# Contents

President’s visit to China and Malaysia.................................................................................. 04

Human Resources.................................................................................................................. 10

Student Services................................................................................................................ 12

Marketing and Communications Department, Student

Recruitment Office............................................................................................................. 18

Faculty of Science & Health................................................................................................ 22

Faculty of Business and Hospitality.................................................................................... 30

Research, Innovation and Enterprise.................................................................................... 38
President’s visit to China and Malaysia January 2018

Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, President of Athlone Institute of Technology travelled to Shanghai on 3 January 2018 to visit new Chinese partner university and then travelled to Malaysia to visit existing and new partner universities.

Shanghai, China
A meeting took place at the municipal government of Shanghai on 4 January 2018. Dr. Sha Hailin was the former Chinese Ambassador to Ireland from 2002-05 and has occupied leadership roles within the government of Shanghai since his return. Currently, he is the Vice Chairman for the Standing Committee of Shanghai Municipal People’s Congress. Professor Ó Catháin was invited by Dr. Sha to visit the Shanghai municipal government hall at People’s Square, Shanghai. During this visit, Dr. Sha outlined the rapid development and expansion plans for Shanghai to Professor Ó Catháin. Dr. Sha spoke very highly about AIT’s cooperation and achievements in China. He encouraged AIT to continue its commitment to developing relationships with universities in China.

Professor Ó Catháin explained that internationalisation is a key pillar in AIT’s strategic plan and faculty at AIT are actively promoting outward mobility of students. China is a priority market for AIT. Faculty from the Department of Hospitality, Tourism & Leisure Studies led a study group to Beijing in March 2016 and a group will visit Shanghai in March 2018. Dr. Sha committed to arranging a meeting with the AIT students and faculty during their visit to Shanghai.

Wuxi, Jiangsu Province, China

Wuxi Institute of Technology
Wuxi Institute of Technology (WXIT), founded in March 1959, is an independent and full-time public higher vocational institute approved by the National Ministry of Education and Jiangsu Province Education Office. At present, it has an enrolment of 12,000 full-time students and has a faculty of more than 780. There are currently 40 programmes developed for the manufacturing industry-chain as well as core industries of the province. There are 4 National Key Programmes such
as CNC Technology Application, Automobile Technology and Service, etc.; 8 Provincial Key Programmes or Brand Programmes such as Mould Design and Manufacturing, Computer Science and Technology, Marketing, etc.; 3 National Mechanical Industrial Brand Programmes such as Software Technology, etc.

During the meeting, WXIT’s Secretary of the Party Committee, Prof. Zhu Aisheng and President, Prof. Gong Fanghong introduced WXIT to Prof. Ó Catháin. Two C.E.O’s from local companies attended the meeting to confirm support from local industry to develop links between Wuxi and Ireland. The industry representatives were Mr. Li Xin, the Chairman of Wuxi Xinjie Electronic Co. Ltd and Mr. Zhu Xuejun, the Chairman of Wuxi Acrylic Technology Co. Ltd. The two companies support the potential joint institute between WXIT and AIT and will offer job opportunities to future graduates from the cooperation agreement. The MOU between AIT and WXIT as well as the MOU with local enterprises were signed on 5 January 2018.

**Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**
Professor Ó Catháin and Meng Jing, AIT Asia Director travelled from Shanghai to KL on 6 January 2018. Karl Turley from the International Office AIT travelled to KL to attend the Star Education fair promoted by Education Ireland and to attend a number of meetings with educational agents and universities in Malaysia.

**Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMap)**
The first meeting in Malaysia was arranged with AIT’s long term partner, Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMap – School of Business Innovation and Technopreneurship). Dr. Tunku Salha Binti Tunku Ahmad, the Dean of Faculty of Business traveled from Perlis to KL to meet with Prof. Ó Catháin on 6 January 2018. Dr. Tunku completed her PhD in the Faculty of Life Sciences at AIT and discussed the study plans of other UniMap postgraduate students. She was also keen to expand the cooperation with AIT for both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

The new Vice Chancellor of UniMap, Dato’ Prof. Dr. Zul Azhar Zahid Jamal travelled to KL to meet Professor Ó Catháin and to discuss plans to relaunch the Ireland-Malaysia Research Symposium. Meetings will be held by video conference between the Directors of the Research Institutes and the Deputy Vice Chancellor with responsibility for research, Prof. Dr. Uda Hashim of UniMap.
President’s Report

Management and Science University (MSU)

MSU has been working with AIT for the past four years. Each year, MSU sends 2-4 students to study one semester in AIT. President of MSU, Professor Tan Sri Dato’ Wira Dr Mohd Shukri Ab Yajid expressed interest in the possibility of a joint Master’s course in Data Analytics with AIT in Malaysia.

Multimedia University (MMU)
Cyberjaya, Malaysia

Multimedia University was founded by Telekom Malaysia and is part of the TM Education Group. It is now celebrating its 20th year. While initially the focus was on engineering and ICT related degrees, the University has greatly expanded its curriculum. While the main HQ is in Cyberjaya, more than half of the 20,000 students are based in the Malacca Campus and they recently opened a Cinematic Arts degree course in Johor Baru, close to the Pinewood studios. During the visit, The President, Professor Datuk Dr Ahmad Rafi gave a detailed introduction about MMU. They are interested in signing a MOU with AIT in the near future. They are also keen to explore the possibility of working with AIT in the area of Nano Technology, Data Analytics and Accounting.

University Technology Petronas (UTP)
Kuala Lumpur campus

Professor Ó Catháin visited UTP’s main campus in January 2017 and a MOU was signed between UTP and AIT. The first UTP student will commence Masters by Research at the Materials Research Institute, AIT under the supervision of Dr. Declan Devine in February 2018 with a Government of Ireland scholarship.

Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) DVCA, Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim Abd Mutalib hosted the meeting at UTP’s KL campus. As part of Malaysia’s Industry 4.0 scheme, UPT issued an invitation to AIT’s lecturers to attend its 5th research forum in August 2018. UTP was also keen to explore the links between the two partners on joint research and academic exchange.

Meetings with Agents in Malaysia

CK Chiau of MyStudy Agency is a key agent for AIT in Malaysia. There are approximately 20 students from this agency studying at AIT each year for the last four years, mainly in accounting. The purpose of the meeting was to update the agency staff on new programmes offered by AIT in September 2018 and to outline promotional plans for the new academic year. Mr. CK Chiau organised seminars and presentations for Karl Turley from the International Office AIT at local universities and briefing sessions for other agents in Malaysia.
The National Energy University (UNITEN)

Universiti Tenaga Nasional is a private university, located in Selangor, Malaysia. It is wholly owned by the public-listed Tenaga Nasional Berhad, established in 1999. It grew out of the Training Centre for Tenaga Nasional, the electricity supply corporation owned by the Government and is classified as a Government Linked Co (GLC) in Malaysia. UNITEN has over 10,000 students on two campuses and focusing on three disciplines, Engineering, Business and ICT.

