

# Institutional Review 2010 **Self-Evaluation Report**

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# Chapter 1 - Preface

## 1.1 GMIT's approach to the institutional review process

Self evaluation is a continuous process at GMIT.

The institutional review occurs at a timely juncture in the development of GMIT, as new challenges and opportunities arise due to the:

- Changing macroeconomic and social environment
- Imminent publication of the National Strategy for Higher Education
- New Strategic Development Plan
- Renewed focus on aligning the strategic direction of each campus of GMIT with the overall Institute strategy
- Proposed re-organisation of the management structures in the Institute.

This review process was carried out in line with HETAC guidelines and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The self reflective and evaluative process promoted by HETAC has underpinned the entire review process.

GMIT's President nominated a steering group in June 2009 to direct and guide the review process. Engagement with Institute stakeholders was the key element in this process. The Institute's objective for this review was to further embed a culture of continuous quality improvement throughout the organisation.

## 1.2 Previous review

The last institutional review of GMIT took place in March 2004, and overall the findings were very positive. The focus of the last Institutional review was GMIT's application for delegated authority.

GMIT was granted delegated authority to confer its own awards at levels 6, 7, 8 and 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) for all taught programmes. Later in 2004, GMIT was granted accreditation to maintain registers of postgraduate research degrees to doctoral level in two disciplines: Aquatic Science and Mechanical Engineering. GMIT was granted delegated authority to level 10 in those disciplines in 2005.

# Chapter 2 - GMIT profile

## 2.1 Introduction

Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) is one of 14 Institutes of Technology in Ireland. It was established in 1972 as Galway Regional Technical College. In January 1993 it became an autonomous institution of higher education under the Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992. The Institute was legally designated an Institute of Technology in January 1998 and renamed the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT).

The Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992 specifies that the principal function of a college is 'to provide vocational and technical education and training for the economic, technological, scientific, commercial, industrial, social and cultural development of the State with particular reference to the region served by the college'.

GMIT is a multi-campus, multi-discipline, multi-award institute serving a diverse student body. It is a student-centred organisation with a primary focus on learning and teaching informed by research. It operates across a wide geographical area, with campuses in Galway City (Dublin Road and Cluain Mhuire), Castlebar, Letterfrack and Mountbellew. It delivers both accredited and customised programmes, ranging from apprenticeship to PhD awards on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), and is involved in research, commercial consultancy and community activities.

GMIT is proud of its identity and the recognition that it has achieved at sectoral, national and international levels as a higher education institution of repute. The Institute is held in high esteem by its stakeholders, who consider the diversity, quality and innovativeness of staff, students, programme offerings, and learning and teaching resources to be key attributes in its ongoing development in challenging times. A broad range of applied programmes are offered, on a number of campuses, to a diverse student body, and employers highlight the employability of GMIT graduates. Students refer to the 'student experience' in a positive way and actively support the ongoing development of academic offerings, services and facilities through their participation in all aspects of the Institute. GMIT also actively engages with the wider community through a variety of formal and informal initiatives, is considered to be a significant entity in the future development of the region, and a facilitator of social inclusion and cohesion. GMIT, as an Institute of Technology, is confident that through its strategic vision and mission it will continue to pursue its distinctiveness in Ireland's higher education sector and serve the needs of all its stakeholders.

### **GMIT's strategic direction is shaped and driven by the Institute's mission:**

At GMIT we develop life-long learning opportunities through our teaching and research, by supporting regional development consistent with national higher education policy.

## 2.2 GMIT at a glance

GMIT's student and staff numbers and income and expenditure are summarised in the following chart. Statistical data is included in the appendices. The following profile of the Institute contains statistical data based on the period of the most recently audited accounts (2008/2009).



