



**Institute of Technology Tallaght  
Learning, Teaching, and Assessment Strategy**

2018

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## Foreword

This strategy outlines our approach to delivering the best possible learning experience for our students that will promote independent learning and academic achievement. In implementing the strategy departments and lecturers will strive to ensure that students are exposed to modern, effective teaching methods that engage students.

As a modern innovative third level institution we strive to continuously improve our approaches to teaching and learning such that students get the best possible academic experience and results during their time with us.

Given the nature of continuous improvement we shall be revisiting this strategy time and again to validate that it is delivering the desired results for both students and staff alike. The strategy will change over time.

As an institute we have invested significant time and resources in developing our lecturing capability based on international best practice models. Our staff has participated in a variety of workshops, seminars and conferences and some have pursued specialist qualifications in pedagogy. All of these activities are aimed at delivering on our Strategic Plan commitments.

I would like to thank all those who have contributed to the development of this strategy.

**Mr Thomas Stone,  
President**

## 1. Introduction: IT Tallaght Mission & Vision

The Mission of the Institute of Technology Tallaght is to be the centre of higher education and knowledge creation within South Dublin County and its environs, to broaden participation in higher education in the region, to be recognised as a leader in supporting research and commercial innovation, and to assist in the advancement of the economic, social and cultural life of the region.

Our **Strategic Plan 2016-19 (p.17)** sets out our strategic goals under seven pillars, all of which impact on our teaching, learning and assessment strategy:

**Technological University Designation:** We aim to meet the established criteria for designation as a Technological University with our partners and to complete the structural and change process phases involved to deliver this project.

**Career Focused Quality Higher Education:** We will optimise the effectiveness of the teaching and learning experience for our students, maintaining our focus on career-oriented programmes while also enhancing quality assurance related to teaching, learning and assessment, including the learning environment and relevant links to research and innovation.

**Research, Innovation and Enterprise:** We will strengthen the continuum of initiatives from research through innovation to enterprise development, with an emphasis on the social and economic impact of these activities for the region.

**Enhanced Engagement with Industry and the Community:** We will make engagement with industry and community a central tenet of our research activities, academic programmes and civic engagement initiatives.

**Internationalisation:** We will continue to implement a range of initiatives to internationalise the curriculum, integrate into global education networks, and create a multicultural society that respects difference and promotes diversity.

**Campus Development:** We will expand the campus to provide for a Sports Science, Health and Recreation building, and a designated Tourism, Hospitality and Food building. The Institute also aspires to advance along the path of becoming a 'Health Promoting University' and be an exemplar of environmental sustainability.

**People and Culture:** We will continue to enable and support our staff to achieve our strategic goals and to drive professional excellence in education and research, and the student experience.

### 1.1 Our Educational Philosophy

IT Tallaght's educational philosophy combines a practical, career-focused approach to education with a holistic student development perspective. It is underpinned by core values that emphasise student-centred learning, rigorous processes of research and discovery, critical enquiry and entrepreneurship. We aim to enrich teaching,

improve learning experiences, support personalised learning<sup>1</sup> and strengthen research and development. Through close, effective links among education, research and business, we ensure that educational programmes are designed and delivered to equip graduates with the knowledge and competencies to succeed in their future careers. Our goal is to educate our students for employment, for citizenship and for personal development.

## 1.2 Our Vision for Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Our Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) strategy fosters collaboration between students and staff to ensure that successful learning takes place in a diverse and vibrant learning community. Building on success so far in learning, teaching and assessment we aim to:

- Be forward-thinking in the design of our programmes, providing vibrant and challenging learning opportunities that allow students to develop their knowledge and to advance their career
- Support personalized learning, tailoring education to meet the different needs of students<sup>2</sup> and offering flexible learning pathways<sup>3</sup>
- Develop stronger links with enterprise and employers so that our programmes provide state-of-the-art education that is practice-based,<sup>4</sup> career-focused and

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<sup>1</sup> There is no widespread agreement on the definition of personalised learning or personalization. The *Glossary of Education Reform* refers to it as a “a diverse variety of educational programs, learning experiences, instructional approaches, and academic-support strategies that are intended to address the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, or cultural backgrounds of individual students. Personalized learning may also be called **student-centred learning**, since the general goal is to make individual learning needs the primary consideration in important educational and instructional decisions” (Glossary of Education Reform, <http://edglossary.org/>). The term is also closely aligned if not synonymous with the concept of **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**, which is defined as “an educational framework based on research in the learning sciences, including cognitive neuroscience, that guides the development of flexible learning environments that can accommodate individual learning differences” (Rose, DH, & Meyer, A., 2002).

