustainable research centre/institute, created in collaboration with industry and academic partners.

5. Significantly improve knowledge/technology transfer to enterprise via the commercialisation of AIT’s research activity through a 100% increase in the level of technology licensing to Irish-based companies and creation of knowledge intensive spin-out companies over the duration of the strategic plan.

6. In collaboration with Enterprise Ireland and NUI Maynooth, provide over the lifetime of the plan enhanced training and support towards the development of knowledge-based start-ups in the midlands mid-east region.

7. Increase the provision of a broad range of knowledge intensive innovation services to regional and national clients, with a focus on start-ups and SMEs. The performance targets in relation to the Centre for Industrial Services and Design (CISD) by Q4 2016 will include increases in:
   - Industry projects to 174/pa
   - Company clients to 88/pa
   - Innovation Vouchers to 34/pa

8. Benchmark RI&E activities against appropriate international standards by Q4 2015.

9. Achieve delegated authority to award at Level 10 in software/networking research by Q4 2014.

10. By Q4 2016, AIT will be on a path towards developing a distinctive model for structured postgraduate studies which emphasise core research competencies, knowledge transfer capabilities, innovation framework, in collaboration with regional and national enterprise partnerships.

“… provision of a broad range of knowledge intensive innovation services to regional and national clients, with a focus on start-ups and SMEs.”
5.2.4 Leading Action Projects

1. **TU Project**
   This project to commence by Q4 2014 will develop formal strategies for AIT to achieve all research criteria pertaining to TU status over the lifespan of this strategic plan.

2. **MEND Cluster Project (subject to agreement with MEND cluster partners)**
   This project, to commence by Q3 2015, will establish strategies for the advancement of opportunities afforded to AIT in RI&E through MEND, including development and provision of shared postgraduate modules, support services for technology transfer and enterprise development, and mechanisms for shared access to specialist research facilities.

3. **Funding Diversification Project**
   This project will identify a range of funding sources by Q3 2015 for RI&E, and target strategic and regional development funding opportunities aligned with AIT’s strengths, regional needs and national priorities from diverse exchequer and non-exchequer sources, including EU, industrial, philanthropic and national funding initiatives.

4. **Postgraduate Research Students**
   A sustainable plan will be defined and implemented to:
   » meet targeted numbers of postgraduate research students in areas aligned with our focused research institutes.
   » deliver structured generic and discipline-specific postgraduate research modules in collaboration with NUI Maynooth and other regional cluster partners, in line with the emerging QQI/HEA national doctoral framework.

5. **Career Path for Research Staff**
   A defined career path for AIT dedicated researchers will be developed and implemented by Q4 2018, in accordance with the EU ‘Charter and Code’ for researchers and achieve the HR ‘Excellence in Research’ logo awarded by the European Commission.
AIT is an organisation founded on human capital. Our social and institutional structures will be moulded to enhancing collegiality and maximising performance. Equally, staff will be supported through an extensive programme of continuing professional development.
5.3 Staff, Organisational Structure and Institute’s Environment

5.3.1 Key Strategic Goal
To enhance our working environment and organisational structure to support all staff to perform to their full potential.

5.3.2 Strategic Actions to Deliver our Goal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Direction of Organisation</th>
<th>Working/Social Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ensure our organisational structure is fit for purpose and reflective of the mission of a TU.</td>
<td>7. Engender an environment conducive to collegiality and the promotion of the holistic health of all employees and students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Continue to adopt a strategic approach to ensuring TU staffing metrics and resources are attained.</td>
<td>8. Develop and implement an internal communication strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>9. Establish a community of inclusive participation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Strengthen a culture of pride and loyalty in AIT.</td>
<td>10. Enhance campus staff facilities on a rolling basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ensure that all staff contributions are recognised, and that respect and trust are central to all relationships.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3.3 Performance and Strategic Targets

Strategic Direction of Organisation
1. Review AIT’s organisational structure by Q3 2014 and implement strategic modifications in Q3 2015.
2. Supporting unit strategic plans to meet the institute’s master plan goals will be developed by each school and major function area by Q2 2015.
3. Increase from 2013 baseline levels the number of full-time faculty holding PhDs (or professional equivalent) to achieve TU staffing metrics within the lifetime of the plan.

Staff
4. Design and implement a more effective new staff induction programme by Q3 2015. Employ effective implementation of PMDS by Q3 2015.
5. Identify a suite of development programmes for all managerial staff by Q4 2014. All management teams will participate in such programmes by Q4 2016.