During the visit, a MOU was signed between AIT and UNITEN to explore links for student exchange, staff exchange and joint research.

Dato’ Prof. Ir. Dr. Kamal Nasharuddin B. Mustapha (Vice Chancellor), Dato’s Prof. Ir. Dr. Ibrahim Bin Hussein (Deputy Vice Chancellor) and Prof. Dr. Mohd Zamri Bin Yusoff (Deputy Vice Chancellor) attended the meeting together with the faculty members.

UniMap Holdings

Unimap Holdings is wholly-owned by Universiti Malaysia Perlis. Its business focuses on training & consultation; event management; academic programmes; trading & services; property & asset management; new business ventures.

University Sultan Zainal Abidin (UNISZA)

UNISZA is the 18th public institution of higher learning, located in the state of Terengganu in Malaysia. The university was established under the Act of Parliament known as the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971. It is the first fully-fledged university in the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia and the first university to be based on the “cluster” concept. It is also the first university in Malaysia to be modelled on the University of London, United Kingdom.

The university has four campuses namely Gong Badak Campus, Medical Campus, Tembila Campus and the latest is UniSZA International Campus (UIC) in Kuala Lumpur City. The university has 10 faculties located in different campuses which offer programmes to diploma, bachelor degree and master’s level as well as doctor of philosophy.

The university is considered the biggest “comprehensive university” in the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia and to be one of the most respected Islamic-based institution of higher learning in Malaysia. It has produced thousands of graduates in many fields, since its establishment in 1980.
Tunku Abdul Rahman University College (TarUC)
TarUC is AIT's partner in Malaysia since 2012. A number of TarUC students have graduated with the award of Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting from AIT and many are working in leading accounting firms in Ireland, UK and Malaysia. AIT and TarUC are working closely in Business, Accounting, Engineering and Science programmes. During the visit by Prof Ó Catháin, plans for future cooperation were discussed. There is a plan to explore new areas such as transfer of students from Foundation level programmes at TarUC to undergraduate programmes at AIT.

Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM)
Pagoh Malaysia
The university was formerly known as Pusat Latihan Staf Politeknik (PLSP) and was established on 16 September 1993. The core business of PLSP then was to train and produce polytechnic level academic staff to become knowledgeable and skillful in various engineering fields. The training institute was jointly administered by Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and the Ministry of Education Malaysia. Three years later, PLSP was upgraded to Institut Teknologi Tun Hussein Onn (IITTHO). Dato’ Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak who was then the Minister of Education made the official announcement of the new status on 12 April 1996. This promotion was an acknowledgment of the institution's excellent track record in producing highly qualified academics for technical education in Malaysia.

On 27 September 2000, the institute achieved another milestone when the Malaysian government agreed to award a university-college status to the institute. With its new status, the institution was renamed as Kolej Universiti Teknologi Tun Hussein Onn (KUiTTHO) and the official announcement was made by Tan Sri Dato’ Seri Musa bin Mohamed, the then Minister of Education.

The visit by AIT was held at UTHM’s new campus in Pagoh city. It is a newly designed campus with plans to have a high speed train from KL to Singapore stop there by 2026. During the visit, Prof. Dato’ Dr. Abdul Razak Bin HJ Omar who is the Director UTHM Pagoh campus introduced the campus to Prof. Ó Catháin.

Asia Metropolitan University (AMU)
Asia Metropolitan University (AMU) was established in 2004 and has grown into a fully-fledged university offering a wide range of programmes which bears testimony to its impressive track record within the Malaysian private-higher education industry. AMU is focused on producing trained, qualified, competent graduates for domestic and international markets in health sciences and various other disciplines. Currently, AMU provides a comprehensive educational pathway beginning from foundation and diploma studies for post-secondary school certificate holders who can then move on to pursuing undergraduate studies. AMU also offers a wide range of masters and doctoral degree programmes.

Deputy Vice Chancellor Prof. Dato’ Dr. Jayles Yeoh introduced AMU to AIT. He expressed interest in signing MOU with AIT in the near future and developing joint programmes in the area of computing, software and hotel management.

Professor Ó Catháin departed Kuala Lumpur on 11 January 2018 after successful meetings with new Malaysian partner universities and to strengthen the relationship with existing partner universities. It is critical to support visits to AIT’s priority markets of China and Malaysia to outline AIT’s strategic vision and to show commitment to building AIT’s brand in international markets.

AIT is actively pursuing an internationalisation strategy by targeting priority markets in Asia identified by Enterprise Ireland’s international education strategy. China and Malaysia are key markets to promote opportunities for international students to choose Irish higher education institutions as their preferred choice for study abroad opportunities. AIT is developing strong academic links in China and Malaysia by promoting student and staff exchanges, research collaboration and opportunities to transfer to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at AIT. AIT would like to acknowledge the support of Michael Garvey, education consultant in KL in organizing some of the campus visits, Mr. CK Chiuau of MyStudy Agency, Mr. Cormac Kavanagh of Education Ireland Malaysia for organizing Star Fair and other promotional events in Malaysia.
Prof. Dato’ Dr. Jayles Yeoh, AMU meets Professor Ó Catháin

Prof. Dato’ Dr. Abdul Razak Bin HJ Omar meets Professor Ó Catháin at UTHM.
Human Resources
Recruitment
10 New Employees were recruited since December 2017, which include Research positions.

New Garda Vetting for all Staff (Existing and New)
The Institute, as an educational body, has a responsibility to provide students with the highest standards of care to promote their well-being and protect them from harm.

The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012-2016 (The Act) provides a legislative framework for the mandatory vetting of persons who wish to undertake certain work or activities relating to children or vulnerable persons or to provide certain services to children or vulnerable persons.

In line with section 21 of the Act, the Institute shall submit for Garda Vetting all existing staff and other relevant persons. We intend to start the process of vetting all these persons in the coming weeks.

The vetting process will be conducted via the Institute’s HR Department who has a Liaison Person who will correspond directly with the NVB. The Institute will conduct vetting online through the Garda E-Vetting system, on a strictly confidential basis.

In accordance with best practice, Garda Vetting will be sought in respect of all staff approximately every 5 years, or at any time or times within the said 5 year period as deemed necessary by the Institute.

All staff will be asked to complete the Garda Vetting process.

A copy of the Garda Vetting Policy and the Operational Procedure will be available shortly on the Intranet.

Core Project Update:
HR are continuing to roll out various features on Version 22 of CoreHR System. We are currently working on the automated Recruitment Request Forms process which we hope to implement as soon as possible.

