

THE  TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES

**GOOD
UNIVERSITY
GUIDE
2020**

**INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY
OF THE YEAR**



ATHLONE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
PRESIDENT'S REPORT AND STRATEGIC ISSUES

March 2020



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President's visit to Malaysia

Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin Visit to Malaysia 9-15 January 2020

Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin arrived in Kuala Lumpur on 9th of January 2020 to visit AIT's partners in Malaysia.

Kuala Lumpur: UniKL

Professor Ó Catháin and Mr. Meng Jing, Director for Asia visited UniKL at its city campus in KL. Director of International Office, Dr. Zalhan Bin Mohd Zin and Deputy Dean of Mechanical and Design School, Dr. Nik Mohamad Farid Nik Ismail hosted the meeting. Both sides agreed to start exchanging course syllabus in the area of Production Innovation, Mechanical and Polymer Engineering. UniKL has established international pathway programme of two years duration at UniKL Malaysia and two years at its partner universities abroad to receive award of Bachelor degree.



Kuala Lumpur: MSU

Vice President of Management & Science University, Prof. Dr. Eddy Yusuf met with Professor Ó Catháin and Mr. Meng Jing in KL. MSU have sent two students to study Culinary Arts, Business and Hotel Management at AIT during the past three years. Professor Eddy expressed interest in sending more students to study at AIT in the near future.

Kuala Lumpur: Methodist College (MCKL)

MCKL has experience of sending students to study in Ireland. Enterprise Ireland has been working with MCKL for education fairs, as well as seminars in recent years. AIT received two students who graduated from MCKL. Mr. Andrew Chong from Hansel and Gretel, Kindergarten organised the visit for Professor Ó Catháin and Mr. Meng Jing to MCKL. The discussion focused on the possibility of setting up joint courses in the area of Veterinary Nursing, Software Engineering and Data Science. Chief Executive Officer of MCKL, Angela Pok hosted the meeting.



Kuala Lumpur: Visit to Embassy of Ireland

After the visit to MCKL, Professor Ó Catháin, Mr. Meng Jing, Andrew Chong and his team visited the Irish Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. Deputy Head of Mission, Catherine Aylward hosted the meeting at the Embassy. Ms. Aylward was very interested in learning about the cooperation between AIT and Hansel and Gretel and cooperation plans between the two parties.



Kuala Lumpur: Meeting at My Study Agency

Mr. C.K. Chiau from My Study is our key agent in Malaysia. CK and his team have sent dozens of Malaysian students to AIT during the past ten years. Professor Ó Catháin and Mr. Meng Jing met with CK and his colleague, Melissa Chin in KL. CK outlined the challenges from the Malaysian study abroad market but he was confident about continuing to send quality students to AIT.

UniMap: Meeting in Penang

Professor Ó Catháin and Mr. Meng Jing flew to Penang to meet with the newly appointed Vice Chancellor of UniMap, Professor Ir. Ts. Dr. R Badlishah Ahmad, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Prof. Ir. Dr. Mohd Rizal Bin Arshad and their colleagues. Unimap has been one of AIT's longest partners

in Malaysia. During the meeting, both sides discussed plans to hold the next annual research conference in Ireland. The Vice Chancellor of Unimap expressed interest in sending more academic staff to study PhD at AIT.



Penang TarUC

Professor Ó Catháin and Mr. Meng Jing visited TarUC Penang campus. Branch Campus Head, Associate Professor Dr. Toh Guat Guan, Deputy Head, Dr. Lee Pey Huey and Manager Lee Phaik Ling welcomed the AIT delegation. AIT's accounting course is still popular among students at TarUC Penang Campus and there are plans to continue promotion of this programme for September 2020 intake. Both sides explored opportunities for more students to transfer to AIT and to develop cooperation in new programmes such as Data Analysis.



TarUC KL

Professor Ó Catháin, Mr. Meng Jing and Mr. Kean Yeap Yong visited TarUC in Kuala Lumpur. Professor Ir Dr. Lee Sze Wei, President of TarUC welcomed AIT's delegation to the KL campus. AIT and TarUC are partners since 2012 for transfer of students to BA (Honours) in Accounting and other programmes at AIT. During 2018, AIT and TarUC also signed agreement of cooperation for pathway from Foundation course in KL for Malaysian students to transfer to Year one of Bachelor degree courses at AIT.



Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya (UM)

Professor Ó Catháin, Mr. Meng Jing and Mr. Kean Yeap Yong visited University of Malaya on 14 January 2020. UM is ranked amongst the top 500 universities in the world and was awarded 87th place in the QS World University rankings 2018. The student population is 21,500. AIT and UM are developing joint research for mechanical and polymer engineering, staff and student exchange and cooperation for postgraduate research programmes. Deputy Vice Chancellor, Director of International Relations Office, Prof. Dr. Yvonne Lim, Deputy Dean of Research Prof. Dr. M. Suffian M. Annuar and Judy Choong Chai Kun from International Relations Office attended the meeting.



Professor Ó Catháin departed Kuala Lumpur on the evening of 14 January 2020.

This visit cemented long term relationships established with partner universities in Malaysia and highlighted new programmes offered by AIT which will be of interest to Malaysian students. Malaysian agencies are interested in continuing to send students to AIT as students have given positive feedback about their student experience at AIT. Malaysia is a priority market for AIT and the appointment of a Marketing graduate will promote a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes to students as they receive their high school results and college examination results.

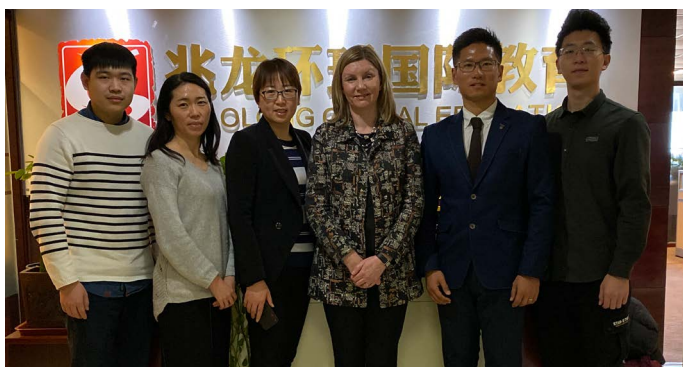
EDUCATION MISSION TO CHINA

DECEMBER 2019

Ms. Mary Simpson, Director of International Relations and Mr. Jack Meng, Director of Asia travelled to Beijing to visit partner universities and agents from 26 of November to 3 of December 2019.

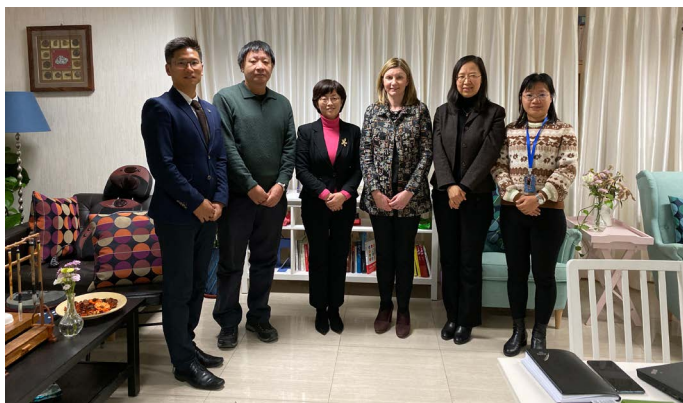
Beijing Zhaolong Education Consulting Company

Zhaolong has been an educational agency partner to AIT for many years. It has rich experience in sending Chinese students to study in Ireland. Ms. Mary Simpson and Mr. Jack Meng met with its manager, Alice Li and staff at their office in Beijing. During the meeting, Mary introduced AIT's new Master courses, entry requirements and other key selling points and answered questions from staff at Zhaolong. After the discussion, Zhaolong also arranged an online promotion session for Mary to introduce AIT through one of their internet platforms.



Beijing Union University (BUU)

Beijing Union University (BUU) is a partner to AIT for the past 10 years. More than 20 students from BUU have transferred to Business programmes at AIT. Ms. Mary Simpson and Mr. Jack Meng attended a meeting at BUU to meet with the new Head of Accounting Faculty, Mrs. Wang Qi as well as key lecturers, Mrs. Yan and Prof. Fu.



Beijing International Education Institute (BIEI)

Ms. Mary Simpson and Mr. Jack Meng met with Ms. Ada Huo who is the Deputy Dean and her colleague Ms. Grace Liu. Ada and Grace briefed AIT on the joint programme in Design at Jiangnan University for 2019-2020. BIEI is also keen to introduce new Chinese university partners to AIT.

Anhui Finance and Technology Vocational College (AFTVC)

Mary and Jack travelled from Beijing to Hefei to visit AFTVC. President Liu welcomed AIT's delegation to the campus. Vice President Hu hosted the meeting. AFTVC and AIT are long term partners for Business and Accounting programmes. More than one hundred AFTVC students have graduated from AIT over the past five years. AFTVC plans to send a group of academic staff to visit AIT to enhance the relationship. AIT also sends academic staff to lecture in AFTVC for our joint programmes. A number of academic staff from AIT have lectured there over the past five years. AFTVC is keen to have more AIT lecturers to visit its campus. Mary also met with some of the programme students and gave them a detailed introduction about AIT and Ireland.



Ms. Mary Simpson with President Liu



Ms. Mary Simpson with Vice President Hu



Ms. Mary Simpson with Students

Huainan Normal University (HNNU)

Huainan Normal University is located in Huainan City within Anhui province. An introduction was set up by AIT's key agent from the region, Progressive Education Consulting Company. Ms. Mary Simpson and Mr. Jack Meng travelled to Huainan to meet with the faculty and the International office staff. Mrs. Zhu Ping who is the International Officer welcomed AIT's visit. During the meeting, Mrs. Zhu introduced HNNU. The common areas of interest between HNNU and AIT are in Science and Engineering disciplines.



Anhui Progressive Education Consulting Company

Jackie Wang is the owner of Anhui Progressive Education Consulting Company. Jackie has been working with AIT for almost 10 years. She invited Mary and Jack to visit her office in Hefei city to train her staff as well as promoting more opportunities within the region to AIT. During the meeting, Jackie also invited her foreign lecturers to participate in the training session and to introduce AIT programmes to them.



Wuhan Johnton Consulting

Ms. Mary Simpson and Mr. Jack Meng travelled from Hefei to Wuhan city to meet with Ms. Raylene Ouyang from Wuhan Johnton Consulting. Raylene has been working with AIT for more than one year. During the meeting, Raylene introduced Shouyi College programmes to AIT.

Shouyi College

Through Raylene's introduction, Mary and Jack visited Shouyi College in Wuhan city. Shouyi is one of the biggest private colleges in China and the biggest within Hubei province. It has almost 20,000 students for both diploma and degree level programmes. Jack and Mary met Mrs. Yang who is the International Officer of the college to discuss credit transfer in the areas of Mechanical Engineering, Accounting and Software Engineering programmes.



Jiangnan University

Jiangnan University and AIT have cooperated on joint programmes in Graphic Design for the past five years. There are currently four hundred students studying Graphic Design at Jiangnan University with students having the option to transfer to final year of Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Graphic and Digital Design at AIT. Design lecturers from AIT have delivered modules to students at Jiangnan and hosted Summer programmes in Design at AIT. Mary and Jack attended Jiangnan-AIT's first joint design exhibition at Jiangnan University in December 2019. Mary gave a speech to the University students and congratulated them on the display of their work.



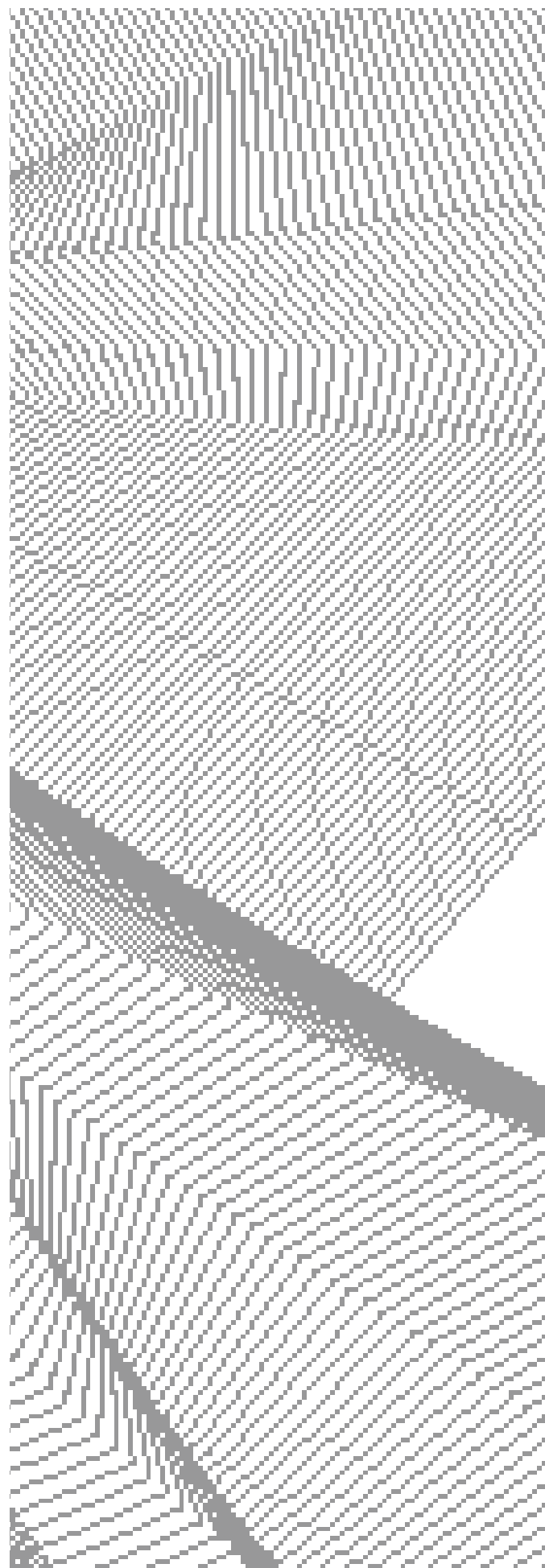
Jiangnan University Art Show



Ms. Mary Simpson with Dean and Deputy Dean of Jiangnan Design School

There are currently 180 Chinese students studying at AIT during academic year 2019-20. Many Chinese students transfer to AIT from joint programmes at partner universities in China. It is anticipated that the application for technological university status with Limerick Institute of Technology will see more Chinese students choosing AIT for completion of their Bachelor degree studies and progression to postgraduate programmes. AIT is committed to attracting high quality undergraduate and postgraduate students from Asia during the next phase of its plan to become a Technological University for the Midlands Region.

A special word of thanks to Jack Meng, Director for Asia for coordinating the visit to education agent events and partner universities in China in December 2019.





**OFFICE FOR
STRATEGIC
PLANNING,
INSTITUTIONAL
PERFORMANCE,
EQUALITY &
DIVERSITY**

Business in the Community / Skills at work programme

The Vice President of Strategic Planning, Institutional Performance, Equality & Diversity visited Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa, Clara. The institute is linked with this school under the 'Business in the Community / skills at work programme'. This provides senior cycle students with an insight into third level and the world of work. Research has shown that if a second level student sees the link between education and work then they are much more likely to complete their education to Leaving Cert and beyond.

IBEC

The Vice President of Strategic Planning, Institutional Performance, Equality & Diversity attended a meeting of the Midland Regional Executive of IBEC in Teleflex Medical, Garrycastle, Athlone on 13 February.

HEA Strategic Dialogue

The institute completed its 2019 Progress Report and submitted it to the HEA on 14 October 2019. The institute will be meeting with Dr. Alan Wall, Chief Executive of HEA on the 30 March. The agenda is centred on Strategic Dialogue and Annual Budgets.

Senior Academic Leadership Initiative

The institute was successful in its application in the Senior Academic Leadership Initiative. We were one of only three Institutes of Technology to be successful. The position of Dean of Graduate School and Research was recently advertised, and it is hoped to have a candidate appointed in early autumn.

AIT Industry Working Group

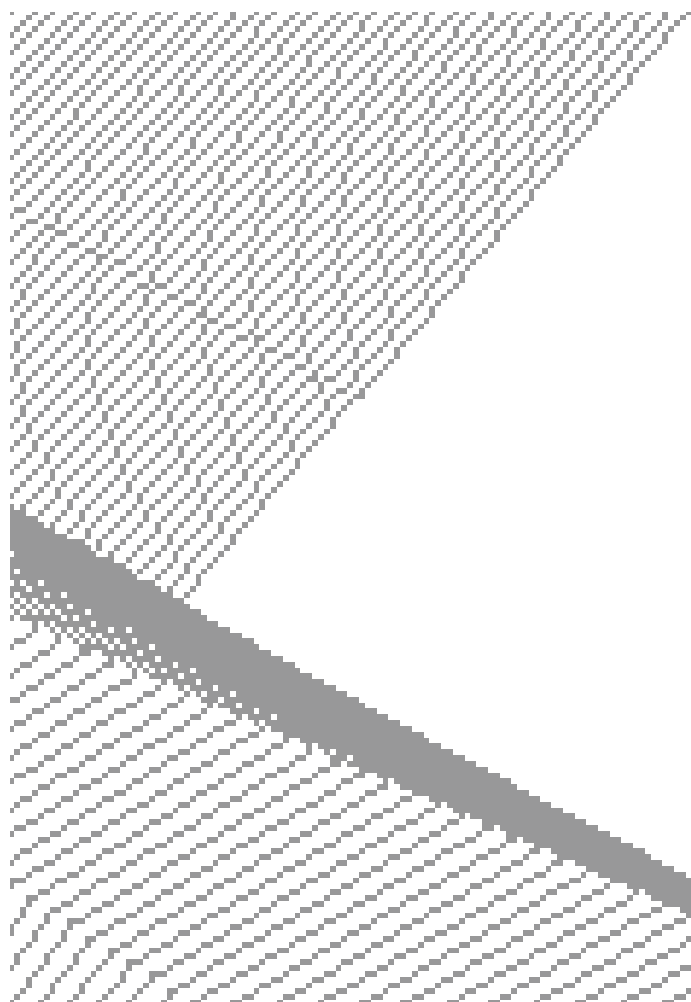
The Vice President of Strategic Planning, Institutional Performance, Equality & Diversity attended a meeting of the AIT Industry Working Group that was held in Tullamore Court Hotel on 6 February 2020.

Recent Athena SWAN/Equality agenda activities that have taken place:

- EDI Office produced an Athena SWAN Champions Guidance Document (on 4/11/19) to further embed Athena SWAN principles within the Institute, this was circulated to those 18 staff members who expressed an interest in being a champion in January 2020. Introductory session planned for end of February 2020.
- EDI Steering Committee to be chaired by the President established, and began its work in December 2019.
- To focus and highlight the role of female researchers in AIT, profiles of Mamoon Asghar and Nadia Kanwal were written under the Title 'Female Game-Changers at AIT'. Profiles published to the AIT web page.
- Expressions of Interest in the Aurora Leadership

programme were invited by the Vice-President responsible for Equality Diversity and Inclusiveness. The Institute supports 6 female delegates for this programme, which commenced in Dublin on 10 December 2019.

- 2 further focus groups to further analyse qualitative data from the Athena SWAN staff survey were facilitated by Stephanie Duffy in January 2020. The topics covered by these focus groups were Family Leave and Flexible Working, and Female Representation in Research. The qualitative data garnered at these sessions will inform our updated Athena SWAN action plan.
- The 4 sub-groups of Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Team, commenced work on compiling a first draft of the updated Athena SWAN Bronze award application.
- First drafts of Athena SWAN application provided by writing sub-groups were submitted to writer Henrietta McKervey
- A Cultural Awareness Week is planned for March 2020 to be held in AIT's Access Office will be supported by the EDI Office.
- Jackie Farrell represented AIT at a recent Athena SWAN practitioners meeting in the University of Limerick on Friday 28 February.





**Office of the
Vice President
Academic
Affairs and
Registrar**

Learning & Teaching Unit

Athlone Institute of Technology launch of the ERASMUS+ Developing Excellence in Team-Based Active and Collaborative Learning to Enhance Student Outcomes (TALENT Project), Institute Boardroom February 3 2020.

Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin formally launched the TALENT project. Led by the University of Bradford the TALENT project is funded under a European Commission's Erasmus+ programme. TALENT will see teachers from Ireland, the UK, Spain and the Netherlands develop expertise in an innovative teaching approach, "Team Based Learning" (TBL).



Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin speaking at the TALENT Launch

Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, in his address, welcomed the principals and teachers from the Athlone-based secondary schools - Athlone Community College, Coláiste Chiaráin, Our Lady's Bower and the Marist Secondary School. He thanked the principals for their support and the teachers who will avail of this innovative upskilling opportunity.