Working/Social Environment
6. Develop and implement an internal communication strategy for the institute by Q4 2014.
7. Ensure that 40% of all staff participate in an activity/project/programme in another school/department/administrative area over the duration of the plan.
8. Implement an annual staff engagement survey by Q2 2015 with outcomes circulated to all staff. It is proposed to explore benchmarking such a survey utilising a best-practice instrument.
9. Increase by 50% over the lifetime of the strategic plan the number of organised social activities.
10. Identify and implement minor capital improvements related to staff facilities on an annual basis, subject to available capital funding.

“Engender an environment conducive to collegiality and the promotion of the holistic health of all employees and students.”
5.3.4 Leading Action Projects

1. *Strategic Direction of the Organisation*
   A comprehensive review of AIT’s organisational structure will be carried out by Q3 2014, with recommendations implemented by Q3 2015.

2. *Staff Communications*
   An IT-based staff communication forum will be developed by Q4 2014, including a monthly newsletter. An effective annual staff engagement survey system will be designed and implemented by Q2 2015.

3. *Induction Programmes for Staff*
   A more effective induction programme will be designed and provided for all new staff by Q3 2015.

4. *Continuous Professional Development of Staff*
   The Professional Development Committee will review the development and implementation of PMDS, staff up-skilling, career development supports (including support mechanisms for staff pursuing PhDs), and managerial/leadership programmes.

5. *AIT Healthy Campus Project*
   The AIT Healthy Campus Project will be further developed on an annual basis from Q1 2015 with the implementation of additional initiatives and in consultation with the HSE and other external stakeholders.
The beneficiary of €115 million since 2000, AIT’s campus can justifiably be called state-of-the-art. We will be innovative in our revenue generation mechanisms to enable us to continue to invest in our facilities, thereby creating a future-ready connected infrastructure to meet the needs of our learning and research community.
5.4 Resources, Infrastructure, Competitiveness and Commercial Income

5.4.1 Key Strategic Goal

To continue to offer a competitive, modern, learning and research environment by providing a flexible, cost effective, commercially focused and fit for purpose connected infrastructure.

5.4.2 Strategic Actions to Deliver our Goal

**Funding Sources**
1. Maximise HEA core grant income to optimise student numbers.
2. Grow income streams from research, enterprise and both national and international educational services.
3. Explore potential income streams from philanthropic sources.

**Infrastructure**
4. Design a new campus master plan for AIT and prioritise development of library facilities.
5. Continue to deliver a connected digital campus to provide appropriate professional and educational requirements to a diverse staff and student population.
6. Improve the utilisation of existing space and create greater cross-faculty use of infrastructure.
7. Develop and roll out a plan for Green Campus status as part of the AIT campus master plan.

**Competitiveness**
8. Utilise best-practice market analysis to ensure that all AIT’s academic programmes continue to be current, relevant and competitive.

**Commercial Income**
10. Optimise the commercial use of a wide range of income streams emanating from AIT campus facilities.
“... deliver a connected digital campus to provide appropriate professional and educational requirements to a diverse staff and student population.”

5.4.3 Performance and Strategic Targets

Funding Sources
1. Deliver on criteria agreed with the HEA to maximise annual available performance funding.
2. Secure at least one contract for the provision of international campus management services by Q4 2018.

Infrastructure
3. Design a new campus master plan by Q4 2015.
4. Continue to maintain a competitive IT infrastructure throughout the duration of the strategic plan to deliver on the connected digital campus.
5. Initiate space utilisation surveys in Q4 2014, with results published annually and effective utilisation metrics introduced.
6. Compile requisite data on a phased basis to meet the targets for the achievement of Green Campus status for AIT by Q4 2018.

Competitiveness
7. Incorporate detailed market-analysis in all new programme proposals from Q3 2014.

Commercial Income
8. Grow revenue from all non-exchequer income streams to €6 million per annum over the period.
5.4.4 Leading Action Projects

1. **Industry/Enterprise Educational Services Programme Project**
   A high-level group will develop strategies to deliver the non-exchequer income stream annual target of €6 million per annum.

2. **Development of New AIT Campus Master Plan**
   This project will focus on the design of an AIT campus master plan by Q4 2015 which will highlight future campus infrastructural needs, as well the refurbishment of other campus facilities. The rate of development will be dependent on available capital funding.

3. **Green Campus Development Project**
   This project will establish key targets toward delivering Green Campus status for AIT by Q4 2018, establishing AIT as a model green HEI nationally, addressing energy, sustainability and environmental issues.

4. **Product Creation and Commercial Income Generation Project**
   By Q4 2014 an overall strategic plan will be established for the ongoing development of institute-wide products and commercialisation services.

