Limerick Institute of Technology

Teaching and Learning Strategy, 2018-2023

Strategy Ethos

The Pursuit of Excellence in Teaching and Learning through Engagement, Innovation and Enhancement

LIT Academic Council Sub-Committee in Quality, Teaching and Learning
# Teaching and Learning Strategy 2018 to 2023

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Teaching and Learning Strategy 2018 to 2023

1 Table of Contents
Table of Figures ............................................................................................................. 4
List of Tables .................................................................................................................. 4

Executive Summary ........................................................................................................ 5

1.1 Introduction and Context .......................................................................................... 7
  1.1.1 The regulatory framework .................................................................................. 7
  1.1.2 Students at LIT and the learning experience ...................................................... 8
  1.1.3 LIT approach to Teaching and Learning strategy ............................................... 9

1.2 The European, National and Institutional Policy and Strategy Context ......................... 9
  1.2.1 The European policy context ............................................................................ 9
  1.2.2 The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 ........................................ 10
  1.2.3 Formation of Technological Universities ......................................................... 11
  1.2.4 The Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) ............................................. 11
  1.2.5 The Higher Education System Performance Framework 2018 – 2020 ............. 12
  1.2.6 The LIT Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022 ................................................................ 12
    1.2.6.1 Institute Mission, Vision and Values ......................................................... 12

1.3 Teaching and Learning Strategy: Ethos and Higher Level Principles ......................... 14
  1.3.1 Strategy Ethos .................................................................................................. 14
  1.3.2 Strategy Higher Level Principles ..................................................................... 14
    1.3.2.1 Enhancing engagement with innovation and excellence in Teaching and Learning .......................................................................................................................... 15
    1.3.2.2 A learner centred active learning approach ............................................... 16
    1.3.2.3 A focus on applied learning and the development of employability skills .......... 17
    1.3.2.4 Supporting personal development and growth of the whole person ........... 18
    1.3.2.5 Effective assessment practices that promote deeper learning ................... 19
    1.3.2.6 An inclusive, engaging and supportive learning environment .................. 20
    1.3.2.7 Fostering a culture which enhances research capacity ............................... 21
    1.3.2.8 Developing and embedding a culture of quality enhancement ................... 22

1.4 Key Implementation Themes and Strategic Goals ..................................................... 23
  1.4.1 Academic excellence through Active Learning .................................................. 24
  1.4.2 Best practice in curriculum design ................................................................... 27
  1.4.3 Effective assessment that embeds and enhances learning ............................... 34
  1.4.4 Development of the whole person and work readiness .................................... 37
  1.4.5 Technology enhanced, blended and online learning ........................................ 40
  1.4.6 Developing capacity with knowledge and research skills .................................. 43
  1.4.7 Coherent and effective continuous professional development (CPD) pathways .... 45
  1.4.8 Development of the learning environment ....................................................... 48
  1.4.9 Quality enhancement in teaching and learning supported by evidence ............ 51

1.5 Appendix 1 Mapping Teaching and Learning Strategy to LIT Strategic Plan .......... 58
Table of Figures
Figure 1: Map of Teaching and Learning Strategy .......................................................... 6
Figure 2: A Model for the Incremental Process of Active Learning .................................. 25
Figure 3: The 7 Cs model of curriculum design .................................................................. 30
Figure 4: Alignment of award standards, learning outcomes and assessment ...................... 32
Figure 5: The assessment hierarchy .................................................................................. 35
Figure 6: Synthesis of the DigCompEdu Framework .......................................................... 41
Figure 7: National Professional Development Framework .................................................. 46

List of Tables
Table 1: Key themes identified for the development of draft strategic goals ......................... 23
Table 2: The constituent elements of the 7Cs model of curriculum design .......................... 31
Executive Summary

The international and national context of teaching and learning in higher education is set within an evolving policy framework that sets out a comprehensive set of benchmarks, standards and models to guide evolving strategy at institutional level. This context for teaching and learning can be overviewed as one of the development of full human potential through an agenda of innovation and excellence in teaching and learning, evolving pedagogy, developing competencies and employability, raising skill levels, greater use of technology enhanced learning, deeper engagement with learners and society and widening participation through flexible programme provision.

LIT is cognisant of this policy framework and rapidly changing external environment. The Institute has conducted a review of its strategy and has developed a new robust strategic plan designed to take LIT forward to meet the challenges in the period ahead. It is important that the new Institutional Teaching and Learning Strategy is informed and guided by the national policy framework as well as the Institutional Strategic Plan. This Teaching and Learning Strategy is designed to dovetail with the Institutional vision and strategic objectives and priorities as specified in the LIT Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022. The new strategy is guided by the following overall ethos, which is supported by a set of eight Higher Level Principles.

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The Higher Level Principles elucidate the values that LIT as an organisation holds in terms of its approach to teaching and learning for the period of the new strategy and are further supported by nine Implementation Themes (Figure 1). Each theme has a Strategic Higher Level Outcome and an associated set of linked Strategic Goals and Areas for Development and Implementation. The strategic goals of the various implementation themes are a critical part of the strategy and responsibility for their implementation lies with a range of institutional parties.

The overall objective and the associated pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning through engagement, innovation and enhancement infuses all aspects of the strategy and is developed in a multifaceted way throughout the higher level principles and implementation themes. The emphasis on engagement and innovation is implicit at all levels including in curriculum design, delivery and assessment. It is designed to deliver student centred and authentic learning mediated by the signature pedagogy of Active Learning supported, where appropriate, by technology enhanced learning. This enhancement of learning is furthered through a quality enhancement culture supported by evidence. This culture of innovation and enhancement maximises engagement of key internal stakeholders including students, staff, and external stakeholders such as industry, employers and wider society regionally and nationally.
Higher Level Principles that encompass the LIT Approach

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<td>Fostering a culture which enhances research capacity</td>
<td>Developing and embedding a culture of quality enhancement</td>
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Key Implementation Themes

1. Academic excellence through active learning
2. Best practice in curriculum design
3. Effective assessment that embeds and enhances learning
4. Development of the whole person and work readiness
5. Technology enhanced, blended and online learning
6. Developing capacity with knowledge and research skills
7. Coherent and effective continuous professional development pathways
8. Development of the learning environment
9. Quality enhancement in Teaching and Learning supported by evidence

Figure 1: Map of Teaching and Learning Strategy
1.1 Introduction and Context

Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT) is a multi-campus Institution strategically located in Ireland’s Mid-West region in an area currently experiencing significant economic growth. LIT provides a diverse range of full time and part time programmes across a broad range of disciplines giving student real opportunities for both career and self-development. The Institute, with its focus on applied learning and employability, is well placed to play a key role in this development and contribute both at a regional and national level. The focus on graduate’s core and applied disciplinary skills and competencies is augmented by a strong emphasis on the development of the individual and the development of essential soft skills both for employment and for wider participation in society. LIT has a core philosophy and signature pedagogy of ‘Active Learning’ through a fusion of theory and practice in which graduates are equipped to continuously develop professionally and personally.

1.1.1 The regulatory framework

LIT offers programmes of study across the full range of the Bologna Cycles (the purpose of the Bologna process was to produce a common structure of comparable degrees in European higher education). The Bologna framework groups qualifications into cycles and these have been aligned with the National Framework of Qualification (NFQ) (NFQ Levels indicated in brackets): Short Cycle, Higher Certificate (Level 6); First Cycle, Bachelor Degrees (Level 7 and 8), and Higher Diploma (Level 8); Second Cycle, Master’s Degree and Postgraduate Diploma (Level 9); and Third Cycle, Doctorate (Level 10).[1,2]

In LIT all taught programme content is specified in modules with associated ECTS credits assigned (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System)[3]. The ECTS is based on the student workload required to achieve the learning outcomes and competencies to be acquired. It is therefore a standard means of comparing the volume of learning based on the defined learning outcomes and their associated workload for higher education across the European Union and additional other participating European countries[3]. It is a central tool in the Bologna Process and, in addition to making national systems more compatible, it helps to make learning more student centred. It assists in the planning, delivery and evaluation of programmes of study in a manner that makes them more transparent.

Learning outcomes are sets of competencies expressing what a student shall know, understand or be able to do after a process of learning. They are an essential part of the learning model known as Constructive Alignment defined by Biggs[4] as “coherence between assessment, teaching strategies and intended learning outcomes in an educational programme”. In this model, all components of the Teaching and Learning process are aligned to each other to facilitate the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. In LIT, this emphasis on learning outcomes and their alignment with student centred (and active learning) modes of delivery and effective assessment have been reflected in the programmes through the quality assured new programme development and cyclical programmatic reviews undertaken by each faculty and department. This methodical and structured approach to programme
Teaching and Learning Strategy 2018 to 2023

design and curriculum development, delivery and assessment sets the essential framework for the teaching and learning context.

LIT is fully cognisant of its legal obligations under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012)[5] to provide programmes that meet the standards of the National Framework of Qualifications (2003)[2]. It is aware of the growing emphasis towards quality enhancement or that of continuous process improvement with a particular focus on learners and the learner experience.

LIT is also cognisant of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015)[6] particularly the following sections which are directly relevant to an institutional teaching and learning strategy: 1.3, Student-Centred Learning; Teaching and Assessment; 1.5, Teaching Staff; 1.6, Learning Resources and Support; and 1.9, Ongoing Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes. LIT’s academic regulations and policies are aligned with these and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Core[7], Sector[8] and Topic[9] -Specific Quality Assurance guidelines for taught programmes.

1.1.2 Students at LIT and the learning experience

The Institute’s students are of paramount importance and the fostering of a learning environment that facilitates the achievement of their maximum potential is a key goal. The relationship between students and staff is a particular strength of the Institute. It is supported through the ongoing dedication of staff to their students and further enabled through small class sizes, particularly in the delivery of the skill-based and practical competencies, which typically constitute 50% of programmes. This student-staff connectivity is a key strength of the learning environment and is evidenced through the findings of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE)[10] where LIT scores consistently high in this metric. This significant and evidenced strength exemplifies the commitment of LIT staff to their students and to their associated learning. It reflects a particular commitment to engaging in best practice that can be further leveraged in the context of the ongoing development and enhancement of teaching and learning.

LIT has a strong record in staff development and in the scholarship of Teaching and Learning through the work of the Shannon Consortium and the active engagement of its Teaching and Learning Champions. A collaborative approach to the sharing of best practice is evident through the multiple structured non-accredited CPD opportunities available through ‘Conversations in the Consortium’ and ‘Teaching Tips’ seminars. These are open to any faculty from consortium members including the University of Limerick and Maria Immaculata College. In addition, there are three dedicated LIT staff development days that engage national and/or international keynote speakers and a range of workshops and these are well supported and attended annually. This is complemented by ongoing staff development in discipline specific cognate areas supported by academic departments and Human Resources.
1.1.3 LIT approach to Teaching and Learning strategy

To support this scholarship, LIT has had a Teaching and Learning Strategy in place since 2009 and this was further revised in 2012\[11\]. The strategy evolved and developed in particular through the elucidation and development of its distinctive and agile educational philosophy of active learning and approach to student centred learning. In this model, LIT seeks to engage learners in activities which stimulates their interest and enhances their learning. LIT recognises the changing external environment including a new dynamic in terms of the aptitudes and expectations of learners and a rapidly evolving work environment and employment context for graduates. The increasing pace and reach of digitalisation in wider society and its growing impact on the education sector is also a very relevant factor.

LIT acknowledges that the international and national context of teaching and learning in higher education is set within an evolving policy framework. This policy framework sets out a comprehensive set of benchmarks, standards and models to guide evolving strategy at national and institutional level. It is also noteworthy that in this context, LIT has conducted a major review of its strategy in 2018 and has developed a new robust strategic plan designed to take LIT forward in meeting the challenges in this era of change. It is necessary to take full cognisance of these policy and strategy frameworks as a basis for development of the institutional Teaching and Learning strategy. In this way the Teaching and Learning Strategy is not an isolated endeavour but is fully integrated and aligned with National and Institutional policy and strategy imperatives and serves as a vehicle for furthering their implementation.