Staff Survey
AIT Management and Human Resources Department would like to thank staff who completed this survey. We have received the results of same and are waiting on an Action Plan from The Irish Centre for Diversity as to what areas need to be developed and delivered to help improve our organisation in being fair, equal and inclusive.
Communications and Marketing Office

Student Services
Access Office

College Awareness Week: AIT

Athlone Institute of Technology celebrated college awareness week in November. College Awareness Week events promote the benefits of going to college and help students of all ages to become college-ready. This is a national programme involving over 600 events all over the country, with the involvement of primary schools, secondary schools, further education, third level, community groups and libraries.

For the third year running AIT welcomed Cara Phort Family Resource Centre who along with the teachers from Ballynacargy N.S., Milltown N.S., Sonna N.S., Emper N.S. and Moyvore N.S brought in 45 sixth class students. They were put through their paces with circuit training organised by the AIT third year students of Business in Sport and Recreation, Dept of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure under the supervision of lecturer Joe Meegan. After lunch in the main canteen they still had enough energy for a run in the International Arena. The day finished up with a presentation of certificates. It was a great opportunity for the young students to use the facilities in AIT and to meet the third level students.

College of Sanctuary

Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) was designated as a College of Sanctuary in recognition of a range of initiatives demonstrating a commitment to welcoming asylum seekers and refugees into the college community and fostering a culture of inclusion for all. The award was marked at a celebratory event held on campus which was attended by all of the stakeholders involved.

The establishment of the AIT Institute of Sanctuary Scholarship Programme was announced. This programme will run on an annual basis and will comprise of six places on the AIT access programme, as well as 3 scholarships for undergraduate programmes in the Institute.

Xmas Kids Party

A children's Christmas party was held in the institute for the children from the direct provision centre, supported by the Students Union and New Horizon and AIT staff. Seventy children and their parents attended. Students from the international office helped with the organising and face painting.
**Peer Assisted Student Support (PASS)**

**PASS Training**
At the end of August, 24 students attended two days of informative and fun workshops in order to prepare them for the role of PASS Leader. Theresa Ryan, Aoife Walsh, Rebecca D’Arcy and Iain Murray facilitated the training which included a counselling talk given by Treasa Fox (Head of Student Counselling Service) and referencing training given by Michael Doheny (Assistant Librarian). Thanks to all involved for successfully preparing this year’s Leaders. 14 PASS sessions were offered on 23 programmes, available to potentially 506 first year students. The progression of the PASS programme since its inception is given below in Figure 1.

Thanks to all Deans of Faculty and Heads of Departments who liaised with Edel Murray-Burke for ensuring that PASS sessions were allocated an effective and advantageous position on the timetables.

![Figure 1: Progression of the PASS Programme since 2009.](image)

**PASS Attendance**
PASS sessions have concluded for the current academic year. The average weekly attendance for the PASS programme in semester one is given below in Figure 2.

![Figure 2: Average attendance at PASS sessions for the first six weeks.](image)
Continuing Professional Development
As part of the continuing development of the PASS programme team, Iain Murray attended PASS/SI Supervisor Training in Cork Institute of Technology from 31st October to 2nd November. Iain thoroughly enjoyed the training provided by Leif Bryngfors and Joakim Malm (Lund University), and Will Carey (University of Manchester). He returned bursting with new ideas to develop the PASS programme even further at AIT.

Graduation
Congratulations to all previous PASS Leaders who graduated during November. Special congratulations to Edel Flynn (BSc (Hons) in Sports Science with Exercise Physiology and PASS Leader in 2014/15) who won the Best Student award in her programme.

A small ceremony was held at the end of November for PASS Leaders from 2016/17 who received their transcripts for completing the PASS Programme.

PASS Leader Conference
Shane McGaley (Sports Science with Exercise Physiology PASS Leader 2017/18) undertook the massive task of representing AIT on his own at the 8th Annual PASS/PAL Leader Conference in Cork Institute of Technology. Shane created a poster for the event and took part in three days of team challenges, parallel sessions and workshops to optimise networking and share good practice. He and his team won a prize as part of #TeamBeckett for interaction during workshops and promotion of the event online.

Pictured: Patrycja Boniakowska (Business Computing PASS Leader 2014/15), Sandy Brun (Toxicology PASS Leader 2013/14) and friends.

Pictured: Michaela Gibbons, Oliver Mullaly, Aoife Walsh (PASS Coordinator), Deolinda Gill, Aidan McDonnell.
Marketing and Communications Department, Student Recruitment Office

School Engagement
AIT exhibited at various regional fairs in December and January. The events took place in Co. Galway, Meath and Clare. The institute was represented by the Student Recruitment Officer along with the Graduate Ambassadors, and staff from academic departments. The student recruitment team also visited 35 secondary schools across the country over the past 6 weeks. The focus will shift to ETB’s once all targeted schools have been covered.

Portumna Community School Campus Visit
24 leaving cert students from the Portumna Community School travelled to us for a campus tour, talks and demos on Wednesday December 13. Thank you to the staff of Hotel Tourism and Leisure, Engineering, Social Care, Business, Nursing, Science, Sport Science and FETAC Entry to 3rd Level who delivered intriguing talks.

CAO Information Evening
The CAO Information Evening took place on Tuesday 16th January. The evening was focused on applying to college this year as a leaving certificate, QQI or Mature Applicant.

Attendees learnt about the CAO application process, explored our student supports and spoke to staff and students.

A strong focus was placed on our new Honours Degree programmes in Applied Psychology, Design Innovation & Technology, Toxicology and Analytical Science and Hospitality Management with International Placement. Approximately 150 made the journey through adverse weather conditions.

#CAO2018 Helpline
This month we launched the CAO Helpline to help applicants with their #CAO2018 application.

Applicants can contact the AIT CAO Helpline from Monday 22nd January to February 1st with any queries in relation to the application process and we will guide them in the right direction.

Monday - Friday: Email askus@ait.ie or call 090 646 8136
Saturday - Sunday: Email askus@ait.ie
As part of the #CAO2018 campaign we also introduced campus tours. With the CAO deadline fast approaching we are encouraging students to visit our college campus and find out why they should choose AIT.

The tours commenced on the 19th of January and will run until the deadline on February 1st. There will be two tours each day beginning at 11.00am and 2.00pm.

**Careers in Construction – Thursday 25 January 2018**

We were delighted to attend the CIF National Careers in Construction collaboration event in the Radisson Blu Hotel in Athlone on January 26th as part of our CAO campaign. Senior cycle students from key feeder schools all over the midlands were in attendance.

