



Connect & Discover

Athlone Institute of Technology Scheme 2017 - 2020

Under Section 15 of the Official Languages Act 2003

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Introduction/Background

This scheme was prepared under Section 15 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, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and following consultation with staff, students and representative stakeholders. 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, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and will commence with effect from 01 May 2017. 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. The Institute's mission is to provide student centred, career focused education, training and applied research programmes for our diverse cohort of learners within a professional and supportive environment. The Institute is fully committed to intensive engagement with regional business enterprise and social communities while maintaining our global orientation.

1.4.2 The Institute

Athlone Institute of Technology is an innovative institution that offers our learners a range of programmes ranging from professional development courses through to PhD's across the Faculties of Business and Hospitality, Engineering and Informatics, Science and Health and our Department of Lifelong Learning. As an Institute we are distinguished by an outstanding learner experience, international focus, distinctive regional contribution and high quality impact of its staff. AIT is a leader in applied research and innovation in materials, bioscience and software, all housed in our state of the art campus, of which €115 million has been invested in since 2000, to benefit our 5,500 growing student base.

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)
- The Technological Higher Education Association (THEA)
- 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
- Lionra

1.4.4 Main Functions

Function Area	Department
President's Office	International Office Marketing and Communications Human Resources Commercial Health, Safety & Wellbeing
Vice President Academic Affairs & Registry:	Quality Office Library Academic Admin.' & Student Affairs Information Technology Student Resource Centre Learning and Teaching Unit Computer Services Graduate Studies
Vice President Financial & Corporate Affairs:	Finance Estates Sports Department
Vice President Strategic Planning & Institutional Performance	Department of Lifelong Learning MIS Analysis
Research	Midlands Innovation& Research Centre Bioscience Research Institute Materials Research Institute Software Research Institute Funded Programme Manager Technology Transfer Office
Faculty of Business & Hospitality	Business and Management Accounting and Business Computing Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure
Faculty of Science & Health	Life and Physical Science Nursing and Health Science Sport and Health Science Social Science and Design
Faculty of Engineering & Informatics	Electronics and Informatics Polymer, Mechanical, Civil Engineering & Trades

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. Annual reports, financial accounts and headed notepaper are published bilingually, while pre-recorded oral announcements are also bi-lingual.

CHAPTER 2

SUMMARY OF SERVICES/ACTIVITIES 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 library of the Athlone Institute of Technology is situated on two campuses with the principal library located on the Main campus and the Nursing Library on the East Campus. The library's mission is to provide quality information and learning resources, and to meet the needs of learning, teaching and research within the AIT and the local community. There are 290 reading spaces within the main library along with a computer laboratory and four group study rooms. The library collection consists of over 23,000 books and 60 print journals. The library is also acquiring more material in electronic format, currently 70,000 electronic books and 17,000 electronic journals are available via the library website.

2.2.2 Academic Administration and Student Affairs

The Academic Administration and Student Affairs office is responsible for the admission, registration, examination and graduation of students. The office also has responsibility for fee collection, timetabling, ID card production and the print room functions.

2.2.3 Information Technology

The Computer Services Department (CSD) is responsible for the maintenance of the Institute network, Internet connections, staff and student email, phone system, staff and student computers and management of site licences for a range of software products. CSD is also responsible for the connection to the shared MIS systems –Core, Banner and Agresso.

2.2.4 Student Resource Centre

AIT offers a wide range of ancillary support services to students. The Student Resource Centre is one of the first ports of call for students seeking information and help on any aspect of student life. Services offered include Financial Support, Pastoral Care, Careers Advice and Coaching, Counselling, Disability and Learning Support Service, Access office, Health Centre, Health Promotion, Tutor Services and Academic Writing Centre

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 teams and activities. A full range of sports are catered for at both elite and recreational level with a focus on gender balance for the provision of these activities. AIT Sports Co Ltd., in co-operation with the sports department, operate 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 sports department manages AIT's sports scholarship scheme, which rewards excellence in performance. All of the institute coaches report to the sports department managers.

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 job descriptions and person specifications 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 Faculties

The Faculties undertake the core activity of the Institute. Programmes are provided in a wide range of disciplines under the auspices of the three Faculties: Business and Hospitality, Engineering and Informatics, Science and Health. 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) and COMAND (Connected Media Application Design and Delivery) Technology Gateway centres – further strengthen the existing support for strategic industry collaborations in the Polymer and ICT space. Further research clusters exist within our three Faculties of Business and Hospitality, Engineering and Informatics, Science and Health.

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

AIT does not produce the entire prospectus bilingually, nor do we envisage that we will during the lifetime of this scheme. This is primarily due to the ongoing constraints on resources. However, section headings and programme titles contained in the prospectus are produced bilingually. Material particularly aimed at the international market will continue to be delivered in the language appropriate for the market. All direct applications for undergraduate and postgraduate students are now online with direct link into the Banner system. There has been no reprint of application forms as all applications are now online, no further plans for re-print.

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.

3.1.2 Miscellaneous Publications

The graduation booklet is published in time for the graduation ceremony, mainly listing students and their award. The following sections are produced bilingually:

- Introductory pages
- Titles of courses and programmes
- AIT Life Magazine when published will continue to include one article published bilingually.

3.1.3 Website

The content management system underlying AIT's website has the capacity to display information bilingually. The Institutes' website is currently under review and being updated. 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.

The Athlone Institute of Technology Scheme 2017-2020, together with the Official Languages Act 2001 Guidebook, will be housed on our website under the following link, once approved.

<https://www.ait.ie/contact/staff/official-languages-act/>

Time: by end of year 2017

3.1.4 Email

The email disclaimer is displayed in both Irish and English

3.1.5 General Correspondence

The institute will respond in the same language when a person communicates in writing through Irish.

3.1.6 Oral Announcements

Pre-recorded oral announcements are bilingual.

3.1.7 Reception Operation

Our main reception telephone greeting has the Irish language options applied. Suitable arrangements are in place so that reception staff are 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.

3.1.8 Public relations

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

AIT will increase from 5% to 7% the publication of other Institute press releases bilingually and simultaneously.

The official version of Gaeltacht placenames will be used for official purposes.

Time: From Commencement of Year 2 of this Scheme

3.2 Support Services

The Institute does not have a significant number of staff who are proficient in Irish and 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 4

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 5

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:

- 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