1.2 The European, National and Institutional Policy and Strategy Context

A range of studies and reports have been developed to inform policy and decision makers at European and national levels.

1.2.1 The European policy context

A survey of European studies and policy reports on teaching and learning reveals a strong convergence on a number of central themes that reflect a rapidly changing external environment and context for higher education. The Yerevan Communiqué issued after the EHEA Ministerial Conference 2015\[12\], noted that “we will encourage and support higher education institutions and staff in promoting pedagogical innovation in student-centred learning environments and in fully exploiting the potential benefits of digital technologies for learning and teaching”. The report to the European Commission on New Modes of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education by the High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education\[13\] noted that “there is enormous potential for widening access to higher education and increasing the diversity of the student population. Online technologies provide opportunities to learn anywhere, anytime and from anyone. This flexibility is essential for non-
traditional learners and will enable a shift change in the engagement of higher education institutions in lifelong learning and continuing professional development”.

In another report to the European Commission on The Changing Pedagogical Landscape: New ways of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education\textsuperscript{[14]} the authors noted that the complexity of today’s higher education landscape is causing national policy makers and individual institutions to rethink their strategies and position in response to the associated challenges emerging. This report acknowledged that degree education across the Bologna cycles would continue to be the mainstay of the higher education sector. However, it also identified the importance of lifelong learning, non-degree education and short Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses delivered in a flexible way supported through technology enhanced and blended learning as being particularly relevant to the agenda of widening participation. This upskilling is increasingly seen as essential in the context of rapidly evolving skills requirements and skills displacement in a changing work environment. In this way, the sector will be more connected and engaged with industry and the wider community and provide learning opportunities to a broader range of individuals with consequent advantages for individuals, the wider community and economy.

These policy perspectives also align with the 2012 OECD report on *Fostering Quality Teaching in Higher Education: Policies and Practices*\textsuperscript{[15]}, which highlighted the new teaching and learning paradigms emerging in higher education. These include: new relationships regarding access to teachers and a wider range of communication and collaborative working through learning platforms; re-designing of curriculum; bridging teaching and research more intensively; re-thinking of student workload and teaching load; continuous upgrading in pedagogy, use of technologies, assessment models aligned with student-centred learning; creation of innovative learning platforms; providing guidance and tutoring to students with new means and methods; and assessing impacts and documenting effectiveness of the teaching delivered.

1.2.2 The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030\textsuperscript{[16]} elucidated a vision for Higher Education in Ireland with ‘people and ideas’ at its heart. It envisaged that the higher education system will in the coming years develop “to play its part as a major agent of positive change & development for both the individual and wider society and be a sustaining force for social and economic regeneration”. This mission encompassed three interconnected core elements; teaching and learning; research; and engagement (with wider society and internationally). It placed *Innovation* at the centre of the mission, “innovation in the interactions and exchanges of new ideas and in the fusion of its core elements”.

It envisaged that higher education institutes will have “a strong engagement with individual students, communities, society and enterprise”. It acknowledged that the nature of the learning community and the modes of teaching and learning would evolve. It particularly highlighted the need for a growing
emphasis on flexible learning, part time provision and work based learning. To this end, it advocated Institutional leadership accompanied by a range of practical steps to facilitate and support change. In the context of the advancement of teaching and learning over that past decade The National Strategy acknowledged the importance of:

- the establishment of centres for educational and academic practice development;
- the availability of professional programmes on teaching and learning;
- developments in technology enhanced learning;
- the adoption of new forms of pedagogy for greater student engagement;
- an increasing emphasis on teaching in the tenure and promotion process.

It further stressed that “the challenge now is to convert best practice into standard practice” and referenced the need for teachers in higher education to stimulate active learning where students are critical and creative. It highlighted the need to “respond to changes in the composition of the student body, to new technologies and their potential for enhancing the learning experience”. Many of the principle themes and analysis of the National Strategy dovetail with reports at European level particularly the emphasis on innovation in pedagogy in a manner that facilitates greater engagement.

1.2.3 Formation of Technological Universities

An important recommendation of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030[16] was that the higher education system should be strengthened through the development of regional clusters of collaborating institutions and particularly the evolution of Institutes of Technology into a smaller number of amalgamated institutes where some could apply for redesignation as Technological Universities. This has led to the formation and development of a number of alliances as well as the enacting of a Technological Universities Bill in 2018. The Governing Body of LIT has adopted an approach of being on a Technological University track and aligning with the applicant eligibility criteria required under the Act to become a Technological University. This includes the key staff related criterion that of the full-time academic staff of the applicant institute engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level, at least 90 per cent hold a master’s degree or doctoral degree and at least 45 per cent hold a doctoral degree or equivalent (post degree experience in the practice of a profession). Therefore, the alignment of the LIT staff profile to these targets is an important goal of LIT in the period of this Teaching and Learning Strategy.

1.2.4 The Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE)

Another important recommendation of the National Strategy for Higher Education[16] was the establishment of a national survey of student engagement to provide critical feedback that can ultimately inform evidence based quality enhancement. This proposal led to the establishment of the ISSE project, a national survey system that seeks to collect information on how students engage with their learning environment and provide informed insight into the experience of students in higher education. Student
engagement is seen as a critical element for the development of core capacities such critical thinking, problem solving, writing skills, teamwork and communication skills.

A total of 35,850 students responded to the ISSE survey in 2017\textsuperscript{[10]} providing an invaluable dataset across a range of key indices that impact on quality teaching and learning. These critical indicator areas that the ISSE data-set covers include: Higher Order Learning, Reflective and Integrative Learning; Quantitative Reasoning; Learning Strategies; Collaborative Learning; Student Faculty Interaction; Effective Teaching Practices; Quality of Interactions; and Supportive Environment. In addition, there are a range of other non-indicator items in which relevant data is captured. This provides an invaluable data set driven by the intention to "support and encourage enhancement discussions and activities"\textsuperscript{[10]}.

Thus, the annually reported ISSE survey results provide an evidenced based inter and intra-institutional comparative set of both qualitative and quantitative primary data. This can be utilised by LIT to direct the goals and activities of a number of the Teaching and Learning Strategy themes, as outlined in this strategy.

1.2.5 The Higher Education System Performance Framework 2018 – 2020

The Department of Education and Skills published the Higher Education System Performance Framework in January 2018\textsuperscript{[17]}. This has set a Key System Objectives for the period 2018 to 2020 and linked high-level targets are proposed. Many of these targets intersect with the teaching and learning context across a range of the objectives and this strategy is aligned with these where relevant.

1.2.6 The LIT Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022

After an extensive stakeholder engagement and consultation process, LIT has developed a new Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022\textsuperscript{[18]} approved by Governing Body in April 2018 that is fully reflective of the wider national and international context. The strategy defines LIT’s Educational Philosophy as being "active learning through a fusion of theory and practice\textsuperscript{[18]} and it sets out its Mission, Vision and Values and a range of Strategic Priorities and Enablers.

1.2.6.1 Institute Mission, Vision and Values

The LIT Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022\textsuperscript{[18]} states in its mission that “we empower our diverse student body by providing a quality higher education experience enabling economic, social and cultural development” with a vision “to be a leading provider of higher education that is student centred, research informed, industry relevant and accessible for all”. These aspirations are supported by a core set of values including the following:

- **Supportive** We provide a higher education environment that nurtures, supports and engages our students, staff and external stakeholders, enabling them to achieve their full potential
- **Accessible** We enable wider access and participation in higher education by embracing diversity and providing a flexible offering
Teaching and Learning Strategy 2018 to 2023

**Innovative** We foster creative and entrepreneurial activities, in all their forms, in collaboration with our stakeholders to address the changing needs of our region

**Equitable** We promote fairness, equal opportunity, respect and positive outcomes for all our students and staff

**Excellence** We embed continuous improvement in all Institute activities to support the achievement of the highest standards in all aspects of teaching, learning, research and related supports

These core institute values guide the Teaching and Learning Strategy in elucidating supporting higher level principles that express what LIT stands for in its strategy. The Institutional strategic priorities specified in the strategic plan are:

- **Priority 1** Grow student numbers and diversify our student population
- **Priority 2** Provide high quality teaching and active learning that reflects the needs of industry
- **Priority 3** Increase LIT’s RDI capacity in areas that have a clear economic and social impact for the region
- **Priority 4** Deepen stakeholder engagement and increase our impact on the region
- **Priority 5** Deliver on LIT’s campus development plan to enhance the student experience

While the implementation of the Institute’s strategic plan is a cross functional activity involving all levels of the organisation it is necessary that the Teaching and Learning Strategy is aligned closely with it in all the domains of relevance.

The core Institutional values and strategic priorities have direct relevance to the development of the teaching and learning strategy. They require reflection from an implementation perspective and the consequent alignment of the principles, themes and goals of this strategy with the overall Institute strategy is essential. To this end, a mapping of this Teaching and Learning Strategy to the Institutional Strategy has been undertaken and is presented in Appendix 1.
1.3 Teaching and Learning Strategy: Ethos and Higher Level Principles

The national and international context for teaching and learning in higher education has been profiled in Section 1.2. It is one of the development of full human potential through an agenda of innovation and excellence in teaching and learning, developing competencies and raising skill levels, evolving pedagogy, greater use of technology enhanced learning, deeper engagement with learners and society and widening participation through flexible programme provision.

This new Teaching and Learning Strategy is designed to dovetail with both national policy and institutional mission, vision, and strategic priorities. It embodies the values of the LIT Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022\(^{[18]}\) and reflects the principles in the LIT Student Charter 2018 to 2023\(^{[19]}\). It aims to support and enhance teaching and learning across the Institute through the active engagement of all key stakeholders with a strong focus on delivering excellence in teaching and learning.

1.3.1 Strategy Ethos

*Strategy Ethos:*

_The Pursuit of Excellence in Teaching and Learning through Engagement, Innovation and Enhancement._

This pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning through engagement, innovation and enhancement infuses all aspects of the strategy and its associated higher level principles, implementation themes and strategic goals as outlined in this strategy.

1.3.2 Strategy Higher Level Principles

The higher level principles elucidate the values that LIT as an organisation will stand for in the context of its approach to teaching and learning for the period of the new strategy. It was essential to take account of the international and national context of teaching and learning in higher education as outlined in Section 1.2 and of the Institutional mission, vision, values and strategic priorities, as specified in the Institute’s Strategic Plan, to frame the development of the higher level principles. It is appropriate that the higher level principles are set in the context of, and rooted in, the mission, vision and values of the organisation as a whole as expressed in the LIT Strategic Plan.

The resulting higher level principles are elucidated in the following sub sections, 1.3.2.1 to 1.3.2.8.
1.3.2.1 Enhancing engagement with innovation and excellence in Teaching and Learning

Enhancing engagement can be a powerful driver of learning and this is greatly enabled if there is a culture of innovation, reflection on approaches, best practice, and a striving to continuously improve the quality of the learning experience. This commitment to excellence through continuous improvement is a core value of the Institute (see Section 1.2.3.1).

Providing “high quality teaching and active learning” has been identified as a strategic priority in the LIT Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022[18] and this signals the institutional commitment to fostering excellence in Teaching and Learning. As an enabler of this the plan further identifies the need to “enrich the student learning experience through innovative course delivery methods supported by technology, work-based learning, internationalisation and positive student engagement”.

For authentic engagement, it is important that students are provided with the learning outcomes, as this frames the objectives of their engagement with the learning process and sets the parameters for their involvement in learning activities. Student engagement in the learning process is stimulated by their direct involvement in learning and the instant feedback that takes place particularly in the active learning context and model encouraged and supported in LIT. This can involve discussion, debate dialogue, teamwork, presentations, project work, and work placement. It is complemented by other higher cognitive learning activities such as analysis, enquiry, exploration, evaluation amongst others in all the different contexts they emerge in during a programme.