**Mullingar Training Development Agency Campus Visit – Tuesday 23 January 2018**

We were delighted to welcome 22 students from the Mullingar Training Development Agency for a campus tour, talks and demos on Tuesday 23 January. Dr. Anthony Johnston delivered a fascinating insight into careers in the Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure industry. Enda Fallon also delivered a fantastic presentation on ICT Engineering and how it is shaping our future. Special thanks to Theresa Ryan and Norrie O’Callaghan for speaking to the students about the access course and CAO process.
Faculty of Science and Health
On November 20th 2017, Caroline Coyle, poet, artist, lecturer in AIT and a research member at the Women, Ageing and Media Centre (WAM), University of Gloucestershire, hosted a Herstory Salon at the Earl of Rosse theatre. The event explored the life stories of historical, mythological and contemporary women from such fields as literature, civil rights, science, social activism, lived experience, art, society, theatre, poetry, media and music. It was a collaborative venture providing an opportunity for academics, students and members of the community to explore women’s stories through short presentations, art, music and informal discussion. It resulted in an evening of insightful, inspiring and thought provoking conversations.

Caroline also curated an art exhibition for the evening with various encaustic, acrylic drop, slate art, oil paintings, prints, pencil drawings and sculptures artworks from the following artists, Rosemarie Langtry, Tina Elliffe, Amy Barry, Natasha Barry, Erica Fellows Smith, Ursula Ledwith, Paul McGahey, Sadhbh Brereton, Dee McKiernan, Paula Sharkey, Patsy Preston, and Caroline’s own work.

The Salon was launched by Ruth Illingworth, a well-known local historian, lecturer and author. Ruth has just completed a biography of the Northern Ireland politician, barrister, human rights advocate and sportswoman, Sheelagh Murnaghan (1924-1993), one of only nine women ever elected to the fifty-two-seat Stormont House of Commons during its fifty-year existence. In reference to the Human Rights Act of 1998 which made the European Convention on Human Rights binding within the UK, Ruth highlighted Lord Alderdice’s speech when he reminded his colleagues that over thirty years earlier a similar bill had been introduced at Stormont by Sheelagh Murnaghan. Ruth left the audience with the thought ‘What a different world it may have been if the bill introduced by Sheelagh Murnaghan had gone through at the particular time in history’.

Dr Teresa O Hara who has over thirty years’ experience teaching in the areas of strategic management, organisational behaviour and managing people in organisations, gave an insight into Dr Kathleen Lynn’s work.

One of the first female medical graduates from University College Dublin, Lynn was also chief medical officer for the Irish Citizen Army and along with Madeline Ffrench Mullan, she founded St Ultans in 1919, Ireland’s first hospital for infants. Irena Djak Cvetovic originally from Serbia, now working as a producer and journalist with Athlone Community Radio took the audience on a nostalgic and cultural journey playing recordings from local radio documentaries, including, Count John Mc Cormack, Oliver Goldsmith, John Broderick. Athlone in early radio days and Gentex Factory. The voice of Trish Nolan singing ‘Broken Lines’ from her EP ‘Chapters’, held the audience spellbound. Trish a beautiful vocalist, guitarist, harmonica player, and powerful lyricist sang soulfully of her own experience of growing up with, then being removed from, the travelling community. Encouraged by Ruth’s earlier references to Sheelagh Murnaghan’s advocating on behalf of travellers in the 1960s, Trish spoke about her lived experience and her social activism around human rights for travellers in Ireland today.

Helen Nana Awinawhu a BA (Hons) in Early Years Care and Education student with a background in linguistics read her poem ‘The Blessed Ones’ explaining her journey from Nigeria to Ireland and how her belief in effective leadership is predicated upon effective communication skills, which has become crucial for the empowerment of the world we live in today.

Dr Trish Heavey, lecturer, researcher and consultant with a passion for nutrition gave a presentation on healthy eating for women which revealed how the food we eat can play a role in health and disease, highlighting that ‘when you don’t eat enough nutrient rich foods, your body can lack vital vitamins and minerals affecting your energy, mood and brain function’.

Dr Rebecca D’arcy, tutor in AIT Academic Writing Centre with a background in english literature, presented a paper on Charlotte Bronte revealing that Charlotte was known to speak with an Irish accent. Her father, Reverend Patrick Bronte, was born in 1777 in Emdale, Co. Down, his family name is most likely to have been Brunt, Prunt or O’Prunt. Rebecca informed the audience that Charlotte’s marriage to her father Patrick’s curate, Arthur Bell Nichols, took place in June 1854 and they spent their honeymoon in Ireland. After two days in Dublin, during which they visited Trinity College library, they travelled to her husband’s home town of Banagher, Co. Offaly where they stayed with Arthur’s aunt Harriett, in Cuba House on the eastern side of town. They then travelled to Killarney and around the coast.

Rebecca informed us that while one may note in Jane Eyre, that Ireland is portrayed as the dreaded destination to which Mr Rochester teasingly threatens to banish Jane, this ‘is distinctly at odds with how Charlotte actually perceives it in her correspondence whilst on honeymoon’.
The Salon continued with a Poetry and Storytelling section featuring students, lecturers and members of the community. Contributors included Sinead Mullally, Maria B Bourke, Amy Barry, Ursula Ledwith, Brian McLoughlin, Chris McCormack, Paula Sharkey and Sadhbh Brereton.

Mia Samovich, a seventeen year old author of children’s books, spoke from the heart about ‘the power of one person believing in you’ and ‘how much writing means to her’. Many of the participants in the Poetry/Storytelling section are also artists, playwrights and authors.

Poet John Ennis was also in attendance on the night. John, who retired as the head of Humanities in WIT in 2009, was a winner of the Patrick Kavanagh Award, Listowel Open Poetry Award and the Irish American Cultural Institute Award. He was also an editor of Poetry Ireland and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Laws by Memorial University for fostering links between Ireland and Newfoundland.

The founder of Herstory, Melanie Lynch then spoke about the plans for a new annual global light festival, Illuminations, celebrating women and girls on the 5-8th January 2018. This new festival went viral around the island of Ireland in January 2017 with castles, museums, libraries, theatres, sculptures, churches, offices and homes illuminating in celebration of women. Activities will take place in Palestine, Sweden, Finland, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Spain, Malta, Croatia, Holland, France, Oman, the U.K. and the US in Jan 2018.

The evening concluded at 10.30pm with Patrick Carton, a performance poet and storyteller, with his marvellous poetic ballad of his poem, Granuaile.

Athlone Community Radio recorded the event, and a podcast will shortly be available. Feedback from the night included comments such as ‘huge congratulations on a most extraordinary AIT Herstory Salon. The diversity, authenticity and power of your individual contributions created a magical evening of women’s storytelling’. ‘It was a wonderful night, enjoyed it and delighted to be part of it… ‘Thank you for inviting me to be part of your wonderful night, I am reaping the benefits, how inspiring’.