Front row: Brendan Waldron (Principal, Coláiste Chiaráin) Noel Casey (Principal, Our Lady's Bower Eileen Donohue (Athlone Community College Michael Dermody (Marist Secondary School). Back row: Meighan Duffy, Julie Ann Greaney, Professor Ciarán Ó' Catháin, Nuala Harding, Carol Nolan and Dara O'Driscoll.

Professor Ó Catháin also acknowledged that the TALENT project is the first ERASMUS+ Educational Research Project within the institute. AIT staff are committed to supporting and researching approaches in applied learning and applied practice however, this is the first time for the Learning and Teaching Unit to engage in a collaborative project involving all four local schools.

The aim of the TALENT project is to form transnational strategic partnerships to develop resources and train teachers to use Team-Based Learning (TBL) as an active and collaborative pedagogy in a number of schools in Europe, and evaluate its impact. Schools are offered an evidenced-based blended professional development programme. This will lead to educational change by embedding active and collaborative learning approaches through Team-Based Learning.

AIT will host the first training event in May 2020 involving teachers from Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain, and the UK. Professor Ó Catháin acknowledged that the TALENT project will "further enhance the excellent relationships we have fostered with secondary schools across the Midlands region and will help us in our TU ambition of continuing to be an international research partner of choice".



Front row: Brendan Waldron, Noel Casey, Eileen Donohue, Michael Dermody. Back row: Geraldine McDermott, Anne Marie O'Brien, Meighan Duffy, Julie Ann Greaney, Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, Nuala Harding, Carol Nolan, Dara O'Driscoll, David O'Hanlon & Joan Mannion

The TALENT Project Partners are University of Bradford (Project Lead), Athlone Institute of Technology, International Baccalaureate Organization, the Netherlands and, Fundacon Educación Católica, Spain.

The Learning and Teaching Unit, in conjunction with the International Office has successfully applied for a HEA funded Erasmus+ Delta Grant to support staff from the unit to avail of the opportunity to engage with European and international partners in January 2020.

Erasmus+ DELTA is a new opportunity to engage with the existing Erasmus+ mobility programme for all those who teach in Irish higher education. DELTA (Disciplinary Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment) is a core concept of the work of the National Forum for

the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. This initiative is the result of a partnership between the National Forum and the International Section of the Higher Education Authority. Erasmus+ DELTA focuses on supporting the professional development of staff in Irish higher education, with a particular emphasis on the enhancement of teaching and learning, within and between disciplines. Those who decide to avail of this opportunity, to use their mobility period to focus on the enhancement of teaching and learning within their disciplines, can also gain national recognition for this commitment to their discipline, in the form of a National Forum digital badge.



Catherine O' Donoghue and Eimear Kelly were awarded an Erasmus+ DELTA grant to participate in an intensive 10-day Intercultural Training Academy, from 20 - 30 January 2020, in Bremen-Vegesack, Germany. These courses are run on a bi-annual basis by InterCultur, an organisation that specialises in intercultural awareness training, and are a blend of theory and practice. They are primarily aimed at trainers and professionals who already have experience in facilitating workshops but who would like to deepen their theoretical knowledge and practical skills. The programme attended by Catherine and Eimear formed part of the Winter School at Jacobs University Bremen, and culminated in the preparation and implementation of a 70-minute workshop, a requirement for their certification as intercultural awareness trainers.

Catherine and Eimear lead intercultural training provided by the Learning and Teaching Unit with the support of the International Office. Their participation on this programme aligns with the Institute's on-going commitment to the principle of mobility of learners and staff between partner institutions in Europe and on a wider international level, as outlined in the Strategic Plan 2014 - 2018 and further emphasised in the Strategic Plan 2019 - 2023.

Dr Anne Marie O'Brien (Faculty of Science and Health and Learning and Teaching Unit) and Dave O' Hanlon (Faculty of Business and Hospitality and Learning and Teaching Unit) visited the University of Bradford in January to observe how Team-Based Learning (TBL) is facilitated within their undergraduate Pharmacy programmes. In 2012, the School of Pharmacy took the strategic decision to deliver 100% of the curriculum using this approach therefore, TBL is the primary approach to teaching and learning across modules within these programmes making this a unique learner experience for future pharmacists. This involved setting up dedicated learning spaces where TBL can be facilitated with student cohorts ranging from 40 to 120.

TBL has been adopted further across the university at programme and module level across a range of disciplines

TBL is a structured, student-centred learning and teaching strategy that is designed to promote active, engaging and sustainable learning through a process of preparation, testing and application of knowledge. By participating in TBL throughout an entire semester, students not only apply their learning regularly; but they also develop transversal skills that are sought by employers.

During this visit several days of classroom observations and meetings with faculty and students resulted in ideas on how to further enhance the delivery of TBL in AIT. Particularly illuminating was the feedback from 4th year students. Students associated TBL with building personal and working relationships, gaining confidence, and helping to develop assertive communication skills. Several students identified how the TBL approach helped them to get into the habit of 'thinking for themselves' and to apply what they learn to real-life scenarios. Employer feedback suggested that placement students from the programme excelled interpersonally, fitting in quickly with work teams. The insight from these students resonates with empirical evidence supporting the use of TBL across many disciplines.



Image shows a dedicated TBL room: Each table accommodates a team of six students. It is equipped with a computer, keyboard and microphone/speaker. Application tasks can be displayed, and student work uploaded from each table.



Dave O'Hanlon (AIT), Dr Simon Tweddell (Bradford University), Beck McCarter (Bradford University) and Dr Anne Marie O'Brien (AIT), pictured in one of the dedicated TBL spaces at Bradford University.

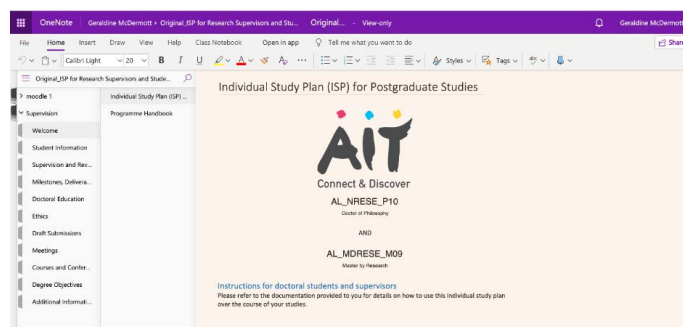
Development of the Individual Study Plan (ISP) for Level 9/10 Structured Research Programmes in AIT.

The Learning and Teaching Unit regularly responds to requests for the development of bespoke technological solutions. Geraldine McDermott (Learning and Teaching Unit) was engaged to develop an Individual Study Plan (ISP) for Level 9/10 Structured Research Programmes in AIT. The use of the ADDIE instructional design model to frame the approach to development allowed for an iterative process, to incorporate feedback and revisions. The purpose of the ISP is to document the research student’s progress and learning throughout the programme. Therefore, it was required that:

- the tool should be easily accessible by all research supervisors and students and user-friendly;
- a standard template should be used (feedback and revisions are expected in the initial stages);
- lead in time for setup and staff development should be short with the first intake in October 2019.

Following extensive consultation, Geraldine led the development of a user-friendly interface that is GDPR compliant. The Microsoft Office 365 application, Microsoft Class Notebook was identified as a suitable platform. This platform was introduced and used successfully in the Faculty of Science & Health by Dr Anne Mulvihill, when she led the TEAM (Technology Enhanced Assessment Methods) project, providing proof of concept. The benefits of using Class Notebook are:

- Minimal set up time: AIT staff and registered students already had access to the suite of Office 365 applications, so setup time would be significantly reduced.
- Agile Platform: the Class Notebook platform could be redesigned according to our requirements, reducing the need for a purpose-built platform, thereby greatly reducing costs.
- With Office 365 online, staff and students could access the resource from any location.
- Staff and students were already familiar with the MS Office interface, so requirements for training and support would also be reduced.



Geraldine McDermott developed an Individual Study Plan (ISP) prototype in Class Notebook, based on templates provided by Dr Niall Seery and revised following feedback provided by Dr Des Cawley.

Following this, the ISP was presented to a number of stakeholder groups within the Institute:

The Class Notebook includes key areas for supervision in a hierarchical structure. Initially, this would be shared with research supervisors via the SharePoint app. Features include:

- Version history to reflect changes made by research supervisors and students
- Transparency: authorship of changes is linked to Office 365 login credentials.
- Online/desktop versions available.

The prototype was tested by a number of research supervisors, specifically in terms of ease of access, navigation, usability and suitability. Feedback loops were integral to the development process.

Implementation

A workshop to present the ISP was delivered to research supervisors in the Department of Sports Science and Department of Nursing. It is envisaged that the template for the ISP will reside in the Graduate School, and to this end, a specific email (isp@ait.ie) was created so that the template is not linked to a personal account. An instructional video was created for research supervisors, to provide a walkthrough of how to set up the ISP. Additionally, both workshops and individual clinic sessions have been provided to facilitate research supervisors, as they set up each ISP for their student(s). This support will continue to be provided by the Learning and Teaching Unit.

27th November 2018	Postgraduate Review Group (PRG)
28th November 2018	Academic Strategy and Quality (ASQ) Committee
11th June 2019	As part of an information session on new AIT Procedures, Regulations and Governance for Research, the ISP was presented to Research Supervisors, Deans of Faculties, Directors of Research Institutes, Heads of Departments, Faculty Administrators, and other relevant administrators.
22 October 2019	Research students as part of the induction programme.

Evaluation

It is envisaged that research supervisors and the development team will evaluate the ISP in terms of the following:

- Ease of access
- Ease of use
- Content, i.e. does the template provided match the needs of the supervisor/student?
- Is the ISP fit for purpose?

Supervisors will be invited to provide their feedback in advance of the next intake of research students, i.e. October 2020. Following this, the design of the ISP will be reviewed and revised.

National Events

Exploring Models of Success: Professional Development of Higher Education or Further Education and Training or English Language Education Staff

Representing the Learning and Teaching Unit, Nuala Harding attended this conference on Thursday 13 February 2020 in the Croke Park Conference Centre, Jone Road, Dublin. The conference was aimed at policy-makers, academic management, front-line educators, support staff and quality assurance teams from all three sectors who wished to develop their understanding of the importance of personal professional development in a high quality teaching and learning environment.

Internationalisation For All Through 'Internationalisation @ Home

Catherine O'Donoghue, representing the International Office and the Learning and Teaching Unit, attended a workshop entitled Internationalisation For All Through 'Internationalisation @ Home'. This workshop, on 17 February 2020, was part of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning programme, hosted by Waterford Institute of Technology.

Professor Catherine Montgomery from the University Durham led an interesting interactive workshop examining 'Internationalisation at home'. This concept describes how students who are not able to go abroad as part of their studies can still gain experiences that help them to be globally aware, developing international understanding and intercultural skills.

Professor Montgomery presented information on different aspects of increasing internationalisation in higher education institutes, including consideration of the curriculum content and assessments, as well as tracking how international considerations are included in the HE institute environment. She also discussed her own work in the School of Education in Durham where she is

tracking and documenting their experiences in promoting internationalisation. Discussions in the workshop focused on reflecting on the current status of internationalisation at home in Ireland, and after examining some international best practice ideas, the discussion moved towards considering how this initiative could be strengthened in our own sector.

QQI & THEA event focusing on Designated Authority

Members of Academic Council, Governing Body and the Learning and Teaching unit represented AIT at an event hosted by QQI, with the support of THEA on 18 February 2020 in the Radisson Blu Hotel, Golden Lane, Dublin. This joint event was designed to consider the implications of the recent designation of Institutes of Technology as designated awarding bodies under Section 36 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019. The event highlighted changes under way for: Academic Governance; Standards for Awards – legislative changes and the regulatory environment; and the evolving policies around the National Framework of Qualifications. Dr. Niall Seery, presented on the opportunities and challenges facing IoT's as Designated Awarding Bodies

AIT Library

AIT Library 2020 looks to be as dynamic and engaging as 2019! Jane Burns, the Institute Librarian was promoted to Assistant Registrar <https://www.ait.ie/news-and-events/news/ait-appoints-new-assistant-registrar> she took up this role in mid-January. Dr. Joanna Archbold will take up the role of Acting Institute Librarian in early March.

Library & Research

The Research Bootcamp series for 2020 was reintroduced in January 2020. Working with Research Colleagues, Tania Marsh, Scholarly Communications Librarian organised the Pioneering AIT Women in Research, Innovation integrated with Education on January 23. Jane Burns chaired the inaugural relaunch of this Research Seminar Series

A series of workshops were held which delivered two workshops on Scopus on January 30. Covering areas from getting the best out of your Scopus search, tracking trends and accessing the data behind the research, feedback from the workshops was very positive and the library will run another workshop in March.

Launch of Library Strategic Plan

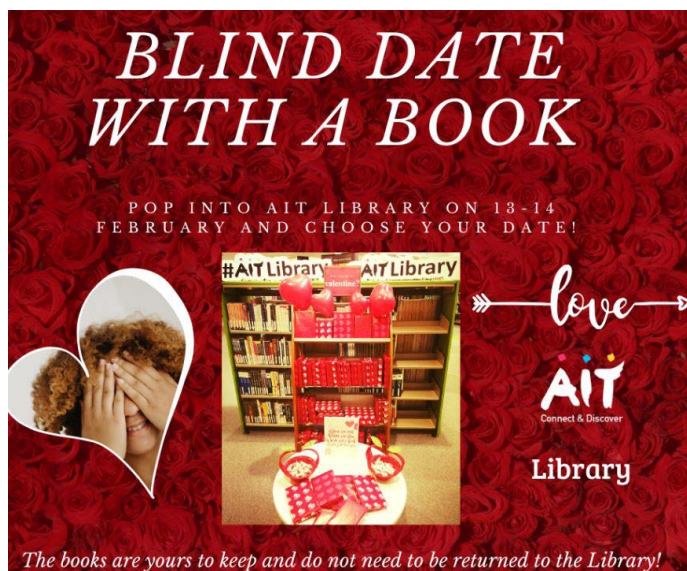
President, Prof. Ciarán Ó Catháin and Dr. Niall Seery (Registrar) and Jane Burns launched the AIT Library Strategic Plan: The Path to 2023 <https://library.ait.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Library-Strategic-Plan.pdf>



Colleagues and students from across the campus attended the launch and celebrated with the library staff at a refreshments reception immediately after.

Blind Date with a Book Library Campaign

Joanne Gillivan & Anne Conway were chief organisers for this fun, engaging event with our students. Many of our students found the perfect date last Valentines at AIT library by choosing to fall in love with reading. Our Blind date with a book promotion was very well received by our students and generated lots of activity on our social media platforms.



National Education Awards – AIT Library Shortlisted

The Education Awards were held on Feb 20, 2020 at the Ballsbridge Hotel in Dublin. Since 2017 the Education Awards has been a platform for recognising, encouraging and celebrating excellence in the education sector in Ireland. <https://www.educationawards.ie/> AIT Library staff with the support of the Marketing Department, Students Union and AIT colleagues submitted an impactful application. The library was shortlisted for the Library of the Year Award. To view the video used in the submission please view here

https://www.dropbox.com/s/232gdolhk4vz237/20191023_Library%20Award%202020%20Video.mp4?dl=0



(L-R Celine Peignen, Michael Doheny and Jane Burns

Healthy Campus

Love Yourself Week:

This campaign centred around promoting positive body image and positive self-esteem. We highlighted the unrealistic images posted on social media, encouraged people to give and accept compliments and also gave tips and advice about good skincare routines and problem skin. We did this through posters in the toilets, posters in the table top info stands on canteen tables, information stands across campus and memes on the bathroom mirrors.

REGARI:

Regari are back this semester with a new list of workshops on offer to staff, students and the wider community. Workshops are still ongoing and in March/April will cover: exploring domestic abuse, SafeTALK, let's talk social media, living with trauma and young people and mental health. Enquiries: regarirecoverycollege@gmail.com

SHAG (Sexual Health Awareness and Guidance) Week:

For SHAG week we had an information stand in the main canteen with giveaways, advice and a sexual health quiz.

RAG Week:

For two weeks prior to RAG Week we advertised a 'Last year...this year' set of stories in some of the bathrooms. The stories represented lessons learned from previous experiences not to be repeated again. The stories showed how when precautions were taken or measures to reduce harm were taken on board, nights out were safer and more enjoyable.

SafeTALK:

Lisa delivered the SafeTALK suicide alertness workshop to a number of students. For enquiries ghanlon@ait.ie

Right Care Right Place Right Time for Student Sexual Health in Athlone Institute of Technology

Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT), with support from the Sláintecare Integration Fund, has launched a comprehensive student sexual health service to meet the needs of its growing student population – 61% of whom are aged 18-24 and are classified as 'high risk' for sexually transmitted infections (STI).

This innovative pilot project is being delivered directly to students on campus, reducing the substantial medical, non-medical and economic costs associated with STIs. The project is also addressing the general upward trend in STIs, where the biggest risk groups are those aged under 25 and men who have sex with men. The service opened for appointments in late January and was inundated immediately, with over 120 enquiries for appointments in the initial days.

The project is led by Institute Nurse and Health Centre Coordinator Laura Tully, who has advocated for a service for students for many years.

"Students feel this is a much needed service, and it has integrated into the student health service seamlessly. I can already see the positive impact the service is having for students. I am confident we will enhance sexual health and promote positive health outcomes which can be sustained far into the future."

This project will ensure that students can access comprehensive and age-appropriate sexual health education and information, and will have access to appropriate prevention and promotion services. This will ultimately encourage the development of a healthy sexuality throughout life; enhance people's lives and relationships; reduce negative outcomes such as STIs and crisis pregnancies and create an environment that supports sexual health and wellbeing. The service is being delivered in line with the aims of the HSE National Sexual Health Strategy (2015-2020) and the Healthy Ireland Framework (2013-2025).

Peer Assisted Student Support (PASS)

Recruitment

37 valid applications for PASS have been received from the three faculties:

Digital Marketing	2
HC Business	1
Bachelor of Business	2
Business & Law	3
Culinary Arts	1
Business Total	9
Mechanical Engineering	2
Music & Instrument Technology	1
Software Design	2
Software Development MACD	1
Computer Engineering	1
Engineering Total	7
Applied Social Studies in Social Care	1
Social Care Practice	3
Early Years Care & Education	1
Applied Psychology	2
Dental Nursing	1
Pharmacy Technician	1
Biotechnology / HC Science	2
Pharmaceutical Science	1
Microbiology	2
Athletic & Rehabilitation Therapy	2
Health Science with Nutrition	1
Physical Activity & Health Science	2
Exercise & Health Science	2
Science Total	21
Total applications	37

Thanks to Brian Murphy, Gary Stack, Alison Hough, Audrey O'Beirne Cleary, and Kieran Dowd for facilitating class visits. They proved very successful. If you would like a member of the team to present to a class on which you teach, please contact Aoife Walsh awalsh@ait.ie to arrange a time.

Quality Office



Jane Burns, Assistant Registrar, Amanda Ryan and Cora McCormack



A group of Engineering students completing the Student survey

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Conference

Cora McCormack and Amanda Ryan from the Quality Office attended a one-day conference in Croke Park on Thursday 13 February last, entitled 'Exploring Models of Success'. This conference which was organised by QQI explored the importance of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of staff in improving the quality of teaching and learning, educational management and other areas of higher education and was part of QQI's series of quality improvement engagements with its stakeholders. There were a number of national and international speakers including Mr Jim Steele, International Business Consultant, Dr Terry Maguire, Director, National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and Damien Owens Registrar, Engineers Ireland. For more information click here

<https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/Conferences-and-events.aspx>

The Annual Institutional Quality Review (AIQR)

The Quality Office is currently completing the AIQR report for the academic year 2018-2019.

This is an annual report about internal quality assurance that all Higher Education Institutes provide to QQI. Part One provides an overview of internal QA governance, policies, procedures and schedules within AIT. Parts Two to Six give an overview of QA activities, themes, changes, enhancements and impacts for the reporting year. QQI publish the Annual Reports on their website:

<https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/Annual-Institutional-Quality-Report.aspx>

Annual Student Survey 2020



The annual [studentsurvey.ie](https://www.studentsurvey.ie) (formerly known as ISSE) was carried out in the Institute during the three-week period February 03 to February 23 last. The cohort of students who participated in the survey were first years, final years and postgraduate taught masters' students. The survey was yet again, a great success, with 68% of students participating. The AIT Quality Officer, Cora McCormack who co-ordinates the survey wishes to thank sincerely the Students Union and the staff throughout the institute for their continued support with this survey, and also to all our wonderful students who participated. A cheque for €1,912, which reflects €1 per survey completed, will be donated to the Student Hardship Fund in the coming weeks. This survey plays a key role to the enhancement of Quality Assurance within AIT and the student experience.