The performance of each faculty member is a crucial factor in the creation of excellence in teaching and learning but this can be augmented by well aligned institutional policies and strategies.

The Oxford Dictionary defines innovation as “the introduction of novelties, the alteration of what are established methods”. This is at the core of striving for excellence in teaching and learning in the context of seeking novel ways of reaching more learners in deep, meaningful and engaging ways. This type of pedagogical innovation can be multifaceted and span core areas such as curriculum design, programme delivery and assessment. Examples might include problem based learning, group learning and role play, blended and technology enhanced learning among many others. Innovation can occur at the level of programme, module and individual lesson where the teacher engages in reflective practice regarding changes that could be developed and implemented to enhance the learning.

Provision of staff development and CPD opportunities in the scholarship of teaching and learning and in developments in digital learning are key enablers of this. The sharing and dissemination of best practice in a collaborative and reflective context is further facilitated through the conversations in the consortium and teaching tips sessions organised through the Shannon Consortium, as well as the continuous development and support of communities of practice.
1.3.2.2  A learner centred active learning approach

Learners are at the core and focus of activity in LIT and the increasing diversity of the learner population and the diversity of learner needs are recognised and valued. Student centred learning is characterised by a reliance on active learning coupled with an emphasis on deep and authentic learning and understanding, and, increased responsibility and autonomy on the part of the student. It involves a reflexive approach to the teaching and learning process that is a shared responsibility between both teacher and learner. In this model the engagement is not dominated by the teacher and the more traditional didactic horizontal transmission of information.

Two overarching facets of LIT’s approach support this in a framework that readily permits a student centred learning approach: 1) LIT’s educational philosophy of “active learning through a fusion of theory and practice”[18] provides an agile framework in terms of delivering on innovative approaches to learning, and, 2) the use of constructive alignment in which excellence is facilitated in a system where all aspects of delivery, and assessment of learning activities, are aligned to the intended learning outcomes. Constructive alignment to learning outcomes places the learning process at the centre of all activities while the active learning pedagogy places student centred learning firmly at the core and this dual emphasis fosters deep authentic learning.

Learners vary in their abilities and in their previous experience of learning. The LIT approach will be supportive, engaging with learners at their current level and helping them to gain in confidence and competence. Each learner is an individual in a learning community. LIT will endeavour to accommodate the particular characteristics and learning styles of individual learners. Because of prior experience and expectations, it cannot be assumed that new students will be ready and able to engage immediately with active learning approaches. New students will receive induction in approaches to student centred and active learning. Learning support has as its main goal the development of independent learners. The student centred approach is directly facilitated, encouraged and evaluated in LIT through their formal involvement in governance and active representation on decision making bodies such as academic council, programme boards, student staff liaison meetings in addition to their participation to student satisfaction surveys including the ISSE survey[10]. LIT is committed to this survey and to listening and responding to students through this engagement. Student feedback can play an important part in the development of curricula, learning outcomes and assessment procedures.

Subject to requirements for academic coherence, and to logistical and resource constraints, LIT will provide flexible routes to qualifications, providing for different modes of delivery and module choice, to facilitate learners in shaping their academic programme according to their needs and interests.

In summary, LIT’s learner-centred approach responds flexibly to learner needs, and seeks to build confidant, capable and independent learners.
1.3.2.3  A focus on applied learning and the development of employability skills

There have been a range of national reports, policy frameworks and strategies published which place ensuring successful employment outcomes for Irish graduates to the forefront. These include Ireland’s Action Plan for Education 2018\(^{[20]}\), the Fifth Action Plan for Jobs 2018\(^{[21]}\), the National Skills Strategy 2025\(^{[22]}\), and Innovation 2020\(^{[23]}\). The success of these national policy frameworks is linked to the ongoing availability of high quality graduates with the skills and competencies necessary for employment in Ireland’s open economy thereby supporting and sustaining its development.

LIT will place a pivotal focus on the employability of its graduates. It has developed effective mechanisms through its quality assured system of programme development and programme review to ensure that LIT graduates have the necessary knowledge, skills, competencies and experience that employers are looking for. Where relevant it works with Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies to ensure graduates meet the competencies required for recognition and registration purposes. LIT will continue to develop links and to consult with the community, and with industry and professional bodies, to inform the development and review of programmes and modules, to ensure that they are responsive to existing and emerging stakeholder needs. Stakeholder needs will be translated into learning outcomes incorporating appropriate knowledge, skills and competencies, and focused on authentic performance.

The applied focus ensures that LIT graduates will continue to be highly sought after and recognised regionally and nationally as having a high level of expertise, skill and competency with multiple career opportunities. This approach facilitates the acquisition of a deep understanding in the core area of study in addition to technical competencies and generic transferable skills so that graduates are work-ready.

The core philosophy of active learning ensures that graduates emerge as mature and competent practitioners and citizens are equipped to continuously develop personally and professionally.

LIT also aims to help students to embrace innovation and entrepreneurship. As LIT supports and operates six enterprise centres across two counties all students can access support through the largest portfolio of enterprise and innovation centres in the country. The availability of these centres and this expertise in enterprise and innovation at the heart of the LIT campus has huge benefits to the wider LIT community, particularly its undergraduate student population. There are many synergies and cross-overs that support students in terms of the development of their employment potential, developing an interest and aptitude in entrepreneurship and supporting the transition to employment in this context.

LIT will continue to integrate work placement and work based learning into programmes. During placement, students integrate their learning with a real world working environment where both professional and social skills merge to develop competencies necessary in the typical team environment. In this context, LIT notes and endorses the Higher Education System Performance Framework target that “all programmes have a placement or work based project by 2025”\(^{[17]}\).
1.3.2.4 Supporting personal development and growth of the whole person

In addition to academic excellence, LIT integrates an emphasis on the importance of personal development and growth into the curriculum where possible and stresses the development of life skills. These are qualities such as interpersonal and communication skills, teamwork, critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, perseverance and flexibility which help people work and live with a sense of purpose and well-being. The development of this human capacity is increasingly recognised as essential in an increasingly competitive and dynamic employment landscape. The growing inclusion of work based learning/work placement provides further opportunities for the holistic development of these skills.

While academic study is an essential part of the learning experience the development of these soft skills is further supported by encouraging and facilitating participation in a range of extracurricular activities during a student’s time in LIT. The Institute has a broad range of Clubs and Societies across sports, business and the arts. In this way, students are encouraged to maintain a healthy balance between study and their social lives. It also helps students to develop additional valuable skills such as leadership through committee involvement, event management, debate and participation in a broad range of sports and arts activities. Participation in these activities is important to develop skills and competencies outside the curriculum that will contribute to personal and professional development in a manner that greatly enhances employability and effectiveness in the long term. Opportunities for students to participate in international mobility programmes such as Erasmus are also provided. Peer assisted learning is also in place through the Learning Support Unit and students are encouraged to participate in this and act as mentors where appropriate.

Students also get involved in many initiatives during the academic year to support local charities and this voluntary engagement includes working with societal organisations and charities in addition to sporting organisations. LIT committed to the Campus Engage Charter for Civic and Community Engagement in 2014, and The GIVE Programme (Guided Initiative in Voluntary Engagement) has been particularly successful and has already contributed over 8,500 hours of voluntary work both on campus and in the community. As stated in Section 1.2, the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 has listed ‘Engagement’ as the third of its three interconnected core goals of education. It states that “Higher Education Institutions will have a strong engagement with individual students, communities, society and enterprise, will give students a sense of Irish place and identity, and will equip them with the skills to play a strong part on the world stage”[16].

LIT recognises the importance of this goal and the significant contribution that students can offer in assisting the Institute to actively and positively engage with the wider community. Additionally, these types of engagements are encouraged as they have the potential to play a significant part in important learning that takes place outside the formal curriculum that supports the development of the whole person creating socially aware, skilled and competent graduates and citizens.
1.3.2.5 Effective assessment practices that promote deeper learning

Assessment is increasingly recognised as a key driver of learning and it is important that assessment practices reflect and are fully aligned with the full range of learning outcomes. LIT is committed to transparent, fair and effective assessment using a combination of both formative and summative methods. It is imperative that assessment criteria are explicitly defined and clarified in relation to learning outcomes and this is an essential ingredient for best practice.

Formative assessment is seen as providing rich learning opportunities in that feedback on a student’s learning and/or performance is provided to students in relation to the explicit marking criteria. Good assessment practices should also encourage reflection and self-assessment.

This strategy takes particular note of the 2016 Enhancement themes of the National Forum for Teaching and Learning relating to assessment, namely “Assessment OF, FOR and AS Learning”[24]. Assessment OF Learning is the classic approach to assessing student’s learning in order to ensure that they have achieved the learning outcomes and that they have met a specified standard. Assessment FOR Learning is formative in nature and uses assessment to give feedback on teaching and student learning. Assessment AS Learning relates to student engagement and empowerment to become better learners. It is very closely aligned with LIT’s Active Learning Strategy of enabling students to become engaged in their own learning. It is characterised by students reflecting on their own learning and making adjustments so that they achieve deeper understanding. This excellent model provides a framework for building a diverse portfolio of assessments across modules and programmes in a manner that facilitates a move away from over reliance on high stakes summative assessments such as terminal examinations to other forms of assessment that promote effective and deep learning.

Feedback is an essential part of effective learning. LIT is committed to enhancing the quality of assessment feedback to support formative assessment and the authentic growth and rich learning that can ensue. It helps students understand the course material and its relation to the learning outcomes and gives them clear guidance on how to improve their learning. Bellon et al.[25] state that “academic feedback is more strongly and consistently related to achievement than any other teaching behaviour”. It is increasingly recognised that feedback can improve a student's confidence, self-awareness and enthusiasm for learning.

Evidence from assessment practice provides empirical data that can be used as a quality enhancement tool for planning future teaching and learning. There is potential for this data to be generated at the end of each individual assessment activity in a programme by the faculty involved. The formal accumulation of data through external examiner reports and their review and processing through the quality assurance system is also a rich source of data that can be utilised to inform assessment practices and lead to improved practices.
1.3.2.6 An inclusive, engaging and supportive learning environment

LIT is committed to creating an inclusive, engaging and supportive learning environment and these are identified as core values in the Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022[18]. LIT enables wide access and participation by offering entry points to students across the Bologna cycles thereby maximising the ability of a diverse range of students to access higher education. LIT is committed to promoting equitable access and to social inclusion by ensuring its student population is representative of the whole of society and this is evidenced by the diversity of the student population. The provision of increased flexible learning opportunities has the potential to increase access opportunities, creating lifelong learning and bespoke upskilling opportunities for many more individuals. The diversity of the student population will also be enhanced by growing international student numbers.

Creating a learning environment that engages its students is an important Institute goal. The signature pedagogy of Active Learning involves and empowers students in the learning process and plays an important part in their motivation. Learners vary in their abilities and in their previous experience of learning. The LIT approach is to engage with learners at their current level and help them to gain in confidence and competence. Each learner is an individual in a learning community. LIT will endeavour to accommodate the particular characteristics and learning styles of individual learners. LIT will continue to encourage learner peer support to build a collaborative learning environment.

The supportive environment in which the learning takes place is, at first point, led by dedicated teaching staff in their ongoing commitment to students. The high quality supportive environment created around the teaching and learning process with direct interaction and access between students and staff is a key feature. As referenced in Section 1.1, this is evidenced as a particular strength of the learning environment in LIT by the high ratings received in the ISSE survey for this metric. It also emerges as a very frequent commendation from the external examiners in their annual reports where they note the detailed knowledge by internal examiners of students individually. LIT encourages this supportive context as an important part of the Teaching and Learning Strategy going forward.

The provision of learning support is an added feature of the active learning model in LIT through the availability of extra tuition in specific discipline areas provided the Learning Support Unit. An essential part of this service “is to re-empower learners in areas which they have identified as requiring support”[26]. It contributes an additional valuable dimension to the overall supportive learning environment.

