



Institute of Technology Sligo

Faculty of Sciences

Faculty Planning

Report

Tuesday 12th February 2019

Final

Contents of Report

Part 1	Executive Summary
Part 2	Introduction
Part 3	Meetings of the Panel of Assessors
Part 4	Meeting of Panel with President and Head of Faculty
Part 5	Meeting of Panel with Head of Faculty and Heads of Department
Part 6	Meeting of Panel with Head of Faculty, Heads of Departments, Programme Chairs and senior academic staff (Faculty Policy Committee)
Part 7	Meeting of Meeting with Industry and Students
Part 8	Findings of the Panel
Part 9	Conclusion
Appendix I	Agenda
Appendix II	Membership of Review Panel
Appendix III	List of documents circulated to the Panel in advance of the meeting
Appendix IV	Staff members who met with the Panel
Appendix V	External Stakeholders who met with the Panel

Part 1 Executive Summary

In accordance with Chapter 5 of the Quality Assurance Procedures of the Institute, a Faculty is required to present a Faculty Plan at least once every five years.

5.4.1 Objectives of Faculty planning

The objectives of conducting a Faculty Planning process are to:

1. Optimize the resources of the Faculty for the purposes of delivering the highest standard and quality of education and to meet the Faculty strategic objectives
2. Specify how the Faculty will respond to the Institutes Strategic plan
3. Make proposals for changes in direction and focus of the Faculty
4. Identify key performance indicators for the Faculty and specify how these will be measured
5. Map the proposed actions to the strategic objectives
6. Update the procedures for monitoring quality, management, and operations within the Faculty.

A visit of the external Panel of assessors took place on Tuesday, 12th February 2019. The panel met privately in the evening of February 11th and on the morning of February 12th to exchange views on the submission. The Panel met with the Faculty Management Team, some Programme Chairs and other senior members of academic staff. They also met with external stakeholders.

A draft report was circulated to the Panel members and corrections and feedback was sought. The Faculty was also issued with the draft report to confirm factual accuracy. The final report was approved by the Chairperson and is due to be brought the Academic Council of 13th June, 2019. If the findings are accepted by the Academic Council, they will be implemented by the Faculty. The achievement of these will be audited by the Chairperson within 6 months of completion of the process

Findings of the Panel

Commendations

1. The Panel commends the Faculty on its Industrial engagement and acknowledges that it is an area of strength.
2. The Panel commends the Faculty on the growth in online delivery and that this demonstrates the increase of the impact of the Faculty nationally and internationally.
3. The Panel commends the Faculty on its increase in its level of research output and numbers of postgraduate enrolments.
4. The Panel commends the Faculty on the number of new programmes validated over the period.

Recommendations

1. The Faculty should ensure that level of dedicated technical support for research is adequate for the current activity and for planned increases.
2. The Faculty should formulate a policy of timely and appropriate student assessment feedback. .
3. Whilst there was evidence of benchmarking in research output the panel recommend that be extended all other areas as appropriate.
4. Benchmarking of progression and retention rates should carried using national data such as ISSE and HEA.
5. A graduate research committee which has oversight of the student research performance, should be established.
6. The mechanism of procurement for PIs to order equipment and materials should be reviewed and streamlined.
7. Module commonality matrix across programmes and faculties should be identified.
8. The number of projects with main and co supervisor and main and mentoring supervisor should be highlighted.
9. The faculty should explore the possibility of short term staff placements with industry.
10. Identify opportunities through programmatic review to bring the environmental science progression rates into line with other departments.
11. Consider using placement student visits to collect industry/sector feedback and review.

Self-Evaluation Process

The panel made the following comments.

1. A summary of changes made since the previous Planning process.

These were outlined in detail.

2. An analysis and evaluation of how the Faculty has responding to the Institute's strategic plan and a mapping of how the Faculty is contributing to the strategic targets.

The panel expressed some concern around the number of actions identified. The Faculty assured the panel they had identified a list of priorities.

3. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the channels of communication and engagement with the business sector and employers

The panel were impressed by the volume and levels of engagement that were outlined by the industry representatives. There was evidence of strong partnership between the faculty and local industry that contributes to regional development

4. A statement of QA compliance. For the period since the previous Planning process, this should include reviews and summaries of:

1. Actions taken in respect of recommendations of the annual Programme Monitoring Reports (PMR).

These were well documented in the documents.