## An Integrated Multi Campus Institute

**GMIT GALWAY CAMPUS**  
35,000 M<sup>2</sup> on 11.09 Hectares

Full Time Students 08/09  
**Engineering** (1,069)  
**Science** (641)  
**Business** (948)  
**Humanities** (570)  
**Hotel** (703)  
**Foundation** (79)  
**Postgraduate** (84)

All student, staff and financial data relate to the year ending 31.08.2009

**GMIT LETTERFRACK**  
4,000 M<sup>2</sup>  
(Developed Rented Space)  
Full Time Students 08/09  
**Furniture Design & Manufacture** (229)

**GMIT CLUAIN MHUIRE**  
6,200 M<sup>2</sup> on 3.1 Hectares

**Art Design**  
**Film**  
**TV**

**GMIT MOUNTBELLEW**

**Agriculture Environment**

**GMIT CASTLEBAR**  
10,900 M<sup>2</sup> on 6 Hectares

Full Time Students 08/09  
**Nursing and Health Sciences**  
**Business and Technology** (745)  
**Outdoor Education**  
**Applied Social Studies**  
**Heritage**  
**Foundation** (26)

**Level 5**  
Foundation (105)

**Level 6**  
Trades 383 PT  
 Failte Ireland 249 FT  
 113 PT  
 Higher Cert 86FT  
 350 PT

**Level 7**  
Ordinary Degrees 3026 FT  
 670 PT

**Level 8**  
Honours Degrees 1665 FT  
 196 PT

**Level 9**  
Masters Degrees 65 FT  
 15 PT

**Level 10**  
Ph.D. 19 FT  
 1 PT

## Proactive Regional & National Development

- Industry/Research Collaboration
- Business Incubation Enterprise Development
- International Academic & Industrial Collaborations
- Social & Economic Development & Labour Market Activation
- Continuing Professional Development Training Programmes
- Out Reach Training
- Cultural Development

### REGIONAL INNOVATION & BUSINESS CENTRES

- 114 Jobs
- 11 High Potential Start Ups
- €9m Funding - 12 Successful Spinouts
- 750K R&D Grants

### RESEARCH OUTPUT 2005 - 2009

- 37 Masters Degrees Students
- 10 Ph.D Students
- 98 Peer Reviewed Publications for marine, Biomedical, Mechanical and Energy Engineering
- 76 Conference Proceedings for marine, Biomedical, Mechanical and Energy Engineering
- €15.4m Euro Research Funding
- 1/33 Research:Teaching Space

## NUMBERS

STUDENT NUMBERS	
Foundation Students	105
Part Time Students	1,728
Undergraduate Full Time Students	4,905
Postgraduate Students	84
Life Long Learning Students	2,058
Socrates Students	119
<b>Total Students</b>	<b>8,999</b>

GRADUATES	
Full Time	1558
Part Time	383

**Graduates 1941**  
(November 2009)

### UNDERGRADUATE ANALYSIS

**GENDER**  
Male 58%; Female 42%.  
**DOMICILARY ORIGIN**  
 Connaught 76%; Leinster 11%;  
 Munster 8%; Ulster 5%.

STAFF NUMBERS	
Full Time	492
Part Time	215
<b>Total Staff 707</b>	<b>(Whole Time Equivalents)</b>

OF WHICH	
Academic	379
Technical & Support	157
Management, Administration & Library	151
Research	20

## Expenditure

YEAR END 31.08.09	
Staff (74%)	€47.9m
Non Pay (26%)	€17.2m
<b>Total</b>	<b>€65.1m</b>

## Income

YEAR END 31.08.09	
Fee Income	€15.2m
Department Grant	€38.4m
Other	€14.9m
<b>Total</b>	<b>€68.5m</b>

## 2.3 Infrastructure

GMIT has 56,000 square metres of buildings and 30 hectares of land spread across five locations. The total buildings portfolio of GMIT has increased by approximately 70% in the last decade as a result of a substantial capital project programme.

GMIT has received seven awards in design, construction and innovation for its buildings from independent external bodies such as The Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI), Construction Industry Federation (CIF) and The Association of Consulting Engineers of Ireland (ACEI). In particular, its learning resources centre has become a landmark building in Galway city.

A key development for the future is the construction of a student centre.

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*In 2009, GMIT introduced an energy aware project aimed at converting its main Galway campus site into a combined energy learning space and energy laboratory, suitable for use by various academic disciplines and members of the public.*

## 2.2 GMIT at a glance

GMIT's student and staff numbers and income and expenditure are summarised in the following chart. Statistical data is included in the appendices. The following profile of the Institute contains statistical data based on the period of the most recently audited accounts (2008/2009).