Special attention is given to the first year experience, particularly to the initial weeks of the first year, as a learner’s early experience of higher education is crucial in determining the likelihood of future success. The LIT ENGAGE Programme is a structured, activity-based induction programme, geared towards orientating new students to college life. This programme provides student with the opportunity to actively engage in college life, get to grips with their course, join a club or society and develop a personal toolkit to live a healthy, balanced and enjoyable lifestyle.
1.3.2.7  Fostering a culture which enhances research capacity

LIT aims to be a research-informed higher education institution and research is required to enable the Institute’s teaching programmes to be excellent and relevant. The combination of both teaching and research are long recognised as central to the delivery of quality higher education. The ESG states that “Quality assurance policies are most effective when they reflect the relationship between research and learning and teaching and take account of both the national context in which the institution operates, the institutional context and its strategic approach”.[6]

This Teaching and Learning Strategy links with the research agenda and aims to develop and strengthen undergraduate student’s critical research skills such as ethos of enquiry, critical thinking, using evidence, formulating and testing hypotheses and citation of sources. These are fundamental to the research process and support the development of strong research groups. The process of creating a learning environment which imparts research skills throughout each stage of a student’s academic studies begins with the Institute encouraging and supporting faculty to continue to develop their own academic research skills. Providing a working environment with research opportunities through different projects, research groups and centres across the Institute is an important facilitator of this.

It is important to increase faculty awareness of the various research opportunities at both an institutional, national and international level and highlight the advantages to faculty of collaborating, and continuing to become research active in their discipline. The National Forum for Teaching and Learning also provides opportunities for cross institutional collaboration through various research projects in the scholarship of teaching and learning. Informing faculty at LIT of these and other research opportunities is paramount to the continued development of research within LIT.

Disseminating research findings and publications helps strengthen and instil a research active environment for students and faculty. It is important to create and provide a platform for research work to be communicated to students and faculty within LIT. Part of this communication is to provide feedback to enhance programmes and enrich the students learning experience. The support of communities of practice is an important way to help facilitate this. Such learning communities can function to disseminate best practice through sharing experiences in an interdisciplinary context.

Faculty and student participation and attendance at conferences facilitates the continuous development of research skills. Skills such as networking and information gathering are learned informally through conference attendance. This in turn can lead to opportunities for further collaboration and research proposals. It is important to ensure that faculty and students are encouraged and supported to attend/organise conferences so that they may develop their research skill and capacity. Nurturing the relationship that faculty have between research and teaching and learning involves reviewing current practice among faculty and identifying ways to support involvement in research activities across the Institute.
1.3.2.8 Developing and embedding a culture of quality enhancement

LIT implements a multi-layered approach to academic quality assurance including executive structures involving academic council, academic council subcommittees, working groups, faculty, department and programme boards. Each of these fora have involvement in ongoing programme design, delivery, monitoring, review, examination and assessment. The ongoing development and updating of strategies and of quality assurance and enhancement policies in line with national and European regulations is also an important function. Thus LIT has an effective, active, robust and accountable quality assurance system in line with statutory obligations under QQI and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The Yerevan Communique\(^{[17]}\) issued after the 2015 EHEA ministerial conference refers to the important goal of “enhancing the quality and relevance of Learning and Teaching”. Nationally, the Higher Education System Performance Framework 2018 to 2020\(^{[17]}\) specifies key system objectives for that period including demonstrating “consistent improvement in the Quality of the learning environment with a close eye to international best practice through a strong focus on quality and academic excellence”. The linking of quality assurance and enhancement systems to wider institutional strategy is increasingly seen as important in terms of delivery. The current Teaching and Learning Strategy is a crucial part of the quality enhancement system and is closely aligned with the institutional strategic plan (Appendix 1). LIT is committed to continuous process improvement and to the creation of a ‘quality culture’ in which the twin purposes of accountability and enhancement (improvement) are more closely linked. LIT is committed to this and to continually develop the collegiate academic culture of the Institute through the listed participative academic structures. A central repository of the academic record will be maintained via the establishment of a Quality drive containing an archived record of the implementation of the academic system and its management.

The participation of students in academic management structures is an essential element with clearly laid out processes for closing out feedback loops and responding to and communicating responses to student feedback where appropriate. LIT is committed to national and international benchmarking and to the ISSE survey in particular. This provides opportunities to enhance student engagement by providing a rich data set, on central themes related to the quality of the learning experience, allowing intra and inter institutional comparisons and the associated identification of areas for improvement.

The centrality of the provision of taught programmes to the mission of the Institute is reflected in the strategy and it is informed by the requirements of key stakeholders such as students, faculty and employers. It places an emphasis on data, analytics and evidenced based practice which seeks to measure the impact of teaching and learning activities and provides empirical data for ongoing review and improvement. It forms an essential part of the core value of LIT in striving for excellence in teaching and learning through continuous improvement.
1.4 Key Implementation Themes and Strategic Goals

A set of implementation themes and linked strategic goals have been developed to progress teaching and learning excellence across the institute and to enrich the learning experience of all learners. They are carefully aligned with the national policy context, the LIT Strategic Plan and the Higher Level Principles of this Teaching and Learning Strategy. An associated set of actionable strategic goals have been developed to further the strategy ethos of excellence in Teaching and Learning through Engagement, Innovation and Enhancement. This Teaching and Learning strategy and its implementation is the responsibility of a range of parties across the institute in multifaceted contexts. Parties with responsibility associated with implementation themes are listed. It is envisaged that the parties responsible would work to implement the goals in their respective contexts and where appropriate develop operational plans accordingly.

Table 1: Key themes identified for the development of draft strategic goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Strategic Higher Level Outcome for Each Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Academic excellence through active learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continue to embed active learning strategies in programme design, delivery and assessment processes as a means of continuously striving for innovation and excellence in teaching and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Best practice in curriculum design.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Promote best practice principles to guide the curriculum design process across all LIT programmes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Effective assessment that embeds and enhances learning.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Develop capacity in using and managing a range of effective assessment processes, which engage students and embed learning.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Development of the whole person and work readiness.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>That LIT graduates through their programme of studies be enabled and skilled to contribute effectively to the needs of society and the economy, regionally and nationally.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Technology enhanced, blended and online learning</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase the use of technology enhanced, blended and online learning to improve the learning experience and to offer flexible modes of learning to students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Developing capacity with knowledge and research skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty, individually and collectively, enable student capacity to use quality information and research in their development as knowledgeable graduates in their chosen discipline.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Coherent and effective Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Pathways.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Develop a coherent CPD pathway in teaching, learning and assessment for all staff in accordance with the framework proposed by the National Framework for Enhancement of Teaching and Learning 2016.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Development of the learning environment.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>That LIT will enhance all elements of the learning environment for students, both psychological and physical.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Quality enhancement in teaching and learning supported by evidence.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continue to gather, analyse and respond to data from quality assurance processes at Institute, Department and Modular level to continually enhance student engagement through quality teaching and learning.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
1.4.1 Academic excellence through Active Learning

**Strategic Higher Level Outcome**

*Continue to embed Active Learning strategies in programme design, delivery and assessment processes as a means of continuously striving for innovation and excellence in teaching and learning.*

Providing “*high quality teaching and active learning that reflects the needs of industry*” has been identified as a strategic priority in the LIT Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022\(^{[18]}\). LIT’s signature pedagogy of active learning through a fusion of theory and practice provides an agile framework in terms of delivering on excellence and the use of innovative approaches to teaching and learning. The Active Learning pedagogy places student centred learning at the core and this engagement fosters deep and meaningful learning.

LIT commits itself to “*Active learning through a fusion of theory and practice*”\(^{[18]}\). Active Learning is a strategy that encourages students to be active participants in the learning process and allows them to take ownership of their own education. Connecting theory and practice, students apply their learning and develop their understanding through practical and project work, competency and skill development, problem-solving exercises, case studies, work placement, work-based learning, reflection, and many other activities both on and off campus. As an outcome, graduates are equipped to continuously develop personally and professionally.

This philosophy is aimed both at the acquisition of knowledge and the development of a deep understanding and competency in the core area of study. In addition to the acquisition of generic skills so that LIT produces rounded graduates. Active learning in LIT encourages students to be active participants in the learning process and allows them to take ownership of their own education. Thus, a key feature of active learning is that students become vigorously engaged in assimilating the material being taught rather than absorbing that taught by others. Active learning is effectively an umbrella term that refers to several models of instruction that focus the responsibility of learning on learners and can engage them at cognitive, social and physical levels. LIT has owned active learning as a pedagogical brand within the Shannon Consortium and nationally and it is an excellent fit with the theory/practice and applied learning culture.

It is important that, at Faculty and Departmental level, teaching staff discuss and explore the nature of active learning as it best applies to their discipline. Active learning needs to be embedded into all stages of the curriculum development process including programme and module learning outcomes, delivery and assessment strategies. The process of embedding active learning strategies, in an incremental manner, as student’s progress through the life-cycle of their course of study is also an important consideration. In this context it has the potential to embed learning across the continuum of Certificate, Diploma, Degree and Post Graduate education.
There is potential to deepen its implementation across Faculties and Departments and create an exciting signature pedagogy of practice for LIT across all its campus locations.
Strategic Goals and Areas for Development and Implementation for Theme 1

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1.</td>
<td>Continue to engage in an Institute wide initiative to explore the nature and benefits of Active Learning in a Higher Education Institute teaching and learning context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.</td>
<td>Embed Active Learning strategies within all stages of the curriculum development process including design, delivery and assessment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.3.</td>
<td>Engage students in a wide variety of Active Learning approaches including practicals, workshops, seminars, presentations, group and teamwork, work based learning and work placement among others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4.</td>
<td>Support faculty to develop their skills in designing active learning across all areas of the curriculum including assessment processes that reflect the active learning culture.</td>
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<td>1.5.</td>
<td>Teaching staff engage in CPD processes at departmental level to develop capacity around Active Learning as a pedagogical approach that can be customised to meet the discipline specific learning needs of students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.6.</td>
<td>Ensure that students are adequately prepared for group work and so that there is fairness in task sharing, workload and assessment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.7.</td>
<td>Encourage students to develop excellent frameworks for theory and practice engagement in their placement experiences at home and abroad.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.8.</td>
<td>Encourage staff to complete research in Active Learning and Assessment Strategies and present/publish in relevant regional and national fora and disseminate within the Institute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9.</td>
<td>Collate and disseminate best practice examples of active learning through communities of practice, staff CDP and the Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning.</td>
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Parties Responsible for Implementation and Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty and Academic Departments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Department Boards and Programme Boards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality, Teaching and Learning Office</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
1.4.2 Best practice in curriculum design

**Strategic Higher Level Outcome**

*Promote best practice principles to guide the curriculum design process across all programmes at LIT.*

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030\(^{[16]}\) notes the major role that higher education will play in developing Irish society and a knowledge-based economy over the coming decades. Central to achieving this potential is the quality of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across a range of disciplines. It also cited the significance of the quality of the undergraduate curriculum and associated requirements to focus on generic skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, team work, and communication skills that are required in the contemporary workplace and for active citizenship.

For LIT to deliver on its strategic plan and to contribute to the achievement of the National Strategy for Higher Education in the mid-west region and beyond, it must continue to educate quality graduates and postgraduates in a range of disciplines. Therefore, the process of curriculum design, adopted across LIT departments, supported by the LIT Quality Assurance process (as noted in Section 1.3) is of paramount importance. This theme is designed to provide and promote some best practice principles for Institute staff to guide the curriculum design process across programmes.

1. **Process, Values and Principles**

The curriculum design process at LIT can incorporate face-to-face, blended and online elements depending on the programme involved (undergraduate, postgraduate, flexible and special purpose). It involves an internal and external institutional wide collaboration between academic staff (faculty), heads of department, institutional managers, educational developers and technologists, support and library staff. It also involves an external collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including: liaison and research with industry, state agencies, relevant professional bodies, placement agencies and a variety of disciplinary networks.