2. Achievements against the Faculty's KPIs

The faculty outlined their KPIs in relation to the Institute strategic plan. The panel shared the view of the faculty that these ambitious targets would be challenging to achieve and should be kept under review.

3. Recommendation made by reports of any Panels of assessors

Evidence that they have responded adequately. It was noted that some external reports were not available.

4. Conditions and recommendations from programme (re)validation boards.

These were not included in the documentation.

5. Minutes of meetings of Faculty, Faculty Management and Programme Boards.

Key Issues raised were included in the tables.

5. A review of past performance of the Faculty in relation to its strategies and an analysis of the current external environment to identify future potential directions

There is significant evidence of forward planning with relation to the strategic plan pillars with regard to new programmes and research developments.

6. An analysis of the main findings from surveys of current students and of graduates

There was comprehensive data available from surveys of current students and of graduates.

7. A summary of changes made to programmes since the last Planning process was carried out.

This was provided and will be explored at the programme revalidation stage of this process.

8. An evaluation of performance in strategic areas, e.g:

1. Research

Good progress on identification of progress in research including publications

2. Learning and teaching

Faculty actions were identified for the institute Teaching and Learning Strategy. Analysis of retention and achievement was given.

3. Collaborations with employers and other providers

Strong evidence of collaborations with employers and other providers

4. An evaluation of staff contribution to the achievements of the Faculty strategic plan, together with staff training and development needs

Evidence given of current staff development and training need analysis.

5. Staff CV's, updated to include research and publications.

A full set of Staff CVs were supplied.

Part 2 Introduction

A Programmatic Review is a process by which a Faculty assesses its progress comprehensively over recent years and sets down proposals and plans for future developments. Under the Institute's quality assurance (QA) procedures, this must take place at least every 5 years, if not more frequently. It is a very significant part of the quality assurance process as it enshrines the concept of continual improvement and development based on self-evaluation. A Programmatic Review is a self-monitoring quality-assurance activity carried out by the Academic Council of the Institute.

At IT Sligo, the process is divided into two parts: (a) Faculty Planning, and (b) Programme Revalidation. The self-evaluation process includes the production of documentation by the Faculty and formal evaluations by an external review Panel. The overall process is controlled by the Academic Council. The Head of Faculty manages the process within the Faculty and the Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar has overall responsibility for managing the process on behalf of the Academic Council.

Typically, the process takes 12 months to complete and the output is a set of documents that report on the findings of the self-evaluation and that specify, as in this case, the plans of the Faculty. At the discretion of the Faculty, the documentation may be considered by an internal Panel (a 'dry-run'). The final set of documents is assessed by a Panel of external experts established by the Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar on behalf of the Academic Council. This latter Panel comprises representatives from other higher education institutions (HEIs), state agencies and from relevant employer sectors. This Panel is expected to read through the documentation and visit the Institute over a full day period. A report of the visit is issued together with a set of conditions and recommendations from the Panel. This report is sent to the Academic Council for consideration and, if approved, adoption.

The Faculty of Science completed its last Programmatic review in 2013. This current submission presents the proposed plan of the Faculty in its efforts to prepare itself for the years ahead.

A visit of the external Panel of assessors took place on Friday, 12th February, 2019. The agenda for this meeting is contained in Appendix I. Membership of the Review Panel is listed in Appendix II. The list of documentation received by the Panel is contained in Appendix III.

Part 3: Meetings of the Panel of Assessors

The panel met privately in the evening of February 11th and on the morning of February 12th at which a number of points were raised for discussions with staff of the Faculty. Other short private meetings were held throughout the day.

Part 4 Meeting of Panel with President and Head of Faculty

The Chair introduced the Panel, welcomed the President and Head of Faculty, and outlined the process for this session. The Chair emphasised that this should be a positive experience and that there will be an opportunity to address a wide range of issues during the day.

The focus on this meeting was on the Institute Strategic Plan and HEA Mission Based Performance Compact. The President circulated copies of the Institute Strategic Plan and institute newspaper.