5. **High-Performance Sports Centre of Excellence**
   The focus of this project will be the establishment of a self-funding high-performance sports centre of excellence by Q4 2016. Sports science testing will be targeted.
Collaboration is central to the attainment of AIT’s strategic goal to become a technological university. This philosophy will drive our engagement with educational, research and industry partners towards our mutual benefit and that of our respective communities.
5.5 Inter-Institutional Collaboration

5.5.1 Key Strategic Goal
To create a cross-disciplinary learning environment that builds on its capacity for developing and maintaining strategic consolidation and collaborative relationships with quality external partners in academic sectors regionally, nationally and internationally.

5.5.2 Strategic Actions to Deliver our Goal
1. Prioritise the attainment of criteria for designation of AIT as a technological university, including consolidation with an appropriate partner, through system level strategic decisions and strong leadership, management and governance at local level.
2. Establish a framework for the development of meaningful working collaborations with partners.
3. Agree and implement processes to establish and support sustainable and shared academic planning across the cluster region.
4. Develop an integrated regional approach to transfer and progression linked to MEND partnership.
5. Increase the number of collaborative postgraduate research awards in cross-disciplinary areas between AIT and national and international third level education providers.
6. Instigate cross-institutional research and learning through staff mobility between institutions.
7. Continue to engage with the further education sector in our region.
8. Establish a second level schools’ advisory panel for our region enabling mutual information sharing.
9. Develop and offer at AIT or through MEND a cross-disciplinary learning experience to all staff and students.
“Prioritise the attainment of criteria for designation of AIT as a technological university, including consolidation with an appropriate partner, through system level strategic decisions and strong leadership, management and governance at local level.”

5.5.3 Performance and Strategic Targets

1. Establish a TU planning group before Q3 2014 to recommend strategic action pathways before Q4 2014 and provide annual status reports thereafter.

2. Develop by Q4 2015 a rubric for the screening of collaborative partnerships which would rank potential partners on the basis of the benefits that the collaborations may bring to AIT.

3. Establish a framework for the delivery of coherent planning and coordination of academic provision within MEND for educational programmes to be completed by Q4 2015.

4. Create a phased pathway for transfer and progression across the MEND cluster HEIs by Q4 2016.

5. Develop a framework for joint awards at Levels 9 and 10, both taught and research with collaborating HEIs in complementary and strategic significant areas by Q4 2018.

6. Establish relevant KPIs for shared collaborative research and enterprise that are mutually beneficial and aligned with respective institutional research strategies by Q4 2015.

7. Expand on existing access, transfer and progression arrangements with the FE sector, including the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) to incorporate all regional FE providers by Q4 2014, to achieve the 25% growth of learners from FE providers.

8. Establish a second level schools’ advisory panel to provide advice and guidance on links with second level by Q4 2015.

9. Each academic school will develop at least one collaborative cross-disciplinary programme by Q2 2016 which will be offered over the lifetime of the strategic plan.
5.5.4 Leading Action Projects

1. *Technological University Project*
   A TU planning group will be established to guide AIT to technological university status. The group will comprise the President, Chairman of the Governing Body, major regional representatives from industry and the local community, and national and international academics of global status. This group will remain in place for the duration of the strategic plan.

2. *Shared Academic Planning/MEND Project*
   A working group will be established by Q4 2015 to develop a shared academic planning framework incorporating the analytical and preparatory work required to enable a more coordinated offering, through mapping of existing provision, development of protocols for collaboration, and preparation of inter-operable student record systems.

3. *Collaborative Partner Rubric Project*
   The collaborative partner rubric and leverage technologies will be developed by Q4 2015 to facilitate closer cooperation and collaboration with new and existing partners.

4. *Development of Joint Awards/MEND Project*
   A working group will be established by Q4 2016 within MEND to identify a mechanism for the development of joint awards at Levels 9 and 10 and KPIs as measures of research and enterprise outputs.

5. *Regional Education Forum Project*
   A forum for senior management, parents and teachers from local secondary schools, ETBs and regional FE colleges will be formed by Q4 2015, to build a regional discourse on educational matters and to provide opinion and advice to AIT on strategic developments in education for the region.
Students from more than 50 different nationalities call AIT home, reflecting the quality of education and warmth of welcome they receive. Equally, our international journey is about forging graduates who have benefited from the latest global thinking and experiences, while a growing number of staff will participate in international exchange programmes.
5.6 Enhanced Internationalisation

5.6.1 Key Strategic Goal
To be internationally focused in teaching, research and knowledge exchange.

5.6.2 Strategic Actions to Deliver our Goal
1. Enhance the overall international profile of AIT reflecting its TU mission and building on AIT’s appeal as a college of choice in attracting international students from the institute’s priority markets and in line with government policies with regard to international educational provision.

2. Foster an inclusive environment that embraces diversity.

3. Equip staff appropriately so that they can recognise and address the needs of an internationally diverse student community.

