



# **Athlone Institute of Technology Scheme 2013 – 2016**

**Under Section 11 of the Official  
Languages Act 2003**

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

## **Introduction/Background**

This scheme was prepared under Section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003 (hereinafter referred to as the Act) by AIT. Section 11 provides for the preparation by public bodies of a statutory scheme detailing the services they will provide:

- Through the medium of Irish,
- Through the medium of English, and
- Through the medium of Irish and English, and

the measures to be adopted to ensure that any service not provided by the body through the medium of the Irish language will be so provided within an agreed timeframe.

### **1.1 Guidelines for the Preparation of a Scheme**

This scheme has been drawn up, having regard to the guidelines published by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and following consultation with staff, students and representative stakeholders. The Institute also issued a public notice under Section 13 inviting representations in relation to the preparation of the draft scheme under Section 11 from any interested parties.

The scheme has been informed by these submissions and views and suggestions put forward by staff and students. The Institute appreciates the time and effort put in by all concerned in this process.

### **1.2 The Content of the Language Scheme**

The services provided in AIT are currently through the medium of English. The Institute has a limited number of staff with verbal competency in Irish and an even smaller number with written competency. The priorities of the scheme are to:

- Gauge and monitor the level of demand for services in the Irish language
- Create an awareness among staff of the content and purpose of the scheme
- Provide training for staff to develop competency in the Irish language
- Comply with the regulations of the Act
- Ensure effective implementation of the Scheme and that commitments given are delivered upon

### **1.3 Commencement Date of Scheme**

The scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and will commence with effect from 21 October 2013. The scheme will remain in force for a period of three years from this date or until a new scheme has been confirmed by the Minister pursuant to Section 15 of the Act, whichever is the later.

### **1.4 Overview of AIT**

#### **1.4.1 Vision Statement**

AIT aims to build on its strengths to become a college of choice for learners and staff regionally, nationally and internationally. This will be achieved through an emphasis on the development of innovative excellence in teaching, academic exchange and enhancement of the learning centred environment, the establishment of a strong reputation in research, innovation and knowledge transfer, and a leadership role in the economic, social, cultural and environmental development of Midlands Gateway region.

#### **1.4.2 The Institute**

AIT is an award-winning higher education institution located in the heart of Ireland, the only higher education institution in the Midlands. Established in 1970, it has expanded in size, scope and influence since its inception and

now has more than 6,000 students undertaking undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Business, Humanities, Engineering and Science. €115 million has been invested in our campus since 2000, ensuring that students experience a world-class education with cutting-edge facilities.

### **1.4.3 Customers and Clients**

The Institute's principal customers are its students to whom it has a particular duty of care. It also interacts with other educational institutions and agencies and the general public. Its key client and customer base comprises the following, but this list is not exclusive:

- Higher Education Authority (HEA)
- Department of Education and Skills
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
- Institutes of Technology Ireland
- Irish Research Council
- Midlands Gateway Chamber
- Education and Training Boards (formerly Vocational Education Committees)
- County Councils
- County Development Boards
- Enterprise Ireland
- IDA Ireland
- Gurteen College
- Cavan Institute
- Fáilte Ireland
- The Arts Council
- Engineers Ireland
- The Teaching Council

- Lónra
- BMW Regional Assembly.

#### 1.4.4 Functional Areas

Function Area	Department
President's Office	International Office Marketing and Communications
Registrar's Office	Library Academic Administration and Student Affairs Information Technology Student Services Learning and Teaching Unit Sports Department
Finance Office	Human Resources Estates Health, Safety and Well-being Payroll Financial Transactions
Business School	Business Studies Accounting and Business Computing
Humanities	Social Care Design Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Studies
Engineering	Engineering Trades Civil, Construction and Mineral Engineering Electronics, Computer & Software Engineering Mechanical and Polymer Engineering
Science	Life and Physical Science Nursing and Health Science
Research	Midlands Innovation and Research Centre Bioscience Research Institute Materials Research Institute Software Research Institute



Technology

Transfer

Office

#### **1.4.5 Assessment of Extent to which services are already available through Irish**

The primary function of the Act is to ensure better availability and a higher standard of public services through Irish. The main function of AIT is to provide quality education programmes and at present all programmes are delivered through English. Services to the general public, stakeholders and other agencies are also exclusively through English at the present time. AIT is working towards full compliance with the requirements of the Act: annual reports and financial accounts are published bilingually, headed notepaper is bilingual and new signage is also bilingual, while pre-recorded oral announcements are also bi-lingual.

**CHAPTER 2**

**SUMMARY OF  
SERVICES/ACTIVITES BY  
DIVISION**

## **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter sets out the position in relation to service provision/activities by individual departments within the Institute.