The Panel asked for an outline of IT Sligo and the CUA and of the potential impact of the TU on Science. The President outlined the partnership of ITS/GMIT/LYIT and explained the new TU would have 18,000 student over 8 campus in the region. The Faculty would play a key role in the development of the region.

The Panel queried the 60% Thesis specification from the TU Act and asked if it included research methodologies? They were informed that it can if it is assessed by a mini thesis.

As the Faculty currently have 55 Masters/ PhD postgraduate students the Panel asked how realistic is this target, and is their capacity to meet this? The panel was informed that Academic Council has discussed this and that a suite of masters have been identified. There had also been support from industry, and Governing Body had agreed to commit funds to do this (in conjunction with HEA funding).

From the organisation chart the role and responsibilities of Research and Innovation and the Faculty were outlined. The Institute has a New VP post to lead up the research drive and to work with Head of Research and Head of Innovation. A post of a Graduate Education Officer had been approved and there was a plan to recruit post docs, grant application writer, etc. The President also outlined allocations to staff for research which had been agreed and were being rolled out subject to resources.

On student number targets The Head of Faculty outlined growth and felt that the numbers are realistic. The Faculty had grown in online and now had more online than FT students. It was explained the institute was fighting against tide of student leaving region to go to university outside region. The Panel asked if the TU brand will have effect. The President felt that yes the university brand will help to ensure less student have to travel to attend a university.

The Panel explored how important were international students as a funding source. The President explained that the funding was not the main driver for Internationalisation in IT Sligo and that the internationalisation of our programmes and research were the main focus. IT Sligo

has a large number of students from Ontario, Oman, and China, with the Canadian students being of most importance for the Faculty.

The Panel commented on the quality of documentation and the thoroughness of submission. The achievements of faculty were noted. The Panel queried the time required to undergo the process and asked the institute to consider if the time could be better spent.

Finally the Panel asked if the Faculty was meeting the government's action plan for jobs in region. The President responded that it was meeting it well and gave examples of working with Nibert. The Faculty is agile and met the needs of its region and that this was not always through major awards as the Faculty has a suite of SPA's.

Part 5 Meeting of Panel with Head of Faculty and Heads of Department

Meeting with Head of Faculty, Heads of Departments on Faculty Plan to consider the Faculty Plan.

The Panel complimented the Faculty on quality of documentation. The Head of Faculty introduced Heads of Department and went on to give a presentation.

During the Presentation a number of questions were asked.

The Panel asked that for the FT student numbers had the Faculty benchmarked with other IOT's? The Faculty explained that they did not have all figures for IOT's but benchmarked against similarly located IOT's. The problem with students leaving region and the shift in FT to level 8 was noted. The PT student numbers have grown from 555 to 1097, but there has been increased competition in online education in the last number of years.

The Faculty student gender balance was outlined with a growth in the number of females in last few years. The faculty progression rates were comparable with other science programmes in the sector.

There was clarity on number of Erasmus student as 4 and not 44. In Erasmus there was an issue with the number of students going out. This number low due to issues with languages and getting students to go abroad. The Faculty had hosted a summer school and had also focused on non EU students.

The number of graduates had grown from 427 to 536, and it was noted that this was only full award and did not include SPA.

The Research students had grown from 31 to 51. The Panel asked if there was a cap on the number of postgrads that a staff member could supervise and were told that there was no cap. To help achieve the TU Metrics the Faculty were targeting 30 extra postgrads, and this would equate to 3 new masters with 10 students on each.

The Faculties research impact was illustrated through Web of knowledge indices that were benchmarked against 5 other IoTs. It was noted that there are also patents and spin out companies that illustrate research impact

In the Faculty student survey it was noted that there was a drop in 5% in student satisfaction. Given the new science building, and the number of new staff with PhD etc. the Faculty was unsure why this was. Positive feedback from survey from employers was noted.

In the award classifications the 1st class grades at L7 reduced, and the 1st class grades at L8 increased to 20%.

Part 6 Meeting of Panel with Head of Faculty, Heads of Departments, Programme Chairs and senior academic staff (Faculty Policy Committee)

Meeting with Head of Faculty, Heads of Departments, Programme Chairs and senior academic staff (Faculty Policy Committee) to consider the Faculty Plan.