<sup>2</sup> This is underpinned by the concepts of personalised learning, student centred learning and UDL as outlined above.

<sup>3</sup> The key component of a learning pathway is that a programme of education is designed to promote evidence of personalized learning, with an emphasis on competency-based learning. The approach also recognises that learning that can occur outside the formal environment e.g. through civic engagement activities, as well as time spent in training and employment. Flexibility means that young people can adapt their learning pathway as they go along, to suit their interests and abilities. Flexible learning pathways also support movement between education, the workplace and training. Learning pathways offer the learner the opportunity to develop a way of tracking and creating digital evidence of learning which would help create a description of who they are as a person and what they can do. See <http://www.openclassroomonline.com/learning-pathways-post-1-what-is-a-learning-pathway/>

<sup>4</sup> Practice-based education (PBE) is a broad term that refers to education that prepares graduates for their practice occupations. “A PBE curriculum is one that frames goals, strategies and assessment around engagement with and preparation for practice; it values both learning for and learning in practice and occupational contexts” (Sheehan, D. and Joy Higgs, ‘Practice-Based Education’, in *Realising Practice-Based Education for Life and Work* (Sheehan, D. et al., 2013, p.13).

relevant and innovative in its design, content and delivery, addressing Ireland's knowledge and skills needs

- Promote the desired graduate attributes and ensure that they are developed through the inclusion in the curriculum of components to promote and foster employability skills, entrepreneurship, creativity, independent and lifelong learning, civic engagement, social responsibility and a global perspective /competencies
- Encourage programme teams to design curricula that are informed by their research and/or scholarly activities and individual modules, which can be shared by other academic programmes
- Enhance the students' learning experience, making assessment activities, support and feedback, and the use of portfolios and personal development plans<sup>5</sup>, powerful integrated features of learning
- Implement a professional development framework for staff that improves practice and promotes excellence in learning, teaching and assessment, including elearning<sup>6</sup>
- Develop and improve our educational strategies through an evidence-based approach that utilizes information and tools so that strategies are derived from and/or informed by objective evidence<sup>7</sup>

Underpinning these activities is the quality assurance commitment to continue to ensure that curricula are designed in accordance with Institute policies and with the frameworks and guidelines offered by external bodies, including the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG), the Bologna Process, Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI) guidelines, the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, and the National Student Engagement

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<sup>5</sup> Personal Development Planning (PDP) is defined as 'a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development' (*Personal Development Planning and Employability*, Higher Education Academy, 2009). The primary objective of PDP is to improve the capacity of individuals to understand what and how they are learning, and to review, plan and take responsibility for their own learning (QAA, 2001).

<sup>6</sup>While there are different definitions of elearning, it is most commonly understood as the use of electronic devices (computers, tablets, the internet, phones and other devices) to deliver educational or training content to learners. The use of ICT technologies can improve the quality, flexibility and accessibility of learning for students by facilitating access across multiple time zones and enabling students to access learning opportunities at any time and from any place. For an overview of trends in education, see <https://elearningindustry.com/future-elearning-trends-and-technologies-in-the-global-elearning-industry>

<sup>7</sup> An educational strategy is described as evidence-based, data-based, or research-based, if educators compile, analyse, and use objective evidence to inform the design an academic program or guide the modification of instructional techniques (<http://edglossary.org/evidence-based>). Examples of useful resources in the Irish case are the *Irish Survey of Student Engagement* (ISSE) and the more recent *Online Resource for Learning Analytics* (ORLA), which was developed by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. ORLA was developed to support institutions to use existing data to benefit their students' learning and reach out to students experiencing difficulties.

Programme (NStEP). Engagement with industry and professional and regulatory bodies is also a key element of our education strategy and process.

### 1.3 Our Focus

Our strategy builds on the flexibility already enjoyed by our students engaged in full-time, part-time and other flexible modes of delivery. This flexibility is reflected in our modularized and semesterised environment, which is designed to encourage wider participation and engagement with our diverse student body. It supports the mission of the Institute which is to:

- Provide learners with higher education opportunities from Level 6 to Level 10 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)
- Widen participation in higher education
- Create career ready graduates for business, industry and society
- Provide comprehensive lifelong learning opportunities for the region
- Provide educational supports to business, industry and society
- Engage in research, innovation and enterprise development
- Contribute to social, cultural and economic development
- Enhance internationalisation and integration within the region

Consistent with the above mission, our LTA strategy is outlined under five thematic areas:

1. The Structure and Design of Academic Programmes
2. The Development of Graduate Attributes
3. Pedagogical Approaches & Assessment Strategies
4. Professional Development of Staff
5. The Enhancement of a Culture that Supports Learners and Promotes Student Success

The remainder of this document elaborates our Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy under these five headings.