Curriculum design occurs in the context of embracing and achieving the values and outcomes implicit in the eight key principles which underpin this Teaching and Learning Strategy including: *enhancing engagement with innovation and excellence in teaching and learning; a learner centred active learning approach; a focus on applied learning and the development of employability skills; supporting personal development and growth of the whole person; effective assessment practices that promote deeper learning; inclusive, engaging and supportive learning environment; fostering a culture which enhances research capacity; and developing and embedding a culture of quality enhancement.*
2. Overarching Curriculum Design Principles

In an Irish context, the work of O’Neill (et al)[27], (a collaborative research project across a University and IOT context) is insightful in highlighting three overarching principles for effective curriculum design and LIT subscribes to these principles. These are:

- developing a collective team philosophy for the curriculum;
- developing strong building blocks; and
- communication of curriculum sequencing to students and staff.

Developing a collective team philosophy for the curriculum

This involves the holistic process of making explicit the beliefs and values of the team involved in curriculum design. It is what teachers believe they should be teaching, what learners should be learning and the respective roles of teachers and learners in pursuing both. LIT believes this step is a key starting point for academic developers initially at the level of overall programme design and subsequently at module design level. It may begin with the development of a collaborative vision of the core graduate attributes which should be achieved and then designing a curriculum which will achieve these attributes.

Developing strong building blocks

In designing successful curriculum, evidence suggests that successful programmes include core modules, sometimes organised into streams that can be subsequently built on to develop transparent pathways for students. These core building blocks usually have disciplinary specific cognate areas of knowledge, skills and competencies which enable programmes to be complete, cohesive and integrated.

Communication of curriculum sequencing to students and staff

This principle encourages the use of curriculum mapping tools for the purpose of making sequencing transparent to students and staff on the programme team. This visual mapping serves the purpose of signposting core building blocks, disciplinary foundations and creating a coherent visual rationale to highlight the sequencing of curriculum.

3. Programme Design Principles

LIT also recommends the adoption of ten further principles identified from a study of best practice in curriculum design across a range of authors (including: Fink 2003[28]; Meyers & Nulty 2008[29]; Land, Meyer, & Smith, 2008[30]; Ornstein and Hunkins 2009[31]; O’ Neill 2015[32]. Collectively these principles include a focus on the following:

a) Authenticity; relevance and real world application.

b) Knowledge, skill and competency; appropriate to QQI guidelines for level and award.
c) **Coherence and inter-linkage;** between component parts.

d) **Sequential and incremental:** requiring learners to progressively engage with higher order cognitive processes.

e) **Challenge:** develops student motivation & provides learning challenges.

f) **Alignment:** learning activities, processes and assessments are aligned with learning outcomes.

g) **Choice:** offers choice to students in relation to assessment and elective modules.

h) **Balance:** relevant disciplinary balance, cognitive, psycho-motor and affective domains.

i) **Threshold Concepts:** includes provision for negotiating challenging disciplinary concepts referred to as ‘troublesome knowledge’.

j) **Tacit knowledge:** acknowledges that profound learning is not always measurable.

4. **Curriculum Sequencing Options**

The process of sequencing in curriculum design offers at least four different approaches depending on the needs of a specific discipline or the rationale favoured for achieving curriculum objectives. It is also possible to adopt more than one of these approaches in the design process.

a) **Linear sequencing** typically involves arranging curriculum modules according to levels of difficulty or increasing complexity. Here careful thought is given to relevant content and assessment tasks at each incremental stage of a curriculum.

b) **Spiral curriculum sequence** topics that make up the curriculum are studied more than once because there may be some *threshold concepts* that require an ongoing focus. At first, these concepts are covered at a relatively superficial level and then they are revisited so that they can be explored more critically and in more detail usually over a longer period of time.

c) **Thematic sequencing** is where core or key themes are given a strong structure throughout the programme as a whole. These central themes underpin all of the work that students do while studying the curriculum. The core themes which guide the curriculum process are made explicit to students and remain central to the coherent architecture of their learning.

d) **Backward design sequencing** is often used with a ‘graduate attributes approach’ whereby the mapping and sequencing of learning outcomes and assessments (across all years of a programme) is aligned directly to the achievement of specific and named graduate attributes for a particular discipline.

5. **Universal Design for Excellence and Learner Centred Models of Curriculum Design**

The work of Grainne Conole (explored during the LIT 2018 Staff Development Programme)\(^{33}\) provides an interesting parallel process to that of more traditional design approaches. This work involved the development of a 7Cs model as part of the Open University Learning Design Initiative in the UK, coupled with work at the University of Leicester, has now achieved international recognition\(^{34}\). The
Teaching and Learning Strategy 2018 to 2023

7Cs model was designed to shift the curriculum design process away from teacher centred knowledge to designing for a learner centred curriculum experience.

The constituent elements of the 7 Cs model are outlined in Figure 3.

![Image of the 7Cs model of curriculum design]

Figure 3: The 7 Cs model of curriculum design

This model provides programme design teams with an opportunity to reflect and review in a more holistic manner (than afforded by linear models) how the learning experience will be experienced by students.
# The 7 C’s model of curriculum design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Conceptualise:</td>
<td>What is the vision for the learning intervention? Who is it being designed for? What is the essence of the intervention? What pedagogical approaches are used?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Capture</td>
<td>What Open Educational Resources are being used and what other resources need to be developed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Create</td>
<td>What is the nature of the learning intervention the learners will engage with? What kind of learning activities will the learners engage with?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Communicate</td>
<td>What types of communication will the learners be using?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Collaboration</td>
<td>What types of collaboration will the learners be doing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Consider</td>
<td>What forms of reflection and demonstration of learning are included? Are the learning outcomes mapped to the activities and assessment elements of the learning intervention?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Consolidate</td>
<td>How effective is the design? Do the different elements of the design work together?</td>
</tr>
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6. **The LIT Learning Outcomes Framework aligned to QQI Awards Standards**

The cascading inter-relationship between learning outcomes defined for programmes and modules indicate their initial and primary alignment with QQI guidelines for the respective level of the programme. QQI has published the national framework of qualifications and has defined award standards that describe the standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired, or where appropriate demonstrated, by a learner before an award may be made\(^2\). LIT regulations specified in ACRP\(^{35}\) mandate that “validation requires evidence that the minimum intended programme learning outcomes are consistent with the applicable award standards and the relevant NFQ award type descriptors”.

The programme learning outcomes in consequence determine the module learning outcomes. Teaching, learning and assessment methodologies must reflect the programme and module learning outcomes. The assessments selected for modules should enable the achievement of the learning outcomes for the relevant modules. These interrelationships are diagrammatically represented in Figure 4\(^{36}\).
LIT uses the *Academic Module Manager* software system for curriculum definition to specify all aspects both at programme and module level. This system allows programme boards to ensure there is a uniform approach in terms of the workload associated with ECTS credits including both directed and self-directed learning to ensure consistency, comparability and transparency in addition to the constructive alignment of learning outcomes with programme delivery and assessment. It enables module learning outcomes to be mapped to programme learning outcomes allowing the progressive achievement of programme learning outcomes to become evident as the student progresses through the stages.

The LIT New Programme Guidelines\(^ {[37]} \), updated annually, offer a template for faculty to ensure further consistency in programme development and presentation across a broad range of key areas including stakeholder engagement, learning outcome writing and mapping, and curriculum definition. They constitute a very useful resource and effective starting point for faculty for the development of new programmes.
Strategic Goals and Areas for Development and Implementation for Theme 2

2.1. Ensure that programme design initiatives at LIT continue to be viable, compatible with the programme portfolio, take account of stakeholder requirements and refer to and embrace the key best-practice principles of curriculum design as outlined.

2.2. Write programme learning outcomes with reference to the National Qualifications Framework\(^2\) award type descriptor for that programme level and in accordance with the *LIT Writing & Using Learning Outcomes: A Guide for Academics 2017-2020*\(^36\).

2.3. Design curricula to deliver generic competencies identified in the *LIT Graduate Attributes Framework (2016)*\(^38\) including: critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, group-work, adaptability, multiculturalism, resilience and reflective practice as required in the contemporary workplace and for active citizenship.

2.4. That each department resource and plan for team-based curriculum design processes to enable collaborative and integrated approaches across all stages of curriculum design, development and accreditation.

2.5. Enable programme teams to assess curriculum design options for best practice combinations of face-to-face, blended and online learning models.

2.6. That programme design and review integrates the goals associated with the programme and module learning outcomes with relevant assessment methods.

2.7. Programme assessment should be clearly, cohesively and effectively linked to the achievement of specified graduate attributes and include authentic assessment customised for the specific professional requirement of relevant graduates.

2.8. Provide staff with adequate CPD that focuses on literacy in curriculum design from conceptualisation to completion and planning of the learning experience for students.

2.9. Design the practice/work placement element of a curriculum to help achieve a range of specified professional development objectives, including the successful integration of work-based skills development with key knowledge, skill and competence domains across a programme.

2.10. Design the curriculum to enable all learners to achieve their full potential within a relevant discipline whereby enthusiasm for further scholarship leads to ongoing life-long learning pathways.

Parties Responsible for Implementation and Development

Faculty & Academic Departments
Department Boards and Programme Boards
Registrar’s Office
Quality, Teaching and Learning Office
1.4.3 Effective assessment that embeds and enhances learning

**Strategic Higher Level Outcome**

**Develop capacity in using and managing a range of effective assessment processes which engage students and embed learning.**

LIT is committed to best practice in assessment and “all assessment practices within LIT will be valid, fair and consistent, and appropriate to the learning outcomes with which they are linked. LIT promotes innovative methods in summative assessment, which support active learning and authentic performance, while maintaining standards of validity, fairness and consistency. Assessment for learning (formative assessment) will be used extensively to provide timely and supportive feedback to students from assessment activity” [35].

LIT is committed to employing a range of assessment approaches and instruments including both formative and summative formats. Best practice principles for assessment include explicit sharing of learning outcomes for the programme/modules and sharing the criteria for success with respect to their assessment. Therefore specific approaches will be used to ensure alignment between assessment and learning outcomes and to ensure that assessment is appropriate to the stage of learning the student is at. There is a commitment to continually review assessment practices in LIT to ensure they correspond to best practice nationally and internationally.

In the wider context, there is increasing recognition that a programme level approach is particularly helpful in enhancing assessment strategies and practices. Given that the award of a certificate/degree is a public declaration of the graduate’s achievement of programme-level learning outcomes the integration of the modular assessments in a manner that indirectly measures programme learning outcomes in an integrated manner is important. These programme-level requirements include subject discipline knowledge, understanding and skills, but also wider ‘graduate attributes’ including the so-called ‘soft skills’ such as interpersonal, communication, flexibility, and teamwork among others. Therefore there is an imperative to explore the relationship between assessment and desired graduate attributes. This can result in the development of an integrated, coherent and effective approach to assessment across each programme that captures the programme learning outcomes in addition to those at individual modular level.

There is also an increasing acceptance of the relevance of allowing students to be part of assessment design processes driven in part by the gradual move away from ‘assessment of learning’, the summative examination. The benefits of using ‘assessment for learning’ where assessment is formative and as such offering the opportunities to learn through the assessment process itself are increasingly recognised. Furthermore, the value of ‘assessment as learning’ which directly involves students in the process of assessment in authentic ways (such as through peer, self and co-assessment) enables students to be
Teaching and Learning Strategy 2018 to 2023

reflective with respect to learning and assessment. An integral part of formative assessment is improve and enrich feedback mechanisms for students as this facilitates rich learning and growth. In contexts where student numbers are large, developing authentic feedback mechanism for students is a challenge but the benefits of technology could be harnessed to help facilitate this.

