

Chapter 7 Student Access, Transfer, Progression and Supports

7.1 Introduction

The institute has, as part of its Quality assurance procedures, systematic arrangements to cover all area related to student admission, access, transfer and progression. These procedures are implemented consistently in a transparent manner and in conjunction with the actual academic programme of study, to ensure the smooth progression of a student through their chosen study and also ensure there is fair recognition of their qualification on completion.

There are also a range of more general resources and supports available to students which are actively promoted through the institute in partnership with the Student Union. These are continuously monitored on an on-going basis and adapted and expanded as required.

7.2 Access Transfer and Progression

The Admissions Office provides on-going support in such areas as admissions, registration, grants and fees. The Academic staff provide support to the Recognition of prior learning and advice on programme transfer, advanced entry etc.

Refer to the website study pages for information relating to all courses.
<https://www.itsligo.ie/courses/>

Admission to Full-time undergraduate programmes

All applications for entry to the first year of IT Sligo's full-time undergraduate courses are made through the Central Applications Office (CAO). While the majority of incoming students to first year hold the Irish Leaving Certificate, IT Sligo welcomes applications from all types of students such as Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Further Education (FE) candidates, other school leaving exams (GCE A-Levels, BTEC, HNDs, etc.), and mature students. QQI FE scores are converted to CAO points and candidates can apply to any programme in the Institute on this basis. Because IT Sligo is committed to facilitating the entry of QQI FE candidates, a target of 20% of places is set on each programme for holders of Level 5 or Level 6 awards.

Admission by Advanced Entry

Application for advanced entry to years beyond Year 1 are made by direct application to the Institute. Each application is assessed by a member of academic staff to ensure that the applicant meets the entry requirements for advanced entry and that the learning outcomes that the student has achieved are sufficient to allow advanced entry to a programme. The Institute publishes

criteria for admission to add-on programmes on the Entry Requirements Section of the Institute's website.

Admission to Online part time programmes:

The Institute offers a range of online courses at certificate, degree and postgraduate level across a range of discipline areas. Applications for these part time online programmes are made directly to the Institute through the website and they are assessed by members of academic staff. IT Sligo participates in various initiatives such as Springboard and Skillnet which provides financial support for students.

Internal Transfer

Internal Transfer from one programme to another is facilitated where there is sufficient overlap between modules and learning outcomes. Each application is assessed by a member of academic staff. A number of programmes have been developed with a common first year to facilitate students who do not want to specialise until year 2.

Progression

IT Sligo offers a wide range of courses in different disciplines as well as the opportunity to progress through them. All courses fit within the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) – the official system of qualification recognition in Ireland (www.nfq.ie). Following completion of a lower level award, a student can progress up the ladder system to Level 10.

Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the generic term for learning assessment mechanisms such as Accreditation of Prior Learning or Advanced Academic Standing, which are used within Higher Education to describe the awarding of credit / exemptions to applicants on the basis of demonstrated learning that has occurred prior to admission. Recognition of prior learning involves awarding the applicants recognition in the form of initial or advanced admission to a programme, credits within programme, exemptions or an award. The learning can be certified or experiential.

Recognition of Prior Learning is an important element of EU policy for widening access to qualifications and supporting lifelong learning. In common with its European partners, the Irish government has made a commitment to support RPL and the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 established the right for a learner to get recognition for prior learning. The philosophy underlying RPL is to enable and encourage people to enter or re-enter formal education, leading to qualifications recognized by the National Framework of Qualifications. The process is detailed in EXAM012 Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure.

Student Vetting Policy

A number of courses at IT Sligo require students to undertake work placements that will bring them into contact with children and/or vulnerable adults and in which they will assume positions

of trust. Since the introduction of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 it is a criminal offence to allow any person (including students) to undertake work placements and/or any other activities that amount to “*Relevant Work or Activities*” which are defined in the Act. We are committed to protecting the safety of those children and vulnerable adults, for further detail see ADM017 Student Vetting Procedure.

Fitness to Study and Fitness to Practice

It is the policy of IT Sligo to widen the access to higher education and to address the learning needs of an increasingly diverse student body. In so doing it is committed to supporting, within available resources, all students with a disability in their endeavours to obtain an education at the Institute. Students with a disability are welcomed and reasonable accommodation will be made where practicable. Where additional support is necessary, it must be feasible within the current sphere of professional practice. It is possible however that regrettably, some persons otherwise qualified to undertake a programme may be unable to complete certain elements for reason of health or physical ability. Good health in the context of Fitness to Study and Fitness to Practice means that an individual’s health status is such that they are well enough to undertake safe and effective study & practice under supervision. Good health does not necessarily mean the absence of any disability/specific learning difficulty or health condition. Many people with health conditions or disabilities or specific learning difficulties are able to practice with or without adjustments to support their practice and are legally supported in this by the Equal Status Acts. The Institute’s ADM022 Fitness to Study Policy & Procedure and the ADM026 Fitness to Practice Policy & Procedure set out how the Institute deals with concerns about a student’s fitness to study and/or fitness to practice. These procedures are available on the Student Hub of the Institutes Website.