## 2. Structure and Design of Programmes

The programme structure provides the context in which learning can happen. Under the Bologna Framework, the *European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System* (ECTS) was adopted and the Institute's undergraduate programmes will continue to equate to 60 ECTS credits per academic year. All modules, whether in undergraduate or taught postgraduate programmes are designed to carry a weighting of 5 ECTS or multiples of 5 ECTS.

Working within both the ECTS system and QQI guidelines, academic departments regularly review the structure and design of programmes. The aim is to ensure that they provide the best context for learning, in terms of offering flexibility and choice, achieving a balance between knowledge breadth and depth, and taking into account the value of the student experience broadly defined, versus the acquisition of sector/discipline skills and knowledge. In particular, Programme Boards will:

## 2.1 Review Programme Credit Structures

Programme Boards monitor programme structures and performance to ensure that the number of modules and associated ECTS each semester are optimised for successful learning and programme management. The majority of programmes follow a standard 6 x 5 credit modules per semester. The review of programme structures takes into account research and feedback by, for example, the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (NFETL). Using data from across HEIs in Ireland, the NFETL report that on average students complete a much higher number of assessments per ECTS credit in single-semester modules than in full-year modules. In general, the higher the number of 5 credit modules the higher the volume of assessments.<sup>8</sup> The number of assessments per ECTS credit completed by students also differs between fields of study. In the light of more recent research in this area, Programme Boards will review the most effective way of delivering programmes from a student perspective, while working within the framework of the ECTS system.

## 2.2 Support Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Modules in Programme Design

To increase the breadth of the learner experience, where appropriate, the Institute provides flexibility and choice through the provision of electives. Relatedly, it will continue to develop 'generic Institute modules' that will add value to our students in a model that allows for mixing the composition of discipline groups. A cross-disciplinary approach to programme and module development will be facilitated to allow greater flexibility for the learner in terms of module mix. It is envisaged that modules will be developed across schools and departments to minimize unnecessary duplication in programme development and delivery.

## 2.3 Adopt a Practice-Based Education (PBE) Approach to the Curriculum

The changing need of higher education to interface more effectively with industry is widely documented, as has the rising awareness of those attributes which most benefit graduates seeking employment. In keeping with our *Practice-Based Education* (PBE) approach (defined p.2), the Institute will continue to support and prepare students for employment by designing curricula that connect the world of education to the world of work, incorporating work placements, applied industry projects, and other PBE strategies as appropriate. This aspect of our LTA is further elaborated in Section 3, which deals specifically with *The Development of Graduate Attributes*.

## 2.4 Promote Independent Learning, Lifelong Learning & Personal Development

Programme Boards will consider the workload of students for independent learning to ensure that greater emphasis is placed on independent learning as students progress. This will be reflected in the incorporation of, for example, final year projects and elearning portfolios, as well as Personal Development Plans (PDP's), which provide opportunities for both personal and professional development planning. In keeping with the need for graduates to continually update their learning as part of their continuing professional development (CPD), we seek to ensure that our students develop the independent learning skills required to engage in lifelong learning beyond their primary qualifications.

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<sup>8</sup>*Profile of Assessment Practices in Irish Higher Education*, National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning: Insights January 2017.



## 2.5 Enhance the First Year Experience

A stated objective of the *Institute Strategic Plan 2016-19* (p.20) is “to enhance the first year experience and support student success and retention through a series of designated actions implemented across all disciplines”. Programme Boards will design appropriate initiatives within their disciplines, reviewing the structure of the first year to ensure that provision is made to support students in engaging successfully with their programme and with developing the requisite skills e.g. for independent learning. Where appropriate, recognition of knowledge, skills and competencies developed outside of the formal learning environment will be accommodated.

## 2.6 Link Research and Teaching

We will continue to be proactive in strengthening the link between research and teaching through, for example, encouraging active research and innovation at undergraduate level and supporting the presentation and communication of this research to peers and the wider community. To ensure the attainment of this objective, Programme Boards will:

- Ensure that the content of programmes is informed by research and that students undertake research activities throughout their programme of studies e.g. case studies, research projects, literature reviews and action research assignments
- A module on research methods will be included on all programmes as well as research elements within modules as appropriate. This will support the development of research skills and their application across different modules

We recognize that an active research programme is vital in a dynamic education system seeking to respond to the needs of students, employers, community, government and society in general, and in helping educational institutions retain a relevance to the marketplace.