The Quality Office has recently started engaging with Social Media to connect with our students and to spread information about Quality Assurance which is the process used by AIT to monitor evaluate & review the quality of its teaching, learning, research & services.

Follow us on Twitter @AIT Quality

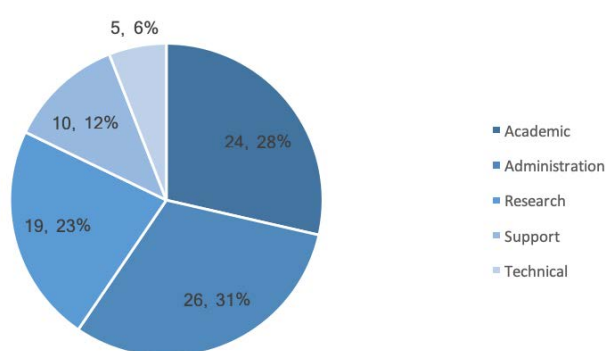


HUMAN RESOURCES

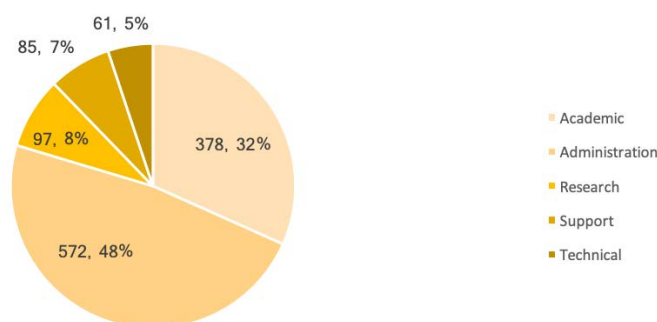
Total Recruitment Data from 2019

Type	No of Competitions	Applicants / Competition	% male	% female	Total Male	Total Female	Total Applicants
Academic	24	16	49%	51%	185	193	378
Administration	26	22	19%	81%	110	462	572
Research	19	5	55%	45%	53	44	97
Support	10	9	54%	46%	46	39	85
Technical	5	12	43%	57%	26	35	61
	84	14	35%	65%	420	773	1193

No of Competitions



No of Applicants



Top 10 Staff Enquiries to the HR Inbox

Sick Leave	21.77%
Strike (4th Feb)	15.37%
Recalculate Hours	14.77%
Annual Leave	11.35%
Locked Out Of Core Portal	9.50%
Parental Leave	8.01%
Medical Appointments	7.10%
Time in Lieu	5.20%
Unpaid Leave	3.20%
Flexi Enquiries	3.73%

Professional Development

Following the December 2019 PDC meeting a total of 14 applications for funding were approved. These consisted of 1 PhD application and the remainder range from Diploma's & Certificates in Learning & Teaching.

Currently there are a total of 35 staff completing their PhDs.

The next meeting will take place on March 10th 2020.

Training and Development

HR would like to thank the 250 employees who participated in the Equality and Diversity On-Line Training which was provided by Legal-Island. We would like to encourage more staff to complete these valuable training courses in the future.

At the moment the HR department are looking into the possibility of providing training for staff in the following areas:

- Dignity at Work
- Cultural Awareness
- Gender Awareness

HR will keep staff updated.

BIKE TO WORK



Bike to Work Scheme

Bike to Work Scheme is a government initiative offering tax free bikes for cycling to work. Using the Bike to Work Scheme, your employer can help you obtain a brand new bike and safety equipment worth up to 1,000 euro.

You can avail of this scheme once every five years – the tax year in which the bicycle is provided counts as the first year. This scheme is administered twice per year in AIT – January and July (subject to approval by the Finance Department).

Employee Awareness Day

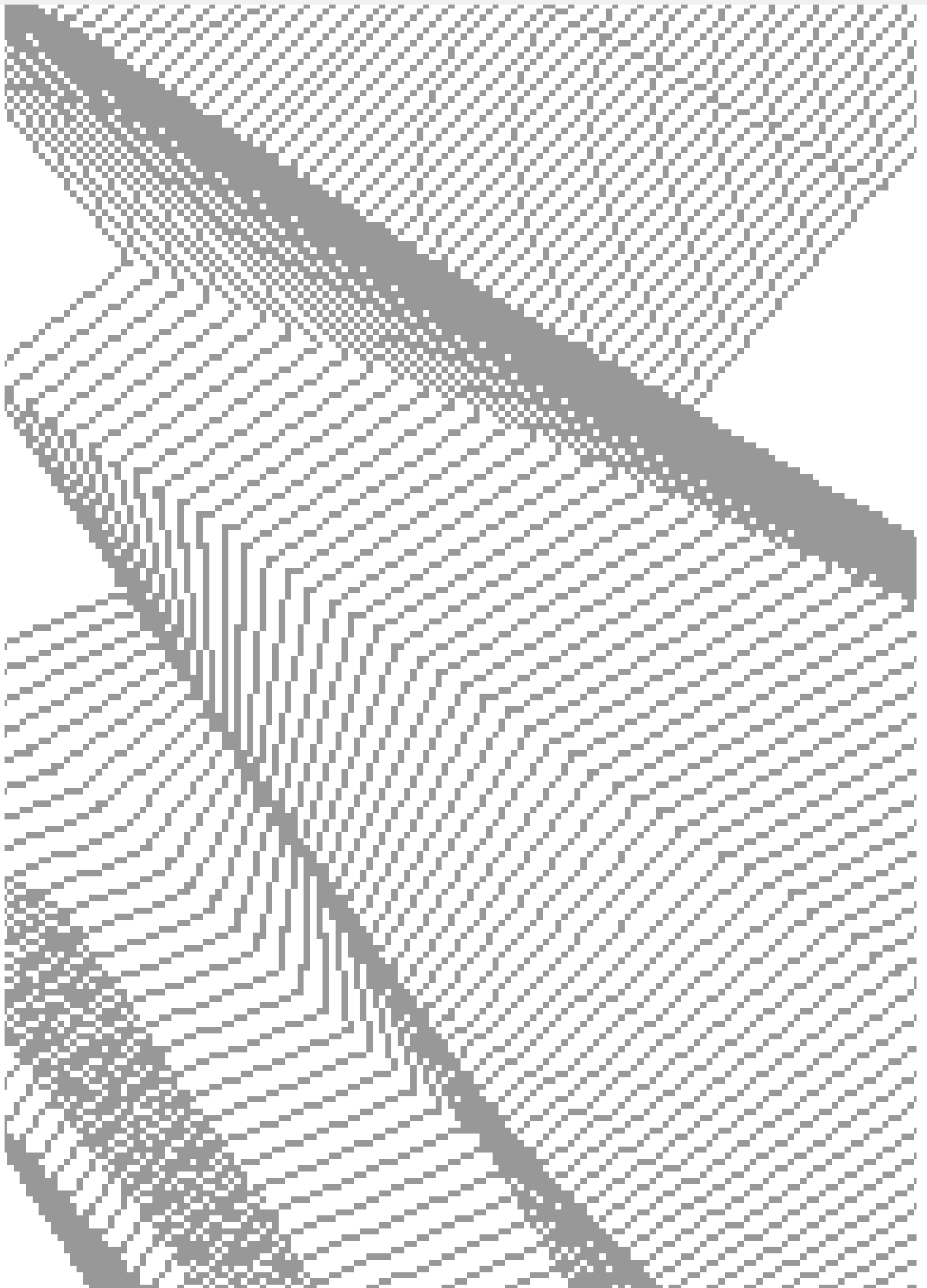
Following on from our last Employee Awareness Day in 2019, we are now inviting employees to join us on a committee for the purpose of gathering suggestions on how we can expand/improve our services to the staff of the Institute. Any staff member who is interested in participating on this committee please email hr@ait.ie.

We envisage that there should be no more than 3 meetings per year.

New Maternity Leave Guidance Handbook

The HR team have published a new Maternity Leave Information Handbook. This handbook has been developed to provide a comprehensive source of information for employees before, during and after maternity leave. The handbook is supported by a number of policies which are available on the HR page of the AIT website.

Pregnancy and childbirth necessitate a break in employment for expectant employees and the way in which this is managed has important implications for those employees and their families. As an employer the Institute recognises the importance of supporting and retaining staff who take maternity leave, and also the impact that taking time out of the workplace to raise a family can have on their careers. With this in mind, AIT has developed a range of policies and initiatives not only to support women while they are on maternity leave but also to support them upon returning to work and re-establishing their careers whilst simultaneously balancing home/work commitments.





**MARKETING &
COMMUNICATIONS
DEPARTMENT**

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Schools and Career Events

This term we have visited over 40 schools across 15 counties. The school visits involve speaking to different senior cycle students including TY, 5th and 6th years. The talk gives an overview of our institute, the courses on offer, the state of the art facilities, student support systems, sports, clubs and societies, and work placements.

The recruitment team also attend Career Events across the country. Attending these events allows the team the opportunity to speak to prospective students, their parents, guardians and guidance counsellors about the career opportunities and our industry-focussed CAO course offerings across the Faculties of Business and Hospitality, Engineering and Informatics, and Science and Health.

CAO Information Evening

On Wednesday 15 of January we welcomed over 300 prospective students, early school leavers and mature students to the institute. A lot of planning went into the event this year. A widespread pre-event communications and advertising campaign through social media and direct marketing (email, SMS, Facebook and Instagram) took place. Radio campaigns were also run regionally through iRadio and Midlands 103.



Campaigns on social media including Instagram and Facebook, in correlation with our radio and print advertisements directed audiences toward our Eventbrite bookings page, resulting in 289 bookings being recorded for the event. The CAO Information Evening was a great success, both in terms of numbers, the engagement between prospective students and staff, and the overall ambiance on campus. Prospective students had the opportunity to meet with both students and staff from the Faculties of Business and Hospitality, Engineering and Informatics, and Science and Health, as well as speaking to admission staff about the CAO application process. Attendees also gained valuable insight into our student support services, scholarships and HEAR and DARE.



Campus Visits

In January we welcomed 80 Transition Year students from Mean Scoil Mhuire in Longford to AIT campus to experience our state of the art facilities as a Taster Day. They were given the opportunity to experience talks/ tours and demos from our three Faculties - Business and Hospitality, Engineering and Informatics, and Science and Health. We split the groups in two and devised up a schedule which included a tour of HTL, Nursing and the Science labs. They were also given the opportunity to experience our design facilities and hear about the career opportunities within Civil Engineering and Quantity Surveying.

In February we welcomed 65 Transition Year students from Roscommon Community College to campus for a Taster Day also. Daniel Seery gave a welcome talk to both the students and the four teachers which informed students of the general overview of our institute, our courses, the facilities on offer, our award-winning support services, sports, clubs and societies and student supports. The students got to experience the incredible facilities located in HTL, and also a tour of our Sports facilities including the Sports Science lab, the High Performance gym and the world class International Arena. The students were also enlightened about the career opportunities available within Software and Mechanical Engineering.



Upcoming Events

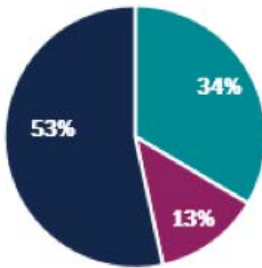
Having had two successful Open Days in October, and a CAO Information Evening in January, we will host our Course Interactive Open Day which will take place in the International Arena on April 25. Attendees will get an insight into our 65+ CAO courses available in the Faculties of Business and Hospitality, Engineering and Informatics, and Science and Health with our academic staff on hand throughout the day to answer all queries.

AIT International Grand Prix 2020

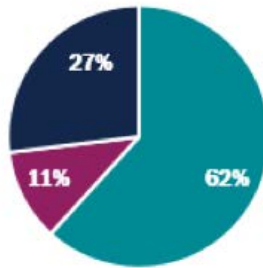
The seventh edition of the AIT International Grand Prix proved hugely successful. The Marketing and Communications Department was responsible for publicising the event pre, during and post event. In the run up the event, the design component of the team conceptualised a sponsors brochure, created a suite of graphics to be used for advertising purposes across social media, created multiple ads for a print campaign, and created promotional videos which were displayed across the TVs in the college and used as part of the AIT Grand Prix promotional social campaign. From a public relations and media relations perspective, the team built relevant, dedicated media lists, organised a press conference, created and issued media packs, liaised with journalists and issued multiple press releases pre and post event. This work resulted in 236 pieces of media coverage (up from 125) spread across broadcast, print and digital with an AVE of €338,746 (up from €300,452 and a reach in excess of 27.64 (up from 10.66 million) (A full breakdown of this can be seen below). The event was covered by BBC, RTE, Irish Times, Irish Independent, Irish Examiner and many others.

1st January – 19th February 2020

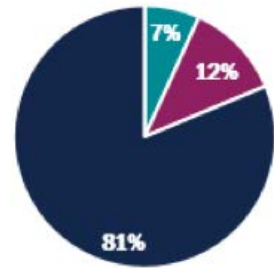
Media Volume



Media Cost



Potential Reach



■ PRINT ■ ONLINE ■ BROADCAST ■ PRINT ■ ONLINE ■ BROADCAST ■ PRINT ■ ONLINE ■ BROADCAST

Media Type	Volume	Weight	Media Cost	Media Reach
BROADCAST	126	190 min.	91,182	22.47 M
ONLINE	31	8,706 words	38,322	3.29 M
PRINT	79	30,436 sq.cm.	209,242	1.88 M
TOTAL	236	N/A	338,746	27.64 M



Stories hitting the headlines:

Research Spotlight: AIT Breathes New Life into Peatlands Bog with Aquaculture Research

New research looking at the use of cutaway peatland and poor agricultural land for freshwater fish production is underway at AIT. Researchers are investigating the use of naturally occurring microalgae to help mitigate disease and improve fish health in freshwater fish farms. The innovative aquaculture project is being carried out in partnership with Bord na Móna and is expected to provide jobs for workers within the Midlands - ultimately helping preserve rural communities.

Research Spotlight: AIT Leads Global Effort to Tackle Plastic Pollution and Develop Next Generation Materials

Researchers from Athlone Institute of Technology's Materials Research Institute are spearheading a €5 million pan-European Chinese research effort aimed at tackling plastic pollution - a global crisis of prodigious proportions. The Horizon 2020 research innovation project, dubbed BioICEP (Bio Innovation of a Circular Economy for Plastic), will seek to develop sustainable, environmentally-friendly alternatives to traditional petroleum-based plastic.

Discover Your Passion, Purpose, Future Career - CAO 2020 Campaign

AIT's CAO 2020 campaign is underway spotlighting its 65+ undergraduate courses as well as specific HCI programmes. A full suite of collateral was developed to promote the offering - from scripted videos, static images, testimonials etc. The campaign is utilising a mixture of organic and paid posting to reach the target demographics and was segmented accordingly.

HR Candidate Booklet - Dean of Graduate Studies and Research

The Marketing and Communications Department created a brand new HR candidate booklet for the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research position. The magazine-style booklet showcases the myriad reasons one might choose to work at AIT, Ireland's leading institute of technology with the view to attracting top talent to apply for the position.

50:50 Brochure | Inaugural Industry/Academic PhD Programme

The Marketing and Communications Department created a brochure promoting 50:50, a new research initiative designed to facilitate the development of next generation research leaders who will contribute regionally and nationally to Ireland's knowledge economy. Athlone Institute of Technology is seeking the support of Midlands-based business and industry leaders in co-funding 50 tailored PhD programme(s) with the view to addressing their company's specific needs.

The initiative, which is intended to commemorate Athlone Institute of Technology's 50-year anniversary, will act as a

gateway for participating companies to identify and recruit talent early on, ensuring that they can get access to the best people at a reduced cost. Academic staff with extensive R&D expertise and a background in industry will also be made available to industry to supervise the high-TRL research project(s).

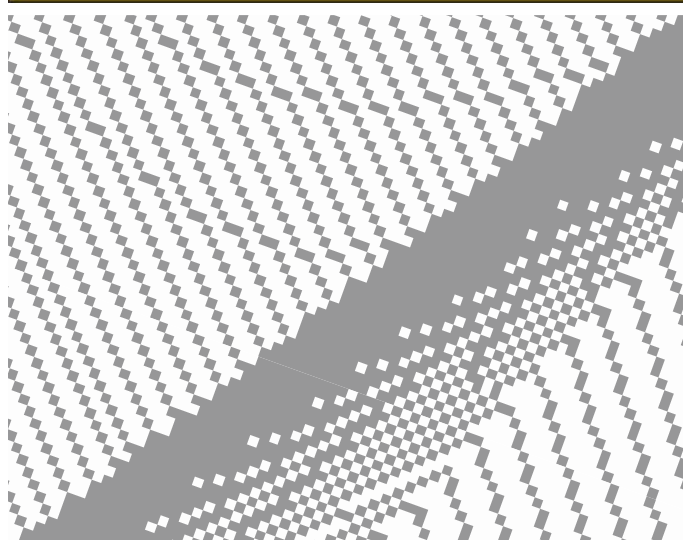
With research, innovation and enterprise all central tenets underpinning Athlone Institute of Technology's transition to becoming a technological university, the institute is firmly committed to further developing its world-leading applied research and development with the needs of industry firmly in mind.

THE SUNDAY TIMES
GOOD UNIVERSITY GUIDE
2020
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
OF THE YEAR

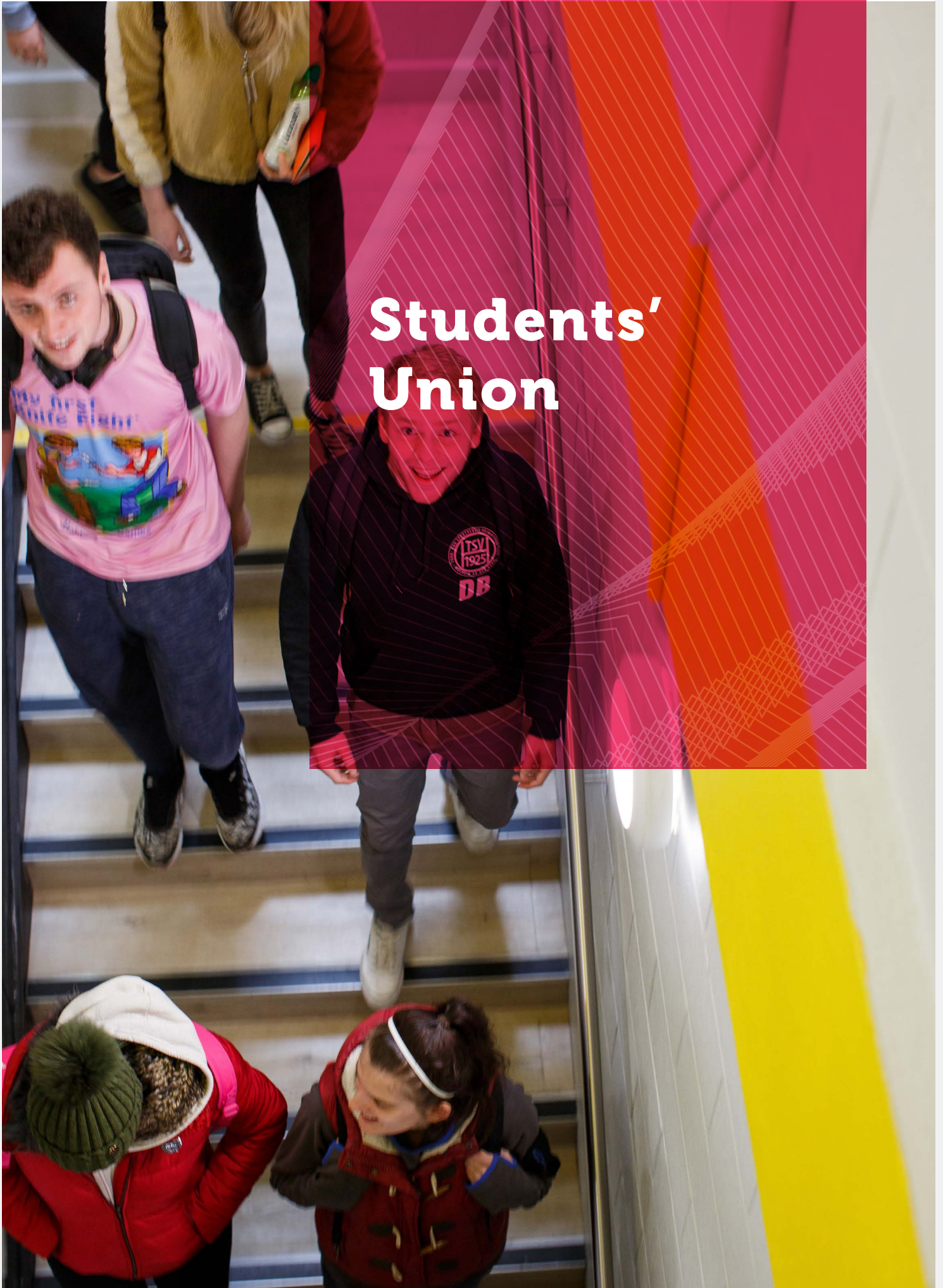
50 years
Athlone Institute of Technology

50:50 Inaugural PhD Industry Programme
Driving Ireland's Knowledge Economy Forward

Athlone Institute of Technology



Students' Union



Less Stress More Success week (December)

Less stress more success offered students assistance with maintaining a healthy work ethic while also aiding their general wellbeing. Activities included a library pop up, a meditation session, stress management information, a free gym pass for a day and a video detailing the college supports available.