4. The institute will make a concerted effort through PR 2015–2016 to make languages and cultural awareness an integral part of AIT curricula and augment international recognition and accreditation of its portfolio of programmes.

5. Develop the skill-set of globally-minded graduates, who are ready to embrace the challenges of working in the international market place.

6. Provide learners where appropriate with the opportunity to gain international experience, through international placements, study or training periods abroad.

7. Initiate a student international scholarship scheme to encourage outward mobility of AIT students and to increase the number of AIT academic staff involved in exchange programmes at international partner institutions. Continue to attract oversees academics for periods of research or teaching in AIT.

8. Meet institutional targets in respect of internationalisation revenue and activity, specifically in relation to overseas student numbers studying at AIT, collaborative programmes and the provision of international management for educational services.

9. Increase the visibility and range of services provided by the AIT International Office.
“Initiate a student international scholarship scheme to encourage outward mobility of AIT students and to increase the number of AIT academic staff involved in exchange programmes...”

5.6.3 Performance and Strategic Targets

1. Engage in a major benchmarking exercise (both national and international) by Q4 2015.

2. Establish alumni chapters in key locations worldwide by Q4 2016.

3. Increase international student intake from baseline 11% to 15% by Q4 2018.

4. Enhance and review on an annual basis the induction experience for international students attending AIT commencing in Q3 2015.

5. Develop in collaboration with an international HEI partner or alliance selected online modules by Q3 2016.

6. Offer AIT students the opportunity to study a language or take a cultural awareness module for at least two consecutive semesters in a high proportion of undergraduate programmes by Q3 2017. Such opportunities may be facilitated through MEND.

7. Embed the opportunity for study abroad or an international placement element in a significant number of ab-initio Level 8 programmes in each school by Q3 2017. Provide cultural awareness programmes for all academic staff engaged in international exchange programmes or teaching international students within the same time frame.

8. Incentivise outward student mobility on international study and placement programmes with the establishment of a competitive international scholarship scheme by Q3 2015. Increase to 80 the number of AIT students undertaking an international placement, study or training programme abroad by Q3 2016.

9. Involve a minimum of 5% of total academic staff per school in international exchange programmes or delivering modules at international partner HEIs by Q4 2017.

10. Participation of AIT in an international research consortium as part of Horizon 2020 during the lifetime of the strategic plan.
5.6.4 Leading Action Projects

1. Benchmarking Exercise
   The institute will engage by Q4 2015 in a major benchmarking exercise, with selected national and international HEIs as part of AIT’s mission trajectory towards achieving TU status.

2. Growth of International Student Cohort
   This project will develop and implement strategies to increase the net percentage of international students from key overseas partner HEIs enrolled on undergraduate, postgraduate and research programmes to meet the KPI target.

   As part of PR 2015–2016, a range of language modules and/or a cultural awareness module will be offered, with potential involvement of a collaborative HE partner facilitated through the MEND cluster. International placement elements/study/training periods abroad will be integrated into a high proportion of ab-initio Level 8 programmes.

4. Student and Staff Mobilities
   The project will initiate a student international scholarship scheme to encourage outward mobility of students. This project will also focus on the establishment of mechanisms within each school with the goal of increasing the number of teaching and research staff engaged in international exchange programmes and will also facilitate visiting overseas staff coming to AIT.

5. Horizon 2020
   AIT will participate in an international research consortium as part of Horizon 2020 and continue to co-host at least one major international research conference during the lifetime of the strategic plan.
Since its foundation, AIT has been rooted in the fabric of the midlands. This has seen the institute play a catalytic role in the life of the region, recognising the levels of engagement and connectivity that exist between the institute and the wider community.
Socio-Economic Engagement and External Stakeholder Partnerships

5.7.1 Key Strategic Goal
To construct and embed a sustainable and measureable approach to civil engagement (social, economic, cultural) that permeates AIT’s curriculum and advances regional development.

5.7.2 Strategic Actions to Deliver our Goal

General
1. Conduct an internal audit of, and classify, all engagement activities with external parties and develop systems that will allow for an integrated and consistent approach to educational/community/industry engagement.

2. Undertake a needs-analysis survey of regional perception of the institute, incorporating the requirements of schools, industry and the community in the midlands.

3. Further develop lifelong learning, work-based learning, structured work placements in curricula and develop effective models that facilitate greater staff engagement with business/industry and the wider community in line with the mission of a TU.

Business/Industry
5. Commit through partnership, collaboration and scholarship towards becoming a centre of excellence and influence in areas of growth in the Irish economy with particular emphasis on regional developmental opportunities.