Physical Activity Requirements

Students on a number of specific programmes participate in practical modules that include elements of physical exercise. This is to ensure that students participate in physical exercise at a level that suits them best. At registration stage for the programmes concerned, students are requested to fill out a simple self-assessment questionnaire. The information is reviewed by our Medical Services staff. Where considered necessary, students may be invited for a follow-up medical assessment before participating in the physical exercise elements of their course.

Fees

Fees for full-time students are collected in accordance with Department of Education and Skills circulars on fees. Fees for on-line and part time learning are established on a commercial basis

and approved by the Executive Committee of the Institute annually are outlined on the individual programme web pages. The Student Record system provides details of all fees paid by each student. Procedures are set out for the payment, collection and refunding of fees. An appeal process is in place in respect of student liability in ADM038 Refund of Student Fees Procedure. Any student who remains dissatisfied with the way their appeal was handled has recourse to the Office of the Ombudsman.

7.3 Induction and Mentoring Support

The development of a feeling of belonging is important to the creation of an effective learning community. To this end, the Institute provides a comprehensive Induction experience to all its students. Typically a range of experiences is provided to discrete student cohorts, e.g. online, transfer students or international students but there are also common elements. The induction process may include virtual and face-to-face elements. The purpose of induction is primarily to create a feeling of belonging within the Institute, as well as the provision of necessary information related to the Institute, the programme of study, as well as the process of learning itself.

The Induction Programme is followed with other programmes to ensure that new students, particularly the fulltime school leavers are supported during their transition to third level. The specific programmes change from time to time but all of them offer opportunities for students and staff to support the first year students through networking and practical information. An example of this is the internationally recognised PASS peer mentoring programme. The co-ordination of induction and other specific initiatives is the responsibility of the Head of Student Success.

7.4 Student Success Strategy

The institute is committed to the goal of student success for all its learners. A Head of Student success at senior level was appointed in 2020. The institute in engages in a process to review and develop a range of student success supports that are reviewed annually. The strategy is based on broad consultation with stake holders and reviews of best practice internationally. The strategy addresses the totality of the learning experience, including but not limited to: professional development of staff, retention and progression issues, strategic development of support services, student participation in academic quality assurance activities and assessment and feedback.

The Institute created a specific student success officer post to co-ordinate efforts to improve retention. Apart from supporting the induction and mentoring activities outlined above, this

officer has specific responsibility for generating data for the institute to inform management and retention policy. Activities include but are not limited to:

- Gathering and Analysis of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) data
- Publish student data in relation to retention e.g., exam performance, pass rates, completion rates
- Implementation of specific initiatives e.g., Student Engagement and Attendance System Pilot(Seats)
- Other Initiatives for example the use of Intelliboard (<https://intelliboard.net/>).

This student retention policy has been developed to address the distinctive needs of IT Sligo. A diverse student population, widening participation and diverse levels of preparedness for higher education combined with many internal and external issues, all have an impact on retention levels. In recognising that many factors can be at play in student's early withdrawal from college, it follows that a collaborative approach is required to improve student retention rates. Addressing retention requires a coherent policy and a set of actions which recognises the holistic nature of this issue, the complete student experience, and the contribution of all sections of the institute in an integrated way. ADM016 Retention Policy, contains recommendations and suggested actions that Schools can implement to improve retention on their programmes.

7.5 Access Office

The Access Office provides supports for a range of students with disabilities and students with specific learning difficulties. Supports available include assistive technologies, learning support, general support for students with disabilities or ongoing illnesses, an assistive technology room, a fund for students with disabilities and a screening service for students to identify any learning difficulties. The Access Office also administers the Student Assistance Fund. This fund aims to ensure that students from a socio-economic disadvantaged background receive financial supports to enable them to fully benefit from their studies and in particular to assist them in overcoming financial obstacles which may otherwise cause them to abandon their studies. All students are eligible to apply for assistance to overcome acute or unexpected hardship. Any tuition or registration fees must be paid in full before students can receive funding from the Student Assistance Fund.