## 2.4 Student profile

The total student population in 2008/09 was 8,999 (diagram 1.9). Of these, 5,213 were full time (84 were Erasmus and 22 were US exchange students). The majority (81%) (diagram 1.10) of students are based in Galway (Dublin road and Cluain Mhuire campuses). The largest schools are engineering (22%) and business (20%) (diagram 1.11).

Over the period 2004/05 to 2008/09, 58% of students were full-time undergraduates, 1% were postgraduates and 41% were part-time students (diagrams 1.4 to 1.8).

In 2006 GMIT made a strategic decision to focus largely on level 7 entry (58% of full time undergraduates are level 7 students) (diagram 1.12). As a consequence there has been a marked decline in the number of students enrolled for higher certificate programmes. Gender composition has changed in the period under review. In 2004/05, 53% of registered full-time undergraduate students were male. This increased to 58% in 2008/09 (diagram 1.13), which is against the national trend where male participation is generally lower than female. The increase can be attributed to an increase in numbers in traditionally male-dominated disciplines (e.g. engineering and construction).

GMIT remains a highly regional educational entity. In 2004/05, 70% of the student body originated in Connacht (western province of Ireland). The comparable figure in 2008/09 was 76% (diagram 1.15). Of the top 20 feeder schools, four are in Co. Mayo, one is in Co. Clare and the remaining 15 are in Co. Galway (2008/09).

In 2009, 1,944 students graduated from GMIT, the vast majority with level 7 (45%) or level 8 (38%) awards (diagram 1.21). The percentage of first class and distinction awards has remained stable over the past five years – always within 1% of the five year average of 17.6% (diagram 1.25 to 1.28).

*Catherine Toolan is a BA graduate of the Hotel School (1997). As the International Catering Director for Aramark International she managed the catering operations of the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing.*

GMIT is actively committed to addressing the needs of under-represented groups of students. Its success in this area is highlighted in recent Higher Education Authority (HEA) reports which show that GMIT attracted the highest number of mature entrants across the Institute of Technology Ireland (IOTI) sector in 2007/2008 and 2008/2009. GMIT also attracted the highest number of entrants from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

GMIT is currently focusing on broadening access to higher education through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). A joint marketing and promotion campaign on RPL for the region is under development and will be launched in September 2010. This is a collaborative project between National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) and GMIT, supported by the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF).

GMIT has long-established linkages with European and US universities. More recently, GMIT has developed strong collaborative links with universities in Australia, China and Saudi Arabia. Since 2005, it has been particularly active in China. The collaboration with Nanchang University is of particular note.

Selected student profiles are set out in the appendices.

## 2.5 Staff profile

GMIT employs 707 whole-time equivalent staff (as at 31/8/09). Of these, 379 are academic staff, 157 are technical and support staff, 151 are management, administration and library staff, and 20 are employed in the research area (diagram 2.2). The approximate full-time student to academic staff ratio (excluding part-time casual staff) is 14:1 (diagram 2.14). An organisation chart is shown at Fig. 3.1 and selected staff profiles appear in the appendices.

GMIT is proud of the professionalism, commitment and dedication of its staff, and in particular of their dedication to the welfare of students and their achievements. This is what drives the success of the organisation.

Academic and technical staff maintain strong sectoral, professional and industry linkages, and are represented on a wide range of national and international bodies.

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## 2.6 Learning and teaching

The Institute recognises that learning and teaching is at the core of all its activities. GMIT offers a wide variety of programmes from apprentice to PhD level, including a foundation programme and special purpose awards. Details of undergraduate programmes are set out in the Prospectus attached.

*The Letterfrack campus offers a Bachelor programme in Design and Technology Education and Higher Diploma in Arts in Education (Technology), from which the first teachers will graduate in 2010. GMIT is the first institute to receive approval from the Teaching Council of Ireland to offer pre-service teaching awards.*

### 2.6.1 Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy

Quality and innovation in learning, teaching and assessment have always been a prime focus of the staff of GMIT. The first formal Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy (LTA) was approved by the Governing Body in May 2010. The creation of a learning and teaching unit is a central focus of the LTA. It is expected that this unit will be created in 2010/11.