## 2.7 Support Co-curricular and Extra-curricular Activities

The Institute’s student-centred educational philosophy (*Strategic Plan 2016-19*, p.13), recognises the importance of the student voice and student representation. It is committed to contributing to a positive student experience that acknowledges the importance of the broader aspects of student learning associated with participation in sport and clubs and societies, and the ‘non-academic’ elements of student life i.e. outside the ‘core’ curriculum.

To support the holistic development of our students, Programme Boards and Student Services will work together to provide a comprehensive programme of activities that support student development through a combination of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

We will also collaborate with our students in realizing the objectives of the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP), a collaborative initiative under development by the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), the Higher Education

Authority (HEA) and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).<sup>9</sup> The NStEP programme has two main objectives. The first is to develop and support the implementation of a student training programme, specifically to Class Representatives. The second objective is to build capacity within institutions to provide high quality opportunities for learners to engage. This is elaborated further our LTA Strategy, in *Section 6: The Enhancement of a Culture that Supports Learners and Promotes Student Success*.

### 3 The Development of Graduate Attributes

Programme Boards will strive to enhance, embed and integrate employability skills and other graduate attributes<sup>10</sup> into the design of programmes, using imaginative approaches that will enhance engagement with industry and other stakeholders. This is in line with the commitment in our Strategic Plan 2016-19 (p.20) to promote the development of generic skills across all disciplines.

Our approach to developing the desired graduate attributes is outlined below under three main headings: Professional Body Recognition/Validation of Programmes; Inclusion of Modules to Support the Development of Graduate Attributes; and Support for Inclusiveness and Diversity.

#### 3.4 Professional Body Recognition/Validation of Programmes

Where possible, Programme Boards will seek accreditation by Professional and Regulatory Bodies. In accordance with our Strategic Plan, we will also:

- Promote the number of blended/distance/in-company programmes to advance the region and the national objectives in relation to lifelong learning and workforce development
- Engage with industry, enterprise, community and professional bodies in programme design and delivery to ensure that programmes are aligned effectively to the regional and national needs of the labour market and society, and facilitating work placements as appropriate
- Partner with the Dublin Regional Skills Forum, Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in the region, and other appropriate bodies to support co-ordinated academic planning and provision
- Incorporate and develop inter-disciplinary/multidisciplinary programmes to prepare graduates for complex professional roles in a changing technological world in order to meet enterprise requirements and market needs

The main influences on programme design are presented in the diagram below. As stated in our Strategic Plan 2016-19 (p.18), “a priority is placed on the employability

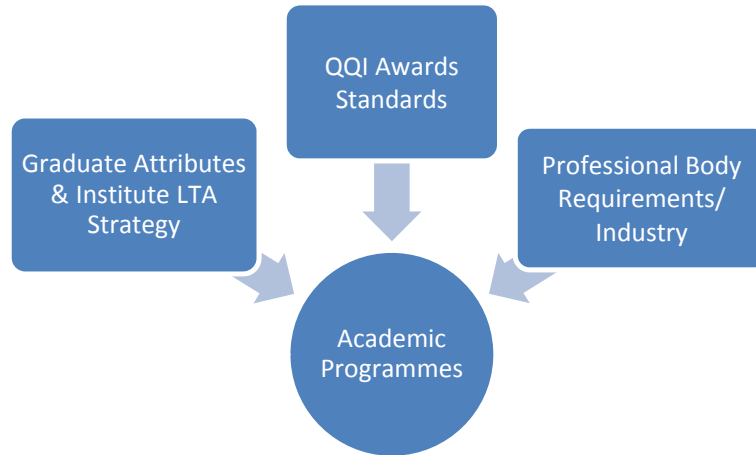
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<sup>9</sup> See <http://usi.ie/nstep/>

<sup>10</sup> Graduate attributes are generally defined as the qualities, skills and understandings that students should develop as a consequence of the learning they engage with on their programme of study. They are generic in that they are required by all graduates regardless of their discipline or field of study. That is not to say that they are independent of disciplinary/domain knowledge; rather, it is through studying a particular programme that these generic attributes are developed. Graduate attributes must therefore be integrated with and assessed through individual programme learning outcomes. According to Bowden et al., (2000), “Graduate attributes are the qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students should develop during their time with the institution and consequently shape the contribution they are able to make to their profession and society .... They are qualities that also prepare graduates as agents of social good in an unknown future”.

of graduates and on the development of generic work-related competencies". This is reflected in the enterprise focus of our courses of study and the industry-facing nature of research and innovation, which is directly relevant and contributes to the economic, social and cultural development of our region.