The Chair welcomed staff to the meeting.

Recommendations of Programmatic Review 5 years ago (Vol 1 A, pg. 113)

17. Time should be made available to staff to network effectively and validate course focus and content within the Faculty and externally.

The Faculty had made no response as it was unsure what it meant?

14. The successful provision of the online maths module should be replicated for other topics and on other Programmes and Departments across the School.

The Faculty explained that online modules were being delivered to student on placement and that this was working well. The Panel asked if placement was a pass/fail module and were informed that the employer does pass/fail but the module is graded with other assessments to give final score. It was noted that IT Sligo had recently been funded by HEA for online full time programme

16. A Terms of Reference for the Programme Coordinator role should be developed and agreed between School Management and academic staff.

It was noted that an academic council working group had looked at the role of a programme chair.

9. The School should develop an assessment strategy, which should include the process of ensuring that over-assessment will not occur and also address the provision of timely, informative and constructive feedback to students... Following feedback from the students, particular attention should be given to the amount of assessment on modules where there is more than one lecturer.

The Faculty had addressed the mid semester assessment clash by bringing in an assessment matrix to avoid overlap. More joint assessment had been included to help lessen load. The panel asked if there was a faculty policy on amount of time it takes to give students feedback and were informed that there was not one at faculty level.

It was noted that there were service contracts for equipment and that the faculty had a budget of €80k for support for equipment.

Performance of Faculty (Vol 1 A, pg. 20)

The Panel queried that on Page 21 research numbers were 55 and on page 54 research graduation was 22? Over 5 years is this graduation rate too low? The Faculty responded that some students were taking longer and some are part time, and that there was only small attrition. The Panel asked the question of the 35 students in 2013 how many graduated. The Faculty responded that the Research office have this data but were asked should this be held in Faculty.

The Full Time student numbers on Pg. 22 were discussed with % change of -45, -40, etc. by the panel. The Faculty will be reviewing their programme portfolio in the Programmatic Review.

The Awards on Pg. 46 were examined and Environmental science was noted as lower? The Faculty explained that this was being addressed in the new version of the programme with regards to number of assessment etc.? International students on Pg. 55 were discussed and if they were having an impact on grades? It was noted that Erasmus perform very well and that Canadian students perform very well in life sciences.

Forensic science extern report on Pg. 118 was discussed. It was to do with the standard of biology. One student was interviewed and the student didn't perform well. The issue was discussed with lecturers and there were no issues in subsequent years.

Data Set Volume 1b

In Forensics year 3 Pg. 10 there was an issue identified with Access to IT - Wi-Fi, printing, access to pc etc. in new building and an issue with access to GIS software. These were resolved and students were given access in the evening to a lab with the software. ? This software is now cloud based.

The panel asked around the use of ISSE data? The faculty explained that they had used own survey more.

Faculty implementation of Inst. strategic plan (Vol 1a, Pg. 15) – 6 Pillars

The Faculty Full Time student numbers are static and this is the biggest challenge for the faculty, but that they were doing good job in maintaining them. They have a number of initiatives in stem.

The faculty are currently working on L6 Science Apprenticeship and hope to have in place for sept.

The panel identified 78 actions and 50 sub actions in strategic plan and asked if this was too many? The Faculty agreed but had identified priorities.

The panel asked how Pg. students are supported. The faculty outlined developmental modules in writing thesis, interview skills etc. The panel asked if there should be a Graduate Research Committee as this was becoming standard practice in sector

With regards to T&L priorities the Faculty detailed the TEAM project that had been very successful. Other T&L priorities were in delivery processes and assessment processes.

The newly formed CELT was developing materials and being requested to provide a wide range of training. . An example was UDL training rolled out.

Pillar 4 Partnership and external engagement

Engagement activities such as Sligo Science festival and Student engagement with local industry in h&s was detailed.

Pillar 5 – Shaping and Influencing Economic, Social and Cultural Development

There has been extensive staff involvement in national agencies. The faculty had been involved in series of radio programmes on science for the local radio station. .

Pillar 6 Organisation and Governance

The faculty had restructured as the Department of Life Science had grown too large. They are also looking at new programmes in nutrition.