IT Sligo is fully committed to developing and promoting initiatives that seek to counter educational disadvantage. There are several strands to our Access Office activities and initiatives including:

- Full participation in the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) and Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) schemes.
- Students are assessed for learning difficulties and referred on for appropriate support such as help from Learning Support Tutor, maths support, academic writing support and assistive technology, where appropriate.
- The Disability Support Service acts as an advocate on behalf of the students with a disability, or special needs in the Institute of Technology, Sligo. By registering with the Disability Support Service, supports can be requested and developed in relation to academic and physical requirements within the college on the student's behalf.
- Mature Students: IT Sligo welcomes applications from mature students – up to 20% of places on courses in the Institute are reserved for mature applicants. Applications are made through the CAO in the usual way. An information evening for interested applicants is held in January each year. Mature Student workshops are held in the week immediately preceding the commencement of first year classes, for incoming mature students who have been away from education for some time.
- Financial Supports: The access office provides limited financial supports through the Student Assistance Fund and also offer various Bursaries both Internally and Externally (e.g. PATH 2, 1916 fund).

7.6 Library

Key to any third level academic institution is the availability of high quality resources for study and research for student and for staff. The Yeats Library is a large space spread over three floors and situated centrally on campus and provide an in-person and online library support to all students. It holds a stock of over 50,000 books in print. Access is also provided to a further 100000+ electronic books as well as a wide range of journals, electronic databases, films, maps, official publications, and other resources. There is extensive information about the use of the library, regulations for borrowing from the loan collection, searching the book catalogues, library guides, access to past exam papers, an online helpdesk and all the procedures associated with the use of the library on the web site at <https://library.itsligo.ie/>. The library is continually updating its services to ensure they are suited to the needs of all learners whether they are accessing their programmes on a full time or part time/online basis and at all levels of study i.e., up to doctorate level. The library also manages an Interlibrary Loan Service to access items in other library collection, this is outlined in the 'Interlending and Document Supply Overview' section of the library website.

Licensed access to Yeats Library online resources is authenticated using staff and student logins. A single search facility is provided on the Yeats Library website, branded as EOLAS. Because online learning forms a significant part of all programmes for the foreseeable future, the Yeats Library anticipates it will be moving an increasing proportion of its budget from print to the acquisition of online resources. The responsibility for selection of library resources is shared between the professional library staff and academic teaching staff. Library staff bring an overall sense of balance to the provision of resources while academic staff will have expertise in the subjects within programmes and courses which they teach. The library continually reviews the collection, both print and online, to ensure that its budget is directed in the most effective way and to ensure a good distribution of resources across the various programme areas. The library will accept requests for library resources from individual staff members (teaching and non-teaching), students and users from the extended regional community. These may be considered in discussions with members of course/programme boards or for library reference resources. Consideration will also be given to the library's responsibility to support individual research by teaching staff which will enrich their teaching activity.

The library procedures that impact directly on academic programmes are available in the Staff Portal in the Institute Procedures manual. The library also maintains an internal staff manual containing procedures for a wide range of day-to-day tasks. Since these are of relevance to library staff only, they are not included in the Institute procedures manual.

Library Resource Management

The Yeats Library divides its acquisitions budget each year between print and online resources. Online acquisitions are in the form of individual eBook purchases and ejournal subscriptions. There are also subscriptions to larger databases of ebooks, ejournals, standards and other material which are continuously updated and reviewed. The provision of IReL funding to Institutes of Technology, if it occurs, will have a significant effect on the subscriptions available in the library. The bulk of material will be in English. Where the Institute teaches a language, substantial language learning resources will be put in place in addition to a representative selection of the language's literature. The Institute will pay special attention to the development of the Irish language. All Irish language development projects in the Institute will be fully supported by the library. The library sees as its responsibility the provision of a representative collection of all material published in Irish. The Librarian is currently responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Official Languages Act in the Institute.

Academic Writing Centre and Maths Support Centre

The Academic Writing Centre offers advice and support on all aspects of academic writing to all students and staff. Students can avail of one-to-one appointments with experienced writing tutors in a friendly and informal atmosphere to improve the quality and academic integrity of their work. The centre also offers advice and support to staff who are writing for publication, writing reports or writing dissertations. The centre supports the provision of centralised resources through the Virtual learning Environment (Moodle) and also bespoke training.

The purpose of the Maths Support Centre is to support students' mathematics learning across all programmes by providing a dedicated area with supervised access to help and resources in a relaxed informal environment and through addressing the mathematics needs of special groups.

7.7 Student Supports

The Institute has in place other support services that do not relate directly to the academic supports above. An extensive Student Guide is updated and published each year and can be found on the Student hub section of the website [here](#). This contains wealth of information for students about the campus, all the academic and non-academic supports available and how to access these services.

The Careers Office

The Careers Officer provides advice and career guidance to prospective and current students within the Institute and to other third level education providers. They also provide a service to students who are about to graduate to help them make well informed decisions for their future careers.

Counselling Services

The Student Counsellors provide counselling to registered students of IT Sligo. Counselling involves the provision of professional, psychotherapeutic assistance to students who are experiencing personal issues that are affecting their well-being and their academic performance. The counsellors help students through these difficult times. They also encourage students to embrace positive living and to develop positive mental health habits.