**Figure 1: Design of Academic Programmes**



### 3.5 Inclusion of Modules to Support Professional and Personal Development

The desired graduate attributes will be developed through the inclusion in the curriculum of components to promote and foster:

- employability skills
- entrepreneurship and creativity
- independent and lifelong learning
- civic engagement
- ethical behavior and social responsibility
- a global perspective/competencies
- communication skills and digital skills
- critical thinking and problem solving skills

Supported by a collaborative approach involving industry, academia and government, our curriculum is designed to educate graduates with the following key attributes:

Table 1: List of Graduate Attributes

Graduate Attributes	Description
Proficient, Highly-skilled, Practical & Capable	Our graduates are educated to be knowledgeable and proficient in their chosen field of study. Being proficient means having an advanced level of knowledge combined with skill and competence. A distinguishing feature of our programmes is that the education process is geared towards practice; it is relevant and applied. Therefore, graduates are practice-oriented, technically competent and numerate, and have the confidence to bring their knowledge to bear on real world problems.
Innovative, Creative, Entrepreneurial &	Graduates have an entrepreneurial mind-set reflected in a pro-active 'can-do' attitude. They have the curiosity and drive to discover, develop, invent

<b>Resilient</b>	and innovate. They will seek novel ways to drive change and to identify new opportunities and possibilities. They will be trained to anticipate and to deal with complex, difficult and unpredictable situations and to display resilience and inventiveness in overcoming obstacles.
<b>Critical and Analytical Problem Solvers</b>	Graduates are critical and analytical in their thinking. Critical thinking is clear, disciplined, rational, open-minded, and informed by evidence. It is associated with strong analytical skills and is characterized by an ability to recognize problems, gather information, provide solutions, make decisions, and understand the importance of prioritization and order of precedence in problem solving. Higher level graduates have a developed capacity for critical thinking within their discipline, a demonstrated capacity to conduct research and to bring their discipline knowledge to bear on real world problems. They provide insight into contemporary problems and have the confidence to respond to difficult challenges in a constructive way.
<b>Articulate &amp; Effective Communicators</b>	Graduates have the ability to communicate clearly, articulately and effectively. They display skill and versatility in written, verbal and digital media communications. They are also reflective, open to different views and able to listen and to lead persuasively - at local, national and global levels. Graduates guide public opinion with a high awareness of international concerns.
<b>Ethical &amp; Professionally Responsible</b>	Our graduates are educated to have high ethical standards in their personal, professional and civic domains. They will be aware of the importance of ethical values and behaviour within their profession - and the wider significance of ethical behaviour in creating a stable economy and society. Graduates will understand and value their unique contribution and role in society. Educated to work towards the common good they will seek the fullness of their human potential and get involved in civic life.
<b>Collaborative &amp; Adaptive</b>	Our graduates have an attitude of positive collaboration, oriented toward the achievement of goals. Students learn to interact effectively with people from different disciplines, backgrounds and cultures, through curricular and extra-curricular activities. They learn how to operate effectively as members of project teams and networks, to solve problems, generate and implement solutions, and to evaluate outcomes.
<b>Global Mindset/ Thinkers/Citizens</b>	Our graduates are open to different cultures and perspectives, prepared to work in a multi-cultural environment and to engage internationally, valuing diversity and respecting difference. They are globally as well as locally-engaged and help create a multicultural society that respects difference and promotes diversity.
<b>Independent and Lifelong Learners</b>	Our graduates are also committed to continually develop their knowledge and skills as part of a process of up-skilling and lifelong learning.

At a practical level, we will support the development of the graduate attributes through a number of measures, including:

- Providing opportunities for work-related learning through the incorporation of work placement opportunities, industry projects and preparation for employment modules on programmes. A stated goal of our Strategic Plan (p.24) is to “Increase the number of programmes with a work placement/ internship/ industry project element and/or Professional Body recognition/collaboration in programme accreditation”