### 2.6.2 Applied nature of learning and teaching

The Institute is proud of the applied nature of its programmes and their professional orientation. This is reflected in the learning outcomes of programmes and the range of teaching and learning methodologies employed (see Table 2.1).

Students on every programme in GMIT undertake project or practical work. During the 2009/10 academic year, 1,270 students took up placement opportunities. Students also have links with the Innovation in Business Centres (IiBCs) in Galway and Castlebar and opportunities to learn in unique settings such as the online energy laboratory.

Formal classroom lecture	Self-study / individual research	Video conferencing
Interactive lecture	Student placement	Web conferencing
Computer lab	Seminar	Virtual learning
Bench room class	Design lab	Environment (Moodle)
Practical workshop class	Student presentation	External collaboration
Technical demonstration	Case studies, text and video	International collaboration
Tutorial	Field trips to industry and to industry events	Teaching practice
Project based learning		Micro teaching
Group discussion		Peer assisted learning
Role play		On-line delivery (planned)
In-class debate		

**TABLE 2.1 SELECTION OF LEARNING AND TEACHING METHODOLOGIES EMPLOYED IN GMIT**

*Most schools have industry advisory boards comprised of industry leaders who meet staff regularly to review all aspects of curricula and advise on programme relevance to industry.*

### 2.6.3 Interdisciplinary learning and teaching

GMIT is committed to interdisciplinary developments. Some current examples include:

- The co-operation of the Schools of Business, Science and Mountbellew Agricultural college in offering agriculture, environmental and business programmes
- Enterprise development initiatives and graduate entrepreneurship awards which span campuses and disciplines
- The development of Learner Choice Modules (LCMs)
- The implementation of the module manager system (MMS), which should facilitate more interdisciplinary programme development in the future
- The common first year programme in Science and the approach to common modules to facilitate flexibility in Castlebar
- The interdisciplinary nature of many programme offerings.

### 2.6.4 Staff development

GMIT is committed to supporting staff development. In the period 2004 to 2009 expenditure on staff development amounted to approximately €1.4m. This expenditure related to supported study, short courses, conferences and in-house training. Currently 55 staff are undertaking supported study, including 13 at doctorate and 21 at masters level. In 2009, 62 staff were supported to undertake higher qualifications, 117 were funded to attend short courses and conferences and 276 attended inhouse training programmes.

The Institute seeks to extend the qualifications profile of all staff towards higher levels of academic achievement, facilitate the training of staff in new areas of expertise and promote attainment of qualifications in learning and teaching. The staff development office provides ongoing support for new learning and teaching initiatives.

The Performance Management Development System (PMDS), introduced in 2006, has been successful in the context of individual staff development in GMIT. However, the overall process has proven to be limited in terms of its value. The Institute has identified the need to embed strong linkages between the new Strategic Development Plan, the strategies of each school or functional area and the development of individual staff members. To this end an executive leader has been appointed to investigate and report on shortcomings in the PMDS system to date and develop a cohesive strategy for the future. The objective is to develop an effective PMDS system aligned to the Strategic Development Plan.

### 2.6.5 Developments in the facilitation of learning and teaching since 2005

Key developments include:

- Delegated authority
- Modularisation
- All programmes focused on learning outcomes
- All modules ECTS compliant
- A move from programme duration of '2-years plus 1-year plus 1-year' to '3-years plus 1-year' or 3-years ab initio
- Increase in accredited Lifelong Learning (LLL) offerings
- Improvements in access, transfer and progression (ATP)
- 'Making experience count' – a module to steer applicants through the development of a portfolio to demonstrate experiential learning; and 'Leap Forward' a collaborative promotion campaign on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) with NUIG to be launched in September 2010
- Greater use of IT, particularly Moodle; currently there are 250 staff using Moodle, as well as 15 PAL leaders (students)
- The Enabling Maths initiative
- Increased choice of electives and learner choice modules
- Responsiveness to curriculum reform innovations that enhance the student experience, e.g. development of a civic engagement module
- Increased engagement with prospective students to assist with informed decision making
- Emphasis on retention through the first year experience (FYE).