Herstory Salons have taken place in The Irish Times, Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork, Waterford IT, University College Galway, NUI Maynooth, Milwaukee Irish Fest and the International Literature Festival Dublin, with future events planned in Oxford University, University College Dublin and Queens University Belfast.
Pop-up art exhibition from the event
Dr Brian Murphy, Department of Life and Physical Sciences participated in December 2017 as the Principal Examiner for the Chemistry Higher Level P3 Examination Paper leading a team of international examiners as part of the Grade Award Meeting for the November 2017 Examination for the International Baccalaureate (Cardiff, Wales).

The Evaluation of Phase II of the GAA Healthy Project was launched in Croke Park on January 15th. Dr Aoife Lane is the lead contributor to this work, which is presenting the GAA club as a setting for health promotion. Clubs across Ireland are working to improve the health and wellbeing of members and wider communities through this initiative, which is embedded in Healthy Ireland.

Visiting Academic: Dr Adam McDonnell has joined the Department of Sport and Health Science for the remainder of the academic year. Adam is an Environmental Physiologist at Jozef Stefan Institute, Ljubljana, Slovenia and has worked closely with Dr Diane Cooper. Adam will assist with teaching and research activities during his time here in AIT.

Dr Niamh Whelan recently celebrated her PhD graduation in the University of Limerick. Many congratulations Niamh! Her studies were on The Biomechanical Specificity of Running Drills to Sprint Performance.

SPARK Social Entrepreneurship Awards 2018
The SPARK Social Entrepreneurship initiative was founded in 2014 to promote and develop social entrepreneurship among Social Care Students and to support the potential implementation of social care innovations and inventions. This national awards competition is sponsored by Certified Public Accountants of Ireland (CPAI). AIT social care students have participated every year since its launch and have been amongst the winners. This year, one of the lecturers in the Department of Social Science, Denise MacGillari, will partner Louise McBride (LYIT) in coordinating the awards programme.

The 4th year Applied Social Care Drama Students performed onstage at St Kieran’s Community Centre on Monday 4th December with actors from St Hilda’s Work Therapy Unit (WTU) in a collaborative musical play WOLFELIA AND THE THREE GIANT PIGS.
Caroline Coyle, AIT Drama lecturer and founder of ‘The Art of Possibilities Community Drama Group’ directed the cast through the process of co-constructing the writing, producing and performance of this musical play. Based on an idea from Aideen Harkins WTU, this musical play told the story of the night of the Big Storm Wolfelia, three Giant Pigs are getting ready for their house warming party to celebrate their new Brick House. But Wolfelia has other ideas and tries to blow their house down. Will the night be spoiled? Will Wolfelia blow the house down? Will the party go ahead? Will the Pig’s friends be able to make it? A packed audience from the community joined in singing songs based on the actor’s choices, such as ‘Good Looking Woman’, ‘Fernando’, ‘Wagon Wheel’ and ‘Fairytale of New York’. Caroline stated that ‘Drama is a way of actively participating in the world. Through the collaborative work of AIT, WTU and The Art of Possibilities Community Drama group in making this play, the actors were empowered, not only through the production, but by the creation of an inclusive environment in the creative process’.
Faculty of Business and Hospitality
Faculty of Business and Hospitality

Congratulations are offered to the over eight hundred business graduates from the Conferring Ceremonies held in the Institute on 2 November 2017. Indeed, the Faculty of Business and Hospitality wish to congratulate all graduates of AIT and to wish them well in the future.
Dean of Faculty Mr Eoin Langan and Head of Department of Business and Management Mr Owen Ross attended the Businet Annual Conference in Portugal from 7 to 10 November. They presented a paper on the 1st year retention initiatives within the Faculty. Businet is a network of Business Schools within higher education (both private and public universities and colleges) that share a common ethos regarding internationalisation. It provides an environment that encourages the sharing of good practice and encourages co-operation between like-minded individuals and organisations.

- The Department of Accounting and Business Computing under the leadership of Head of Department Mr Trevor Prendergast, hosted an industry advisory board on 7 November 2017 as part of the development process for two new programmes – a Bachelor of Science in Business Information Systems and a Master of Science in Data Analytics. The meetings were particularly well attended with representatives from international companies including Intel, AirBnB, AA Insurance, Deloitte and companies with a local presence including Teleflex, NPD, Emarkable and Dotser. Taking input from these companies, the department is progressing with the programme development aiming to start the Masters programme in September 2018.

- The Law Lecturers in the Department of Business, together with the support of the Department of Business and Management, arranged a one day workshop in Mooting for the students of the Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Business and Law programme on Thursday 9 November 2017. The students were trained in public speaking and court procedures and behaviour. They ran a mock Court of Appeal case in teams, competing in a short competition after lunch. The training was provided by Bríd McGlinchey BL, barrister with Moot Training experience for the Law Society and Gael Linn. Alison Hough BL (Department of Law) and Dr Chris McDermott (Faculty of Life and Health Science) assisted in the provision of training and the running of the competitions. The training will be followed by an in-house competition run by the AIT Law Society next term, which will lead to selection of teams for intervarsities competition in NUI Maynooth in April.

Mooting involves running a Court of Appeal case, making legal argument in a simulated court-room environment, based on hypothetical legal cases drawn from real life. It differs from Mock Trial in the way that the focus is on legal argument and there is no witness handling or evidence giving (similar to actual Court of Appeal cases). Mooting is an invaluable way to develop public speaking skills and confidence, as well as to learn about both court procedure and substantive law in a hands-on practical way, applying legal principles to real life hypothetical scenarios, and delivering legal argument in a simulated Court room experience.

AIT's Law Society has established connections with other student law societies around the country in respect to mooting, and has been invited to a “friendly” Moot in University of Limerick next term.

The students on the Bachelor of Business and Law have founded AIT FLAC Society with the support of the law lecturing staff in the
Department of Business and Management. The purpose of the society (modelled on other similar student societies in Trinity, UCD, UCC and other colleges) is to allow students to gain clinical legal experience by establishing clinics for the purposes of providing legal information to fellow students of AIT. The Society has been approved by FLAC Ireland as one of their subsidiary student societies.

Clinics provide students with real life experience dealing with members of the public, helping prepare them for the world of work, and helps bring law to life for them in a practical way, so that they can see the application of the subjects they study in their degrees.

In some Universities in the UK, the FLAC Clinics have been incorporated into the legal education of students, with students gaining credits for participation and doing research projects based on topics they come across in clinics. It is hoped that this can be incorporated eventually into the Legal Skills Modules of the Bachelor of Business and Law.

Ms Zsé Varga, Volunteer Co-Ordinator with FLAC, delivered a guest lecture on Tuesday 14 November 2017 to the students of the Business and Law programme. She spoke about the history of the first FLAC society, as a student clinic in Trinity College, and its growth and development into a National Organisation. She highlighted the importance of awareness of basic legal rights, and the work of the student FLAC Societies. Ms Varga also explained the important role that good quality legal research can play in achieving real change in society, and the privileged position law students have in that regard. She then had an informal question and answer session with the students involved in the FLAC Society afterwards, followed by coffee with the students.