6. Strengthen key existing industry-based commitments to forge strategic partnerships and raise new opportunities with industry.

Community
7. Ensure that a significant number of accredited programmes will demonstrate credit-bearing engagement by AIT students with the community.

8. Continue to enhance engagement with the local community, in line with AIT’s open campus ethos by pursuing a comprehensive annual calendar of community-based activities and events.

9. Continue actively to identify and engage the AIT alumni network.
“Examine mechanisms towards granting credit recognition for AIT students for appropriate community–based work undertaken in partnership with community organisations.”

### 5.7.3 Performance and Strategic Targets

**General**

1. Use PR 2015–2016 as a platform for each school to further develop lifelong learning, work-based learning, structured work placements in curricula and create effective models that facilitate greater staff engagement with business/industry and the wider community in line with the mission of a TU.

2. Develop a database that will hold and regularly update information on links, their purposes and outcomes across all schools and functional areas by Q4 2014.

3. Establish by Q4 2015, a matrix capturing the data described in 5.7.3.2 and utilise these to develop strategies enhancing engagement with new and existing stakeholders.

**Education**

4. Continue to develop structured offerings for transition year students providing them with opportunities to engage with discipline-based specific areas at AIT from Q3 2014.

5. Examine mechanisms towards granting credit recognition for AIT students from Q3 2015 for appropriate community-based work undertaken in partnership with community organisations.

6. Continue to provide from Q4 2014 at least two opportunities for primary school students in the midlands to visit the institute. A similar facility available to local sports clubs will be adopted on an annual basis.

**Business/Industry**

7. Develop procedures, by Q4 2014, which identify early trends in regional and national economic development. This will draw on feedback from the engagement project and will be responsive to national publications related to future skills needs.

**Community**

8. Publish an annual calendar of community-based activities and events promoting the open campus nature of AIT to the wider local community.

9. Each school will host a minimum of one relevant community-based event on an annual basis throughout the strategic plan.

10. Register 6,000 graduates with the alumni association by Q4 2014 and an additional 2,000 annually in the subsequent years of the plan.
5.7.4 Leading Action Projects

1. **TU/Programmatic Review 2015–2016**
   In line with the mission of a TU, PR 2015–2016 will focus on curricular development that recognises and further embeds engagement with the community and in the workplace in relevant AIT programmes.

2. **AIT Engagement Project**
   This project will develop by Q4 2015 an institute-wide database outlining all AIT’s links with business, communities, industries, stakeholders, their purposes and outcomes. A matrix will be designed showing all various levels of engagement/strategies and a staff survey will be developed to ascertain the level of engagement.

3. **Strategic Analysis Project of Regional/National Economic Trends**
   This project will establish an institute-wide stakeholder focus group by Q4 2014 aimed at reporting annual regional/national economic trends.

4. **AIT Open Campus Project**
   This project to be developed and delivered throughout the duration of the strategic plan will focus on AIT establishing and promoting the institute as an open campus to the wider community. As part of this project an annual calendar of community-based activities and events will be published and each school will host a minimum of one relevant community-based event annually.

5. **AIT Alumni Project**
   This project will involve the expansion of the AIT alumni network including the development of a board structure, a dynamic interactive online platform, and a portfolio of services for members by Q4 2015.
6 Implementation, Monitoring and Review

Strategic Plan 2014–2018 is fashioned in the context of the considerable change being experienced in Irish higher education. What is set out here will shape the continuing progress of AIT over the coming five years and the institute is committed to the implementation, monitoring and review of the strategy. The realisation of this plan is contingent on structural change within the institute and one proposal is the establishment of a Strategy and Institutional Performance Office (SIPO) which will assist Governing Body and management in the delivery and evaluation of the plan.

This strategic plan is founded on the seven pillars with attached actions and performance targets. Each will have clear ownership and time lines. This envisages that before the commencement of academic year 2014/2015 we will have put in place an operational plan to guide the process of implementing, monitoring and reviewing this new strategic plan. Each of the main governance organs of the institute will contribute to this oversight. The Governing Body will oversee an annual review and be furnished with a performance evaluation; the Academic Council will contribute to this monitoring through an annual review of the academic performance indicators; the Executive Management Team has overall responsibility for the implementation of the plan including assigning of ownership for each key strategic action and also the related resourcing requirements. The implementation of the plan will be resourced through the aforementioned Strategy and Institutional Performance Office which will coordinate the actions and deliverables identified within this document. Such annual monitoring and performance reviews will commence in Q3 2015.

The schools and major functional units will each formulate their own supporting plans consistent with Strategic Plan 2014–2018. This work will commence in Q4 2014 with a view to informing the programmatic review 2015–2016.