## 2.7 Student environment

### 2.7.1 Student services

Student services are central to most activities throughout the Institute. The following table outlines the range of services available to students:

#### GMIT Student Services

Unit	Galway and Cluain Mhuire Campuses	Castlebar Campus	Letterfrack Campus
Student Health Unit	✓	(doctor off campus)	From Galway
Counselling Service	✓	✓	✓
Careers and Appointments Service	✓	✓	From Galway
Chaplaincy	✓	✓ External Service	From Galway
Accommodation Services	✓	✓	✓
Administrative Support	✓	✓	✓
Sports Officer	✓	✓	
GAA Development Officer	✓	(links with GAA are part of sports officer role)	
Fitness Suite	✓	(support for off-campus memberships)	

TABLE 2.2 STUDENT SERVICES AT GMIT

The Institute has identified the need to develop sporting facilities as a matter of priority. A grass pitch has been constructed in Letterfrack, co-funded by the local community and the Institute.

Through the combined efforts of the Institute and the Students' Union (SU), many social structures have been enhanced and developed over the past five years. The SU ([www.gmitsu.ie](http://www.gmitsu.ie)) organises and manages numerous clubs and societies for student participation. This type of social interaction is part of the overall student experience.

### 2.7.2 Academic affairs

The Office of Academic Affairs supports students in their learning by providing services in the areas of admissions, registration and records, fees, grants and examinations.

### 2.7.3 Lifelong learning

GMIT offers an increasing range of accredited programmes on a part-time and/or Accumulation of Credits and Certification of Subjects (ACCS) basis. It has undertaken specific, customised initiatives in work-based learning and specialised training, including the bespoke Certificate in Pharmaceutical Chemistry for Boston Scientific and Medtronic AVE and the Baxter Healthcare International leadership development training programme.

The Institute needs to further develop links with the region and local employers, particularly small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs). It plans to further develop flexible workplace-based programmes that integrate expertise from practitioners as well as academics, and broaden delivery mechanisms to facilitate greater and more flexible access.

#### 2.7.4 The Irish language

GMT's geographical location, situated between the Galway and Mayo Gaeltacht areas (Irish-speaking districts), has been significant in determining its role in relation to the Irish language. The Institute was one of the first higher education institutions selected to prepare a language scheme under the Official Languages Act 2003.

The School of Business offers the BA i nGnó agus Cumarsáid (BA in Business and Communications), taught through the medium of Irish at Level 7 and Level 8.

GMT's partnership with Europus Teoranta, a language consultancy firm based in the Co. Galway Gaeltacht, is an area that has seen significant development over the last number of years. In 2005 the structure of the Ard-Diplóma i nGaeilge Fheidhmeach agus Aistriúchán programme (Higher Diploma in Applied Irish and Translation), run by Europus Teoranta in conjunction with Údarás na Gaeltachta (Authority for Gaeltacht Regions) and GMT's School of Humanities, was revised to include progression to an MSc qualification. In 2006, the School of Humanities responded to a call from the HEA for programmes to supply Irish language graduates. The Institute received €10,000 and made a submission for a Special Purpose Award. This award, An Teastas i Riarachán Dátheangach (Certificate in Bilingual Administration), was accredited in 2007.

The Irish language continues to be offered as an elective module up to degree level on programmes in various schools over three campuses (Dublin Road, Cluain Mhuire and Castlebar). Irish is also offered on GMT's suite of evening programmes. A new initiative, arising out of the recent programmatic review in the School of Humanities has resulted in the accreditation of new modules in ab initio Irish for international students.

## 2.8 Research and innovation

The focus of the research strategy is primarily on applied research and development in prioritised areas with clear outcomes related to teaching and regional development.

The three principle areas of research are:

- Marine and Fresh Water
- Biomedical Engineering
- The Built Environment including Energy and Construction Waste Management.