Addiction Awareness week (February)

As part of addiction week the Deputy & Vice President made an Alcohol Safety guidance video to educate students on safe use of alcohol. Furthermore, Tony 10, the postman who gambled €10,000,000 was brought in as a guest speaker, he also gave a presentation to students which was followed by a podcast.

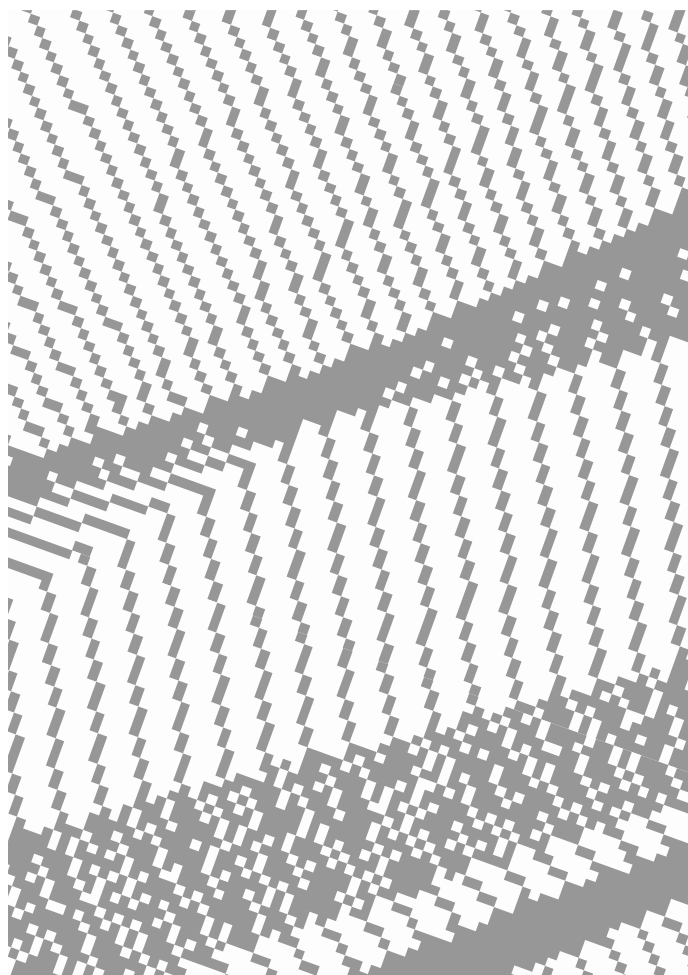


SHAG Week (Sexual Health and Guidance Week)

This week was run by our Vice-president for Welfare to bring awareness of sexual health to the student body. There were many events ran throughout the week from getting the conversation going, building the awareness needed and raising money for charity. A table quiz was held in Charlies Bar for the Midlands Rape Crisis Centre. The USI were on campus with a Sexual Health Roadshow with several relevant organisations.



We're in @aitstudentsunion for @usi.ie SHAG week 🙌



Referendum on Student Union Constitution

The Union along with Class Rep Council drafted a revised Constitution to represent the students of AIT today, it has been over 30 years since the Constitution was drafted. A revised full time officer role along with six part time officer roles and faculty conveyers will ensure adequate representation for the student body. The Union membership has now reached the entire student body instead of representing only full time registered students. The Union moved it's voting to online for the student body which showed great engagement & saw a great turn-out on referendum day with the amendments surpassing the quota. The officers are thrilled and are very thankful for the assistance along the way.



Women Lead USI National Conference

The President of the Union was asked to speak at a 'Women in Leadership' panel for the USIs Annual Conference 'Women Lead in Dublin'. The event was filled with guest speakers, panel discussions and group activities to inspire women to run for leadership positions.



RUN- Network

The SU President along with two student representatives attended the Regional University Network launch in Brussels, Belgium. The RUN networks intention is to increase cooperation between universities and institutes across Europe. The network, dubbed 'RUN-EU', will promote future and advanced skills necessary for social transformation across the European Union. The student representatives from each participating institute presented on their individual Higher Educational Institute and what their student experiences are on each of their campuses. The students collaborated and brainstormed their vision and ideas of participation for this future network which was presented at the network launch the following day.

RUN REGIONAL UNIVERSITY NETWORK.EU

RUN-EU NETWORK LAUNCH EVENT PRESENTATION

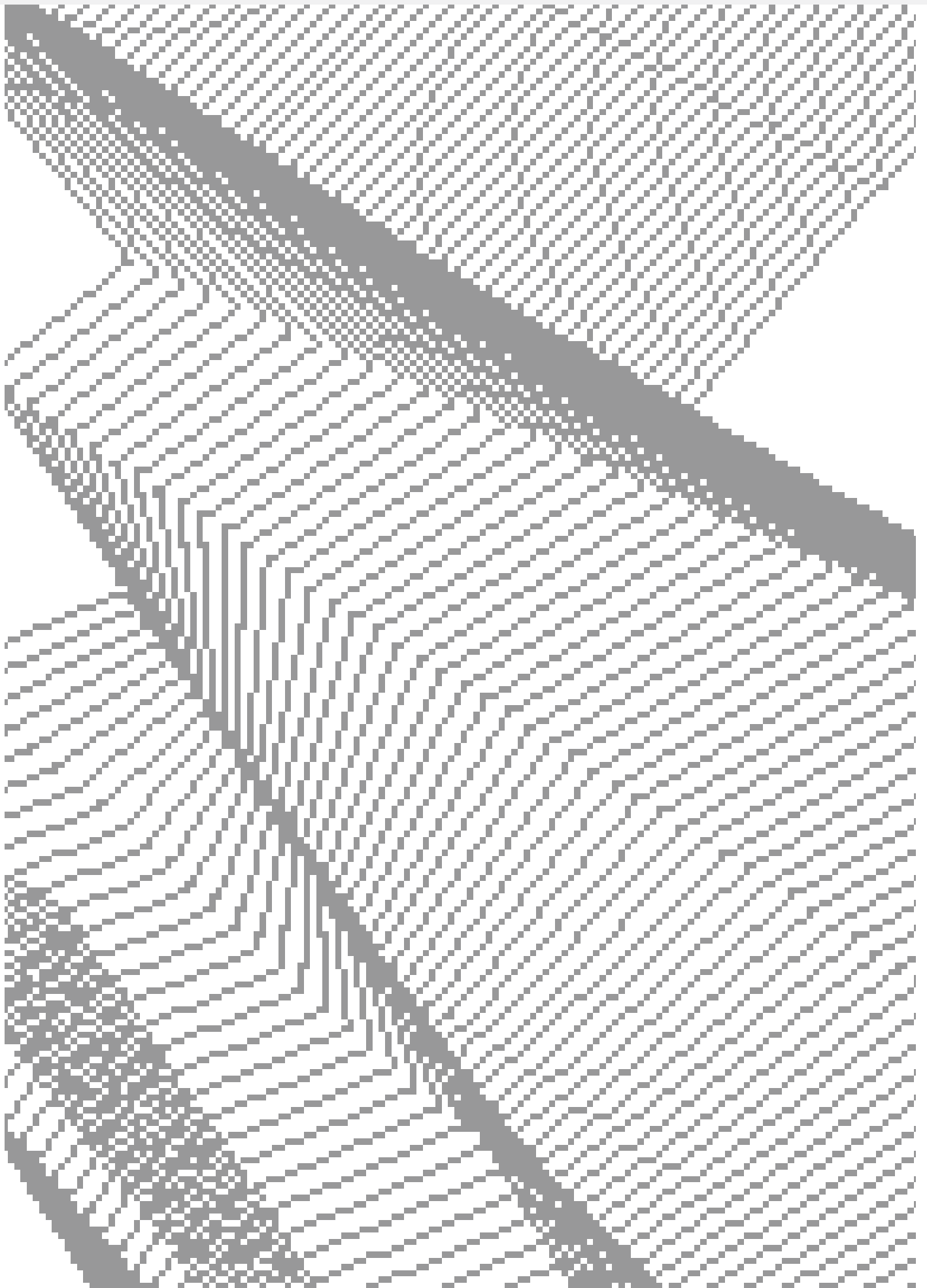
12th. FEBRUARY. 2020 - 10:30AM
 Portuguese Permanent Representation to the European Union (REPER)
 Avenue de Cortenbergh 12
 1040 Brussels
 Belgium

PROGRAMME

- 10:30** Welcome Session
Portuguese Ambassador
- 10:40** RUN-EU Network Presentation
- 10:55** RUN-EU Members' Pitch
- 11:30** The Students Vision of the European University
- 11:40** Signing Ceremony
- 11:50** Closing Session
Portuguese Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education
- 12:00** Networking light lunch

REGIONAL UNIVERSITY NETWORK OF EUROPE (RUN-EU)

- Politecnico de Leiria Portugal (Center Region)
- Polytechnic of Castelo and Ave Portugal (Northern Region)
- Athlone IT Ireland (Midland Region)
- Limerick IT Ireland (Mid West Region)
- HAMK Finland (Southern Region)
- Sáidbergléttan University Hungary (Cisle-Mesón-Segvár County)
- NHL Stenden Holland (Overland Province)
- FH Vorarlberg Austria (Vorarlberg)



FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND HOSPITALITY



AIT Students to Collaborate with Industry on Live Digital Marketing Projects

Once again we are partnering with Midlands-based companies to help them fill their digital marketing resource gaps using final year digital marketing students' knowledge of cutting-edge digital marketing methods as part of an innovative 'live' capstone project.

Ms Aisling Keenan and Ms Louise Murray, both lecturers in the Department devised the digital marketing capstone project. The hugely successful initiative, which is now in its second year, gives the students the chance to work with real businesses, helping them set and achieve strategic digital marketing goals all the while gaining invaluable, hands-on, industry-relevant experience.

This year, ten companies have been selected to participate in the programme. They are Alexion Pharmaceuticals, Athlone Chamber of Commerce, Athlone Golf Club, Hodson Bay Group, Kingsize Big and Tall, McGargles Beer (River Rye Brewing Company), Neueda Technologies, Seery's Cash and Carry, Shannonside FM and Steripack Ireland.

Guest Lecturer by Belgian Visitor Mr Stijn Larmuseau

During semester 1 the 4th year Bachelor of Business students undertaking the module Strategic Marketing with lecturer Mr Brian Toolan, were treated to a guest lecture from Mr Stijn Larmuseau, of Vives University of Applied Science (Hogeschool VIVES, Kortrijk). This was kindly organised by Ms Mary Simpson and Ms Annette Buckley of the International office at AIT.

Stijn delivered a two hour powerpoint presentation and Q&A session on the topic of Belgium and its economy, and the branding of its goods. Specifically, Stijn outlined the rebranding of consumer products and showed the techniques used to create fresh modern branding images.

The lively discussion included an insight into Belgian beer and the surprising rise of non-alcoholic beer; a trend confirmed by the reaction of the students. Politics and Brexit were topics also on the menu!



Witloof
— with love —



Visit to Partner College in France

Louise Murray, Marketing Lecturer visited the IUT of Aix-Marseille Université on 27 and 28 November 2019 to present at their International Student Exchange Fair. The event was organised by the International Relations Office of Aix-Marseille Université to provide students with the opportunity to discover the numerous opportunities that are offered to them by studying abroad through the various agreements. The visit was facilitated by Ms Marie Françoise Tredy, Head of the International Relations Office and her colleagues and was attended by representatives from partner Universities from Poland, Germany, Slovenia, Spain, Canada, Belgium, Scotland & Waterford.

On 27 November Louise travelled to Marseille, St. Jerome campus where she made three separate presentations to students of Business, Engineering & Science from campuses based in the Marseille area and she participated in the Student Fair where she answered any questions the students had about AIT. She attended lunch with all the participants

On 28 November, Louise travelled to the Aix en Provence campus where she presented to 1st year students of Business, Engineering & Science through a video link to the outreach campuses of Salon, Digne & Gap. She also made three separate presentations to students of Business, Engineering and Science from campuses based in the Aix en Provence area. In all, Louise presented to seven of the ten Colleges in the IUT Aix-Marseille Université, meeting in excess of 500 students of Business, Engineering and Science and she spoke to them about the opportunities at AIT through the ERASMUS programme and other routes. Louise attended a special dinner for the International partners on the evening of the 28 November in Aix-en-Provence.

Please follow the following link to view the video which was made during the two-day visit:

<http://amupod.univ-amu.fr/video/3317-iut-international-fair-video/>



L-R: Jade Pezet (Student IUT Aix-Marseille), Louise Murray (AIT), Sophie Rochet (Lecturer, IUT Aix Marseille) with Business students from the Aix en Provence campus.

Global Undergraduate Awards

The Global Undergraduate Awards is the world's leading academic awards programme, recognising innovation and excellence at undergraduate level. Radvile Razmute, a graduate of our Bachelor of Business Honours 2018/2019 programme was highly commended (top 10%) in the Business category and was invited to attend their three-day conference which took place in Blackhall Place, Dublin from 11 to 13 November 2019. Thirty eight universities from twelve different countries and twenty five different categories gathered to collaborate and share their research. Radvile was awarded for her paper: Examining organisational change – a case study approach.

Speaking after the event, Radvile wished to acknowledge the support of her lecturer Mr Pat Hannon who encouraged and supported her throughout the process. She also thanked Ms Michelle McKeon-Bennett, Dean of Faculty who supported/sponsored her attendance at the conference. Radvile also said that she was thankful to Athlone Institute of Technology for giving her the opportunity to represent AIT among the world's top universities.

The submissions for the Global Undergraduate Awards Programme 2020 are now open with a deadline of 2 June 2020. Radvile is encouraging all supervisors of undergraduate research projects to inspire their students to submit their piece of work for global recognition and she is happy to share her experiences with both academic professionals as well as final year students.

Radvile is currently continuing her studies at AIT on the Master of Science in Data Analytics programme.



Radvile Razmute pictured on right of photo with two other conference participants.

Digital Marketing Students Visit Facebook

On Thursday 23 January, a group of Digital Marketing students visited Facebook in Dublin. The visit entailed a tour of the city-centre campus followed by a discussion on Facebook's Digital Marketing strategy and how the various strands inter-relate into the various product offerings by the company. Following that talk, a panel of staff members spoke about their careers to date and how they ended up in their varied roles within Facebook. This session was followed by questions and answers where the AIT students got a further insight into what a career in Digital Marketing could look like.



Financial Times and Bocconi Talent Challenge

An Italian student, Giovanni Feruglio, currently studying Financial Markets with Ms Karen Guest, Lecturer in the Department of Business and Management competed in London recently with Bocconi University at the Financial Times Headquarters in the FTxBocconi Talent Challenge. Giovanni is registered on the Bachelor of Business Honours programme.

The challenge brings together students, early career professionals, academic, Nobel Prize winners and business leaders to tackle the challenges facing a range of sectors as a result of technological change.

The event convened one hundred challengers from forty-five countries across five continents to solve strategic challenges related to the digital disruption in the fashion, fintech, artificial intelligence and sustainability sectors.

Participants were offered masterclasses on the impact of digital technologies held by Financial Times experts and were mentored by Bocconi alumni, university professors and FT experts and journalists including Michael Spence, 2001 Nobel Prize Winner for Economics.

The FT Talent Challenge is a three-day global programme aimed at generating ideas to challenge the future of business.



Giovanni Feruglio pictured with other challenge participants

Masters Students in Transatlantic Online Session

As part of their Personal and Professional Development module, the Master of Business students participated in a live, transatlantic online session in February alongside students from the Community College of Baltimore County. Using the Adobe Connect classroom, students were able to take part in a live diversity workshop facilitated by Dr Tara Ebersole (located in Baltimore). Several group discussions were conducted where groups of students from both Athlone Institute of Technology and the Community College of Baltimore County worked together to discuss the benefits and challenges of diversity in the workplace. A session full of active learning and student engagement ensued in spite of the 5,000 km distance between students and the five-hour time difference!

Nancy Zimmerman and Melissa Stitt of the Community College of Baltimore County were visitors to AIT in November and have been working alongside David O'Hanlon from the Faculty of Business (Department of Business and Management) in the planning of this session. The day could not have worked without the contributions of a number of staff from the Faculty and beyond. Ms Catherine O'Donoghue and Ms Eimear Kelly's session on Intercultural Awareness which was conducted a week previous to the online session, helped the students to

consider how culture impacts on communications. Ms Stephanie Duffy was also present on the day to help with technical support and to facilitate the Adobe Connect breakout rooms. Dr Teresa O'Hara and Mr Peter Meehan also assisted and their input was very much appreciated.

Freezing Week 2020 – Hameenlinna University, Finland

An invitation from the School of Entrepreneurship and Business at HAMK, Finland to attend their 6th International event from 3 – 7 February 2020 was accepted by the Dean of Faculty of Business and Hospitality, Ms Michelle McKeon-Bennett and lecturer from the Department of Business and Management Prof Marc Cashin. The Deans of Engineering & Informatics and Science & Health Dr Sean Lyons and Dr Don Faller were also in attendance.

Other delegates were from colleges and universities across Europe including Finland, Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Poland, Belgium, Kosova and Ireland. The workshops and seminars covered a wide range of current and future business challenges including Responsible Investment, Information Asymmetry in Online Marketing, Responsible Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, Data Science, e-Recruiting, Operations Management and Corporate Social Responsibility.

In parallel, a meeting of the various Deans of Faculties from the representative / attending universities facilitated to present and exchange current and future programmes of mutual collaboration and to highlight synergies in research and programme development, specifically but not exclusively to facilitate student and lecturer exchange. More importantly, representatives from the RUN-EU Consortium met to further consolidate strategic and operational objectives of the consortium and to access substantial EU funding for RUN. This will benefit AIT in its application for TU status with LIT.

AIT and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) welcome Ms Mairead McGuinness MEP

Hosting and sponsoring this event on 24 February, the Dean of Faculty of Business and Hospitality Michelle McKeon-Bennett welcomed the large crowd to 'The Green Deal – Gearing up for new ways of working'. She extended a warm welcome to Ms Mairead McGuinness MEP and to Ms Caroline Ward, Chairperson of the CIPD Midland Committee.

Ms McGuinness delivered a most informative lecture in relation to a greener Europe and how the main focus of the Green Deal will be on how climate change is approached. Highlighting how the initiative 'Farm to Fork' will have a major impact on policy decisions, Mairead's advice to all stakeholders was to have their focus on people and the economy.

The evening ended with Ms Caroline Ward inviting Ms Claire Shaw, CIPD committee member and lecturer in AIT to present a bouquet of flowers as a token of appreciation.



L-R: Ms Michelle McKeon-Bennett, Dean of Faculty: Ms Caroline Ward, Chair CIPD, Mairead McGuinness MEP, Claire Shaw CIPD and Alison Sheridan A Head of Department

Deans Honours Awards

Acknowledging the success of students across the Departments of Accounting and Business Computing, Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure and Business and Management, the President of AIT Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin welcomed the students and their supporters along with the staff of the Faculty of Business and Hospitality to the Deans Honours Awards on 26 February in the Douglas Hyde Lecture Theatre.

Professor Ó Catháin commended the students on their academic achievements to date whilst offering them encouragement to pursue a Master's degree or PhD after their undergraduate period of study.

Ms Michelle McKeon-Bennett, Dean of Faculty of Business and Hospitality extended her congratulations to the students and said how she was delighted to celebrate their academic excellence within the Faculty. The awards are presented to students who have achieved an overall grade of 70% or higher which equates to a first class honour in all subject areas.

Eighty seven students across the three departments in the Faculty were eligible for the awards which were presented by the Dean, Ms McKeon-Bennett.



Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin addressing the audience at the Deans Honours Awards for the Faculty of Business and Hospitality



Front Row L-R: Noel Tierney Lecturer, Trevor Prendergast Head of Dept of Accounting and Business Computing, Michelle Mc-Keon Bennett Dean of Faculty of Business and Hospitality, Alison Sheridan, Acting Head of Department of Business and Management, Anthony Johnston, Head of Department of Hospitality Tourism and Leisure, Aisling Keenan Lecturer, Elaine Walsh Lecturer, Siobhan Fitzmaurice Faculty Administrator

RUN-EU Network

Ms Michelle McKeon-Bennett alongside her colleague Dr Sean Lyons, Dean of Faculty of Engineering and Informatics have been the representatives of AIT in the formation of a new higher education network between universities and institutes across Europe. Dubbed RUN-EU, the network is intended to increase cooperation between the partner colleges and promote future opportunities to obtain multiple degrees within the framework of a joint training programme.

