Quality Enhancement in Research Areas in 2016/2017

**Symposium / Conference**

AIT has held a research symposium with International partners since 2011.  The symposium, an annual event, hosts keynote address, guest speakers and postgraduate student presentations.  The event also hosts a poster festival for best poster with prizes for first, second and third place.

The event has also been held outside of AIT in Malaysia with UniMap [University of Malaysia, Perlis].

In 2017, AIT host the national ‘Environ Conference’.   The ENVIRON colloquium is the longest running and largest national gathering of environmental researchers in Ireland, with over 300 delegates attending each year.   This will be yet another opportunity for AIT postgraduates and researchers to network and present their work on a national stage.

**Research Ethics Committee in AIT**

The Research Ethics Committee established in AIT since 2011 meets on a monthly basis.  The committee reports to the Research, Innovation and Enterprise Sub-Committee of the institute’s academic council and assists in the realisation of it responsibilities for ethics in research carried out within the Institute.   The committee assesses any ethical issues reported in a Research Proposal and makes recommendations to AIT regarding ethical issues and possible risks to the Institute pertaining to the research applications received.  The Ethics Committee also provide ethical education to staff and students of the Institute through their annual conference held in May each year.  This conference is also open to the general public**.** The conference for 2017 will be held 11th May overviewing the area of Ethics in Sports.

**The Human Resource Strategy for Researchers [HRS4R]**

AIT was the recipient of the very prestigious HR Excellence in Research from the EU Commission in July 2015.  The award of HR Excellence in Research is an endorsement from the European Commission recognising AIT’s commitment to achieve fair and transparent recruitment and appraisal procedures for researchers. It reflects the institute’s commitment to continuously improve its human resource policies in line with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.  The achievement of this prestigious European Logo will support our researchers in their research proposals to attract international funding, especially Horizon 2020. Such an award will also increase the international profile of AIT in attracting academics and researchers, since it will signal the institute as a progressive education and research organisation.  AIT undergo a self-review / audit at 24 months and an external audit by the commission at 48 months to maintain the HR logo from the EU Commission.

**Athena Swan**

In a major national initiative supported by the [Higher Education Authority](http://www.hea.ie/), the Athena SWAN Charter was launched in Ireland in early 2015. SWAN Charter was established in 2005 to encourage and recognise commitment to advancing the careers of women in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM) employment in higher education and research. The charter has since expanded to recognise work undertaken in arts, humanities, social sciences, business and law (AHSSBL), and in professional and support roles, and for trans staff and students. The charter now recognises work undertaken to address gender equality more broadly, and not just barriers to progression that affect women. AIT has established a cross-institution Athena SWAN Steering Group, chaired by John McKenna, Vice President for Strategic Planning and Institutional Performance which will undertake a review and consider the current range of initiatives and policies and how they impact colleagues in the STEMM disciplines in the first instance and consider how AIT can, improve support to staff and students by way of its “policies, practices, action plans and culture”,.

Higher education institutions will be required to have secured the minimum Athena SWAN gender equality accreditation by end 2019 in order to be eligible to compete for research funding allocated by any of the three agencies.

**Research Integrity**

In June 2015, the standing National Forum on Research Integrity was established. The Forum membership is drawn from research funders, research performing organisations and other relevant organisations. It is coordinated by the Irish Universities Association. AIT developed and approved a ‘Good Research & Research Integrity Policy’ in line with National & International guidelines. AIT are working to the guidelines and direction of the National Forum whose aim is to ensure continual development and adoption of good practice towards a strengthened approach to research integrity in Ireland.

**HRB Host Institution**

In August 2016 AIT was successful in becoming a HRB recognised host institution and it eligible to apply and host HRB awards.