## **2.2 Registrar's Office**

### **2.2.1 Library**

The Goldsmith Library is an integral part of the institute and it plays a central role in academic life. It supports the educational and research activities in AIT by providing a comprehensive information service.

### **2.2.2 Academic Administration and Student Affairs**

The Academic Administration and Student Affairs office is responsible for the registration, assessment and graduation of students.

### **2.2.3 Information Technology**

The Computer Services Department (CSD) is responsible for the maintenance of the Institute network, internet, email, phone system, staff computers, Open Access and the IT Centre. The management of the MIS systems –Core, Banner and Agresso also comes within the remit of this department, as does the management of site licences for a range of software products.

### **2.2.4 Student Services**

AIT offers a wide range of ancillary support services to students. The Student Services Department is one of the first ports of call for students seeking information and help on any aspect of student life. Services offered include Chaplaincy, Careers Advice,

Counselling, Disability Advisory and Support Service, Access office, Health centre facilities.

### **2.2.5 Learning and Teaching Unit**

The Unit is dedicated to the support and advancement of learning and teaching in AIT. The unit works collaboratively to continue to develop a culture that:

- Respects and supports individual differences among learners.
- Encourages the development of student-centered learning environments in which students can learn and excel.
- Values and rewards teaching.
- Supports staff in educational research.
- Assists with the dissemination of best practice in higher education.
- Encourages the implementation of pedagogical initiatives/innovations.
- Promotes and supports the objectives and measures outlined in the Institute Strategic Plan, which relate to excellence and innovation in Learning and Teaching.

### **2.2.6 Sports Department**

The Sports Department is the coordinating function for the institute's multiple sporting facilities, which include an indoor athletics arena, playing pitches and a multipurpose centre which contains a basketball court, four badminton courts, two volleyball courts, futsal (indoor soccer) and a state-of-the-art fitness suite. The department manages AIT's sports scholarship scheme, which rewards excellence in performance.

## **2.3 Finance/HR Office**

The Finance Office is responsible for all procurement and payment and consequently advertises contracts, produces tender documents, pays invoices, salaries and prepares the annual accounts. The payroll department currently offers an option to view pay slips in Irish and English.

The Human Resources Department is responsible for advertising staff vacancies, producing application forms, job descriptions and arranging interviews. It is also responsible for staff welfare and discipline. The Professional Development Committee supports the Institute's goal of ensuring that staff have the opportunity to train and upskill as necessary to effectively deliver given targets.

## **2.4 Schools**

The Schools undertake the core activity of the Institute. Programmes are provided in a wide range of disciplines under the auspices of the four Schools: Business, Engineering, Humanities and Science. All programmes of study are delivered and assessed through English and there is no evidence of a demand for the provision of any course material through Irish.

## **2.5 Office of Research, Innovation and Enterprise**

AIT has three strategic research institutes in Materials (MRI), Biosciences (BRI) and Software (SRI) whose research thrusts are aligned with key regional and national priorities. The establishment of Enterprise Ireland-funded Technology Gateways Programmes – the Applied Polymer Technologies Ireland (APT Ireland) Research Centre and COMAND (Connected Media Application Design and Delivery) – further strengthen the existing support for strategic industry collaborations. Further research

clusters exist within our four Schools of Business, Engineering, Humanities and Science.

## **2.6 Communications and Marketing Office**

The Communications and Marketing Office is responsible for the recruitment of students and for the dissemination of information both internally and externally to the Institute. To this end, the office advertises courses, organises school visits and is responsible for Institute publications.

## **CHAPTER 3**

# **ENHANCEMENT OF SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED BILINGUALLY**



### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter sets out the position in relation to service provision enhancement through the Irish medium by individual divisions within the Institute. AIT accepts that service provision in Irish should be introduced incrementally. However, AIT does not predict a demand for course provision in Irish and understands that other third-level institutions, some of which are located in Gaeltacht areas, are collaborating to form a unified approach to such provision. AIT is supportive of this collaboration, however, it does not foresee that it will play a role in this provision during the lifetime of this scheme.

#### **3.1 Means of Communication with the Public**

The Institute's communication with the public is largely via the following media and at present is through the English language.

- Prospectus
- Application forms/Brochures/Information leaflets
- Miscellaneous publications
- Website
- Email
- Letter
- Oral Communication
- Public relations.

An exception to this is the use of bi-lingual invitation cards to all Institute official events. The following commitments are being made in respect of this language scheme.

##### **3.1.1 Prospectus**

Having regard for the current constraints on resources the Institute does not expect to produce the entire prospectus bilingually during the lifetime of this scheme. Section headings and programme titles contained in the

prospectus will be produced bilingually. Material particularly aimed at the international market will continue to be delivered in the language appropriate for the market.