- The students from the 1st and 3rd years of the Bachelor of Business in Digital Marketing programme along with lecturer Ms Aisling Keenan attended a site visit on Tuesday 14 November in Hubspot office, Dublin. HubSpot provides software and service tools for social media marketing, content management, web analytics, landing pages and search engine optimisation. It also hosts user group conferences and inbound marketing and certification programmes. Hubspot has 34,000 customers across ninety countries, and they have 3,400 agency partners. Their EMEA headquarters is located in Spencer Dock, Dublin. The students had a tour of the different departments, they also received a presentation on careers at Hubspot and potential summer internships. Also conversed was the professional inbound marketing certification that Hubspot provide, which the 3rd year students will undergo in their module Advanced SEO and Web Usability during this semester.

- RTE’s Legal Affairs Correspondent Ms Orla O’Donnell delivered a most informative and engaging guest lecture to the students on the Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Business and Law and Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting and Law programmes. She discussed the role of social media in influencing active legal cases as they progress through the court system. Orla focused in particular on the trial of the protestors who blocked the then Tánaiste Joan Burton in her car in Tallaght. She gave some particular insights into how various groups were attempting to influence public opinion.

- Mr Sean Whelan, the RTE’s Economic correspondent visited AIT on 16 November as part of our strategic partnership with RTE to give his insights into the current economic climate in Ireland. His guest lecture was delivered to a full house and covered the 2018 budget and the implications for the Irish economy incorporating into his commentary the strong growth in the economy at present and the risk associated with Brexit. He also highlighted future opportunities for graduates.
• Each year, the Faculty host a lunch for students who achieve excellent results in their studies in non-award years - for example, 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students on a four-year degree programme or similar. The students are selected on the percentage grade that must exceed 70%. The event was held on 21 November with 58 students receiving awards that are designed to recognise their achievements and to encourage them to continue to strive for excellence.

• The Faculty of Business & Hospitality welcome visitors from Dongbei University of Finance and Economics (DUGE) which is based in Dalian in China. DUGE and AIT has a long history of collaboration that commenced in 2004 on our Bachelor of Arts in Accounting programme with many students transferring from DUGE to AIT over this time. However, in recent years the numbers transferring has been significantly reduced and it is hoped that this meeting is a step forward in renewing our collaboration. The delegation included Prof Xiao Xingzhi, VP of DUGE, XU Gang, Vice Dean of the School of Training and Continuing Education and Xu Zhou, Translator DUGE.

• Eoin Langan represented the Faculty at an IDA company visit on 30 November. The company in question are a UK based organisation considering their options post Brexit and Ireland is one location being actively considered for a European sales and scientist support centre and possible shared services centre.
The AIT Law Society organised a Charity Ball on Thursday 30 November in the Radisson Blu Hotel Athlone. It was an extremely successful night with the attendance including a mixture of students and business faculty lecturers. Congratulations are extended to the organisers of the event, particularly the 4th year Business and Law students. Their enthusiasm is highly commendable given that they had a tremendous work load at that particular time.

Musical entertainment was provided by an excellent band and a well established iRadio DJ who entertained the attendees after they had enjoyed a beautiful meal. Mr Noel Greene from the Midland Simon Community was the special guest on the evening and he delivered a heartfelt speech on the struggles that the charity is experiencing at the moment. A raffle was held on the night with all prizes sponsored by local businesses.

Monetary donations were received from Paul Connellan Solicitors and Byrne Cunningham Carolan Solicitors, both Athlone based firms. By approaching the local solicitors, the students have made them aware of the AIT Law Society and are hopeful that it will lead to future further relationships.

Over €600 was raised for the Midlands Simon Community from the event and given the high motivation which is evident in the current students, the Law Society may make it an annual event.

The students have expressed their gratitude to the Business Faculty members who helped them with the organisation of the Charity Ball and for their continuous support throughout the course of their studies.

- The annual Quality Assurance visit to the Zambia Centre for Accountancy Studies (ZCAS) was undertaken by Ms Linda Reidy, lecturer in the Faculty of Business and Hospitality in December 2017. These visits are a strand in the quality assurance processes that ensure adherence to best practice in the transnational provision of academic programmes. The Bachelor of Business in Applied Accounting has been successfully delivered since 2012 in ZCAS, with content, regulatory compliance and awarding of qualifications managed by AIT.

- Owen Ross was a guest on the Will Faulkner show on Midland 103 radio on Monday 8 January discussing IBEC’s economic analysis and projections.

- The Faculty was pleased to welcome Mr Luc Saby from IUT de Saint-Brieuc in France to formalise an agreement for French students to study in AIT next September. Students will commence on the International Business Management programme with a view to progressing to the honours degree in Business and the Master of Business.
On the 8th of January HTL Lecturer, Kevin Ward attended the official launch of the “Good France March 2018 gastronomy month”.

The meeting was hosted by H.E. Mr. Stéphane Crouzat, Ambassador of France to Ireland at the Residence de France. This meeting also introduced the venue for the third FICAHT (French Irish Culinary Arts and Tourism) forum for 2018. The meeting was attended by representatives of most of the IOTs and members of the French diplomatic corps.

Kevin and the 2nd year culinary arts students along with lecturer Aileen Kelly and her Diploma in restaurant Management group will host a dinner for the Ambassador and his guests in AIT on Tuesday the 27th of February to kick off the Good France Month 2018.

The FICAHT forum will be held in DIT Cathal Brugha Street between the 28th of February and the 2nd of March. On the 21st of March a scholastic culinary competition will be held in DIT, where Irish and French Students will team up in a mystery basket type cook off.
Research, Innovation and Enterprise
Research, Innovation and Enterprise

INNOVATION AND ENTERPRISE

Industry Programmes and Knowledge Transfer - Projects
Development of a guide to assist research active staff in the internal process, support staff available and the related procedures and policies during a funding application and award process.

IP Policy review underway to reflect current national guidelines and protocols. Revisions to be presented at the relevant committees for approval.

Annual reporting on TTSi3 Programmes for 2017 shows AIT performing well across all technology transfer areas, particularly in the number of research agreements with companies on projects.

Events
Breda Lynch attended the launch of the Regional Enterprise Development Fund, by Minister Heather Humphreys, at IMR in Mullingar on 12th December.

Breda Lynch attended a Community of Practice of HEI Technology Transfer personnel hosted by DCU.