Eight colleges from Austria, Finland, Hungary, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Ireland form the consortium. We were pleased to welcome their representatives to Athlone IT from the 15th to the 17th January for one of the major planning / discussion forums. Limerick Institute of Technology are also participating and Michelle McKeon-Bennett explained how partnerships, such as RUN-EU will aid AIT and LIT in achieving our technological education mission. The network will provide new and exciting opportunities for all learners, which will include studying abroad. For staff, the opportunities to teach abroad will boost professional development.

The RUN-EU launch event was held in Brussels on 11 and 12 February. Ms McKeon-Bennett, Dr Lyons and the Dean of Science and Health Dr Don Faller attended. The student representatives from AIT were Ms Radvile Razmute (Business & Hospitality), Ms Aine Daly (Science & Health) and Mr Evert Fuenmayor (Engineering & Informatics). Also in attendance was the Portuguese Secretary of State for Science, Technology and Higher Education, João Sobrinho Teixeira, Ambassador Pedro Lourtie, Deputy Permanent Representative of Portugal to the European Union. They were joined by the diplomatic representatives from Ireland, Hungary, Finland, the Netherlands and Austria.



Representatives of the RUN-EU Network partnership

Data Analytics students visit Microsoft

A group of fulltime Data Analytics students visited Microsoft's Dublin Headquarters on 4 October 2019. After being welcomed by Academic Lead & Accessibility Evangelist, Stephen Howell, the students were treated to a tour of the new state-of-the-art facility. Following that, students were given some time to play with Microsoft's new HoloLens virtual reality hardware, which proved particularly popular. The highlight of the visit was a talk given by head Microsoft's Senior Data Scientist, Martin Perry. Martin enthralled the students with his animated and lively discussion on data science, digital literacy and the future of the discipline.



Data Analytics students visit Ericsson

On 22 November, the fulltime Data Analytics students visited the Ericsson campus. After being welcomed by Paul Hourican, students were given a tour of the facility and were particularly impressed with the data centre and the volumes of data stored therein. Following a coffee break, students were then given a talk by Neil Grogan and Rodrigo Correia on the real-world application of Data Analytics in the management of mobile phone networks. Judging by the sheer volume of questions, students were particularly interested and it resulted in the talk running over time by an hour.

HCI call – Pillar 2

The Department of Accounting and Business Computing was successful in its application for funding under the Pillar 2 call last December. An application was made for the provision of extra places for the new Business Information Systems programme, due to run for the first time in September 2020. Eight places were funded for a total of €2,500 per place.



Data Analytics Students with Head of Department Trevor Prendergast (Back Row Left) at Ericsson

HCI call – Springboard

Two programmes have been submitted to the Springboard ICT Skills Conversion Programme, both of which have been modified from previous iterations to produce a more streamlined and relevant offering for both students and employers. The first, the Higher Diploma in Data Analytics, currently has sixty students enrolled across two programmes and it is hoped that the popularity of the programme will ensure funding is secured. The second programme, the Higher Diploma in Computing, currently has nineteen students enrolled. This is a broad conversion programme aimed at those either working in the IT industry who do not have a qualification in the area, or those who have an interest in working in the IT industry.

HCI call – Pillar 1

A further two programmes are being submitted to the Pillar 1 call. The first, a Higher Diploma in Business in Information Technology was designed in recognition of the fact that businesses and organisations are increasingly reliant on technology and that there is a skills deficit of broad technologists. This programme incorporates skills in a wide range of areas, including databases, web, programming and enterprise applications. The second programme, a Post Graduate Diploma in Data Analytics builds on the success of the Department in offering programmes in the field of data analytics, providing students with a direct pathway to progress onto the MSc in Data Analytics, should they so wish.

CPA visit

On Thursday 13 February, Ms Michaela O'Dea, Student Recruitment Officer from CPA Ireland visited to speak about the organisation and the opportunities CPA offers to students. The event was well attended by students and staff alike, with groups from the Accounting, Business and Business and Law programmes in attendance.

Hospitality, Tourism & Leisure Department

Visit to Ashford Castle

Once again Mr Niall Rochford, General Manager, Ashford Castle Estate on Lough Corrib, County Mayo, hosted a group of students from the hospitality department on their annual fieldtrip. The hotel is situated on a magnificent 350-acre estate on the picturesque shores of Lough Corrib. It is one of Ireland's most impressive hotels. The Red Carnation Hotel group acquired this 5-star property in 2013. Elaine Connaughton, HR Manager for Red Carnation Hotels Ireland explained that the "Red Carnation Hotels group is recognised as one of the finest luxury hotel collections in the world, and in order to create extraordinary experiences for guests you have to go about your work with heart and soul, and with warmth and passion". The group sees Ashford Castle as one of its foremost property in the group. With a history stretching back almost 800 years, it provides acclaimed hospitality on a grand scale.

The field trip started with a welcome talk from Peter Fergus, General Manager of the Lodge at Ashford Castle. The Lodge sits within the magnificent 350-acre estate of Ashford Castle overlooking Lough Corrib, offering country house charm, fine dining in Wilde's Restaurant and is regarded as one of Ireland's finest wedding destinations, pairing warm Irish hospitality with a modern appeal. Peter gave the group an insight into the history and working of the very fine establishment. This was followed with a guided tour, which included a walk-through of restaurants, function rooms and kitchens, during which the group received an all-inclusive narration on how the individual departments of the establishment comes together to deliver its top-class service. Learners got the chance to speak with Kelly Ann McKay, People and Culture Manager at the Lodge during the tour, who explained what it is like to work in a luxury hotel environment. She explained that they recruit quality people "who embody these qualities and who can demonstrate dedication, expertise, and above all else enthusiasm for taking care of our guests. In return, you'll receive all the help and support you need to help you reach your full potential and grow with us as part of our family". The hotel provides accommodation for employees in a purpose-built residence on the estate.

Antoine Bellanger, Sous Chef of the Lodge led the group on a tour of the poly-tunnels. He explained that the interior heats up from the sun during the day and warms plants, soil, and raised beds inside the building faster than heat can escape the structure. He explained that the kitchen staff manage the temperature, humidity and ventilation of these tunnels, a skill they have refined over the years. He told the group that his colleagues enjoy growing produce and further delight in the fact that most end up in the hotels' fine dining restaurant. Fruit, herbs, salads and vegetables grow in raised beds. Students sampled a range of produce and noted their freshness and their splendid aromas and taste.

The tour continued with a short bus trip to Ashford Castle, where a welcome talk was delivered by Mr Andrew Phelan, Assistant Manager. He explained the history of the establishment, the standard they aim for and the facilities and quality of service offered to guests. He told of his own journey in the hospitality industry and explained that having a good education formed the foundation for later work experiences. He told the story of the president and founder who built up the Red Carnation Hotels, Ms Beatrice Tollman. Learners were intrigued to hear of the vision for service excellence and a passion for generous hospitality. He explained that the group is lovingly named after the signature flower Ms Tollman's husband always wears, and this symbol of hospitality is also worn by every member of the team. Currently the group (they proudly call it a collection) has 19 exceptional properties in the group from around the world (London, Guernsey, Dorset, England, Geneva, Botswana, South Africa, Florida), each unique and special, whilst sharing the founding values that define the family-owned and run business. Their moto is:

"The guest experience is always at the heart of Red Carnation, where talented teams exceed expectations with warm and caring service, delicious cuisine and thoughtful touches. We also connect guests with the local destination through authentic and meaningful experiences, beautiful and restorative design, and curated art collections. These hotels are truly the art of hospitality."

Mr Phillippe Farineau, the Executive Head Chef joined the group who were fascinated to listen to his take on quality food, his staff, the profession and the pleasure it is to come to work every day. He introduced the students to staff and then were shown around the castle. Again, students saw a kitchen with staff in action preparing for the next meal, they got to meet with and chat with managers, chefs and restaurant staff. They toured the wine cellar and viewed 10,000 plus bottles of wine stored in it, and declined the tasting offer. Phillippe and Andrew Ryan, Head Pastry Chef, Ashford Castle Estate explained about the chocolate they use and the equipment used for tempering it. The samples were just excellent.

For lunch, the group dined in the George V Dining Room. This was a culinary delight. The graceful setting, with rich, panelled walls and sparkling Waterford Crystal chandeliers bestowed a grand sense of occasion. The staff made the entire group feel welcome and everyone really enjoyed the wonderful experience. Mr Robert Bowe, Restaurant Manager and a contemporary of our own Seán Connell (they both did their degree together) showed the group what high standards and excellent service is all about.

After lunch, the group was treated to a pleasure cruise trip on Lough Corrib onboard the Lady Ardilaun. This cruise boat is operated by brother's Pat and David Luskin,

brothers of our own Gerard Luskin. They take visitors from Ashford Castle on a tour of the lake and its many islands during the summer months. David gave a fantastic and witty narration explaining that Lough Corrib is the largest lake in the republic, coupled with historical, cultural ditties, while the group took in the magnificent Twelve Bens mountains in Connemara in the background. He explained that archaeologists are only just beginning to piece together how important this lake was in terms of trade and connectivity in the area. Recent discovery of several, perfectly preserved 5000-year-old boats on the lakebed only add to the mystery. He explained that historians already knew of its religious significance with the renowned holy island, Inchoigoill. St Patrick was a very busy man because he built a church there and his nephew, Lugna the navigator, is believed to be buried in its holy grounds. The trip went by quickly, partly due to the wonderful vista and partly because of David's wonderful yarns.

Students brought back many good memories from the trip. The theme of this year's trip (expounded by all that the group met) resonates with Mr Rochford welcoming speech from last year when he spoke of the characteristics one must have to succeed in a property like Ashford Castle, and they are:

- Being on time
- Work ethic
- Effort
- Body language
- Energy Attitude
- Passion
- Being coachable
- Doing extra
- Being prepared

He said then, 'that these things require zero talent, but are necessary if you want to work in an establishment like this'. A thought-provoking message that is easily transferrable to many sectors of the hospitality industry. Indeed, aspiring hospitality learners and novice culinarians would value work experience in either of the properties on the Ashford Castle Estate, with a team of professionals that propagates such ideals.

3rd Year Bachelor of Business in Sport Management - Field Trip to UL Sport

On Thursday, 23rd January 2020, the third year Sport Management students visited UL Sport at the University of Limerick as part of their Sports Development module. The students visited the various sporting facilities and were given a presentation by the Senior Executive Sports Manager, Ms. Neasa O'Donnell, on the funding, maintenance and operation plans of both the indoor and outdoor sports facilities located on and off campus. Models

of funding and business planning with sustainability was a strong theme of the talk. Mr. Phelim Mackin, Sports Co-ordinator for Limerick Sports Partnership, spoke to our students about his role, the work of the partnership and future plans for the development of sport in Limerick. In this presentation, the students learned about the role of the sports partnership, how they fund and plan their activities, and the present and future employment opportunities in the community recreation area. This field trip was interesting, educational, relevant and beneficial. It created an awareness of some great and exciting possibilities for employment opportunities in sport and recreation.



AIT was represented at the LYCÉE HÔTELIER. Portrieux, Brittany, France in early February.

Mr. Anthony Johnston, Head of Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure and Margaret O'Loughlen visited the Hotel Training School with the aim to present further training options to the students who have completed foundation level training at level 5 and 6. The students were encouraged to come to AIT which presents multiple advantages in terms of language, culinary skill training and management development.

As part of the visit, a range of cupcakes with a unique decorative finish and novelty cakes suitable for the student cohort were prepared. These were very well received as it's an area not familiar to the French pastry industry and are now on display in the College. It is hoped that the cake demonstrations and together with Mr. Johnston's presentation will entice the students to AIT to continue their training and development.

2st year H.C. in Culinary Arts – Pune, India.

The Department of Hospitality Tourism and Leisure Studies participated in the 12th edition of the ATITHYA Hospitality Competitions organised by Dr Milind Peshave of the AISSMS Hospitality University in the Indian city of Pune. The competitions ran between the 5th and 7th of February 2020. This is the second year that HTL has sent a team to the competitions.

AIT HTL 2nd year Culinary Arts students Caitlin Carnegie and Maria Dunne represented Ireland and the institute with distinction at the event. They were accompanied by Culinary Arts Lecturer, Kevin Ward who gave a guest lecture to a group of hotel management students.

This event offers AIT the opportunity to build positive relationships and networks with some 33 Hospitality universities across the Indian sub-continent. The students were blown away by the level of hospitality, professionalism and the friendliness of their Indian hosts and have had a once in a lifetime experience which has left a positive and long lasting impression. We are expecting the first hospitality students from AISSMS to begin their studies in AIT in September 2020.



1st year Bar Supervision - National Cocktail Championship & Bartender Awards 2020

Four of our 1st year Bar Supervision students competed recently in the National Cocktail Championship & Bartender Awards Ireland 2020 which were held at Food & Bev Live Expo in City West Convention Centre Dublin. This event is organised by the Bartender's Association of Ireland and sponsored by Edward Dillon & Co Ltd. Joe Newman, Ivan Kennedy, Ciaran Mullan and Conor Rattigan all 1st year Bar Supervision students competed with Joe winning the Award for Best Hospitality Student with his cocktail 'Violet Bay', Joe was also selected to compete the following day in the National Final.



The students competed on stage in front of a large audience and were judged on their appearance, skills, technical procedure and overall proficiency. Their cocktails were assessed on appearance, aroma, taste and commercial considerations, with 4 industry judges looking for attractive cocktails that had a balance of flavour and were both appealing to the eye and the palate.

There were seven heats with AIT'S Joe Newman reaching the final. His entry 'Violet Bay' was a stylish, sophisticated, brand appropriate cocktail that lent an air of trend and glamour to the competition.

According to Sarah Janes Coffey, lecturer in the Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Studies, AIT'S Bar supervision course provides students with the professional craft and supervisory skills in bar and beverage service, leading to the provision of a quality and unique customer experience in the Irish tourism industry.

Joe, Ivan, Ciaran & Conor had spent weeks creating unique signature cocktails for entry. Together they had to produce the right mix of creativity, ingredients and craftsmanship: in short, a stand out crowd pleaser. The cocktail had not only to taste great, but they had to stand out, look outrageous, elegant and engaging. Their recipes have already been reproduced and all four finished products would not look out of place in any leading Venus cocktail menu.

I am very proud of all our students, they approached the competition with eagerness and excitement, and represented AIT with confidence and professionalism beyond their years – S. J Coffey.



1st & 2nd year Sport & Recreation

As part of their work placement preparation, students on the Higher Certificate in Sports and Recreation get the opportunity to engage, debate and ask questions regarding the possibilities for a future career in the dynamic leisure industry. All of the presenters bring their unique perspectives and the discussions are open, to the point and often delivered by presenters that have come through the same programme that the current students are attending.

Dr Niamh Flynn Sports Psychologist discussed possibilities, and described her journey from a sport and recreation background through sports psychology, a Master's in Business Administration to her doctoral study of Hypnosis and its potential to cure migraine. Students quickly engaged and asked some relevant questions with regard to the transition from working with the general public to elite athletes, tapping into ones subconscious, and enhancing ones potential and skill through positive thinking and action. The message was clear, learn the basics well, further your education, never stop learning and tap into your own resources.

The following is the list of presenters for this semester:

- Weds 29th Jan - 4pm to 5pm - B57 - Marian Kennedy - Formally DCU, Coral Leisure and currently Operations

Manager in AIT. <https://www.aitsport.ie/>

- Weds 5th Feb - 4pm to 5pm - B57 - Dr Niamh Flynn - Niamh has worked in the fitness business for many years as an independent group instructor, gym operations and in sports psychology. Niamh has a Masters in Sports Medicine, and a Master's in Business Administration from the Smurfit Business School. Over the years she has worked with teams such as the Senior Galway Hurling Squad, Connacht Rugby and many high profile athletes as well as recreational athletes. Niamh is currently working with the Mayo Senior Football Team. <http://www.bodywatch.com/>
- Thurs 13th Feb - 11am -12 - D05 - Niall Cull, CEO, DLR Leisure - Niall has a wealth of experience in the leisure industry from operations to senior level management. In addition, Niall is passionate about soccer and sports participation/coaching in general. Currently Niall is directly responsible for the strategic management of a number of large leisure facilities in South County Dublin. <https://dlrleisure.ie/>
- Thurs 26th March - 11am - 12 - D05 - Gemma Dempsey, is Operations Manager at DCU Sports. Gemma has extensive experience in operations of multi-functional sports facilities from the hotel sector through corporate and start up facilities. Gemma has worked with facilities delivering fitness programmes to a diverse range of clients with different abilities.



HTL Industry Placement and Graduate Recruitment Fair

In early February the Department of Hospitality Tourism & Leisure hosted our annual Industry Open Day. To our delight it was great to welcome many of Ireland's top hotels to the institute. Adare Manor, Dromoland Castle, K Club, Sheraton and the SO Group (Pat McDonagh group) to mention a few.

The majority of our students attended on the day and really benefitted from the Open Day with many of them securing work placements for the coming summer. Our graduates to be, also got the opportunity to meet top employers and valuable contacts were made which will greatly assist them in their future careers.

We were delighted to welcome back so many past students from the various stands who are now managers and supervisors and who offered words of wisdom to the students who attended on the day.

Polytunnel Report 2020

This project is at an early stage in its development. Once fully functional, it will provide a flexible growing environment that affords learners the opportunity to research both sustainable horticulture and hydroculture. To achieve this, the polytunnel will have two growing zones; a traditional raised bed zone and a hydroponic growing system.

The raised bed zone will provide a fitting space for growing salads, fruit and vegetables. Raised beds are easy to assemble, maintain and provide a manageable area to keep pest free. All they require is top soil, compost, water, a little maintenance and then nature does the rest.

Hydroponics is the practice of nourishing and growing crops using mineral nutrient solutions in a water rather than soil. Plants are grown in cup-like baskets with their roots exposed to the nutritious liquid. Both systems will ensure that we have more food in less space.

Kuala Lumpur Fieldtrip Short Summary

Twenty four students from the Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure visited Kuala Lumpur for a week long academic field visit in February. The visit involved tours and guest classes at two of AIT's partner universities, KDU and TarUC. The students were accompanied by lecturers Joe Meegan, Nora Shine and Shane Sheedy, along with Annette Buckley from the International Office. Students participated in a marvellous street food tour, learning about the cuisine of South East Asia. They also met with 2BA Hons Hospitality Management (with international placement) students, Tara and Orinne, who are spending the semester studying in KDU. Also included on the tour was a visit to the Kuala Lumpur Sport City arena, a visit to Batu Caves, Kuala Lumpur Formula 1 track, and an operations tour of the Verdant Hill Hotel.



Radisson AIT Hospitality, Bar and Culinary Scholarships back for 2020 students

The Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Studies will benefit from 3 x €1,000 scholarships for incoming first year CAO students on Culinary Arts, Bar Supervision and Hospitality/ Hotel Management. These scholarships are kindly sponsored by the Radisson, Athlone. Students starting first year with us in September 2020 will be eligible. Scholarship recipients are chosen based on dedication and passion. Pictured are 2019 recipients Catherina, Michelle and Ivan.