List of programmes on Pg. 169 for programmatic review was noted. Changes are being made to portfolio.

Part 7 Meeting of Meeting with Industry and Students

Meeting with Industry and Students around Industrial engagement with IT Sligo

The companies outlined their engagement with IT Sligo. This included:-

Upskilling,

Recruitment,

Springboard Programmes,

Staff studying for QP.

Examples were given of staff going from L6 through to L8.

Sponsor student research projects – titles and mentoring

There was some involvement as External examiners.

The Panel asked if the company's needs were being met and how do IT Sligo respond to these needs.

The employers responded that overall it was very good. The relationship was two way and working well. The employers gave feedback on programmes – mainly on course content – and went through new IT Sligo proposals – attributes and technical skills. Gave input of what looking for over next 3-5 years and IT Sligo had responded well.

The employers were asked if they had difficulty retaining staff and had a high turnover. Often the issues is with people not from Sligo who leave to move off closer to home. The problem is loss of talent is important for our region and the TU will help address this.

The employers were asked if they could assist with the strategic plan objective of lecturer placement. Industry are looking at projects of 6 months and this could this be an option for IOT staff.

Student experience

A graduate outlined their undergraduate degree and then came back to undertake research.

Of your class how many are in the region – quite a high number

The employers were asked about different skill mixes and opportunities for IT Sligo graduates. A number of developments across all the employers were outlined that made it clear that IT Sligo graduates would be in demand.

Employers were asked if they had any concerns over graduate skillset that would be produced by the new TU. They said that they had no concerns about this.

Part 8 Findings of the Panel

Commendations

1. The Panel commends the Faculty on its Industrial engagement and acknowledges that it is an area of strength.
2. The Panel commends the Faculty on the growth in online delivery and that this demonstrates the increase of the impact of the faculty nationally and internationally.
3. The Panel commends the Faculty on its increase in its level of research output and numbers of postgraduate enrolments.
4. The Panel commends the Faculty on the number of new programmes validated over the period.

Recommendations

1. The Faculty should ensure that level of dedicated technical support for research is adequate for the current activity and for planned increases.
2. The Faculty should formulate a policy of timely and appropriate student assessment feedback.
3. Whilst there was evidence of benchmarking in research output the panel recommend that be extended all other areas as appropriate.
4. Benchmarking of progression and retention rates should carried using national data such as ISSE and HEA.
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Evidence that they have responded adequately. It was noted that some extern reports were not available.

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Strong evidence of collaborations with employers and other providers

4. An evaluation of staff contribution to the achievements of the Faculty strategic plan, together with staff training and development needs

Evidence given of current staff development and training need analysis.

5. Staff CV's, updated to include research and publications.

A full set of Staff CVs were supplied.

Part 9 Conclusion

The Faculty of Science carried out a self-evaluation during the academic year 2018/19. This culminated in a Faculty Plan submission that was assessed by a Panel of external experts in February 2019, in accordance with the institute's Quality Assurance procedures.

The evaluation process included a review of the documentation submitted by the Faculty and meetings with the Faculty Management and the Academic staff took place. There was a very positive meeting with external stakeholders, in which they indicated their satisfaction with the Institute, the Faculty and the staff.

Following the review, the Panel specified 4 Commendations, and 11 Recommendations.

The outcome of this review will be submitted to the Academic Council for adoption.



Stephen McManus

Chairperson

Colin McLean

VP Academic Affairs and Registrar

Date: 05/06/2019

Appendix I Agenda

Panel dinner: Monday, 11th February, 2019

<i>Date/Time</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Room</i>
20:00	Panel dinner	Clayton Hotel