The Strategy and Institutional Performance Office will provide regular progress reports to the Governing Body, Academic Council and EMT. It will also lead a detailed mid-term review in Q3 2016.
## Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIT</td>
<td>Athlone Institute of Technology</td>
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<td>ASQ</td>
<td>Academic Strategy and Quality Committee</td>
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<td>BRI</td>
<td>Bioscience Research Institute</td>
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<td>CISD</td>
<td>Centre for Industrial Services and Design</td>
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<td>ECF</td>
<td>Employment Control Framework</td>
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<td>EDU</td>
<td>Educational Development Unit</td>
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<td>EMT</td>
<td>Executive Management Team</td>
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<td>ETB</td>
<td>Education and Training Board</td>
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<td>FE</td>
<td>Further Education</td>
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<td>HE</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
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<td>HEA</td>
<td>Higher Education Authority</td>
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<td>HEI</td>
<td>Higher Education Institution</td>
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<td>HSE</td>
<td>Health Services Executive</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information Communication Technology</td>
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<td>IR</td>
<td>Institutional Review</td>
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<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
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<td>KPI</td>
<td>Key Performance Indicator</td>
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<td>L&amp;T</td>
<td>Learning and Teaching</td>
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<td>LMS</td>
<td>Learning Management System</td>
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<td>MEND</td>
<td>Midlands, East and North Dublin Cluster</td>
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<td>MIRC</td>
<td>Midlands Innovation and Research Centre</td>
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<td>MRI</td>
<td>Materials Research Institute</td>
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<td>NFQ</td>
<td>National Framework of Qualifications</td>
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<td>NUI</td>
<td>National University of Ireland</td>
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<td>PASS</td>
<td>Peer Assisted Student Support</td>
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<td>PG</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
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<td>PMDS</td>
<td>Performance Management Development System</td>
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<td>PR</td>
<td>Programmatic Review</td>
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<td>QQI</td>
<td>Quality and Qualifications Ireland</td>
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<td>RI&amp;E</td>
<td>Research, Innovation and Enterprise</td>
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<tr>
<td>SME</td>
<td>Small and Medium Enterprise</td>
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<td>SIPO</td>
<td>Strategy and Institutional Performance Office</td>
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<td>SRI</td>
<td>Software Research Institute</td>
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<td>TU</td>
<td>Technological University</td>
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<td>UG</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBL</td>
<td>Work-Based Learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


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Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) (2012) A Study of Future Demand for Higher Education


Higher Education Authority (HEA) (2013) Report to the Minister for Education and Skills on System Reconfiguration, Inter-Institutional Collaboration and System Governance in Irish Higher Education


Higher Education Authority (HEA) (2012) Towards A Future Higher Education Landscape


Data from academic year 2008/2009 was utilised as a comparative base-line.