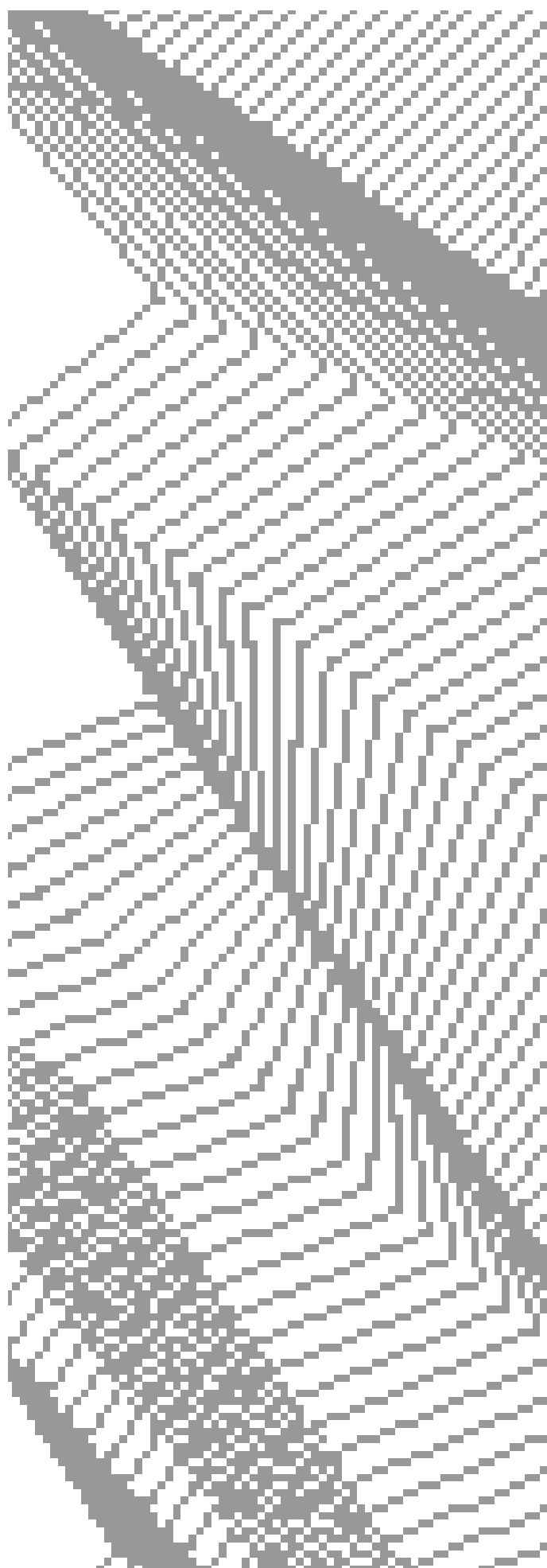


International

Dr Tony Johnston, Head of Department, visited a partner school in Hanover to represent the Faculty of Business and Hospitality. Dr Johnston met with students to promote advanced entry on courses, discuss work placement possibilities and to explore potential new pathways. In February the Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure also commenced discussions with partner schools in Marseille and Dinard in France about the possibilities of working together.

AIMSIR – Majken Bech Bailey

We were delighted to welcome Majken Bech Bailey, co-owner of Aimsir, to the Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure in February. Aimsir won 2 Michelin stars only four months after opening last year, and it is one of only three 2* restaurants in Ireland. It is also the fastest restaurant in history to receive 2 stars. Majken is the front of house manager and co-owner of the restaurant, along with her husband Jordan Bailey, who is the chef. Majken delivered a fascinating talk to staff and students, outlining the restaurant styling, the provenance of the food and their approach to staff hiring and development. Majken then followed the talk with a world class demo of their non-alcohol drinks. Majken’s attention to detail, personality and passion for the industry was clear to see for the students, who were captivated by her story and the success of Aimsir. Majken invited the students to visit Aimsir, which will happen in mid-March.



FACULTY OF ENGINEERING AND INFORMATICS



Leaving Certificate Workshops Engineering and Construction Technology

More than 300 students from ten Secondary Schools around the Midlands attended special Leaving Certificate workshops in Athlone Institute of Technology's Faculty of Engineering and Informatics on the 11 and 12 of December 2019. The schools were from our general catchment area and included Castlepollard Community College and Ballymahon Vocational School. The workshops, which ran for two days, focused on special subject areas in Engineering and Construction Studies and were designed to support students in their preparation for Leaving Certificate exams in these areas. Over the course of the programme, each group of students attended four workshops consisting of a series of lectures and laboratory demonstrations. Those studying Construction Studies attended workshops in Building Information Modelling, Water Quality, Hydraulics, U Values and Concrete Testing, while students studying Engineering covered areas like Polymer Physics, Automation and Control and Polymer Processing.

A guest talk for the Engineering students on the "Basic Principles of Operation and Applications of Autonomous Vehicle Technology" was delivered by lecturer Tom Bennett and a live demonstration was provided of same. This is this year's Engineering students' specialist topic. Each school were given an A3 poster designed by AIT and a copy of the presentation for their own use. The workshops provided to the Leaving Certificate students were delivered by lecturing staff in the Faculty of Engineering and Informatics, each of whom has significant lecturing and research expertise in their respective domains, with the ambition of supporting teachers and students as they prepare for Leaving Certificate examinations.

"Our fun, practical workshops are designed to give students a robust understanding of special subject areas and provide support to teachers across the second level education sector," said Breda Lynch, Head of Department of Polymer, Mechanical and Design. "The workshops also act as a vehicle to prepare students for the transition to third level education by treating them as if they are undergraduate students – from the material delivery, to giving them access to our state-of-the-art laboratories and even letting them experiment with our cutting-edge equipment first-hand," she explained. "This gives them a flavour of what is on offer and helps them in their CAO decision-making process."

This was a sentiment echoed by Joe Lawless, Head of Department of Civil Engineering and Trades, who added: "STEM education is of vital importance to shaping the future of Irish society and the careers of the next generation of leaders – something these workshops help facilitate."

The Leaving Certificate Workshops have been successful over the last number of years in opening up doors for marketing opportunities to schools and individual follow ups with students as part of the CAO process. The Faculty

of Engineering and Informatics also conducted short surveys with the 300+ students to gain an insight for future course development.



Leaving Certificate Demonstration Autonomous Vehicles



Leaving Certificate Demonstration Concrete Laboratory

Promoting Engineering at AIT in Secondary Schools

Joe Lawless, Head of Department Civil Engineering and Trades visited a number of schools on the run-up to closing date for CAO on 1 February. Firstly, Banagher College who participated in the Leaving Certificate Engineering Programme requested a visit on 29 January and Clonaslee on 30 January.

Sean Lyons, Dean of Faculty visited Ballymahon Vocational School on 29 January to talk to the Leaving Certificate Class about the opportunities in Engineering at AIT. Ballymahon Vocational School had also participated in the Leaving Certificate programme in December and have a low conversion rate to third level education so this was a great opportunity to promote AIT Programmes as achievable, accessible and affordable.

Steripack Site Visit with Midlands Science

Alan Mannion, Lecturer in Polymer Engineering visited the midlands training facility housed in the Steripack factory in Clara, Co Offaly to present to a group of 19 TY students from a local secondary school. He delivered a 90-minute presentation which was a mixture of demo and theory. During the presentation students were briefed on their options of study in Mechanical & Polymer Engineering and how robotics is making huge changes to the industry. The demo section was an example of a thermoforming process using the college's vacuum former which the students took part in.



Steripack Visit with Midlands Science

Polymer Processing Apprentices and JL Goor

This year the Phase 6 Polymer Apprentices created a 3D printed insert for an injection moulding machine as part of their polymer processing labs. Lecturer, Alan Mannion gave the students a keyring to design which would be for JL Goor who as a company are a great sponsor of projects, students (through JL Goor Scholarship) and even machinery at AIT. The students made a keyring which imitates the company and website details on the back. Louis Goor, MD of JL Goor visited AIT to see the work carried out by the students.



Polymer Apprentices and JL Goor

Joe Lawless Trades Meetings and reviews

Joe Lawless attended the HVM Programme Board Meeting in Solas Head office on Thursday 17 October. He also participated in the Generation Apprenticeship Partners Meeting at the Davenport Hotel on 7 November on behalf of the Registrar and the Dean of Faculty Dr Sean Lyons.

THEA Apprenticeship meeting was held at Fumbally Square on 13 November and Joe Lawless attended on behalf of AIT.

Joe Lawless and Maureen O' Brien attended the RSA Annual Review in Loughrea on December 16. The meeting was presented with a report of AIT performance for the past year. This included progress of the students, contract review, KPI's and details of new investments within AIT. AIT and the RSA have monthly meetings to keep a close eye on progress of this important contract.

Joe Lawless Head of Department Civil & Trades attended a meeting in Punchestown Racecourse on Tuesday 25 February with LWETB & SOLAS to attend the Advanced Cert Craft Presentation.

Joe Lawless attended exploratory talks with Athlone Training Centre on Friday 28 February to discuss the use of facilities for joint programme development for Civil & Construction Engineering on the lines of how we currently run the Music Programme. There will be further exploration of options as AIT develop the options for new programme for CAO for 2021/2022.

Irish Water Site Visit

On 26 February the Year 4 Civil Engineering students accompanied by Lecturer, Brian Garvey visited the Irish Water at Golden Island Wastewater Treatment Plant, Athlone. The group toured the modern facility and were shown the recent upgrade to the inlet works. The recent works has increased capacity from 30,000 to 73,000 population equivalent to accommodate future expansion.

Pictured: students from B.Eng. (Hons) in Civil Engineering year 4, Environmental Engineering lecturer Brian Garvey, James Joyce Sanitary Engineer Westmeath County Council (ex. Civil Engineering AIT), Micheal McGreal, Asset Operations, Irish Water (ex. Civil Engineering AIT), Padraic Joyce wastewater engineer, Irish Water.



Irish Water Site Visit

Tullamore College Visit Micro:Bits

On Friday 22 November, Karol Fitzgerald, lecturer in the Department of Computer and Software Engineering travelled to Tullamore College to deliver a 2 hour workshop on Micro:Bits. During this workshop 20 students participated in demonstrations and used Micro:Bits, radio communication and programming to formulate solutions for IOT applications. The workshop was well received by both students and staff and will be expanded upon for future collaboration, strengthening civic engagement.



Roscommon Community College Visit to AIT

On a recent visit to AIT, Tom Bennett and Enda Fallon from the Department of Computer and Software Engineering delivered a presentation on “Emerging Trends in Computing” to Roscommon Community College Students and Staff.

Microsoft Guest Speaker

On Friday 28 February the Faculty of Engineering & Informatics hosted Stephen Howell, Academic Programme Manager from Microsoft IRL. Stephen’s talk was attended by students and staff from different disciplines across the Institute and lasted for 2 hours. Topics discussed: careers and career paths, Azure, Artificial Intelligence, Data Analytics and Data Visualisation.

Stephen highlighted the importance of students undertaking Cloud Computing degrees, emphasising that there are more than 200 jobs in this sector that Microsoft are unable to currently fill. Stephen also discussed the roles that Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality developers will play in the development of medical applications and smart manufacturing in the coming years. AIT offers programmes in these areas at undergraduate, master’s level including the Springboard offering. This talk was organised by Karol Fitzgerald Lecturer in the Faculty of Engineering & Informatics.



Guest Speaker Kevin Walsh MSc in Applied Software Engineering (Ericsson Master’s Group)

On Wednesday 29 January, the Ericsson sponsored MSc in Applied Software Engineering student group were delighted to welcome Kevin Walsh, Personal Trainer, to give a guest lecture for the Self-Management & Teamwork module. Kevin spoke to the class about what software teams can learn from sports coaching. Both the lecturers and students enjoyed a highly motivating discussion and learnt about the benefits of incremental improvement in all aspects of work and life. Dr Sheila Fallon organised the guest lecture. The students used this opportunity to wear their County/Club colours.



Pictured: Back Row (L-R) Daniel Hanrahan, Declan Cordial, Helmut Dunavskis, Thomas Delvin

Front Row: Niall Murray, Jackie Stewart, Sean Kennedy, Kevin Walsh, Mary Giblin, Sheila Fallon, Niall Quinn, Anthony Cunningham

Ericsson INFUSE program

Dr. Enda Fallon presented a workshop on “Emerging Trends in ICT” on Friday 28 of February as part of the Ericsson “INFUSE” program, which promotes ICT amongst second level students. The overall aim of the program is to improve the number of students choosing ICT as an area of study.



Barbara Quinn (Ericsson INFUSE Manager), Dr Enda Fallon, Head of Department Computer and Software Engineering.

SISCO Conference

Anthony Commins and Tom Bennett attended the SISCO Conference on Tuesday 21 January in Technical University Dublin, Blanchardstown.

Mature Students Study Steering Group

The HEA has commissioned a study entitled "A Study of Mature Student Participation in Higher Education: What are the Challenges? Recommendations for the future" to be carried out by Indecon International Economic Consultants on their behalf. This study was established from a recommendation in the Progress Review of the National Access Plan. The aim is to conduct a comprehensive research study that identifies the issues and challenges associated with first-time mature student participation in higher education and to make recommendations that will support increased participation from this group.

Dr Jacqueline Stewart, Lecturer in the Department of Computer and Software Engineering in the Faculty of Engineering and Informatics, a former mature student, is representing AIT and THEA as a participant in the Mature Students Study Steering Group liaising with Indecon Consultants. The inaugural meeting of the Steering Group was held in the HEA offices in Dublin on Wednesday 12 February where the initial strategy was discussed and next steps agreed.

It is envisaged that the research findings will translate into recommendations on future policy initiatives to support mature student participation in higher education, which will directly inform AIT in formulating their strategic development in this area for TU.

Animation and Illustration

Following last year's success of the first animated film to be produced by a group of students from Athlone IT, UISCE has been shortlisted to screen at the Dingle Animation Festival in March 2020. The film was created and animated by the Year 3 cohort in 2018/19 and has since screened at a number of national film festivals including the Dublin Animated Film Festival and Still Voices Film Festival. It is shortlisted in Dingle under the Irish Student Short Awards category.

Current Year 3 student, Kristen Hennessy, is also shortlisted to present at the Big Pitcher Competition at the Dingle Animation Festival. The winner on the day will get a 6 month paid internship in Jam Media, one of Ireland's top media companies.

A group of students from the BA (Hons) in Animation & Illustration will be travelling to Dingle to support the successes and also to make connections in the animation and illustration industry.



Publication by the Society for Animation Studies

Yvonne Hennessy, Lecturer in Animation and Illustration programme had her paper titled "Neglect and Omission: Irish Animation Archives" published in February 2020 by the Society for Animation Studies. The paper is part of a current chapter from her PhD research which is titled "Women, Animation Practice and Irish Modernism 1920—1970: Aesthetic, Historical and Cultural Heritage Perspectives".

The Society for Animation Studies is an international group of scholars who value Animation Studies as a discipline which is often described as being over looked, but thanks in part to the development of the Society for Animation Studies which was founded in 1987, the subject has grown significantly.

The pace of published research has often lagged behind the vast technological developments in the animation industry and as such there is often gaps in the discourse. The online collection of papers intends to attempt to fill some of these gaps by providing scholars (and fans) with a more immediate place to engage with current research.

Graphic Design Year 2 Site Visit for Project

On Thursday February 6, 2020 the Year 2 BA in Graphic Design students attended an on-site visit to Mullingar Employment Action Group (MEAG) - their client for a live identity redesign project. Students had previously been briefed at AIT by Michael Ward CEO of MEAG.

MEAG are the parent group who support and head up the Mullingar Enterprise Centre, Mullingar Technology and Innovation Centre, Mullingar Recycling Centre and the Uniform Boutique. Students and lecturers met and had information sessions with the MEAG co-founder and Chairman, the CEO and other core staff members on the day along with 4 entrepreneurs supported by MEAG who have business based in both the Enterprise Centre and the Technology and Innovation Centre. They also met with MEAG staff working on mentoring and education programs with those furthest from the labour market helping them achieve dignity and purpose through employment.



The whole experience was beneficial to students who interacted professionally with everyone involved on the day. The team at MEAG had organised a full programme for students and it provided them with fantastic industry experience in understanding the requirements of a client briefing, while they also gained a practical understanding of what is involved in researching, knowledge building and client-need anticipation when working on creative projects in a real world context.

Graphic Design Year 3 Field Trip Conference

The year 3 Graphic Design Students had a field trip on Wednesday 4 March to gather primary research and content for their Major Project and Professional Practice modules. The students will visit the IMMA to see the Chroma, Desire and Freud Project. The group will also attend a design conference on gender equality and get to hear Jonathon Colman, Senior Design Manager Intercom and Natalie Maher, founder Kerning the Gap to discuss the topic. Lecturers Tara Cullen and Carmel Joyce from Graphic Design accompanied the students for the Field Trip.

College Visits promoting Graphic Design

Design Lecturer Tara Cullen visited the Art and Design departments at Cavan Institute, Abbeyleix FEC, Portlaoise Institute, and Mountmellick Community School to talk to the students about the design courses at AIT and the changes to the portfolio assessment for CAO 2020.

Graphic Design, Industry Visits

AIT Graphic design graduate Fiona Fox from Fjord (Accenture) spent a day with the graphic design students on November 27. She gave a very insightful presentation about her design journey to date and what it is like to be a designer at global design firm Fjord. She spoke about Fjord's objective to use the power of design to create truly positive impact for people and organisations across the world, making it their business to understand their needs and exceed their expectations. That evening Fiona Fox accompanied by design lecturer Tara Cullen, had a critique session on 'Experience Design' (UX) with the year 4 students from the BA (Hons) in Graphic and Digital Design. Fiona was very impressed by the standard of UX Design at AIT and welcomed the college/industry collaboration.

On February 11 the design students got great advice from visiting design graduates Calvin Doyle and Conor English from Studio Great.

"Remove your ego. Dig deep and understand your client. Don't be afraid to fail. Be open to testing. Be fluid and surprise yourself. Design is not for you it's for everyone"



Research Attachment Programme, University Technology, Petronas, Malaysia

Michael Nugent's PhD student Bor Shin Chee joined the Research Attachment Programme in University Technology Petronas, Malaysia from 25 November 2019 until 17 January 2020 as visiting researcher. She worked with Dr Mohamed Shuaib Bin Mohamed Saheed and his postgraduate researcher, Adel Mohammed Al-Dhahebi from the Department of Fundamental & Applied Sciences on developing nano-biocomposites using electrospinning. These nano materials are prepared to be used for drug delivery and biosensor applications.

In addition, Bor Shin visited the University of Putra Malaysia from 20 January until 24 January 2020 to initiate a collaboration project with the Associate Professor Dr. Hidayah Ariffin. Dr. Hidayah has the expertise in utilisation of plant biomass for the production of bio-based chemicals, biopolymers and biocomposites. It was a great opportunity for Bor Shin to work in the Biomass Technology Laboratory to develop nano materials using agricultural waste for drug delivery applications.



Bor Shin Chee (left), Dr Mohamed Shuaib bin Mohamed Saheed (right)

Research Interests Faculty of Engineering

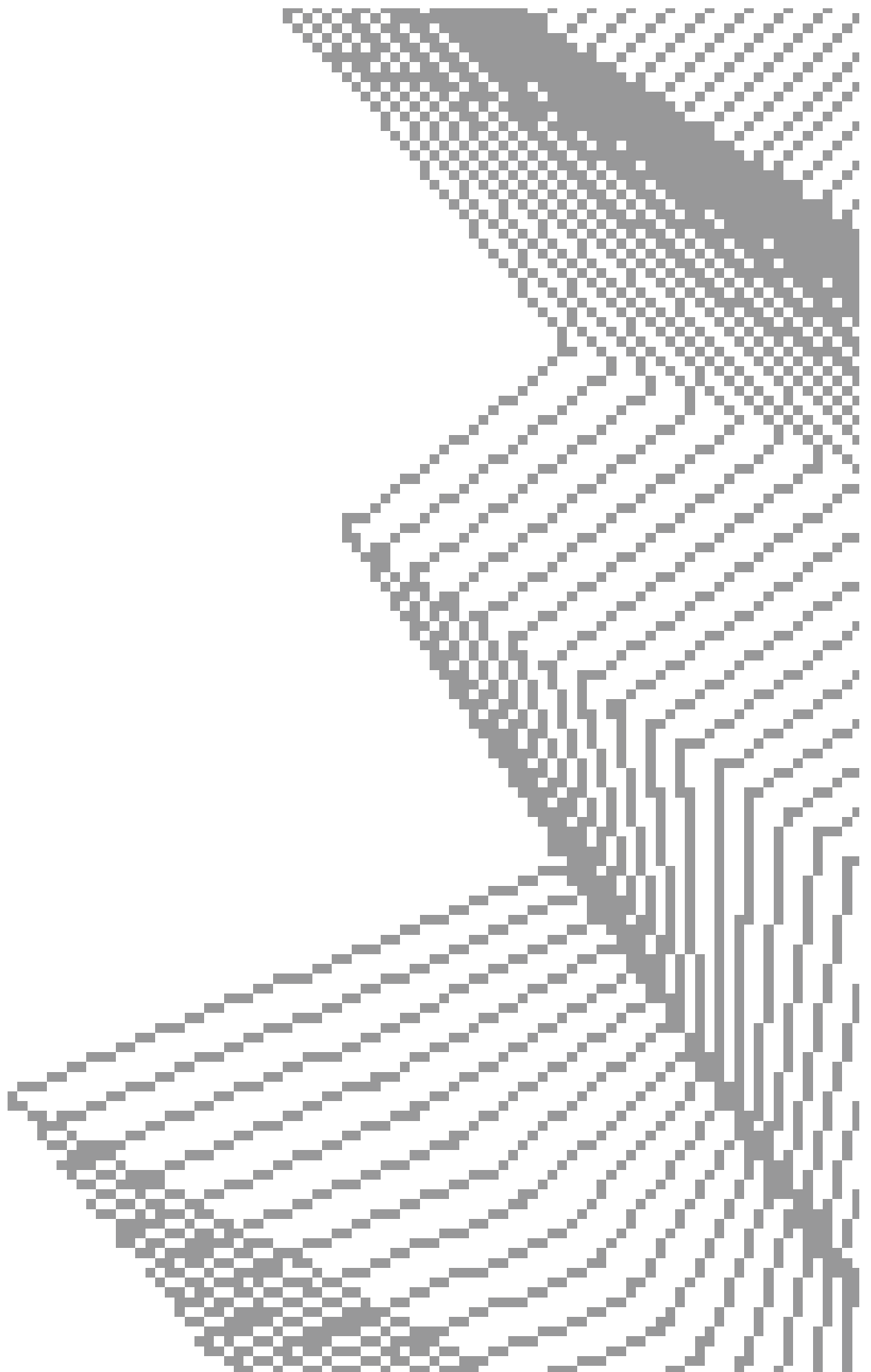
Michael Nugent was successful in a joint proposal with Professor Dinara Jaqueline Moura from the Laboratory of Genetic Toxicology, Federal University of Health Sciences of Porto Alegre - UFCSPA for funding under the CAPES grant. Capes is the Foundation within the Ministry of Education in Brazil whose central purpose is to co-ordinate efforts to improve the quality of Brazil's faculty and staff in higher education through grant programs. This enabled a post graduate student Jeferson G. Henn, to work in AIT for a joint collaboration on the development of novel biomedical materials.