Funding Applications supported
Commercialisation Fund - 2 feasibilities (1 SRI, 1 BRI); 1 full CF for re-submission (SRI).
Innovation Partnership Programme – 4 projects (3 MRI, 1 SRI).
Intertrade Ireland Fusion - 2 projects (SRI).
IRC (Enterprise Partnership Scheme) – 2 projects (SRI).
Consultancy – 2 projects (SRI).
Industry fully funded project – 2 (MRI).

Technology Transfer
Invention Disclosure Form – 2, licence – 1.
Commercial development plan review with an existing licensee – 1.

The office continues to support RI directors, TGP managers, researchers and postgraduates in the 3 Research Institutes, CISoD and the Schools by reviewing and drafting documents in relation to, Inter-institutional Agreements, Heads of Agreements, IP Ownership Arrangements, NDAs, Material Transfer Agreements, Data Management Agreements and IP queries on numerous collaborations, wholly funded contract research and postgraduate projects. Specifically the office supported researchers in recent funding calls to EI’s Commercialisation Fund and Innovation Partnership Programme, SFI - NSFC Partnership Programme and Marie – Curie Career Fit. The office concludes all funding contracts and where applicable negotiates terms of these contracts in line with best practice.

Funded Research – Applications Submitted
2 applications awaiting announcement from DAFM.
1 IRC Postdoc Fellowship awaiting announcement.
Funded Research working with AIT colleagues on proposal development and identifying funding opportunities.

Funded
2 x IRC Enterprise Partnership Scheme started for PhDs January 2018.
International Mobility Programme HEA – Dr Michael Nugent.

Funded Research – Projects
HRS4R – Lorna Walsh is an Assessor for the HRS4R and facilitated a workshop in Brussels January 2018. Lorna Walsh along with UCC person are the only representatives from Ireland.
AIT Repository [Open Access] - working in support to Library.
AIT holds the Chair of the IoTI Funded Research Managers Group 2017/2018 – will facilitate a meeting with SFI for the IOTs in March.
Office is facilitating Dr Des Cawley with a COST Conference showcasing AIT to 40 European partners who will visit AIT over two days February 21st-22nd.

Presentation
2018 EPA Research Programme Roadshow in AIT on 9th March.

Midlands Innovation and Research Centre (MIRC)
On 30th November, a Consortium meeting of ESA Space Solutions Centre Ireland was held in Maynooth University.

The First Interim Reviews for New Frontiers 2017 were held on 11th and 13th December.

On 14th December, a Tender Evaluation Board meeting of ESA Space Solutions Centre Ireland at Tyndall selected 2 start-ups and 2 demonstrator projects for support.
On 10th January, the Director of Innovation and Enterprise met with Conor Sheehan Enterprise Ireland and Danny Gleeson Irish Space industry Group to explore a concept for the Regional Enterprise Development Fund call in March-May.

The Design Team for the expansion of MIRC facilities will commence in February.

**Enterprise Ireland Funding 2017**

Huddl Mobility, The Moodies TV, Durrow Mills, Paid My Way Financial Services and WorkJuggle.com were awarded €50k Competitive Start Funding by Enterprise Ireland in 2017. TixServe was awarded HPSU Funding by Enterprise Ireland in 2017.

**Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur**

Warren Belton, Magna Clava (NF 2017) – which is developing a Subscription-Based Members Club focused on the Health & Fitness sector – won the Best Business Idea award in the Longford County Final of IBYE in December.

**Enterprise Ireland Innovation Vouchers**

35 Innovation Vouchers projects were completed by AIT in 2017 – 391 to date. A call for standard €5k Innovation Vouchers opened on 17th January closing 31st January.

**IDA Innovation Vouchers**

IDA will be operating an Innovation Vouchers scheme for its smaller client companies (less than 250 people on site in Ireland, and have not been approved an R&D grant in last 3 years). The scheme will operate similar to the Enterprise Ireland scheme but will have paper-based applications for the first two years.

**U-Multirank 2018**

An Operational Management Team project group was established in 2016 to undertake a benchmarking exercise – including R&I activities - with selected national and international HEIs. AIT registered with U-Multirank in May 2017. Dympna Fitzgerald, MIS Business Intelligence & Development Unit Manager, did great work, analysis and coordination on the project during 2017. A Preparatory Survey was submitted in June; a First data submission (2018 Institutional Questionnaire/ Survey) was completed in October, a Second/Final data submission was completed in November. U-Multirank 2018 will be launched in June 2018.

**BIOSCIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

The BRI met its’ operational terms of reference by holding 5 steering group meetings in 2017, the most recent held on 27 November last. The BRI steering group comprises a complimentary mix of staff and researchers spanning representative departments under the linked Faculty of Science and Health including Dean and Heads of Departments. The connectivity between research institute and faculty model is essential to meet exiting needs and to satisfy future expectations including trajectory for TU.

BRI Steering Group meetings were held on the main campus for convenience and to help dispel any conceptual thinking that the research process is East Campus or HUB focused. Moving forward, research strengths that are core strengths of the Faculty of Science and Health will be augmented to align with putative (revised) national priority research areas that now fall into 6 domains as opposed to 14 distinctly separate research topics. Central to augmentation of research capacity and scale is the delineation of processes and activities in shared templates and repositories, which is under discussion. The BRI is assisting with review of DA10 in existing award areas (toxicology, microbiology) and supporting submissions under DA10 in sports and health science and DA10 in nursing.

The BRI continues to expand specialist infrastructure with the addition of Marine Institute-funded flow cytometry, cell sorting and dissociator system that adds to powerful advanced imaging suite housed in the HUB. Dr Siobhan Kavanagh and Dr Owen Donohoe accepted the award from Minister Michael Creed at recent DAFM-event held in Dublin. It is noteworthy that AIT was the sole IOT recipient of an MI infrastructure award. It is proposed that operation of the specialist equipment will be managed through the HUB officer with linked to usage with designated staff for continuity and sustainability moving forward. A full list of equipment and typical usage is now available, which along with composite descriptors of equipment on the main campus will aid ongoing innovation and help map future undergraduate projects for pipeline trajectory to AIT research institutes.

There is also a growing trajectory and pressing need to exploit cross cutting research to sister materials and software research institutes. Initiative such as shared repository for staff on existing projects with identification of a future date for shared presentations to staff to overview these is en train. The BRI has witnessed a high turn-over of it’s postdoctoral researchers that
reflects opportunities in industry and academia and the need to consider longer term funding models, such as linked to SFI-funded research centres and/or EI funding gateways. This impacts upon training and re-training and provision of support services to the undergraduate and postgraduate communities on the ground.