- Expanding the number of research projects and theses undertaken in co-operation with organisations (industry, public, non-profit organisations) in the region (Strategic Plan 2016-19, p.24)
- Increasing the number of real-world projects, including social, artistic, cultural, and scientific events/activities/projects organized for and in conjunction with the local community/partners (Strategic Plan 2016-19, p.24)
- Supporting the design and delivery of flexible learning experiences to include independent and reflective learning, critical thinking, information literacy, communication skills and problem solving
- Supporting civic engagement by increasing the number of programmes with a module on Active Citizenship and/or a service learning module(s)<sup>11</sup> which account for credits
- Incorporating a module/part module on Enterprise/Innovation/Creativity (as appropriate to the discipline), as well as enterprise workshops and seminars to support the development of an entrepreneurial skill set that includes skills for innovation and creativity
- Increasing the number of learners participating in flexible programmes/modes of delivery and promote a culture of lifelong learning among graduates with opportunities for up-skilling and re-skilling (Strategic Plan 2016-19, p.19)
- Supporting the development of an international/global perspective among graduates through internationalizing the curriculum and providing opportunities for students to study, work and research abroad. Our Strategic Plan 2016-19 (p.25) states that “Each programme will engage students with an internationally informed curriculum that improves understanding of other economies, cultures and societies. This can be done by incorporating a module/component with an international focus and/or a language and/or an international visit/work placement. The curriculum will support employment in a global context and prepare graduates for employment in companies that trade internationally”.<sup>12</sup>
- **Support Inclusiveness and Diversity**

Our Strategic Plan (p.15) makes a commitment to “increase awareness and adoption of universal design principles in teaching, learning and assessment” and to “implement a range of initiatives to create a multicultural society that respects difference and promotes diversity” (Strategic Plan 2016-19, p.20). We will also integrate relevant recommendations of professional agencies into our teaching and

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<sup>11</sup> Service learning occurs when students, as part of their programme, participate in a project that assists a community partner in achieving a goal. For example, students may support social and community organisations by carrying out research, marketing and design work for them and this forms part of their continuous assessment.

<sup>12</sup> Appendix 1 provides a check list to facilitate incorporating graduate attributes into the curriculum.

learning approach. An example would be the HEA-supported *Association for Higher Education Access and Disability's Charter for Inclusive Teaching and Learning*, as well as relevant reports of the NFETL.

Support for inclusiveness and diversity will be a feature of all aspects of the student experience, from pre-arrival to graduation. Learners from different cultures, religions, ethnic, linguistic and geographical backgrounds, will be encouraged to share different economic perspectives and worldviews, region-specific challenges, cultures, technologies. This open and equitable sharing of knowledge, ideas and understanding engenders a shared commitment to addressing the challenges faced by societies at local and global levels.

#### 4 Pedagogical Approaches and Assessment Strategies

Our LTA Strategy will ensure that the content of programmes is relevant and applied, informed by the latest research and relevant to business, industry and society. A strong emphasis is placed on the assessment process given the role of assessment in driving the learning process. More specifically, we will ensure that there is consistency and alignment between the programme learning outcomes, the assessment strategy, the student learning activities, the feedback processes and the support and resources for learning.

In order to enhance the students' learning experience, we will:

- **Ensure constructive alignment of assessment strategies, learning outcomes, and learning and teaching approaches**

We will continue to align learning, teaching and assessment activities to allow students to continuously develop and enhance their learning and personal profile. We see ongoing feedback, through formative and summative assessment, as key to the learner's success.

- **Provide timely and effective feedback and balance the student workload**

Constructive, prompt and timely feedback improves student learning and it increases engagement and motivation. It allows students to take responsibility for the progression of their own learning. We will encourage students to recognise and reflect on all forms of feedback to enhance their ongoing development. Programme Boards will consider the workload of students and balance the student workload effectively over the semester. A schedule of assessments along with the programme assessment strategy will be given to students during week 1.

- **Employ a variety of assessment tools**

Programme Boards will use a variety of assessments (group, individual, reports, case studies, PBL, individual and group presentations) to develop the range of knowledge, skills and competences required by learners, also recognizing the diversity of learning styles, preferences and abilities of students. Where possible, they will engage industry/professions in the assessment process.

- **Adopt innovative pedagogical approaches and assessment strategies**

To support active student engagement and participation, lecturers will enhance the learning process by using innovative techniques and practices. They will place particular emphasis on linking theory and practice, for instance, through live, real world projects and problem-based learning; they will also use technology effectively to support on-line and blended learning as appropriate. On the assessment side, they will also use assessments to empower students to self-regulate and critically evaluate their own learning and performance.<sup>13</sup>

- **Support work-based learning through employment-academic partnerships**

In keeping with our Practice-Based Education (PBE) approach, we support good quality work-based learning. Part time students may undertake research projects and assignment in their place of work. Where students are studying in a full-time capacity, they may undertake a work placement and/or research project as appropriate. Work Placement is considered an integral element of higher education programmes at IT Tallaght. From our perspective, it offers an opportunity for students to apply what they have learned, to continue to learn new practice-based skills and also to gain an understanding of what is required of them in the workplace. Incorporating the insights of the REAP projects, we have developed structured practices to assist the employer, student and ourselves in planning and managing the time spent in the workplace.<sup>14</sup>