The following journal articles were published recently by Dr Michael Nugent

1. de Lima, Gabriel Goetten; Elter, Johanna Katrin; Chee, Bor Shin; Magalhães, Washington Luiz Esteves; Devine, Declan M; Nugent, Michael JD; de Sá, Marcelo JC; A tough and novel dual-response PAA/P (NiPAAM-co-PEGDMA) IPN hydrogels with ceramics by photopolymerization for consolidation of bone fragments following fracture *Biomedical Materials* 14 5 54101 2019 IOP Publishing
2. Pereira, Bruno Leandro; Beilner, Gregory; Lepienski, Carlos Maurício; Szameitat, Erico Saito; Chee, Bor Shin; Kuromoto, Neide Kazue; dos Santos, Leonardo Luis; Mazzaro, Irineu; Claro, Ana Paula Rosifini Alves; Nugent, Michael JD; Oxide coating containing apatite formed on Ti-25Nb-25Ta alloy treated by Two-Step Plasma Electrolytic Oxidation *Surface and Coatings Technology* 382 125224 2020 Elsevier
3. Steffens, Luiza; Morás, Ana Moira; Arantes, Pablo Ricardo; Masterson, Kevin; Cao, Zhi; Nugent, Michael; Moura, Dinara Jaqueline; Electrospun PVA-Dacarbazine nanofibers as a novel nano brain-implant for treatment of glioblastoma: in silico and in vitro characterization *European Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences* 143 105183 2020 Elsevier

The following book chapters were recently published by Dr Michael Nugent

1. Steffens, Luiza; de Barros Dias, Mabilly Cox Holanda; Morás, Ana Moira; Moura, Dinara Jaqueline; Nugent, Michael; Natural polysaccharides for the delivery of anticancer therapeutics *Natural Polysaccharides in Drug Delivery and Biomedical Applications* 441-470 2019 Academic Press
2. Chee, Bor Shin; Nugent, Michael; Electrospun natural polysaccharide for biomedical application *Natural Polysaccharides in Drug Delivery and Biomedical Applications* 589-615 2019 Academic Press





FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND HEALTH

An application for Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) accreditation of AIT's BSc (Hons) in Applied Psychology has been submitted by the Department of Social Sciences. The PSI is the learned and professional body for psychology and psychologists in the Republic of Ireland. An accreditation panel visit is expected to take place in May/June 2020.

A QQI-appointed panel of experts visited AIT between 17 and 19 February to consider the Faculty of Science and Health's application for validation at NFQ Level 10 (PhD) in the discipline area of Health. The formal report from the panel will issue during March 2020. However, the initial verbal feedback from the panel was positive in relation to Sport and Health.

Dept of Life and Physical Sciences: February 2020 New Research Report

AIT and the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine (DAFM) have recently begun collaborative research on developing new methods of analysis of levels of metals in animal blood serum and vitreous humour.

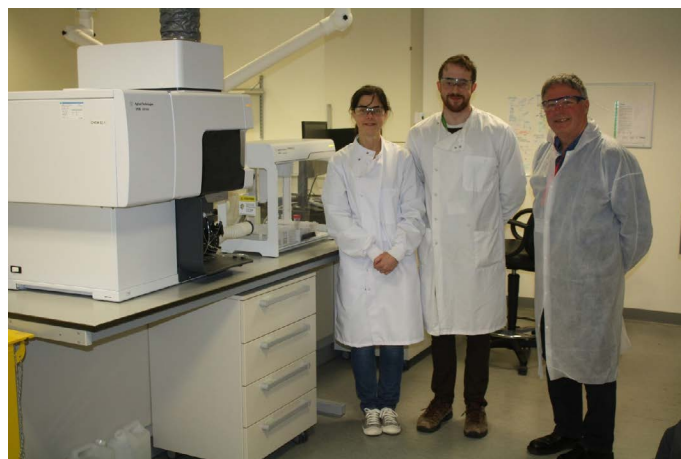
The research will be undertaken by Mr Andrew Larkin in the DAFM (Veterinary Pathology/Clinical Chemistry) laboratories based in Backweston, Celbridge, Co Kildare and will be co-supervised by Dr Celine Mannion, Senior Research Officer/Head of the Pathology/Clinical Chemistry Labs (DAFM) and Dr Sean Reidy AIT.

Andrew is a past student of AIT and is a perfect example of the benefits of the ladder system of qualifications. He began his student career in AIT in 2004, received a Higher Certificate in Science in 2006, a BSc in Toxicology in 2007, a BSc (Hons) in Biotechnology in 2009 and finally an MSc in Toxicology in 2010.

Along the way, Andrew also gained valuable work experience in Elan in Athlone, Chanelle Group in Loughrea and Abbott Diagnostics in Galway, before commencing his present position as a Laboratory Analyst (Clinical Chemistry) in the DAFM labs in April 2018. His project will involve developing two validated (ISO 17025) analytical methods capable of high throughput detection and quantification of specific trace elements and minerals in animal serum and vitreous humour by ICP-OES (Inductively Coupled Plasma-Optical Emission Spectroscopy). The validated methods will offer reduced sample turnaround times for customers as well as generating additional data, which may be useful for mineralomics work and fall in line with DAFM's statement of strategy of helping to safeguard public, animal and plant health and welfare.

It is hoped to build on this collaboration and to broaden the scope of work with the DAFM in the future. Other AIT past students who currently work in these labs include Mr Mike Broderick (MSc by Research in Toxicology) and Ms Catriona Donohoe (MSc by Research in Chemistry).

Research group taken alongside the ICP-OES instrument Andrew with which he will complete his research in the DAFM Clinical Chemistry lab, Backweston, Celbridge



Dr Celine Mannion (Senior Research Officer)/Head of the Pathology/Clinical Chemistry Labs (DAFM), research Mr Andrew Larkin and Dr Sean Reidy AIT.

Friday January 24th, Dr Sile O'Flaherty and Dr Maeve O'Reilly accompanied 3rd year Bioveterinary Science and 4th year Applied Bioscience students to the Central Veterinary Laboratory in Backweston Celbridge, Co. Kildare. The students were provided with an extensive tour of the facility and they met a broad range of clinical and technical staff working in the DAFM laboratory. Veterinarians and laboratory analysts working the virology, parasitology, microbiology, histopathology, biochemistry, and gross pathology laboratories met the undergraduate students and explained their role in the detection of infectious organisms in animals in Ireland.

Mike Broderick gave a presentation on the role of the ecotoxicologist in helping to monitor for toxic substances in water and soil in Ireland. The trip was particularly relevant for the Bioveterinary Parasitology, Environmental Management & Land Use and Ecotoxicology modules the students are currently undertaking.



On Wednesday February 19th the Bioveterinary Science year 1 class, accompanied by their lecturers Maeve O'Reilly and Meadhbh O'Dowd, visited the Regional Veterinary Laboratory (RVL) in Coosan as part of their Bioveterinary Anatomy and Physiology module. The staff in the RVL brought the students on a guided tour of the laboratory and explained the role of the laboratory analysts in providing parasitology, biochemistry, and microbiology test results to local veterinarians. The students also witnessed two gross postmortem examinations, one on a young calf and one on a bovine foetus.



On 13 February 2020, Ms Claire Stack MPSI and Dr Gary Stack MPSI attended the Irish Network of Healthcare Educators (INHED) inaugural Annual Scientific Meeting at Trinity College Dublin. The theme for the conference was 'Preparing students for the complexities of practice and transformative experiences' and included plenary sessions, workshops and presentations. At the Teaching and Learning Innovation session, Ms Claire Stack MPSI presented an e-poster on the 'Development of an online checking accuracy programme for pharmacy technicians in Ireland'. The course is the first checking accuracy programme for pharmacy technicians available in Ireland and its innovative design promotes pharmacy technician engagement with continuing professional development. The session was interactive and represented a unique opportunity to meet individuals and organisations with an interest in and responsibilities for healthcare education.



New Initiative in Biology Revision for Leaving Cert students

Athlone IT hosted a series of Biology Revision days for Leaving Cert students at their state of the art laboratories within the Department of Life and Physical Sciences. Students and their teachers were invited to participate in a hands-on, practical day-long programme. Students were assigned their own working space and were allowed to complete many of the mandatory experiments on the Leaving Cert biology course. Each student was given a detailed course manual which included concise descriptions, illustrations and key focused exam questions to help in their preparations for their big exams. Throughout the day, the students progressed through a variety of experiments, documenting and interpreting their own results.

Laboratory experiments included; investigations into the effect of temperature and pH on enzyme activity, completion of food tests, use of the microscope to examine both animal and plant cells, demonstration of the osmotic effect, preparation of alcohol from yeast, immobilisation of enzymes and extraction of DNA.

On visiting the labs, the Dean of Faculty, Dr Don Faller noted that the energy levels, enthusiasm and quality of learning was clearly evident. The programme was developed and presented by academics within the department, who took time out of their busy schedule to facilitate the event. On the day, academics were ably assisted in delivering the programme by postgraduate students, technical and administrative staff from the department. Throughout the week, almost 200 students from schools across the Midlands participated in the event. Teachers expressed their gratitude at the opportunity afforded to these students and indicated that the day was very successful.

The Head of Department, Dr Nuala Commins expressed her gratitude to all the staff and teachers involved in the programme stating that it is great for Athlone IT to be in a position to offer Leaving Certificate students from the Midlands the opportunity to participate in quality revision programmes within their region.

It is planned to repeat the programme in April prior to the state exams.



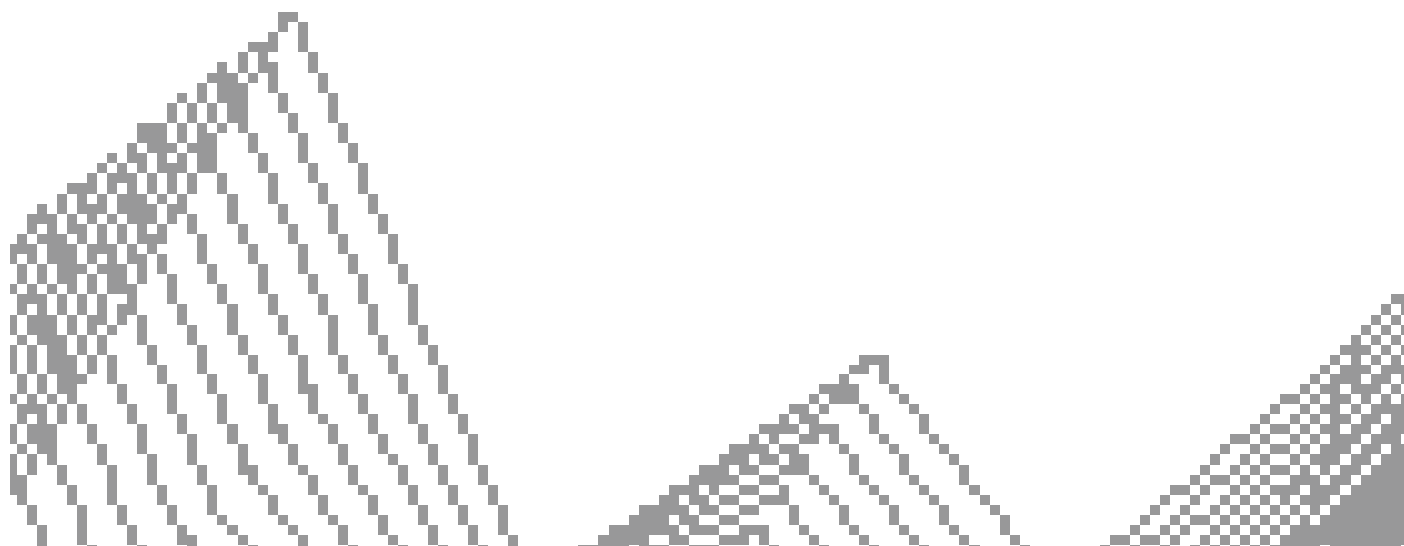
Students from Roscommon Community College experimenting at the Leaving Cert Biology Day



NISO Autumn 2019 Certificate course graduation group, 7th February 2020, Prince of Wales Hotel, Athlone

Back Row, L to R : Mark O'Reilly (Employment and Development Info Centre, Athlone Road, Longford and Granard, Co Longford), David Finane (Kinnitty, Birr), Ciaran Nugent (NISO Midland Committee member), Liam Brennan (KN Networks and Lecarrow, Roscommon), Naveed Iqbal (St. Francis Private Hospital, Mullingar), Thomas Joc (Stonefacings Ltd, Mullingar Ind. Estate, Mullingar), Colm Noonan, Westmeath Co. Co. Offices, Athlone and Kiltoom, Athlone), Daniel Bagiu (Portlaoise), Harry Galvin (President of NISO), John Flanagan (Chairman of NISO Midlands Branch), Mr Seadna Ryan (Head of Department of Lifelong Learning, AIT), Joey Rooney (Longford Co. Co and Lanesboro), John Corbally (Almac / Arran Chemicals, Monksland, Athlone), David Whelan (Stonefacings Ltd, Mullingar Ind. Estate, Mullingar), Philip Heneghan (Marks and Spencers, Athlone Town Centre and Kiltoom, Athlone) and Martin White (NISO Midlands Committee member).

Front Row, L to R: John Henson (NISO Midlands/course lecturer), Chris Mc Cormack (NISO Midlands and AIT), Adhari Alnadri (AIT student and Garnafailagh, Athlone), Jaydean Nicell (Defence Forces, Custume Barracks, Athlone), Shirley McDaid Conneely (Jetwash Int Ltd, Carrigallen, Leitrim and Arva, Co Cavan), Olawatosin Oladimeji (Athlone), Shahriar Ahmed Joy (Lissywoolen, Athlone), Yannick Maseke (Lissywoolen, Athlone), Constanza Sirabella (Palladio, Ltd, Tullamore and Ballinagar, Tullamore), Anna Murray (Ravada Group, Tullamore and Kilcormac, Co Offaly), Toyin Okpeaye (Lissywoolen, Athlone), Cathy Fahy (ALS Minerals, Business Park, Loughrea) and Sean Reidy (Course Organiser, NISO and AIT).



Presentation of Certs to successful participants of the autumn 2019 NISO Introduction to Occupational Health and Safety course held in AIT

NISO Midland branch held their presentation of certificates for the Introduction to Occupational Health and Safety course in the Prince of Wales Hotel in Athlone on Friday 7th February. The course was ran on the AIT campus between September and December 2019. AIT have hosted this course twice each year since 2002. There were 32 participants who successfully completed the course. These included people working and living in Cavan, Leitrim, Longford, Galway, Roscommon, Offaly, Tipperary, Laois, Westmeath and Dublin. Each participant received their Certificate from Mr Harry Gavin, President of NISO. John Flanagan (Midland NISO Branch Chairperson) oversaw the presentation. Seadna Ryan, Head of Dept of Lifelong Learning represented AIT. Three participants from the Direct Provision Centre, Athlone also took part. A second course is currently running (28 participants) and the next course will commence this autumn, beginning on Monday 28th September. A significant number of the participants are expected to progress into the part-time Level 7 degree in Environmental Health and Safety Management in the autumn in AIT.



Dr Pearse Murphy, along with second year general nursing students Ms Katelyn Walsh and Ms Ciara McKellett were invited to the Department of Health World Health Organisation Year of the Nurse and Midwife 2020 launch. Nurses and midwives play a vital role in providing health services. They devote their lives to caring for mothers and children; giving lifesaving immunizations and health advice; looking after older people and generally meeting everyday essential health needs. They are often, the first and only point of care in their communities. The world needs 9 million more nurses and midwives if it is to achieve universal health coverage by 2030. This is why the World Health Assembly has designated 2020 the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife. Annette Kennedy, former director of professional development with the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation, and vice-president of the International Council of Nurses (ICN) gave a talk on the importance and expanding the role of nursing on a global scale where nurses make up more than 50% of the world's health force.



Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, Dr Pearse Murphy and Dr Des Cawley with lecturing staff and nursing students from the College of the Rockies, Cranbrook British Columbia in Canada.

As part of a weeklong visit to Ireland, academic staff and Nursing students from the College of the Rockies Cranbrook British Columbia, Canada spent some time in class with AIT's Nursing students. The Canadian visitors were accommodated by AIT's HSE partner site the Midlands Regional Hospital Mullingar. They also received some meaningful cultural experiences as part of the trip where AIT's history and Irish studies expert Dr Harman Murtagh led the visitors on a walking tour of Athlone and delivered an Irish studies lecture to them in AIT. We wish to thank Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, Ms Mary Simpson and her team, Dr Harman Murtagh, AIT's International Student Group, the staff and students of the Department of Nursing and Healthcare and Ms Katherine Kenny, Director of Nursing and her team from the Midlands Regional Hospital Mullingar for the warm welcome, excellent itinerary and kinds gifts which made this a thoroughly enjoyable visit for our Canadian colleagues to Ireland. We hope to organise a return visit to the College of the Rockies in the future.



A one-day workshop entitled Nurturing Wellness in Clinical Veterinary Practice was hosted in AIT on January 18 2020. The workshop, designed by lecturer Gillian Coughlan and Finola Colgan (Mental Health Ireland), was developed for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses working in clinical practice. The course was accredited by the Veterinary Council of Ireland for Continued Professional Development (CPD). The workshop had full attendance of 40 delegates ranging from veterinary practice principals to veterinary assistants to registered veterinary nurses RVNs and retirees.

The statistics on mental health risks to veterinarians and veterinary nurses are alarming. Veterinarians are four times more likely than the general public, and twice as likely as any other healthcare professional, to die by suicide. An inability to deal fully with the stress of veterinary practice can lead to burnout, compassion fatigue and ultimately mental ill-health.

The AIT workshop was designed to empower vets and nurses to look after their mental health and well-being, recognise the impact stress can have on their personal and professional lives, and focus on resilience. The feedback was very positive with all delegates saying they would recommend the workshop to other colleagues. Speakers on the day were Ms Gillian Coughlan, Ms Finola Colgan and Ms Collette Kealy.



L-R Gillian Coughlan, Daniel Buttimer & Rose Pitou (2nd Year Veterinary Nursing students), Ms Gina Burke, Ms Finola Colgan



Honours List Ceremony – Department of Life & Physical Sciences Thursday 6th February 2020



Dr Andy Fogarty and Dr Nuala Commins with students from BSc (Hons) in Microbiology receiving their medals for high academic achievement

Dr Nuala Commins, Head of Department of Life and Physical Sciences hosted a ceremony to acknowledge high achieving students in the department for the Academic Year 2018-2019.

The opening address for this inaugural event was given by Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin. In his address, he commended students on their achievements and acknowledged that academic performance is not recognised in the same way as sporting performance. Professor Ó Catháin spoke about the increased funding that AIT is investing in post-graduate studies, reminding students that they can progress from higher certificate to degree level to PhD level within the institute. He encouraged attendees to consider pursuing postgraduate research upon completion of their undergraduate degrees

During her address to the students, Dr Commins reminded students that their achievements reflected the help and support that they received from family and staff within the department. Dr Commins reminded attendees that this terrific achievement demonstrated commitment to the subject, hard work and resilience.

Students were presented with an engraved silver medal and certificate in recognition of their efforts in achieving a cumulative grade point average in excess of 70% by academic members of staff. The recipients are spread across the full range of programmes on offer within the Department including Veterinary Nursing, Bioveterinary Science, Microbiology, Biotechnology, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Toxicology and Applied Science.

This inaugural event for the Department of Life & Physical Sciences was attended by 50 high achieving students and their proud families and friends, accompanied by academic, technical and administrative staff from the Department. The event commenced with a reception followed by the award ceremony. All concerned commented that it was a very positive and uplifting experience for all involved and is a welcome addition to the academic calendar. A special mention goes to the academic staff in the Department who

have helped the students in the academic studies to reach this high level of achievement.