*Time: 2014/2015 prospectus edition*

### **3.1.2 Application forms/Brochures/Information leaflets**

Direct application forms for undergraduate and postgraduate students will be issued bilingually under one cover. Brochures and information leaflets will be published in English only. Consultants' reports and dedicated technical reports will be published in the language in which they were originally presented.

*Time: At the next re-print of application forms*

### **3.1.3 Miscellaneous Publications**

The graduation booklet is published in time for the graduation ceremony, mainly listing students and their award. The following sections will be bilingual

- Introductory pages
- Titles of courses and programmes

*Time: By the end of year 2 of the scheme*

*AIT Life* is a magazine from the Institute published annually. One article per issue will be published bilingually.

*Time: By the end of year 2 of the scheme*

#### **3.1.4 Website**

The content management system underlying AIT's website has the capacity to display information bilingually. Headline content of the website will be available in both English and Irish. Material particularly aimed at the international market will continue to be delivered in the language appropriate for the market.

*Time: By the end of the scheme*

#### **3.1.5 Email**

The email disclaimer will be displayed in both Irish and English

*Time: From the commencement of the scheme*

#### **3.1.6 General Correspondence**

The institute will nominate a staff member responsible for responding in the same language when a person communicates in writing through Irish. Suitable training will be provided to the nominated staff member.

*Time: At the commencement of the scheme*

#### **3.1.7 Oral Announcements**

It is the policy of the Institute to work towards ensuring that pre-recorded oral announcements are bilingual. This will be achieved by the statutory requirement date of 1 July 2013.

*Time: At the commencement of the scheme*

#### **3.1.8 Reception Operation**

The Institute will aim to ensure that reception staff are trained to announce the name of the institute and basic greetings in both English and Irish.

Suitable arrangements are in place so that reception staff will be made aware of a nominated spokesperson in the event of a query to them in the Irish language and that they can put members of the public in touch with the office or officer responsible without delay.

*Time: By the end of year 2 of the scheme*

### **3.1.9 Public relations**

Press releases in relation to the Irish language will be published bi-lingually.

*Time: Immediate*

From commencement of year 2 of the scheme 5% of Institute press releases will be published bilingually. An increase in this percentage will be reviewed in subsequent language Schemes.

*Time: From Commencement of Year 2 of the Scheme*

## **3.2 Support Services**

The Institute does not have a significant number of staff who are proficient in Irish and initially expects that the numbers of volunteers who will become involved will be low. For the duration of the scheme it will be necessary to contract out all translation services of substantive documents, annual reports, etc.

## **3.3 Recruitment**

AIT will be conscious of its obligations under the Act when recruiting staff. All new recruits will be advised of development opportunities to improve their competence in Irish.

## **3.4 Training and Development**

The Institute has an on-going commitment to provide appropriate training and supports the development of all staff. Subject to demand and budgetary provision the Institute will provide training in the Irish language for reception staff.

The Professional Development Committee will evaluate any Irish language courses offered by the Department of Lifelong Learning and promote their suitability amongst staff for gaining proficiency in the written and spoken Irish language. Subject to demand, AIT proposes to take the following steps throughout the duration of the scheme to enhance the level of Irish among AIT staff by:

- Providing guidance to individual staff members who wish to leave bilingual telephone voice mail announcements on their personal handsets.
- Providing bilingual announcements on after-hours voicemail messages

# **CHAPTER 5**

## **MONITORING AND REVISION**

The Executive Management Team (EMT) of the Institute will keep the effective operation of the scheme under review. The day-to-day monitoring function will be carried out primarily by the Heads of Department/Heads of Function, who will be responsible for the implementation of the scheme within their own areas and reporting on a regular basis to their line manager, who in turn will report to the EMT meetings.

Achievement of stated targets will be monitored as follows:

- Letters, phone calls, requests, etc. received in Irish will be logged to allow for monitoring of demand
- Level of expenditure on translation of letter correspondence, press releases, website, publications, etc. will be recorded
- Level of expenditure on training in Irish will be recorded
- Level of expenditure on bilingual advertising will be recorded.

# **CHAPTER 6**

## **PUBLICISING THE SCHEME**



The contents of the scheme, along with the commitments and provisions of the scheme, will be publicised to the general public by means of:

- Press release
- Advertising of provisions
- Circulation to appropriate agencies and public bodies through email notification
- Publication on the institute website.

Internally the scheme will be promoted as follows:

- A copy of the scheme will be circulated to all staff as soon as possible after approval.

A copy of this scheme has also been forwarded to Oifig Choimisinéir na dTeangacha Oifigiúla.

The English language version is the original text of this scheme