This concept of assessment OF/FOR/AS Learning has been a key enhancement theme for The National Forum for Teaching and Learning for 2016-2018\[24\]. In particular, the theme aims to support the empowerment and engagement of students in the assessment process. Authentic assessment has been described by Swaffield as a form of assessment which involves students conducting ‘real world’ tasks in meaningful contexts\[39\]. Fostering an increased focus on, and better understanding of authentic assessment therefore aligns with the aim of empowering and engaging students through assessment.

![The Assessment Hierarchy](image)

**Figure 5: The assessment hierarchy\[24\]**
### Strategic Goals and Areas for Development and Implementation for Theme 3

| 3.1. | Continue to ensure that programme validation (including programmatic review and new programme development) have assessment as a central element of the review and curriculum development process. |
| 3.2. | Ensure that all assessments are clearly, cohesively and effectively linked to the achievement of specified learning outcomes. |
| 3.3. | Ensure that module assessments are clearly and validly linked and mapped to the relevant programme learning outcomes. |
| 3.4. | Explore and pilot innovative assessment practices that further the achievement of programme learning outcomes including cross-modular and cross-stream assessments. |
| 3.5. | Prioritise at departmental level assessment practices that are discipline-specific and relevant to professional practice. |
| 3.6. | Identify best practice, key enablers, and opportunities for the enhancement of Assessment and the transition from assessment ‘OF’ to assessment ‘FOR’/‘AS’ Learning. |
| 3.7. | Support and facilitate innovative assessment practices ‘FOR’ and ‘AS’ learning such as Problem Based Learning, Case Study Investigation, Site Visit and Group Presentation among others. |
| 3.8. | That principles for ‘best practice feedback mechanisms’ are agreed at Departmental level and implemented throughout formative and summative assessment. |
| 3.9. | Ensure that the needs of learners with special learning requirements are catered for in the implementation of assessment processes. |
| 3.10. | Provide CPD to faculty in technology enhanced assessment processes and in mechanisms to provide assessment feedback to students. |
| 3.11. | Prioritise assessment literacy and skill development for all levels of curriculum design delivery and implementation as part of staff CPD. |
| 3.12. | Where there are requirements to comply with professional regulations within a discipline, assessment design and delivery should reflect these. |

**Parties Responsible for Implementation and Development**

- Registrar’s Office
- Quality, Teaching and Learning Office
- Faculty and Academic Departments
- Department Boards and Programme Boards
1.4.4 Development of the whole person and work readiness.

**Strategic Higher Level Outcome**

_That LIT Graduates through their programme of studies be enabled and skilled to contribute effectively to the needs of society and economy, regionally and nationally._

LIT is committed to creating a confident, competent, educated and skilled graduate from all aspects of the learning experience. This plays an important part in developing and sustaining a vibrant, successful knowledge economy. The ongoing liaison with industry and relevant service providers in our programmatic review processes is crucial to ensuring that the curriculum is relevant to future skill needs. It also ensures that assessment processes embed attributes that make our graduates work-ready in their chosen fields of practice. The development of strong work placement partnership for students is crucial to their development and readiness for professional competency in the workplace. LIT continues to develop new programmes that respond to the changing work environment across a broad range of disciplines. Apprenticeship education also remains an important part of the service of the Institute with a wide range of offering including growth of offerings under the new apprenticeship model.

The emphasis on building so-called soft skills such as communication and interpersonal skills, teamwork, problem solving, creativity and flexibility, among others, is of increasing importance in the curriculum design, delivery and assessment process. The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 states that “the emphasis has switched from over-specialisation towards deeper and broader disciplinary foundations, with learning objectives that explicitly seek to nurture in students the creativity, enthusiasm and skills required for continual engagement with learning”[^16].

Such soft skills are often integral to the higher level programme learning outcomes and it is necessary that they are reflected in appropriate individual module learning outcomes and particularly that they are aligned to assessment. Additionally, the integration of human and personal development streams within some programmes is a vital strategy for enhancing the human capital of our graduates, particularly those who will work in people centered services and professions.

LIT has established associations with a range of nationally recognised professional bodies. Since LIT’s early history of academic provision, many students have been prepared for external professional examinations and accreditation. Professional accreditation of a range of LIT’s programmes, together with the entitlement for professional body examination exemptions and/or membership, provide students with a real competitive advantage in the employment market.

The creation of links with industry and various professional partnerships through research is also crucial to our active learning through theory and practice model and to the iterative knowledge transfer between research and informed teaching. The growth of research groups and centres across faculties is an
important strategic pathway for human capital generation and capacity building across the region. The Federated Limerick Graduate School (within the Shannon Consortium) serves as a regional platform for postgraduate research and will make a significant contribution to the human capacity of the region.

It is also important to leverage LIT’s innovation centres in fostering and encouraging a culture of entrepreneurship, innovation, creativity and enterprise from undergraduate right through to postgraduate level. LIT has an extensive enterprise programme operating enterprise and acceleration centres in each campus. The availability of these and this expertise in enterprise and innovation at the heart of the LIT campus has huge benefits to the wider LIT community and particularly its student population (undergraduate and postgraduate). There is the potential to develop synergies and cross overs that support students in terms of the development of their employment potential developing, interest and aptitude in entrepreneurship and in this way support the transition to employment in this context. This is an excellent resource for which students can access support or take part in workshops, mentoring initiatives and a range of other short programmes during their time at LIT.

LIT interacts with and contributes to external bodies and agencies in the region and nationally including City and Co Councils, City and County Development Boards, VEC’s, Enterprise Ireland, Shannon Development, IDA, Regional Authorities, Chambers of Commerce. LIT also enhances the social and economic life of the region by using its knowledge networks to create opportunities for local enterprises, public bodies and community and voluntary organisations to participate in international projects, thereby enhancing their knowledge base, trading networks and effectiveness. Another strategic engagement in which LIT participates includes the Mid-West Regional Skills Forum. This forum facilitates engagement between regional education and training providers, local authorities, local enterprise offices and relevant public and private sector organisations to support employers and job creation.

The International dimension and the perspectives gained from student and staff study visits abroad under Erasmus and other exchange arrangements has significant potential to enhance human capacity within the Institute and will also be further supported.
### Strategic Goals and Areas for Development and Implementation for Theme 4

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Embed, as an integral part of the learning experience, attributes that will contribute to the development of the whole person and life-long skills such as adaptability, critical thinking, creativity, team work and problem solving.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>During programme validation give consideration to integrating human development modules and streams as appropriate to the professional needs of the relevant sector(s).</td>
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<td>4.3</td>
<td>Encourage and support students to become involved in volunteering, fundraising and charitable activities as part of their overall development and contribution to active citizenship.</td>
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<td>4.4</td>
<td>Support students to become involved in Clubs and Societies and highlight the benefits of this involvement in the development of life long skills.</td>
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<td>4.5</td>
<td>Use the LIT Graduate Attributes Framework as a guide to designing a learning experience that will develop an educated and skilled graduate contributing effectively to the human capacity needs of society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Continue to embed links with industry across programme development processes and further develop the applied nature of programmes.</td>
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<td>4.7</td>
<td>Further develop work based learning opportunities to give authentic real world context that will integrate theory, practice and competencies required for the workplace and create openness for continuous learning.</td>
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<td>4.8</td>
<td>Prioritises well-structured and supported formal Work Placement and/or Work Based Projects opportunities across all programmes.</td>
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<td>4.9</td>
<td>Create further opportunities for students on taught programmes to engage with and benefit from the expertise available at LIT Enterprise and Acceleration Centres.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>Further develop the international dimension and the potential for increasing the number of outward study trips for students and staff.</td>
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### Parties Responsible for Implementation and Development

- Registrar’s Office
- Quality, Teaching and Learning Office
- Faculty & Academic Departments
- Department Boards and Programme Boards
- Office of VP International and Dean of Work Based Learning
1.4.5 Technology enhanced, blended and online learning

**Strategic Higher Level Outcome**

*Increase the use of technology enhanced, blended and online learning to improve the learning experience and to offer flexible modes of learning to students.*

Technology enhanced learning (TEL), has the potential to provide adaptable modes of delivery for coursework which complements the learning environment for students where appropriate. TEL can be incorporated into many aspects of a module (content, assessments, tutorials etc) to enrich student engagement and create a learner centred experience. Incorporating TEL into coursework allows students to upskill, develop their digital literacy skills, and promotes a lifelong, flexible model of learning.

LIT’s strategic plan prioritises the growth of student numbers and the diversity of the student population and states that this will be enabled with a “flexible model of education to include new online and blended programmes that increase student enrolments, support continuous professional development (CPD) and enable life-long learning”. Blended, technology enhanced and online learning enables a diverse range of delivery methods to facilitate the learning requirements of part time and distance students. TEL allows for the delivery of coursework to be tailored to best suit the needs of the students.

At a national and European level, the enhancement of digital skills for staff and students is a key factor in the provision of an enriched learning experience in higher education. Institutional provision of support for selective integration of TEL in undergraduate, postgraduate and flexible programmes is a fundamental prerequisite for the deepening of its impact.

The Digital Agenda for Europe[^40] states that “digital literacy as a life skill is a key component for building digital capacity”. This is reiterated by the National Forum recommendation to “develop a consistent, seamless and coherent digital experience for students in Irish higher education and actively engage with students and teachers to develop their digital skills and knowledge”.[^40] This theme on blended and technology enhanced learning aims to align itself with the above recommendations.

The integration of digital technology can be structured to support students on different learning paths so that content and learning is varied to the individual needs of the student. The effectiveness of technology enhanced learning depends on how it is incorporated into the delivery of coursework to complement the scholarship of teaching and learning. Adequate supports must be made available to academic staff who are incorporating TEL into their teaching practice.

The National Forum for Teaching and Learning has developed a National Professional Development Framework for all staff who teach in Irish higher education. This framework highlights the importance of “personal and professional digital capacity and the application of digital skills and knowledge to
professional practice"[^42]. Academic staff need to be supported in developing confidence in using digital technology as part of their professional practice.

The European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (Figure 6) provides a set of 22 competencies divided into 6 areas. The framework provides a progression model to allow educators to recognise the level they are at and identify steps they can take to develop their skills further. This framework allows staff to "comprehensively assess and develop their pedagogical digital competence"[^43].

![Figure 6: Synthesis of the DigCompEdu Framework][43]

Framework such as DidCompEdu, and the National Digital Skills framework are a valuable resources that can be customised to meet the institutional requirements of LIT’s staff and students. The goals below outline the institutional structure and support that may be implemented across LIT for both staff and students engaging in technology enhanced, blended and online learning.
Strategic Goals and Areas for Development and Implementation for Theme 5

5.1. Grow the portfolio of flexible learning programmes and their delivery options to increase learner enrolments in life-long learning.

5.2. Continue to develop a set of best practice principles to guide the integration of TEL where appropriate.

5.3. Invest in appropriate infrastructure and platforms to facilitate the use of TEL.

5.4. Embed the role of Education Technologist within the Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning as an enabler of TEL.

5.5. Integrate TEL to enrich student engagement and create a learner centred experience as part of new programme validation and in programmatic review where appropriate.

5.6. Support students who are using TEL as part of their studies by providing technical assistance/information and guidance on learning in a blended/online environment.

5.7. Support the development of flexible programmes using blended and online learning delivery formats with a broad range of related CPD offerings and ongoing follow up.

5.8. Provide training and support to academic staff to enable them develop their digital literacy skills and manage their digital wellbeing.

5.9. Further develop a community of practice to develop a culture of academic collaboration and knowledge sharing of TEL activities across all departments.

5.10. Support and acknowledge the work of TEL advocates across LIT who implement TEL and collaborate with their colleagues.

5.11. Develop a range of resources for TEL in a Virtual Teaching and Learning Centre on the staff portal.

5.12. Engage with professional bodies and key external stakeholders in order to be informed by national and international best practice in TEL, digital literacy and digital resources.

Parties Responsible for Implementation and Development

LIT Executive
Quality, Teaching and Learning Office/Education Technologist
Faculty & Academic Departments
Department Boards and Programme Boards
Office of Dean of Flexible Learning/VP Equality and Diversity
Computer Services
1.4.6 Developing capacity with knowledge and research skills.