**Goal: Achieve a Reputation and Visibility as a College of Choice for Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets and Initiatives</th>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase student numbers by 40% to 7,700</td>
<td>• 24% increase in new entrants&lt;br&gt;• 0.3% increase in total student numbers&lt;br&gt;• 22% new entrant increase to School of Science</td>
<td>Not delivered</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase postgraduate population to 1,000 over life of the plan</td>
<td>• Increase in postgraduate taught to 1,279&lt;br&gt;• Increase in postgraduate research to 278</td>
<td>Delivered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase international and overseas learners to 15% of whole-time students</td>
<td>• Increased from 7.6% to 10.5%</td>
<td>Partially delivered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take initiatives to improve student retention</td>
<td>• Tutor support in place&lt;br&gt;• PASS programme introduced&lt;br&gt;• Non-progression within national average</td>
<td>Partially delivered</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduce innovative scholarships</td>
<td>• Introduced at postgraduate levels</td>
<td>Delivered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embed clinical and practical placement within programmes</td>
<td>• Clinical placement offered&lt;br&gt;• Work-based placements not increased</td>
<td>Partially delivered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand and enhance campus and facilities</td>
<td>• Engineering Building opened&lt;br&gt;• International Arena opened&lt;br&gt;• Research Hub developed&lt;br&gt;• School of Science laboratories upgrade&lt;br&gt;• Business School section upgrade&lt;br&gt;• School of Humanities section upgrade</td>
<td>Delivered</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Goal: Develop Excellence in Teaching and Learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets and Initiatives</th>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase to 20% the proportion of collaborative programmes</td>
<td>• Increased articulation agreements with international partners</td>
<td>Partially delivered</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 11 collaborative programmes (6%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop new and innovative programmes</td>
<td>• Almost 70 new programmes approved by Academic Council over life of the plan</td>
<td>Delivered</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop Learning &amp; Teaching strategies to enable 85% completion rate across all programmes</td>
<td>• Learning to Learn module introduced</td>
<td>Partially delivered</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Peer assisted student support scheme introduced</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 89 staff trained in PG Diploma in Learning, Teaching and Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop interactive e-learning platform for students</td>
<td>• Bespoke Adobe e-learning platform introduced</td>
<td>Delivered</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 517 Moodle training sessions provided</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• 31 staff completed the Certificate in Technology Enhanced Learning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• 15 staff in School of Engineering trained for e-delivery of Springboard project</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Blended learning programmes in Engineering</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for staff</td>
<td>• 313 staff received professional development support over life of the plan</td>
<td>Delivered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attract, recruit and retain high quality and motivated staff</td>
<td>• New staff recruited with development of new courses</td>
<td>Delivered</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Staff recruitment constrained by public sector moratorium and ECF as implemented by HEA</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Goal: Strengthen Research Capacity and Capability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets and Initiatives</th>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achieve research funding of €10 million per annum by 2013</td>
<td>● Total funding of €14,041,697 achieved over life of plan</td>
<td>Partially delivered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target of 70% of research at AIT to have industry/enterprise collaboration format</td>
<td>● Based on research income sources annual industry collaborations ranged from 85% to 97% over period of plan</td>
<td>Delivered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop significant research strengths in medical technology, pharmaceutical science, health/life science, ICT/engineering and the humanities</td>
<td>● Dedicated research centres (MRI, BRI, SRI) expanded and consolidated in the new Research Hub</td>
<td>Delivered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase 4th level education</td>
<td>● 12 of new programmes developed over the life of the plan were at postgraduate level</td>
<td>Delivered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Goal:** Play a Catalytic Role in the Midlands Gateway and in National Economic, Social and Cultural Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets and Initiatives</th>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Support innovation and entrepreneurship development in the region**                  | • During the period of the plan there were:  
  ♦ 225 Innovation Vouchers completed/underway  
  ♦ 58 knowledge start-ups supported                                                      | Delivered        |               |
| **Expand industry secondments**                                                        | • Student placements expanded on new programmes only  
  • School of Engineering engaged in industry-based student projects  
  • Limited project-based staff secondment to targeted industries                        | Partially delivered |               |
| **With other agencies, increase the Midlands Gateway population holding 3rd level qualification to national average 34%** | • Annual number of students from Gateway region registered at AIT increased by 19% from 1,449 to 1,728 over period of plan | Partially Delivered |               |
| **Develop outreach centres**                                                           | • Since 2008, Higher Certificate in Business in Enterprise Development delivered in Ballinasloe and Galway, Trim, Belmullet, Letterfrack, and Emyvale  
  • 2012: Tullamore: BA in Childcare Management  
  • 2013: Galway: BA in Childcare Management                                              | Delivered        |               |
| **Achieve high levels of employability/further studies of AIT graduates (95%)**        | • Partially delivered within context of changed economic and employment environment    | Partially delivered |               |
| **Expand work-based learning through bespoke programmes**                              | • Range of WBL programmes provided with industry, mainly through Schools of Engineering and Business | Delivered        |               |
Appendix 2
Strategic Plan Development Process

The structure established to arrange and undertake the development of the strategic plan is summarised in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 Flow-chart summarising the Strategic Plan Development Process

The process was advised and facilitated by a steering group chaired by the President. The working groups developing the strategies under the pillars consisted of approximately 80 academic, administrative, technical and support staff, and our learners. Each group was chaired by a senior academic or function head. The eighth working group reviewed and evaluated the performance of the previous AIT Strategic Plan, 2009–2013.

Primary meetings briefing the Governing Body, EMT, Academic Council and combined working groups took place in October 2013 at which topics such as internal and external context and evaluation of the 2009–2013 plan were debated and key issues such as AIT's technological university ambitions were decided. A live repository of key reports such as government and HEA directives on higher education in the Irish landscape, economic forecasts, technological university criteria, lists of stakeholders, etc. were made available via a dedicated Moodle site. The latter was also used to provide access to all staff to minutes, interim reports and steering group outputs associated with the strategic plan development process. Final reports from each working group were submitted in
December 2013 and were studied and edited by the steering group and EMT to standardise format and formulate agreed strategic priorities across the plan. In March/April 2014, the President contacted internal and a cross-section of external stakeholders to seek feedback on the draft vision, mission and values, and the strategic pillars and priorities.