**DOCTRID**

AIT became a partner in DOCTRID and was signed in by an MOU at the opening of the 5th DOCTRID Conference held in the University of Limerick.  On this day both AIT and Kings College, London were signed in to the DOCTRID Partnership of 22 Higher Education Institutes and organisations across Ireland, UK and US through an MOU.  DOCTRID is a unique Irish-led international research network of scientists, disability service providers, practitioners and industry partners. It is one of the largest programmes in the world devoted to ID and/or autism research.

**Postgraduate Lunchtime Presentations**

AIT hold a seminar series for postgraduates each academic year.   This is part of the professional development of each postgraduate to present their research work to peers and staff in AIT.

Presentations are scheduled and held at lunchtime in the Institute, offering staff and students the opportunity to organise their work for presentation and challenge their thinking to field a Q&A session at the end of their presentation.  Each postgraduate student is given a time to present each year as part of their programme of study.

**Memberships**

AIT has membership of **EARMA** which represents the community of Research Managers and Administrators (RM&As) in Europe.  EARMA provides a networking forum, a learning platform, and a place to share experiences and best practice among RM&As throughout EARMA and in the wider RM&A community.

AIT is also a member of **VITAE**.  Vitae is the global leader in supporting the professional development of researchers, they have experience in working with institutions as they strive for research excellence, innovation and impact. Vitae are a non-profit programme, with over 45 years’ experience in enhancing the skills and careers of researchers. Vitae provide Institutional support for the professional development of their researchers.

**Training**

AIT offer postgraduate students and researchers the opportunity to take training modules every year in areas of Ethics, Intellectual Property, Statistics, Research Data Management, Communication Skills, Research Career Planning, Project Management, and Academic Writing among others.  AIT see that the professional development of staff and students is essential to the development of the career and profile of the postgraduate and researcher.

**External Review**

AIT work with a panel of external reviewers from national and international universities and Institutes of Technology to review our research proposals each year.  Each proposal submitted to the Office of research is reviewed by a panel of two to three external independent reviewers.  Each reviewer supplies a reviewers report with comments and suggestions of the proposal under review.  This review is presented to our internal postgraduate review committee as part of ratification of postgraduate application to AIT.  Each reviewer signs a confidentiality and non-disclosure agreement as part of the process.

**Stage 1 - Internal Review**

All postgraduate research candidates must comply with this Stage 1 procedure in order to progress with their studies. A total of 15 candidates presented before a panel of independent assessors in the November 2016 and March 2017. A Stage 1 Progression Report, ranging between 6000-14000 words was made available to the panel prior to the presentation. The purpose of the exercise is to enable postgraduate candidates to demonstrate that they have made sufficient progress to-date and have the potential to continue. It is an opportunity for serious reflective progress but should not require a long period of absence from lab work/data collection to write the report. The review is undertaken after approximately the first 12 month study period.

**Doctoral Studies Panel**

All PhD students are required to have at least one meeting per year with their Doctoral Studies Panel (DSP) to ensure the quality of their research and provide advice and support for both the candidate and the supervisors. The DSP comprises the candidate’s two supervisors and two independent advisors. A total of 9 candidates met with the DSP in June 2016