**Strategic Higher Level Outcome**

*Faculty, individually and collectively, enable student capacity to use quality information and research in their development as knowledgeable graduates in their chosen discipline.*

The LIT Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022\(^{18}\) highlights the need to “*ensure our academic programme offering and pedagogies are research informed and equip students with practical critical thinking and problem-solving skills*”. This contributes to the ethos of a research culture and lays a strong foundation for the growth and development of research centres by increasing the capacity of students to be research active and continue their studies in this context.

Research and information literacy skills including critical thinking and problem solving are a key component of completing research. To support students in this area, LIT will provide ongoing training and resources to students on the process of searching for relevant material and learning how to cite and reference their work. Central to this is developing student’s abilities to make value judgements on the reliability and validity of the sources they are using. LIT will support the research effort through facilities and equipment, such as online courses on information literacy and research methods.

LIT has developed an Information Literacy Framework which involves three components to make learners aware, familiar and competent to find, understand and communicate information accessible through library resources. The framework enables students to progressively build their skills and facilitates “*collaboration with academic departments and help integrate information literacy skills into the curriculum*”\(^{44}\).

Library information seminars and workshops are offered during induction and again throughout the academic year. LIT has a wealth of offerings related to referencing and citations provided through the library service and through Moodle (e.g. Epigeum resources). These could be further developed to include additional courses on assessing student’s information literacy skills and on the validity of sources of information.

One approach to instilling information literacy and research skills in students could be by including content in academic writing and research skills in programmes. Highlighting the importance of information literacy skills early in programmes, irrespective of discipline, allows students to see this as an integral part of their learning. The LIT curriculum is research-informed through extensive links between our applied research projects and undergraduate programmes.
Strategic Goals and Areas for Development and Implementation for Theme 6

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<tr>
<td>6.1.</td>
<td>Support and encourage students to undertake research both at undergraduate and postgraduate level.</td>
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<td>6.2.</td>
<td>Incorporate completion of an elementary course on referencing and citation, and other literacy skills, as part of student induction.</td>
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<td>6.3.</td>
<td>During programme validations, consider incorporating a learning outcome that aligns to the development of research skills and methods in all Stages of programmes.</td>
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<td>6.4.</td>
<td>Consider the integration of a 5 credit module on academic writing and research skills within programmes.</td>
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<td>6.5.</td>
<td>Encourage teaching staff to embed academic writing protocols within their written assignment briefs.</td>
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<td>6.6.</td>
<td>Support staff involved in the provision of teaching and learning to develop their knowledge of research methods and protocols for academic writing.</td>
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<td>6.7.</td>
<td>Develop research colloquia/industry poster presentations/conference attendance and presentation as a means of students sharing research practice and findings from final year projects and dissertations.</td>
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<td>6.8.</td>
<td>Continue to strengthen the feedback loop between institutional level research, via LIT-based research centres and groups, and relevant Level 8, 7 and 6 programmes.</td>
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<td>6.9.</td>
<td>Encourage faculty to become research active in their disciplines so that they can be exemplars of best practice.</td>
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<td>6.10.</td>
<td>Encourage and incentivise faculty to become research active through the research groups and centres across the Institute.</td>
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<td>6.11.</td>
<td>Facilitate knowledge transfer from research active staff to the wider LIT learning community through accessible research reports, publications, case studies and conference presentations and information sessions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.12.</td>
<td>Encourage faculty to collaborate through research partnerships with colleagues across the Shannon Consortium and nationally.</td>
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Parties Responsible for Implementation and Development

- Quality, Teaching and Learning Office
- Faculty & Academic Departments
- Department Boards and Programme Boards
- LIT Library
- Office of VP Research, Enterprise and Development.
- Office of Head of Research
Coherent and effective continuous professional development (CPD) pathways

1.4.7 Coherent and effective continuous professional development (CPD) pathways

**Strategic Higher Level Outcome**

*Develop a coherent CPD pathway in teaching, learning and assessment for all staff in accordance with the framework proposed by the National Forum for Enhancement of Teaching and Learning 2016.*

The National Forum highlights that CPD of staff should facilitate "meaningful personal and professional development in a variety of ways"[42]. Therefore, it is important that LIT ensures that the CPD training and supports for staff are flexible and suit the needs of staff collectively and individually. Best practice suggests that they should be inclusive, promote peer collaboration and be underpinned by the scholarship of quality teaching and learning. There are many pathways available for staff as they progress their own scholarship of teaching and learning. LIT is committed to supporting and investing in its staff to facilitate their development.

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning published the National Professional Development Framework for all Staff who teach in Higher Education in August 2016[42]. It states that “the quality of provision in higher education is crucial to ensuring that graduates have the right skills, competencies and experience in order to contribute fully to future economic, social and cultural development”. The Higher Education Systems Performance Framework recommends, as a high level target, the implementation of the Continuous Professional Development Framework from 2018[17].

The CPD framework is divided into five domains (Figure 7) and their constituent elements provide a guide to staff to review their current knowledge, skills and competencies, regardless of how, where or when these dimensions of professional learning have been developed. There is also a focus on supporting people to plan for their future professional development needs with these domains in mind.

All five domains refer to the activities that staff engage in as part of their teaching (including assessment and feedback activity) and the impact that these have on their students’ learning. The development of an individual’s engagement with the scholarship of teaching and learning is an integral component of each domain. The domains and their elements provide a framework to guide staff to review their current knowledge and skills in teaching, learning and assessment for all staff including personal development plans and team development plans[42].
LIT’s CPD Framework will be developed in the context of this national policy framework outlined above. The provision of a range of opportunities for CPD for staff in the accredited and non-accredited domains caters for staff whose learning requirements will vary depending on the pathway they are on. These CPD opportunities should also be available as appropriate to all staff (academic and non-academic) within LIT to support personal development and wellbeing.

LIT will continue to support the development of the Shannon Consortium (SC) Teaching & Learning model to enhance the above opportunities within a cross institutional and interdisciplinary context. Cross institutional collaborations such as the Shannon Consortium Teaching & Learning model promote dialogue and idea sharing among staff. LIT will aim to continue this work and promote collaboration through the establishment of a community of practice for the scholarship of teaching and learning.

LIT recognises the importance of encouraging and facilitating staff to continuously develop their scholarship of teaching and learning and is committed to supporting staff who are completing research in teaching and learning. The provision of opportunities to facilitate staff to carry out research and publish their work is key to their professional development. The ongoing enhancement of a professional academic environment that is underpinned by research in the scholarship of teaching and learning is key to nurturing professional identity, values and the skills of LIT’s staff. In line with CPD support for research in the scholarship of teaching and learning, the provision of staff support for discipline specific research is also required.

As detailed in Section 1.2.3, the governing body of LIT has adopted the approach of aligning with the targets required for application for redesignation as a Technological University and this includes the staff related criterion that, of the full-time academic staff of an applicant institute engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree, at least 90 per cent hold a masters or doctoral degree and at least 45 per cent hold a doctoral degree or equivalent. LIT is committed to aligning its staff profile to this metric in the period of the Teaching and Learning Strategy.
### Strategic Goals and Areas for Development and Implementation for Theme 7

| 7.1. | Establish a fully resourced and funded Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning to implement, support, monitor and evaluate programmes and CPD pathways at all levels. |
| 7.2. | Implement the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning CPD Framework as a template for best practice and sustained emphasis on Teaching and Learning from 2018. |
| 7.3. | Develop departmental-wide CPD initiatives that support active learning and assessment. |
| 7.4. | Continue to ensure the provision of non-accredited training to facilitate the varied levels of staff training requirements. |
| 7.5. | Develop a mechanism to provide certification for non-accredited CPD in teaching and learning. |
| 7.6. | Provide appropriate induction for newly appointed staff in institutional best practice in Teaching and Learning and its associated academic administrations. |
| 7.7. | Develop accredited special purpose awards in Teaching and Learning in LIT to allow wider access to credited CPD by LIT staff. |
| 7.8. | Support and resource the pilot and rollout of the MA in Teaching and Learning across the Shannon Consortium as a key component of a long-term and sustainable regional framework for CPD. |
| 7.9. | Plan and develop a structured PhD in Teaching and Learning as a progression opportunity. |
| 7.10. | Encourage and support staff research in Teaching and Learning and the associated publishing of findings. |
| 7.11. | Develop and support research initiatives that allow staff develop their knowledge and skills in the scholarship of teaching and learning and assessment literacies for higher education. |
| 7.12. | Promote collaboration through the establishment of communities of practice for the scholarship of teaching and learning and research among others. |

### Parties Responsible for Implementation and Development

- Academic Staff
- Faculty and Academic Departments
- Department Boards and Programme Boards
- Quality, Teaching and Learning Office
- Registrar’s Office
1.4.8 Development of the learning environment

**Strategic Higher Level Outcome**

That LIT will enhance all elements of the Learning Environment for Students, both psychological and physical.

The Learning Environment in a holistic sense can be seen as physical, social and psychological and LIT is aware of the importance of each. The institution aims to offer a high-quality, supportive learning environment for all of students including undergraduates, apprentices, postgraduates and international students.

LIT’s ethos and delivery of a supportive environment for students is strong, as is borne out by student surveys and informal feedback. The relational dimension between staff and students has also been referenced positively in student surveys such as ISSE. Staff at LIT are noted in externally verified publications such as the EU Student Barometer for their personal approach to learners through the formal mentoring scheme, the educational philosophy of active learning as well as the general ethos. The Institute recognises the need for student academic support and the learning support structure through the LSU provides a significant asset to the learning environment for a significant number of students and the services of the LSU are available free to all students.

LIT recognises that general ambiance and learner environment in social, cultural or sporting events including volunteering adds a crucial dimension to the learning environment. LIT continues to offer a full suite of supports including Careers, Sports and Recreation, Counselling, Access, Health, Pastoral and in some instances financial. LIT experiences some attrition among students due to financial hardship (a national problem across the IOT sector). LIT has established the Student Hardship Fund (resourced from Student Services budget) and a Bursaries Scheme for students from a regeneration area (with the help of private sector donations).

The physical learning environment and learning spaces at LIT will continue to be conducive to the teaching and learning philosophy which the Institute has embraced and needs to adequately serve the needs of all users: learners, staff and visitors. There is a Campus Development Masterplan to 2030 and some refurbishment work has been successfully completed in Moylish campus. High standards for infrastructure and facilities underpins the academic programmes and services and the institute endeavors to continuously improve available resources.

The Institute is a growing and multi-campus institution and this provides significant opportunities for enhancement of the physical learning environment. Central to this is the construction of a major new campus at Coonagh focused primarily on the Engineering disciplines with a €14m investment in addition to a further €20m investment for the construction of a new Applied Science and IT building.
on the LIT Moylish campus. These infrastructural developments will provide for the expansion and improvement of the learning resources available to LIT students including state of the art engineering workshops, science labs, flat teaching facilities, computer labs, tutorial rooms, breakout and meeting spaces and other social areas. There will also be the opportunity to re-fit existing space in the Moylish campus as current Engineering and Science space becomes vacated.

In addition to the development of state of the art learning facilities this growth provides much needed opportunities to develop additional physical and social learning spaces across different campus locations. It also provides opportunity to make the learning spaces compatible with requirements for digital learning with inclusion of related capacity and resources. There is also a need for continued modernising and upgrading of library services.
Strategic Goals and Areas for Development and Implementation for Theme 8

8.1. Utilize resources effectively to prioritize a full suite of supports for students including careers, counselling, access, health, learner support, sports and recreation.

8.2. Provide supports that respond to emerging student needs in a timely and cohesive manner to ensure an optimal learning environment.

8.3. Facilitate learning outside the formal curriculum by encouraging participation in a range of clubs and societies.

8.4. That the Learner Support Unit continues to provide support to students and continues to develop a reciprocal relationship with teaching staff.