The stakeholder groups are listed in Table 1 below:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
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<tr>
<td>External</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The stakeholders’ responses were evaluated and incorporated into the document. The final draft document was submitted to the Academic Council and Governing Body in May 2014, revised and the formal Strategic Plan 2014–2018 was launched later in 2014.
### Appendix 3
Implementation of Targets and Timelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pillar</th>
<th>Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning, Teaching and Educational Experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3.1</td>
<td>Develop an effective model enhancing institute’s engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3.2</td>
<td>Performance targets for learner growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3.3</td>
<td>Enhance flexible learning systems and usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3.4</td>
<td>Develop vision of the AIT graduate attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3.5</td>
<td>Performance targets for recruitment growth from FE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3.6</td>
<td>Market analysis and strategies for engagement with prospective learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3.7</td>
<td>Programme design and strong practical focus on workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3.8</td>
<td>Incorporate project-oriented elements into programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3.9</td>
<td>Examine teaching norms to free capacity. Further development of blended learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3.10</td>
<td>Increase the number of staff with pedagogical qualifications by 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research, Innovation and Enterprise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3.1</td>
<td>Develop a strategic plan for Research, Innovation and Enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3.2</td>
<td>Increase postgraduate research enrolments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3.3</td>
<td>Continue to build critical mass in thematic research areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3.4</td>
<td>Establish one new research centre/institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3.5</td>
<td>Improve knowledge/technology transfer to enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3.6</td>
<td>Enhanced training and support for start-ups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3.7</td>
<td>Performance targets for innovation services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3.8</td>
<td>Benchmark R,I&amp;E development activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3.9</td>
<td>Achieve delegated authority to Level 10 in software/networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3.10</td>
<td>Development of model for structured PG studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff, Organisational Structure and Institute’s Environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.3.1</td>
<td>Review AIT organisational structure and implement recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.3.2</td>
<td>Development of supporting strategic plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.3.3</td>
<td>Performance targets for staff holding PhDs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.3.4</td>
<td>Review and develop new staff induction programmes and PMDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pillar</td>
<td>Target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.3.5</td>
<td>Provision of management staff development training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.3.6</td>
<td>Improvements in internal communications system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.3.7</td>
<td>Engender intra institute collaborations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.3.8</td>
<td>Staff engagement surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.3.9</td>
<td>Organised AIT social activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.3.10</td>
<td>Staff facilities – minor capital projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Resources, Infrastructure, Competitiveness and Commercial Income**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pillar</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.4.3.1</td>
<td>Meet performance criteria in HEA compact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.3.2</td>
<td>Bid for international campus management service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5.4.3.3</td>
<td>New campus master plan</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.3.4</td>
<td>Enhance IT infrastructure and connected digital campus</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.4.3.5</td>
<td>Space utilisation survey</td>
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<td>5.4.3.6</td>
<td>Green Campus status</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.4.3.7</td>
<td>Market analysis for all new programmes</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5.4.3.8</td>
<td>Commercial income targets</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5.4.3.9</td>
<td>High performance sport centre of excellence</td>
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</table>

**Inter-Institutional Collaboration**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Pillar</th>
<th>Target</th>
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<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.5.3.1</td>
<td>Technological University Planning Group</td>
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<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td>5.5.3.2</td>
<td>Rubric for screening collaborative partnerships</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.5.3.3</td>
<td>Planning for provision of UG and PG programmes within MEND</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.5.3.4</td>
<td>Phased pathway for transfer and progression across MEND</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.5.3.5</td>
<td>Framework for joint postgraduate awards</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.5.3.6</td>
<td>Establishing KPIs for collaborative research and enterprise</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.5.3.7</td>
<td>Expand transition agreements with FE sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.5.3.8</td>
<td>Establish regional second level advisory panel</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.5.3.9</td>
<td>New internal cross-disciplinary programmes</td>
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</table>
## Strategic Plan 2014–2018

### Enhanced Internationalisation

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National and international benchmarking exercise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overseas alumni chapter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance targets for international student recruitment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Induction experience for international students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development of online modules with international partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provision of language/cultural awareness modules</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunities for study abroad and international placements</td>
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<td>International scholarships scheme to incentivise outward student mobility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff involvement in international programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation in research consortium under EU Horizon 2020</td>
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### Socio–Economic Engagement and External Stakeholder Partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role of PR 2015/2016 in enhancing engagement</td>
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<td>Database on AIT engagement links</td>
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<td>Developing a matrix capturing engagement data</td>
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<td>Development of structured offering for Transition Year students</td>
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<td>Credit recognition for community based work</td>
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<td>Opportunities for primary schools to visit AIT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identification of trends in economic development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community based activities and AIT Open Campus</td>
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<td>Register graduates with alumni association</td>
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</table>

### Overall Review Timelines
Designed by
VERMILLØN

Printed by
GPS Colour Graphics

Photography
Strategic Plan 2014–2018
Global Focus – Regional Impact