The BRI webpage (http://BRI.ait.ie) is under review for updates and there is a pressing need to review clusters of researcher specialisation, which is under discussion via the BRI Steering group). Specifically, Dr Donohoe continues to make BRI website adjustments, including fixing of dead links, embedding twitter feeds, social media share-buttons and started preparing, adding news posts and so forth. Dr Donohoe recently circulated templates to all BRI members in order to provide content for researcher profiles on BRI website. At recent BRI Steering meeting, Prof Rowan highlighted an ongoing issue with shared electronic repository systems within AIT and the fact academic that staff and research staff do not have access to common access-controlled electronic repository systems, with staff restricted to using Microsoft systems and students restricted to using Google systems due to licensing and IP issues. Furthermore, up until this year this issue has always prevented PG students from accessing Moodle. Discussions as to use of a suitable shared repository are advancing – this is most important for sharing templates for such things as minutes (BRI, THEA), grant writing, equipment access moving forward. This is particularly important for informing and supporting grant writing activities for novice staff in established and emerging areas, which should be supplemented with tailored workshops framed upon delineated needs reflecting experience and ambitions (such as through https://www.aquatt.ie ).

In terms of detailed activities and events, the €350k Ecoqua project was kick-started that seeks to enhance freshwater aquaculture production linked to studying environmental concerns (if any) from an effluent discharge perspective. This project combines Prof Rowan, Dr Alex Tahar, Dr Owen Donohoe, Ms Sarah Naughton and Ms Emer O’Neill of the BRI with Dr Siobhan Kavanagh and Dr Andy Fogarty of the Department of Life and Physical Science. This project featured nationally and internationally in the media and will pump prime future projects. BRI is pleased to announce that Dr Michael Goblirsch of the University of Minnesota (USA) was successful in his prestigious OECD CRP Agriculture Fellowship and will work with Prof Rowan on pollination-related studies that specifically focuses on knowledge transfer on in vitro cell culture bioassays derived from honey and bumblebees. Dr Goblirsch will arrive in August 2018 and the intention is to investigate usage of disease mitigation approaches along with growing adjacent interests such as that of Dr Siobhan Kavanagh with honey-bee industry. A Brazilian Capes PhD Scholarship was awarded to Ms Lais Ortolani with Prof Rowan, but due to changes in personal circumstances Ms Ortolani will not be able to take up the position. External grants under the IRC postgraduate scholarship programme and DAFM-FIRM are under review, outcome of latter will be known before summer. Prof Rowan also collaborated with MRI as mentor on an IRC-postdoctoral fellowship application. Dr Owen Donohoe will be taking up his Marie-Sklodowska-Curie Fellowship in the University of Liege, Belgium from May this year. Positive discussions were had with Dr Owen on continuum of research collaboration with the BRI on shared projects and re-integration back to AIT in 2020 post completion of the fellowship (likely linked with the aforementioned Ecoqua platform). An advert will be posted soon for new postdoctoral HUB Officer with view to March commencement to allow for two months knowledge transfer and shadowing of Dr Donohoe. The BRI is growing enterprise activities as attested by 5 Enterprise-Ireland vouchers, 1 feasibility and a linked EI-partnership with sister MRI. The subject areas of these vouchers reflect established and emerging domains of specialisation including toxicology, microbiology, food processing, and bioinformatics. The BRI continues to network and foster international collaborations in the aforementioned areas. BRI staff supported research and enterprise discussions with several visitors through the International Office that included the Dutch UAS Fryslan and a delegation of Central and Western University Presidents from the China. BRI staff linked to Faculty continue to network in Europe via EU Cost initiatives where Dr Desmond Cawley will be hosting a meeting in AIT later this year. Prof Rowan has been appointed as evaluator for EU FET programme for 2018. Prof Rowan also represents AIT on THEA in terms of RD&I and Heads of Research group meetings where feedback is provided to the Directors of Research Institutes through the President along with informing faculty on emerging developments and activities (Brexit, Research Integrity, Research Ethics, Research Funding, DA10 and so forth). Again, an electronic management and repository system to capture such information is also on train.

SFI-funded outreach activities to regional primary schools is flourishing and thanks to Ms Maya-Frost for coordinating this important function with researchers across the BRI. This particular initiative links well with SURE-networking initiative; Dr Therese Montgomery and Dr Anne-Marie O’Brien introduced Ms Maya to the latter at recent BRI-sponsored coffee morning with undergraduate students from Faculty of Science for augment recruitment into these dual outreach activities. On relating point, the BRI continues to streamline HUB operation and activities with view to attracting and supporting pipeline undergraduate students along with mainstream postgraduate/postdoctoral communities. Discussions are also en train as to augmenting numbers of undergraduate students in the HUB given importance of growing core toxicology, microbiology, analytical chemistry, pharmacy and biotechnology areas with linked Faculty of Science and future pressure to facilitate these across AIT. It is envisaged that such discussions will also encompass future use of STEM building along with nexus the BRI and possibly augmented interface with regionally industries. Also, growing projects on use of specialist equipment will inform future projects. Retaining and growing pipeline undergraduate students are crucial for intensive sustainability of research institutes and for supporting important learner functions at department level including laboratory demonstrations. In terms of health and safety – Dr Donohoe and Prof Rowan are making steady progress on BRI safety statement, all SOPs drafted at this stage. It is important that Prof Rowan and Dr Devine (Director MRI) continues to work closely with Dr Donohoe (and his successor) for completion of same. BRI staff were also training and re-trained on responder first aid and thanks to AIT Health and Safety Officer (Fergal Sweeney) for organising same. Lastly, but not least, just to wish all staff a productive and enjoyable 2018.
Dr Margaret Brennan received her B.Sc. in Experimental Physics at University College Dublin, and her PhD in the field of Nanomaterial Nonlinear Optics at the School of Physics Trinity College Dublin. On returning from a visiting fellowship at the National Laser Centre at the Australian National University, Canberra, Margaret lectured and established an interdisciplinary research team at the National University of Ireland, Galway working on nanostructure plasmonics for applications in biomedical diagnostics and printed electronics. In 2010, Margaret was appointed as a lecturer at the School of Physical Sciences at Dublin City University. In 2012, Margaret took the position of Chief Technology Officer at PixinBio SAS, a spin out company from the Fresnel Institute as the CNRS, Marseille in France, developing all electronic diagnostic devices. Margaret was awarded a Marie Curie Fellowship at the Department of Bioelectronics at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Mines de St. Etienne, France, in 2013 where she carried out novel integration of nanophotonics with plastic bioelectronics. In 2017, Margaret joined the Materials Research Institute at the Athlone Institute of Technology.

Research Interests
My research is centered on harnessing the power of nano-scale plasmonics for interfacing with biological systems. I have focused on developing nano-active probes that mimic and facilitate operation in tandem with the physiological environment, allowing new in situ modalities for monitoring and stimulating biological systems.

The three major strands of my research portfolio are:
1. Basic understanding of the biological interface with biofunctionalised nanostructures.
2. Development of multifaceted nano-devices for integration with biomedical polymer implants.
3. In vitro application of nano-probes to answer specific questions related to human pathology.