Pastoral Care Service

The Pastoral Care Team offer personal support and advice to students of all faiths and none.

Student Health Service

The IT Sligo Student Health Service offers a comprehensive health service to all registered students and apprentices throughout the academic year. The student medical services are available on campus five days a week. They provide a proactive health service, focusing primarily on health promotion, preventative medicine and encouraging healthy lifestyles. They facilitate students attend to their personal health concerns and maintain healthy lifestyles without having to leave the campus.

International Office

The International Office at IT Sligo co-ordinates admissions, support and administration for international students studying at IT Sligo. The mission of the office is to facilitate a quality educational and cultural experience for all our international students, while simultaneously helping, as far as possible, to ensure a fulfilling international experience for our Irish student abroad. Working closely with staff throughout the Institute, the international office staff strive to provide a friendly and efficient service to all our international students and deliver an efficient turnaround to all application for admission.

IT Sligo Student's Union (ITSSU)

ITSSU has three full time sabbatical officers and a number of other officers and staff to provide ongoing support, guidance, and representation. ITSSU works closely with Institute management to ensure that student welfare and facilities are continuously developed. The Students Union is incorporated as a limited company and works with Institute Management to provide support and representation for students.

ITSSU oversee the operation of Clubs & Societies. More than 70 Clubs and Societies are supported to ensure that there are activities to suit all tastes. Funding for individual Clubs & Societies is assessed and allocated by a committee comprising Institute staff and ITSSU. A block grant is allocated to ITSSU who then distribute the funds.

7.8 Other Policies relating to Student Access transfer Progression and Support

Code of Conduct

IT Sligo respects third-level students as responsible members of the community. Accordingly, it expects that each student of IT Sligo will behave in a mature, reasonable, and honest manner

which protects the good name of IT Sligo, meets the requirements of his/her programme of study, has due regard to the rights of others and does not adversely affect the conduct of IT Sligo business and its good name. Behaviour which damages IT Sligo's good name in the wider community or engaging in behaviour which causes IT Sligo to come into disrepute is not acceptable. The Code of Conduct set out in the [Student Charter](#) outlines the behaviour expected from Students of the Institute. Information relating to the Student Charter, the Code of Conduct and the procedures for Students and Staff to make a complaint are outlined on the Student Charter & Complaints Procedure section of the Institute website.

[Criminal Convictions Policy](#)

IT Sligo is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and is keen to encourage a diverse student population with a wide range of talents, backgrounds, and experiences. We consider applications for admission on the basis of the qualifications, skills, abilities, and personal qualities of the applicant. We acknowledge the critical role of education in the rehabilitative process and having a criminal record will not necessarily debar an applicant unless the nature and seriousness of the offence in question makes it inappropriate for them to be admitted. Applications will be processed in accordance with ADM011 IT Sligo Criminal Convictions Policy.

[Child protection Policy](#)

The Institute has a legal responsibility to protect children and vulnerable adults. To this end it has established a Child Protection Committee and a Designated Liaison Person to liaise with Tusla and the Gardai. ADM030_Child Protection Policy, provides further details.

[Policy on Gender Expression and Identity](#)

IT Sligo is committed to providing an inclusive and diverse environment in which each member of our community is valued for their unique perspectives and encouraged to reach their full potential. The Institute recognises the range, type and nature of gender diversity within its community. As this is a rapidly developing area formal policies are being developed to provide a framework to ensure good practice in its approach to equality, inclusion and diversity and will establish the philosophy and values that the Institute applies to its operations, in recognition of the need for respect and dignity for each person. The purpose of these policies will be to guide institutional action and to direct procedures that impact on gender identity and expression in a manner that is consistent and does not discriminate against individuals on any of the following grounds: gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, or membership of the traveller community.

Equal Opportunities Policy

Equality legislation prohibits discrimination on nine distinct grounds: gender, marital status, family status, race, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability or membership of the travelling community. The overall aim of the Institute's Equal Opportunities Policy, ADM028, is to promote equality of opportunity for all students, both full time and part time, by ensuring that all academic and other practices operate on the basis of the appropriate merits, qualifications, abilities and potential of individuals.

Revision History

Rev. No.	Issue Date	Description of Change
000 to 013	Feb 2003	All chapters of the Quality Manual were incorporated into one document, see chapter 1 for revision history.
014	Jan 17	Updating for online version with links. Chapters separated into separate document. Future revisions will have separate revision numbers
015	30/06/2021	Chapter 7 and Some sections of Chapter 10 combined in to one chapter to address all the aspects of Access transfer and progression and student supports in place for all students. Approved AC 15/06/2021