An additional prize was presented by the Head of Department to Ciara Fitzpatrick and Justyna Twardoch in recognition of the exceptional GPA that they achieved.



Dr Maeve O'Reilly and Dr Olivia Cregg with high achieving students from the Veterinary Nursing Programme

Student Engagement with National Wildlife and Parks Service

Clara Bog

Clara Bog in County Offaly is the largest raised bog in Ireland and is the one of the finest relatively intact raised bogs in Western Europe. Clara Bog Nature Reserve has a land size of approximately 840 hectares, 443.36 hectares of which is uncut high bog. Clara Bog has both national and international recognition. It is a Special Area of Conservation, a National Nature Reserve, a Natural Heritage Area and a RAMSAR Wetland Site.



On Friday February 7, Dr Sile O'Flaherty accompanied the 4th year Applied Bioscience and 3rd year Bioveterinary Science classes to Clara Bog. Colm Malone from the National Wildlife and Parks Service (Conservation Ranger Offaly) and Ronan Casey from the Living Bog Restoration Project (Dept. of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht) gave presentations on Clara Bog Ecosystem, namely the precious landscape of Ireland's peat bogs, fauna and flora. These presentations were followed by a bog walk with Colm Malone, Ronan Casey and Sile O'Flaherty where the students were given an extensive tour of Clara Bog.



St John's Woods

St. Johns wood is a woodland situated in Co. Roscommon. It is an ancient and long-established woodland, located on the western shores of Lough Ree. This woodland is included among the area considered a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and a proposed National Heritage Area. Considered one of the most important woodlands of Ireland, it highlights a history of human usage and encroaches along the lakeshore and fenland area.

On Friday February 7, Dr Sile O'Flaherty and Dr Maeve O'Reilly MVB accompanied the 3rd year Bioveterinary Science class to St Johns Wood. This Woodland is an important conservation site that has three very distinct ecosystems which are all protected by EU and Irish Law. Laura Gallagher (Conservation Ranger Roscommon) from the National Wildlife and Parks Service) gave a presentation on Native Woodland Ecosystem, namely the precious landscape of Ireland's native woodland, fenland, fauna and flora. The presentations were followed by a woodland walk with Laura Gallagher and Sile O'Flaherty where the students were given an extensive tour of St John's Woods.



Alternative Energy: Biocore Environmental Ltd, Co. Roscommon

Biocore Environmental Ltd is a biosolid water waste and food industrial waste, anaerobic digestion (AD) plant situated in Co. Roscommon. It aims to provide biosolid services and generate renewable energy from agricultural uses and industrial wastewater treatment plants. It provides electricity to the national grid and it is now producing agriculture manure from its by-products.

On Friday February 7, Dr Sile O'Flaherty accompanied the 4th year Applied Bioscience to Biocore Environmental Ltd. in Co. Roscommon. The plant visit was facilitated by Brian Giblin, Plant Manager of Biocore Roscommon AD1. The students observed the Biogas plant, from the arrival of the bio-waste to the generation of electricity and by-product fertilizers. Biocore Environmental Ltd. runs a very efficient and secure commercial biogas production plant. Biomass

Waste management is a method of generating renewable energy while addressing the major global waste issues. The student engagement is important in this new industry and forms part of their development as they enter the work forces.



Athlone Science Student's Interaction with Climate Issues

The BSc (Hons) in Applied Bioscience and BSc (Hons) in Bioveterinary Science programmes have modules embedded within their programme to encourage students to study agriculture land use and a range of natural ecosystems. The BSc (Hons) in Applied Bioscience module is Environmental Management and Land Use and the BSc (Hons) in Bioveterinary Science module is Ecology of Terrestrial Ecosystem. The students interact with a range of state bodies and industry via organised educational Field Trips while studying a range of different land uses.

Veterinary Nursing and Applied Bioscience Career Seminar, Friday 14th February 2020

A career seminar was arranged for the students on the Applied Bioscience Programme and the Veterinary Nursing Programme in the Douglas Hyde on Friday 14th February 2020.



A number of graduates from the Applied Bioscience degree program returned to Athlone IT to talk to the present students about their chosen career paths. The seminar was organised by Dr Sile O'Flaherty with the aid of Dr Maeve O'Reilly MVB, Dr Lisa Geraghty MVB and Gillian Coughlan RVN.

The seminar was well received by the undergraduates and they had many questions for the graduates. It gave the students a clear understanding of the many and varied career options open to them.



From Left to Right: Gillian Coughlan Athlone IT graduate Athlone IT Veterinary Nurse Programme and Applied Bioscience now lecturing in Athlone IT, Maeve Farrell, Athlone IT Veterinary Nursing and Applied Bioscience graduates now studying for her PhD at NUIG, Dr Sile O'Flaherty: Programme coordinator of the Bioveterinary and Applied Bioscience degree programmes AT Athlone IT, Ellen Larkin is a Veterinary Nursing (Dundalk IT) and Applied Bioscience Degree (Athlone IT) who is now working with Hills Pet Food, Edel Barrett is a Veterinary Nursing (Letterkenny IT) and Applied Bioscience honours Degree (Athlone IT) graduate, now working on the Veterinary Nurse Programme in Athlone IT. Niamh Higgins is a graduate of Athlone IT Veterinary Nurse and Applied Bioscience now studying for her PhD in Athlone IT.

Attendance at EPA and EU Commission launch of the New Green Deal in the Mansion House on 6th February 2020 by Dr Sile O'Flaherty and Dr Lisa Geraghty MVB.

Dr Runge-Metzger, Director at the DG Climate Action in the European Union, spoke to a packed room about the planned work by the European Commission on the European Green Deal. This is the first policy paper that Ursula von der Leyen's Commission adopted in mid-December 2019, within her first two weeks of being in office. One of the main objectives of the European Green Deal is to make Europe the first climate neutral continent by 2050.

This will require a major transformation and modernisation of the European economy and society within the next three decades that leaves nobody behind. The European Green Deal outlines the first set of around fifty major regulatory and supporting initiatives to be kicked off within the coming two years. They will cover a broad array of EU policies in the fields of climate, energy, industry, mobility, agriculture/forestry, environment, sustainable finance, investments, taxation as well as external relations including trade.



**Research,
Innovation
and Enterprise**

Innovation and Enterprise

Regional Technology Clustering Fund

On 6 December, AIT was awarded €378k under the Regional Technology Clustering Fund, a government initiative administered by Enterprise Ireland which aims to enable Institutes of Technology and Technological Universities to connect and engage with SMEs and multinational companies in order to drive productivity and competitiveness in and across the regions.

The purpose of the funding awarded to AIT is for the development of an Industry 4.0 Cluster which aims to support SMEs to capitalise on the opportunities presented by smart connected technologies that are transforming manufacturing and other industries, requiring a new focus on optimising use of data and information.

Midlands Technology Campus

AIT's Strategic Plan 2019-2023 commits the Institute to deliver the Midlands Technology Campus on AIT's 1.7 hectare site in the Athlone Business and Technology Park - as a multi-partner concerted response towards building regional competitiveness and innovation capacity in the Midlands.

On 24 January, AIT appointed Tecnovus to undertake a Feasibility project in relation to the MTC. A key focus of the Feasibility project will be to ensure that areas of focus and proposed infrastructure of the MTC build on AIT existing and emerging strengths, are complementary to existing infrastructure/offers nationally, are aligned to national policy and agency priorities, and are validated by the needs of industry.

MIRC Expansion

Ground works continue on the MIRC site.

Enterprise Ireland has extended the final financial claim date to 30 June 2021.



New Frontiers

Three of our New Frontiers clients featured at the Enterprise Ireland Start-Up Showcase in Croke Park on 25 February.



Beauty Buddy (NF2017) - a data analytics company dedicated to the beauty and cosmetic industry – received High Potential Start Up funding from Enterprise Ireland during 2019.



KO Kombucha (NF2018) – which has developed a raw fermented tea using a traditional brewing method – and **Octovid** (NF2017) – which has developed an intelligent video marketing software – both received Competitive Start Funding from Enterprise Ireland during 2019.

Technology Transfer Pipeline Fund

Knowledge Transfer Ireland issued a call for groups of HEIs to establish a Technology Transfer Pipeline Fund – to award proof of concept funding of up to €15k to research projects – to undertake prototyping, market validation or spin-out business proposition development.

On 26 February, the MU-AIT-ITC-WIT Technology Transfer Consortium was awarded €90k by KTI to pilot the initiative.

Graduate School

Funding Applications awaiting outcome

- Stage II IRC Postgraduate Scholarship x 4
- Enterprise Ireland Marie Curie Career Fit Plus x 6

Funding Applications for submission

- Enterprise Ireland Capital Grant with Industry Centres
- Interreg Stage II (MRI)
- Regional Fund (BRI)
- H2020 Partner Stage II (MRI)
- SFI Zero Emissions Stage III (SRI)

Time Release

14 AIT academic staff have been awarded Time Release under the 2019/20 programme to enable them to actively engage in research across the Faculties of Engineering and Science. The new call for Academic Year 2020/2021 will be issued in Q1 2020

Research Integrity

AIT are currently in the roll out of Research Integrity training in 2019/2020 offering staff and postgraduate student's online Research Integrity training online

Graduate School

Susan Carroll, Amanda Murray and Lorna Walsh have joined the Graduate School to support the research work carried out by the Faculties, Research Institutes and individuals which is supported by the office of Vice President Academic Affairs & Registrar.

Information Sessions

Dr Geraldine Canny, Head of the Marie Sklodowska Curie Programme presented the MSC workprogramme in AIT on Tuesday Feb 25 2020

Neha Choudhary, IAESTE Officer presented the IAESTE programme in AIT on Tuesday 3 March 2020.

Postgraduate Induction

Following the recent intake of postgraduates in AIT, the Postgraduate Induction will take place mid-March to introduce postgraduates to AIT

Events

AIT hosted the Kick-Off meeting of the BioICEP H2020 Project Co-ordinated by Dr Margaret Brennan Fournet of the MRI on February 10 & 11 in AIT.

Bioscience Research Institute

BRI continues to increase capacity and scale for research and enterprise provision linked to cross-cutting faculty needs and for TU trajectory. BRI has supported and facilitated enhanced recruitment of doctorate researchers through internal President Doctorate Scholarship Initiatives along with external funding including BIM-EMFF. BRI welcomes its first doctorate researcher Mr Latif Adams from the University of Cape Coast, Ghana where he will join an expanding group focusing on the intensive sustainable technologies for food, health and environmental applications. Growth in internationalisation research is also reflected in recruitment of new doctorate researchers from Brazil (Mr Gustavo Fehrenbach and Ms Bianca Simonassi Raso de Paiva) and facilitating visiting Research Fellows (Dr Robert Pogue, via 6 month CAPES Fellowship) for knowledge transfer and mentoring in strategically important areas in the BRI. It is also noted that Mr Fehrenbach has progressed to final stage of his IRC doctorate scholarship review intimating a score of >90%.

BRI has also been successful as part of SFI-Funded CURAM Medical Devices Phase II as a partner. BRI also continues to support overarching Institutional needs by way of participating in THEA RDI meetings along with contributing to a 2-day event co-ordinated by LIT at Thurles Campus with a visit to the new Bioeconomy HUB at Lisheen.

BRI contributes to facilitate and support duties of both Faculty Research Committees (FRC) for Faculty of Business and Humanities and for Faculty of Science and Health for progression of research needs. This is aligned with meeting transition of the new graduate school and joint participation in both FRCs provides excellent add-on opportunities to explore convergence of topics for cross-disciplinary studies.

BRI contributed to the QQI panel review for approval of DA10 (Doctorate) provision in emerging areas of Sports and Health.

BRI welcomes Dr Sinead Mellett, as new postdoctoral researcher for progressing its partnership of Interreg Atlantic Area Neptunus project over the next two years. BRI continues to mentor early-phase staff in doctoral supervision across the Departments of Life and Physical Science, Departments of Nursing and Healthcare, and Departments of Sports and Health Science.

Prof Rowan and Lorna Walsh attended a kick-start meeting of new H2020 MSCA RISE ICHTHYS project in Lisbon in January, which will facilitate mobility of 38 researchers and staff from AIT to 6 locations across EC for training along with managing 219 secondments for consortium over 4 years.

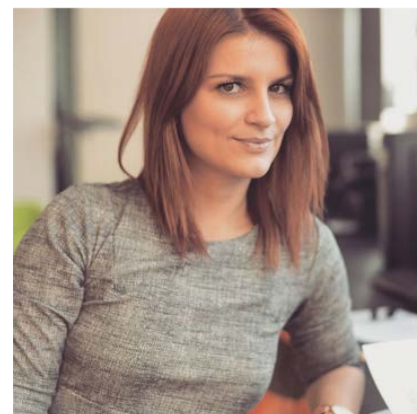
In terms of other important institutional functions, BRI has contributed to the relaunch of the Institutional Research Seminar Programme, where inaugural contributions

focused on leading female researchers and educators in AIT. The Research Seminar was well attended and appreciation is extended to both Jane Burns for chairing and to Tania Marsh (Library) for leading this important initiative for AIT.

Regionally, BRI continues to support needs of SMEs and MNCs with projects and is working towards developing a new sustainable initiative that will also address social engagement, rural development and job creation linked to education. Progression with aquaculture at Mount Lucas with Bord Iascaigh Mhara and Bord Na Mona is excellent, where funding supports new postdoc (Dr Emma Murphy) and doctorate provision (Emer O'Neill). Congratulations to Brian McEvoy, Senior Director Global Technologies at STERIS AST (and Doctorate Research under supervision of Prof Rowan) who commissioned new €2.8M Vaporized Hydrogen Peroxide process for medical device sterilisation at IDA Park in Tullamore. STERIS AST also expanded its electron beam sterilization facilities at Tullamore plant and has presented to FDA in Capitol Hill, Washington on his AIT research. Prof Rowan attended the official opening of Birchwater facility (Bord Na Mona) and is progressing with collaborations on a number of sustainability fronts.

Internationally, BRI has contributed to a Deltas Africa Plus proposal for knowledge transfer and development of next leaders under 'OneHealth' initiative – AIT is sole European partner that collaborates with leading universities from South Africa (including University of Durban and University of Zula-Natal), Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda, Botswana, and Zimbabwe along with partnership with universities in India and USA. This will also hopefully lead to direct recruitment of doctorate researchers from this African consortium. BRI has also supported and contributed to Human Capital Initiative preparation including drafting input under 'Sustainability'. BRI is further forging collaborations with H2020 networks and is working towards European Training Network submission. In terms of dissemination, BRI has collectively published 10 papers in leading journals since last reporting to the President.

Materials Research Institute



Personnel

Dr Marija Mojicevic, has recently joined the Material Research Institute at AIT as part of the EU-China H2020 BioInnovation of a Circular Economy for Plastics (BioICEP) team. Marija completed her PhD in Biotechnology at the Faculty of Technology, University of Novi Sad, Serbia carrying out experimental work at the Institute of Molecular Genetics and Genetic Engineering, University of Belgrade, Serbia.

Marija has considerable experience in bioprocessing and bioproduct generation. As part of her Masters and Bachelor degree programs Marija has performed and monitored a range of biosynthetic studies on areas including xanthan gum production and wastewater treatment including modeling and optimisation. The primary focus of Marija's PhD research was isolation of novel *Streptomyces* spp., their characterisation and assessment of secondary metabolite production coupled with the detection, structural characterization and identification of antifungal compounds and optimisation of their biosynthesis.

As part of the BioICEP team, Marija will lead the biocatalytic and microbial plastic digestion technology stream at AIT. This is an exciting new and cutting edge addition to AIT's suite of plastics technologies and will be instrumental in keeping AIT at the forefront of developments within the rapidly evolving field of polymers and plastics.

Outreach

AIT leading preparations for the plastics of the future:

AIT occupies a pivotal position in paving the route for the plastics of the future. The overriding dependence of our modern lives on plastics is clear. Equally clear is the indelible environmental impact posed by current plastics. We are in a new era of awareness of the fragility of the natural world and the reliance of global economies on environmental wellbeing. Society, industry, governments and policy makers have all played a role in leading to the current global plastics landscape. A new phase driving more eco-friendly practices, building towards transitioning from fossil fuel based plastics and upgraded recycling, is underway. Steering the design and implementation of the

next generation of plastics while navigating the different perspectives and complex demands of the world's players is a considerable yet urgent responsibility. Sustainability is the central obligation that focuses our attention on achieving the goal of sustainable plastics for the future.

As the home of polymer technologies in Ireland, AIT operates alongside and has established relationships with the key contributors shaping the world of plastics. AIT has a world track record in plastics development providing polymer technology solutions for the medical, food packaging, recycling companies and stakeholders along the complete plastics value chain. A newly awarded pan EU-China flagship Horizon 2020 project, led by AIT's Dr Margaret Fournet, is designed to revalorise waste plastic as new sustainable bioplastics and bioproducts. Industry sponsored plastics recycling schemes are operated such as the "Banking on Bottles" scheme where the Irish recycling company Shabra will pay AIT for each tonne of PET bottles collected, with the revenue used to incentivise students to keep recycling. Cross disciplinary PhD studies between AIT's Department of Business and Management and the Materials Research Institute are analysing the factors influencing Industry buy-in to new bio-based and sustainable plastics. AIT is hence in an unparalleled position, poised at the cross-roads of industrial and societal stakeholders, global policy makers and pollution hotspots, and equipped with international cutting edge science to provide frontier leadership on preparing for future sustainable plastics.



Dr. Yuanyuan Chen and Dr. Margaret Fournet at the annual IOM Plastics Ball

The IOM Irish Plastic's ball which brings together Ireland's plastics industry and processing companies was held on Friday 21 February in Powerscourt, Co. Wicklow. At the event Dr Margaret Fournet and Dr Yuanyuan Chen from AIT's EU-China flagship Horizon 2020 team engaged with companies gauging current developments and taking stock of their latest endeavours to progress towards better sustainability. Conversational topics included Coca Cola's recent upcycling of ocean plastic to produce 300 bottles. While cited by the company as a "breakthrough technology", the requirement of thousands of tonnes of

marine plastic for this batch of prototype bottles and the relatively extraordinary financial cost involved, has not served to inspire companies on the feasibility of this approach. Speaking at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, Beá Pádraig, Coca-Cola's senior vice president for sustainability and public affairs has stated that as "consumers want bottles" the company "will continue to provide them". The company's CEO, James Quincey has said "we want every package to have more than one life" and has pledged to include at least 50% recycled material in each bottle by 2030.

Novolex is one of North America's leaders in sustainable plastic packaging. At the IOM Plastics Ball, Colm Duggan, from the Irish branch of the Novolex group, described an optimal cases including closed loop life-cycles for food containers. Colm Duggan described a scenario where

"the customer would buy a PET plastic punnet of strawberries in the supermarket, and the next time they went to make the purchase, the new punnet would contain the plastic from the previous one".

The plastics world is indeed moving into better recycling and innovation in the bid to improve sustainability. AIT occupies a central dynamic position, fostering intricate consumer, company and policy maker relationships. The considerable and growing capacities at AIT make it a powerhouse to inform, show and implement opportunities in the global ambition to reduce plastic pollution while contributing positively to our environment, economy and society.



Coca Cola bottle made from Ocean Plastic

Research Training



PhD Candidates Yvonne Cortese and Marina Bandeira were two of 18 EU students to receive a grant to attend the "Training school on assessment of effectivity of antimicrobial coatings" in the University of Latvia, in the Latvian Capital, Riga. This training course was held and funded by the COST action CA15114: Anti-Microbial Coating Innovations to prevent infectious diseases (AMICI). Whilst taking part in the training course, Yvonne and Marina gained hands on experience with novel antimicrobial coatings, sample preparation for microbial testing, and specialised antimicrobial analysis techniques. This course provided invaluable training that will help in the progression of Yvonne's research into antimicrobial coated urinary catheters and Marina's research into polymer antimicrobial coatings containing zinc oxide nanoparticles.

Publications

Additive manufacturing of PLA/HNT nanocomposites for biomedical applications. C Venkatesh,

E Fuenmayor, P Doran, I Major, JG Lyons, DM Devine. *Procedia Manufacturing* 38, 17-24

Optimizing the hardness of SLA printed objects by using the neural network and genetic algorithm. G Hu, Z Cao, M Hopkins, C Hayes, M Daly, H Zhou, DM Devine. *Procedia Manufacturing* 38, 117-124

Nanofillers can be used to enhance the thermal conductivity of commercially available SLA resins. G Hu, Z Cao, M Hopkins, JG Lyons, M Brennan-Fournet, DM Devine. *Procedia Manufacturing* 38, 1236-1243