**Conferring List October 2016**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Award** | **Discipline** | **Title of thesis** | **Supervisors** | **Extern Examiner** |
| Barbara Cooper | **PhD** | Toxicology | A multi-faceted investigation of a putative analyte associated with Fatal Equine Haemorrhaging. | Dr Carmel Kealey  Dr Damien Brady | Dr Mark Mooney, Queens University |
| Laura Grehan | **PhD** | Polymer/ Toxicology (School of Science) | Preparation, characterisation, *in vitro* toxicological evaluation and bioactivity analysis of novel scaffolds for bone regeneration applications. | Prof Clem Higginbotham  Dr Sinead Devery  Dr Luke Geever | Dr Yury A Rochev, NUIG |
| Zhi Cao | **PhD** | Polymer | Development of novel lightweight, cost effective polymer composites of high density polyethylene. | Dr Declan Devine  Dr Luke Geever Prof Clem Higginbotham | Prof Conchúr Ó Brádaigh, University of Edinburgh |
| Zhao Liu (Luke) | **PhD** | ICT | Performance optimization of live multi-view video streaming. | Dr Yuansong Qiao  Dr Brian Lee  Dr. Enda Fallon | Dr Carl James Debono University of Malta |
| Maurice Dalton | MSc | Polymer | The development of novel smart melt processed drug delivery systems to control the release rate of active pharmaceutical ingredients. | Dr Luke Geever  Prof. Clem Higginbotham Dr Michael Nugent | Dr Austin Coffey Waterford IT |
| Chaoran Xu (Randy) | MSc | Software | Energy Efficient Mobile Cloud Computation Offloading for Web Centric Applications. | Dr Yuansong Qiao  Dr Brian Lee  Dr Niall Murray | Prof John Morrison, UCC |
| Megan Walsh | MSc | Life and Physical Science | The effect of sterilization on the biocompability and ostegenic potential of tissue engineering scaffolds for bone repair. | Dr James Kennedy  Prof Fergal O'Brien, (Royal College of Surgeons) Dr John Gleeson (Royal College of Surgeons) | Dr Louise McNamara, NUIG |
| Oladimeji Sapoloso | MSc | Microbiology | Identification and characterisation of bacteria in contrasting roles as contaminant and bio-fertiliser. | Dr Donal Eardly Dr Gerard Colleran (IT Tallaght) Dr Salwa Barkwan | Dr Colin Conway, GMIT |
| Michael Donohoe | MSc | Nursing and Health Science | An investigation into the effectiveness of latent myofascial trigger point dry needling on muscle activation patterns. | Dr Niamh Ní Chéilleachair, Dr Siobhán O'Connor, Dr Giles Warrington, Prof Neil Rowan | Dr Jason S. Scibek, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA, USA. Dr Eamonn Delahunt, UCDS |
| Tracey O'Fiaich | MSc | Nursing and Health Science | Knowledge and use of folic acid in the Midlands, Ireland. | Ms Olivia Corcoran  Dr Sheila Faherty | Dr Mary Rose Sweeney DCU |
| Emily McFadden | MSc | Health Sciences | Comparative studies on the use of pulsed-UV light, electron-beam, and gamma irradiation for the novel non-thermal processing of commercially-available infant milk formula in Ireland. | Dr Patricia Heavey,  Prof Neil Rowan,  Dr. James Kennedy | Prof Brian McNeil University of Strathclyde, Scotland |
| Sinead Fallon | MA | Applied Social Care | Rights through and in education: An examination of the practice of children's rights in second level schools in Ireland. | Dr Sheila McGree | Dr John Canavan, NUIG |

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| **Athlone Institute of Technology** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Figures for Postgraduate Research Students** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **June 2017** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **MASTERS** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | **School of Business** | | **School of Humanities** | | | | **School of Engineering** | | | **School of Science** | | | |
|  | **Business** | **Accountancy** | **Social Care** | **Hotel & Cat** | **Languages** | **Art & Design** | **Software** | **Mechanical** | **Plastics/ Polymer** | **Life & Physical** | **Nursing and Healthcare** | **Sport and Health Science** | **Total** |
| **Total** |  |  | 1 |  |  |  | 17 |  | 20 | 14 | 6 | **6** | **64** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **PhD** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | **School of Business** | | **School of Humanities** | | | | **School of Engineering** | | | **School of Science** | | |  |
|  | **Business** | **Accountancy** | **Social Care** | **Hotel & Cat** | **Languages** | **Art & Design** | **ICT** | **Mechanical** | **Plastics/ Polymer** | **Life & Physical** | **Microbiology** | **Toxicology** |  |
| **Total** |  |  |  |  |  |  | 6 |  | 14 | 4 |  | 2 | **26** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Total number of Research Students - June 2017 = 90 | | | | | | | |  |  |  |  |  |