- **Explore issues of transparency, efficiency and effectiveness in assessment**

Assessment is at the heart of teaching and learning. Across all disciplines, we will continue to enhance our knowledge and scholarship of assessment practice and incorporate the insights and feedback from various sources, including the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and the NFETL.<sup>15</sup> Our approach to assessment will be transparent, efficient and diverse while also being engaging and supportive of student learning. Assessment methods, content and strategies reflect many of the key features and values of a programme and have a fundamental influence on student engagement and learning experiences. Drawing on the insights of ISSE and the NFETL, we will ensure that assessment is used to empower and engage students to become better learners.<sup>16</sup>

- **Provide supports and resources for Learning**

We will continue to provide academic support to diverse learners through scheduled drop-in tuition clinics and other initiatives through the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CeLT). Our commitment to provide a curriculum that is inclusive means we recognise and value our diverse student body, including the diverse needs, abilities and multiple intelligences of students. It also means we take measures to improve the success of specific groups (including under-represented and disadvantaged groups and students with disabilities), where research has shown that the route to educational success is less straightforward.

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<sup>13</sup> See, for example, *Expanding our Understanding of Assessment and Feedback in Irish Higher Education*, National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, March 2017.

<sup>14</sup> See our website, <http://www.it-tallaght.ie/employment-academic-partnerships>

<sup>15</sup> *Profile of Assessment Practices in Irish Higher Education*, National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning: Insights, January 2017.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, *Profile of Assessment Practices in Irish Higher Education, Focused Research Report No. 2*, National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, Dec 2016.

- **Invest in teaching facilities, infrastructure and equipment**

Given the importance of technology to the education process, we are committed, within available budgets, to:

- Maintain and update the IT infrastructure and embrace digital technologies in services and in teaching, learning and assessment
- Invest in capital equipment - technology and scientific instrumentation - that is compatible with modern IT architectures and suitable for preparing students for employment in modern industrial settings
- Invest in teaching facilities

These are stated goals in in our Strategic Plan 2016-19 (p.20).

## 5 Professional Development Framework for Staff

The development and support of staff in an environment that promotes innovation, continuous enhancement, scholarship and research is an important part of our LTA strategy. We aim to introduce a comprehensive professional development framework that improves practice and promotes excellence in learning, teaching and assessment in collaboration with our partners, such as the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (NFETL) and other alliances. In order to do this, we will:

- **Offer meaningful academic development opportunities through the Centre for Learning and Teaching**

The Institute will provide academic and other staff and researchers involved in teaching and assessment with opportunities to develop the necessary expertise to enhance the student learning experience. As resources permit, there will be a full range of professional development opportunities to enhance academic practice in teaching and scholarship. As stated in our Strategic Plan 2016-19 (p.20), the Institute will “Continue staff development in Teaching, Learning and Assessment. Following national and European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015), this will also take account of the needs of an increasingly diverse student population and improve the digital skills and literacy of staff”.

- **Support the ongoing professional development in the discipline-specific areas for academic and support staff**

Academic Schools/Departments and functional areas will support the development of discipline-specific skills for academic and support staff. We will also continue to disseminate information to staff and students about learning resources and events through our VLE.

- **Encourage research to inform practice, and the scholarship of Teaching, Learning and Assessment**

We will continue to encourage staff to engage in research in teaching, learning and assessment in their particular discipline. Relatedly, we will support the integration of their own research into their teaching and use this to inform the development of academic programmes.



## 6 The Enhancement of a Culture that Supports Learners and Promotes Student Success

This theme acknowledges the varied support needs of the Institute's diverse student body and takes account of research into the student experience, including feedback from the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE), the *National Student Engagement Programme* (NSTEP), among others. It recognises that the student experience extends beyond their learning, teaching and assessment related activities and it suggests the provision of co-ordinated supports throughout the student life cycle. In order to do this we will:

- Ensure that students are fully informed of the expectations of their programme of study through the student life cycle
- Promote a culture and institutional conditions to support student engagement, developing both formal and informal mechanisms to support a collaborative approach in which students are trusted partners in the education process. This is a stated objective of our Strategic Plan (p.20)
- Ensure that Personal and Professional Development Planning (PPD) is considered by each Programme Board for integration as appropriate within the curriculum
- Explore ways to integrate international students more fully academically and socially within the wider student body
- Continue to undertake an annual review of student data in relation to retention, progression, achievement and employment and the adoption of an evidence- based approach to identifying factors contributing to student retention and success
- Ensure that all students are trained to fully engage with the Institute's Virtual Learning Environment and other core elearning software
- Increase availability of real and virtual flexible learning spaces (including spaces for collaborative elearning and flexible spaces for group study already offered in the Library) and increasing the accessibility of pooled and specialist IT resources, e.g. reviewing existing and planned teaching space for their fitness for flexible learning and flexible learners, and reviewing the provision of 'out of hours' services to support flexible curriculum delivery
- We will build on the existing strengths of the Library and Centre for Learning and Teaching by reviewing and enhancing student supports, as practicable.

### What does this mean in practice?

- An increase in effective dialogue, lively interaction and improved communication around learning, teaching and assessment throughout the Institute's learning communities and stakeholders, cross-disciplinary teams,

and with other partners; the promotion of networks and events to engage in this dialogue

- Significant engagement at departmental level, the Students' Union, other interested groups and external partners to ensure engagement for ensuring successful learning
- Communication with students around their experiences, expectations and needs, to inform approaches to learning, teaching and assessment

#### What does this mean for staff?

- Continuing the development/renewal of technical and pedagogic skills and applying these to enhance, support, excite and motivate student learning
- Embedding courses with enterprise, innovation, appropriate learning technologies, employability skills, opportunities for service learning, learner autonomy and personal and professional development alongside academic components
- Providing learning experiences which manage and meet student expectations effectively within available resources
- Linking students' learning to leading-edge knowledge, practice and research
- Embedding a rich mixture of assessment strategies efficiently and effectively

#### What does this mean for students?

- Collaborating with other students, staff, employers and the community to support learning
- Creating and compiling a portfolio of evidence and reflection on learning
- Reflecting on progress and self-assessing
- Developing skills for effective independent learning
- Responding to feedback, and giving feedback to fellow students and staff
- Developing research and inquiry skills which empower students to become creators of knowledge
- Taking responsibility for managing their own learning
- Engaging with technology and managing their time effectively

## 6. Conclusion

Our Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy ensures that all our learning, teaching and assessment activities align with the Institute's Strategic Plan, which outlines a distinctive student experience, wider participation, career focused lifelong learning, civic engagement, internationalisation and collaboration as key objectives for academic and departmental planning processes within academic schools and departments. It also provides a particular learning and teaching focus for other Institute strategies including human resources, student services, finance, estates and IT, as well as research and business development.

## Appendix 1: Ways to Incorporate the Development of Graduate Attributes in the Curriculum

Graduate Attributes	Support by incorporating the following elements in the Curriculum
Proficient, Highly-skilled, Practical & Capable	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work placements</li> <li>• Industry Projects</li> <li>• PBL and active learning</li> <li>• A module (part module) on Professional Development/ Professional Practice/Preparation for Employment</li> <li>• Develop skills and competencies (focus of learning outcomes)</li> </ul>
Innovative, Creative, Entrepreneurial & Resilient	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study a module/part module on Entrepreneurship/Innovation/Creativity</li> <li>• Participate in Workshops/Seminars related to Enterprise/Innovation/Creativity</li> <li>• Complete assessments that relate to entrepreneurship/creativity/innovation</li> </ul>
Critical and Analytical Problem Solvers	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solve problems e.g. through industry projects, case study assignments, PBL - spread throughout the programme</li> </ul>
Articulate & Effective Communicators	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in Group projects/assignments</li> <li>• Give Presentations</li> <li>• Write reports</li> <li>• Develop digital literacy</li> </ul>
Ethical & Professionally Responsible	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module (or part module) on Professional Ethics/Corporate Social Responsibility</li> <li>• Active Citizenship Modules</li> <li>• Service Learning Modules</li> <li>• Undertake projects with a social dimension</li> </ul>
Collaborative & Adaptive	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in group projects and assignments</li> <li>• elective structures support multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary learning and a multidisciplinary approach, which involves drawing appropriately from multiple disciplines to gain a new understanding of a problem/issue</li> </ul>
Global Citizens	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erasmus</li> <li>• International visits</li> <li>• International Work Placement</li> <li>• Conduct research abroad</li> <li>• Study a foreign language</li> <li>• Study modules with an international dimension</li> <li>• The global classroom</li> </ul>
Independent & Lifelong Learners	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• individual research</li> <li>• independent learning, eportfolios, PDPs</li> <li>• online/blended learning opportunities</li> <li>• flexible, personalised learning opportunities</li> </ul>