8.5. Resource the equipment and learning materials in laboratories, workshops, studios and other learning spaces on an ongoing basis to ensure they are adequate for the achievement of intended learning outcomes.

8.6. Provide quality information resources and library services with continued modernising of facilities to include both appropriate learning resources and access to digital resources and databases.

8.7. Continue to develop the information and communication technology infrastructure to support technology enhanced, blended and online learning appropriate to 21st century Higher Education environments.

8.8. Review, develop, and where feasible, redesign the physical learning environment and take full advantage of the campus development plan to create state of the art learning facilities and to include social learning spaces.

8.9. That localised refurbishments be completed across campus locations to reflect the specific learning needs of new programmes.

Parties Responsible for Implementation and Development

LIT Executive
Student Support Services
Learning Support Unit
Quality, Teaching and Learning Office
Faculty and Academic Departments
LIT Library
Computer Services
1.4.9 Quality enhancement in teaching and learning supported by evidence

The Technological Higher Education Association (THEA) published the technological higher education quality framework in April 2017\(^{45}\) and this noted that “the pursuit of academic excellence is central to the mission of all THEI’s”. Additionally, the Higher Education System Performance Framework 2018 to 2020 noted that “it is critical that the purpose of quality assurance and quality enhancement are targeted at supporting a quality learning experience for students”\(^{17}\). In this way the twin purposes of accountability and process improvement become integrated. These imperatives create a very clear and direct link between the quality function and teaching and learning and thus the concept of continuous process improvement and the enhancement of the learning experience is a core principle of this strategy. It is rooted in the overall objective of the strategy, namely Excellence in Teaching and Learning through Engagement, Innovation and Enhancement. It is also integral to the higher level principles elucidated in Section 1.3.2 in addition to the stated implementation themes and strategic goals detailed in Section 1.4. Furthermore, all are aligned and developed to reflect Institutional strategic objectives priorities (Appendix 1).

The technological higher education quality framework\(^{45}\) specified a set of principles that underpin quality assurance and enhancement in technological higher education. A number of these principles are directly relevant to this Teaching and Learning Strategy including Principle 1, Academic and Student Centred Values, Principle 4, Informed Practice and Stakeholder Engagement and Principle 7 Measurement.

In the context of this theme, measurement and evaluation of the impact of teaching and learning activities can be evidenced by gathering and analysing both qualitative and quantitative data from a broad range of sources. This can provide an evidence base from which to direct quality enhancement processes consistent with the teaching and learning mission of the Institute.

The use of data and an evidence base to design change that improves the quality of student experiences and promotes student learning and success is the central imperative of this theme. It is recognised that institutional-level assessment, such as student engagement surveys, can provide evidence of the impact that the development of teaching and learning scholarship has had in institutions\(^{46}\). There are also a broad a range of other student engagement measures that can further a culture of evidence based practice by providing actionable data that can be used to enhance the quality of teaching and learning as well as empower faculty to develop self-reflective practices and engage with the requirements of both
accountability and continuous process improvement. In this way, an evidenced based performance culture that is centered on teaching and learning is developed and actioned at both a centralised institutional level and at additional critical devolved strata at department, programme and module level.
Strategic Goals and Areas for Development and Implementation for Theme 9

9.1. Continuously review the existing policies and procedures in the context of wider change to ensure they align to national and international policy and governance.

9.2. Anchor departmental and programme teaching and learning approaches to the institutional Teaching and Learning Strategy and framework.

9.3. Implement measures to increase student participation in the ISSE survey and embed the findings of ISSE in the institute quality enhancement processes with particular emphasis on teaching and learning functions.

9.4. Continue to gather data and develop effective reporting mechanisms in relation to student and learning supports to enhance its capacity to respond quickly and cohesively to emerging student needs.

9.5. Further develop student feedback mechanisms by increasing student representation on key quality assurance fora such as Programme Boards and Programme Validation Panels and carefully consider issues raised.

9.6. Develop measures to ensure that student feedback loops are identified at institutional, departmental, programme and module level and that the mechanisms of how these are actioned and closed by communicating outcomes back to students are clearly specified.

9.7. Collate and feed forward the comments and recommendations of external examiners during annual assessment to programme boards, programme review and new programme design processes.

9.8. Faculty continue to engage in an end of module evaluation process as part of self-reflective practice.

9.9. Generate and communicate data such as completion, retention and progression statistics annually and communicate to relevant stakeholders to contribute to evidence based practice and continuous process improvement.

9.10. Collate data from student withdrawal forms and interviews as part of a feedback loop to academic departments and programme boards.

9.11. Pilot the use of learning analytics to inform potential improvement strategies for student engagement.

Parties Responsible for Implementation and Development

Quality, Teaching and Learning Office
Registrar’s Office
Faculty and Academic Departments
Department Boards and Programme Boards
Bibliography


10. ISSE (2016). Irish Student Survey Engagement, ISSE

11. LIT Teaching and Learning Assessment Strategy 2012-2015


https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/principles-assessment-offoras-learning/


33. Conole, G. (February 15, 2018). Keynote and Workshop on Curriculum Design at Limerick Institute of Technology Staff Development Day


38. LIT, Graduate Attributes Framework (2016). Quality Assurance Handbook, Limerick Institute of Technology


### 1.5 Appendix 1 Mapping Teaching and Learning Strategy to LIT Strategic Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIT Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022</th>
<th>Mapping to Teaching and Learning Strategy 2018 - 2023</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institute Mission</strong></td>
<td><strong>Strategy Ethos</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limerick Institute of Technology is a regionally focused Higher Education Institute with a national and international outlook. We empower our diverse student body by providing a quality higher education experience enabling economic, social and cultural development</td>
<td>Higher Level Principles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implementation themes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIT Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022</th>
<th>Mapping to Teaching and Learning Strategy Implementation Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institute Values</strong></td>
<td><strong>Implementation Themes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Supportive</strong>: We provide a higher education environment that nurtures, supports and engages our students, staff and external stakeholders, enabling them to achieve their full potential</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Accessible</strong>: We enable wider access and participation in higher education by embracing diversity and providing a flexible offering</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 5, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Innovative</strong>: We foster creative and entrepreneurial activities, in all their forms, in collaboration with our stakeholders to address the changing needs of our region</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Equitable</strong>: We promote fairness, equal opportunity, respect and positive outcomes for all our students and staff</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Excellence</strong>: We embed continuous improvement in all Institute activities to support the achievement of the highest standards in all aspects of teaching, learning, research and related supports</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9</td>
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</table>
### LIT Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022 Priority 1: Grow Student Numbers and Diversify our Student Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Priorities</th>
<th>Implementation Themes</th>
<th>Strategic Goals for Development and Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In order to achieve this priority, LIT will:</td>
<td>Implementation Themes</td>
<td>Strategic Goals for Development and Implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Analyse the Institute’s programme portfolio to ensure continued suitability and to identify new discipline areas</td>
<td>2, 4, 5</td>
<td>2.1, 2.4, 2.5, 2.10, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 5.1, 5.5</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2, 5</td>
<td>2.1, 5.1, 5.5, 5.6, 6.1, 6.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Maintain and enhance appropriate pathways and necessary supports to enable students continued progression through their educational journey</td>
<td>2, 5, 6</td>
<td>2.1, 2.5, 2.10, 5.1, 5.5, 5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enhance our flexible model of education to include new online and blended programmes that increase student enrolments, support continuous professional development (CPD) and enable life-long learning</td>
<td>2, 5</td>
<td>2.1, 2.5, 2.10, 5.1, 5.5, 5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attract international students that generate additional non-exchequer income and enrich the overall student learning experience</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIT Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022 Priority 2: Provide High Quality Teaching and Active Learning that Reflects the Needs of Industry

#### Strategic Priorities

In order to achieve this priority, LIT will:

- Ensure our academic programme offering and pedagogies are research informed and equip students with practical critical thinking and problem-solving skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation Themes</th>
<th>Strategic Goals for Development and Implementation</th>
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<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7</td>
<td>1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.7, 1.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>2, 3, 4</td>
<td>2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.7, 2.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>3, 4</td>
<td>3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>5, 6, 7</td>
<td>4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.8, 6.9</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>9.1, 9.2</td>
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- Enrich the student learning experience through innovative course delivery methods supported by technology, internationalisation and positive student-staff engagement

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<tr>
<th>Implementation Themes</th>
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<td>1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8</td>
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<td>2.4, 2.5</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3.1 to 3.8</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>4.1, 4.10</td>
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<td>5, 6</td>
<td>5.1, 5.2, 5.5, 5.6, 5.12</td>
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<tr>
<td>7, 8, 9</td>
<td>9.3, 9.4, 9.5, 9.6, 9.7, 9.8, 9.9, 9.10, 9.11</td>
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- Expand work based learning and work placement opportunities

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<th>Implementation Themes</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.1, 2.3, 2.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.6, 4.7, 4.8</td>
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- Upskill academic staff to keep pace with new technologies and pedagogies and incorporate these into their teaching and delivery methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7</td>
<td>1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 1.8, 1.9</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10, 3.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10, 5.11, 5.12</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6, 7.7, 7.8, 7.9, 7.10, 7.11, 7.12</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>9.8</td>
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### LIT Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022: Priority 3: Increase LIT’s RDI Capacity in Areas that have a Clear Economic and Social Impact for the Region

**Strategic Priorities**

In order to achieve this priority, LIT will:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation Themes</th>
<th>Strategic Goals for Development and Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Grow the quantity, quality and impact of Research Development and Innovation (RDI) activities and enable knowledge transfer and entrepreneurship</td>
<td>2.10 4.6, 4.9 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9, 6.10, 6.11, 6.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Promote a research culture to increase capacity and identify and support staff to be research active</td>
<td>6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9, 6.10, 6.11, 6.12 7.2, 7.11, 7.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Advance key research priorities relevant to the region</td>
<td>6.10, 6.11, 6.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Further develop enterprise activities that foster innovation and entrepreneurship and shape the entrepreneurs of the future</td>
<td>4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9 6.7, 6.8, 6.11, 6.10, 6.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIT Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022 Priority 4: Deepen Stakeholder Engagement and Increase our Impact on the Region

**Strategic Priorities**

In order to achieve this priority, LIT will:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation Themes</th>
<th>Strategic Goals for Development and Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Strategically engage with regional stakeholders to ensure LIT contributes to the development of the region</td>
<td>2.1, 2.7, 2.9, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.1, 2.3, 2.9, 2.10, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.12, 4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 5.1, 5.5, 5.12, 6.1, 6.3, 6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Further develop the applied nature of programmes in collaboration with industry that equip graduates with the knowledge and skills to meet industry’s ever changing needs</td>
<td>2.1, 2.3, 2.9, 2.10, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.12, 4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 5.1, 5.5, 5.12, 6.1, 6.3, 6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Deepen engagement with regional, national and international higher education providers to drive growth and investment in the region</td>
<td>2.1, 4.10, 5.1, 5.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Utilise the Shannon Consortium framework to play a key role in addressing the opportunities and challenges of the region</td>
<td>2.1, 7.4, 7.8, 7.9, 7.11, 7.12</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### LIT Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022

**Priority 5: Deliver on LIT’s Campus Development Plan to Enhance the Student Experience**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Priorities</th>
<th>Implementation Themes</th>
<th>Strategic Goals for Development and Implementation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>In order to achieve this priority, LIT will:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Continue to expand physical campus space and capacity</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, 8.8, 8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop a campus environment that delivers an appropriate balance of dynamic and flexible spaces for our educational communities</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, 8.8, 8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create an accessible and suitably equipped physical and virtual environment that facilitates individual and group learning and optimises the use of facilities for the benefit of students and the region</td>
<td>5, 8</td>
<td>5.3, 5.11, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, 8.8, 8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Utilise the Mid-West Limerick city-region principles to ensure that the LIT campuses located outside of Limerick City continue to be developed (as per Campus 2030 Plan)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, 8.8, 8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>