Panel: Tuesday, 12th February, 2019

<i>Date/Time</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Room</i>
08:30-10:00	Private meeting of Panel	Institute Board Room, IT Sligo
10:00-10:15	Meeting with President and Head of Faculty on Institute Strategic Plan and HEA Mission Based Performance Compact	Institute Board Room, IT Sligo
10:15-11:00	Meeting with Head of Faculty, Heads of Departments on Faculty Plan . To consider the Faculty Plan (as above)	Institute Board Room, IT Sligo
11:00-11:15	Coffee	Institute Board Room, IT Sligo
11:15-12:00	Plenary Session: Continuity of meeting with Head of Faculty, Heads of Departments, Programme Chairs and senior academic staff (Faculty Policy Committee) . To consider the Faculty Plan (as above)	Institute Board Room, IT Sligo
12:00-13:00	Panel to identify Breakout groups into 3 topics: Continuity of meeting with Head of Faculty, Heads of Departments, Programme Chairs and senior academic staff (Faculty Policy Committee) . To consider the Faculty Plan (as above)	Room TBC Room TBC Room TBC (note takers 1 x Registrars, 2 x Faculty)
13:00-14:00	Lunch and meeting with employers and graduates	Institute Board Room, IT Sligo
14.00- 15.00	Tour of facilities (optional)	Faculty
15-00-16:00	Private meeting of Panel to agree Findings including top line conditions and recommendations/Coffee	Institute Board Room, IT Sligo
16:00	Feedback to Faculty	Institute Board Room, IT Sligo
16:45	Finish	Institute Board Room, IT Sligo

Appendix II: Membership of Review Panel

Title	Name	Surname	Role	Institution/Company
Mr	Stephen	McManus	Chairperson	Former Registrar Dundalk IT
Mr	Seamus	O'Shea	Head of School	Tralee Institute of Technology
Ms	Michele	McKeon Bennett	Head of Department	Limerick Institute of Technology
Mr	John	Behan	Head of Department	School of Science IT Tallaght
Dr	Gerard	Fleming	Senior Lecturer, Department of Microbiology,	National University of Ireland Galway
Dr	Donal	Coveney	Employer/industrial Representative	TopChem PHARMACEUTICALS
Mr	Aaron	Burke	Student Representative	Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology
Mr	Colin	McLean	Note taker	IT Sligo

Appendix III: List of documentation circulated to the Panel

The following documentation relevant to the Review was circulated to the Panel in advance of the meeting.

- Faculty Planning, Terms of Reference.
- A proposed agenda and list of panel members. The agenda will be finalised when we meet to familiarise the Panel with the process.
- A hard copy of the concise Faculty planning document together with a USB key containing a softcopy with hyperlinks to supporting documentation.
- Map of Sligo
- Panel Visit Claim form

Appendix IV Staff members who met with the panel

Appendix 1

Tuesday, 12th February, 2019
Academic Staff attending

Name	Discipline Area	Signature
Lil Rudden	Lil Rudden	Environmental Science
Aideen Considine		
Edel Costello	Env. Science	Edel Costello
Shirley Markley		
Eoin Gillespie	Env. Science	Eoin Gillespie
Guy Marsden		
Ken Monaghan	HEALTH & NUTRITION	Ken Monaghan
Laura Keaver		
Tom Patton		
Stephen Daly	Life Science (Med/Biol/Pharm)	Stephen Daly
Ted Mc Gowan	Life Sciences	Ted Mc Gowan
Noel Connaughton	Life Sciences Dept	Noel Connaughton
Sharon Barrett		
James Brennan	James Brennan	James Brennan
Frances Lucy	Frances Lucy	Frances Lucy
Thomas Smyth	HEALTH & NUTRITION	Thomas Smyth
Deirdre Collery		
Kieran Tobin	COL.	Kieran Tobin
Suresh Pillai		
Fiona Mc Ardle	Life Science	Fiona Mc Ardle
De'lick Beeen	Life science	De'lick Beeen

Appendix V: External Stakeholders who met with the Panel

<u>Industry</u>		
<u>Name</u>	<u>Company</u>	
<u>1 Wrafter, Emmet</u>	<u>Abbvie, Manorhamilton Road, Sligo,</u>	<u>None</u>
<u>3 MCMANUS, ROSS H</u>	<u>Abbvie, Ballytivnan, Sligo</u>	<u>None</u>
<u>Mary Kivlehan</u>	<u>Allergan, Westport</u>	
<u>Dr Pat Glynn</u>	<u>Ex Elanco</u>	<u>None</u>
	<u>GRADUATES</u>	
		<u>Programme studied at IT Sligo</u>
<u>Name</u>		
Jonathon Kelly	Hollister, Ballina	Health & Safety
Eithne Davis	IT Sligo - Postgrad	Environmental Science