The research strategy recognises the importance of the development of the research process, and identifies new areas for development such as Heritage Studies, Tourism, and Electronics. From 2005 to 2009 GMT conferred 37 Masters awards and ten PhD awards (diagram 3.3). There are currently 60 postgraduate research students, 20 of whom are engaged at PhD level. Sixty-two per cent of the postgraduate research students are registered in the areas for which GMT has delegated authority (diagram 3.2).

GMT recognises the capacity of research activities to improve and inform the quality of teaching and learning. For example, both the BEng (level 7) in Energy Engineering and the BEng add-on (level 8) in Biomedical Engineering have been designed as a direct consequence of the research capacity in the School of Engineering. Similarly, in the School of Science, the BSc (level 8) in Applied Freshwater and Marine Biology has been a key development.

Research partners include HEIs such as NUIG, DCU, UCD and AIT; and industrial partners such as Novate Medical, Neuravi, eMedia and InTime Media. The largest external source of funding over the period 2005 to 2009 was the Applied Research Enhancement (ARE) Enterprise Ireland programme, which strengthened Biomedical Technology and Marine and Freshwater research activities.

Funding has been secured to develop research facilities. Over the last five years 1,200 m<sup>2</sup> of teaching space has been re-allocated and refurbished for research (Marine, Biomedical and Energy). Three research laboratories have been set up – the Marine and Fresh Water Centre, the Galway Medical Technology Centre and the Energy laboratory. Greater interaction with research teams in other HEIs is key to developments for the future.

*'Novate Medical found the Innovation partnership scheme run by Enterprise Ireland very valuable. It allowed us as the industry sponsor to carry out research using the capabilities of GMedTech to create an anatomically correct model. This included the hiring of a specialist engineer and using the contacts of employees of GMedTech in both academic institutions and hospitals. The work carried out in this partnership has supported the development of a novel medical device used to protect patients from blood clots created as a result of deep-vein thrombosis.'*

Steven Horan, R&D Director, Novate Medical

The Institute, in fulfillment of one of the key objectives in the 2004–2009 Strategic Plan, opened two Innovation in Business Centres (IIBCs) in late 2005 and mid 2006. The IIBCs support the development of knowledge- and technology-based start-ups in the region by providing innovation space and business development support to nurture new ideas and commercialise applied research. By 2009, 12 start-ups had transferred from the centres, providing 114 jobs. In addition, 11 high-potential start-ups (HPSUs) have been created. Over 50% of the companies occupying the centre have some research interaction with GMT.

*'this was the true incubator in Galway as it operated as an incubator of new businesses'*

Frontline Evaluation / Enterprise Ireland, 2009

## 2.9 Community engagement

### 2.7.1 Student services

GMT is regarded an important player in its community, as evidenced by the consultations undertaken for this review. GMT views community engagement as contributing to the social, cultural and economic well-being of the communities served by the Institute. The Institute, through its staff and students, is engaged with the community at regional, national and international levels, including volunteerism.



GMIT has a global perspective, supported by its strong national and international links with other Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), Chambers of Commerce in Galway and Castlebar, the Marine Institute, professional bodies and staff memberships of national committees.

*In December 2009 the Galway Lions Club recognised the efforts of students in the Hotel School who have been fundraising each Christmas since 1981 for a local Christmas food appeal.*

GMIT is acknowledged as a regional leader in sectoral areas that have been noted for development potential in the Forfás Regional Competitiveness Agenda: Realising Potential: West (2009). These development potential areas are medical technologies, software and ICT services, tourism, renewable energy, creative sectors and digital media, food, fisheries and aquaculture.

GMIT is a partner in the Lónra network, founded in 2000 to develop a collaborative response by the third-level sector to the developmental needs of the Border, Midlands and Western (BMW) region.

This collaboration has facilitated, among other things:

- Access to third-level education
- Links with local communities and outreach centres
- Liaison with social partners, the BMW assembly, government departments and agencies, and international bodies
- A synergy in the approach to improving the region's capacity for sustained development and innovation.

The Institute has close links with the secondary schools in the region. The appointment of a schools liaison officer has enhanced these links. Guidance counsellors visit GMIT annually on open day and meet with Heads of School to discuss programme offerings. In addition to formal arrangements, many academic staff have ongoing, ad hoc linkages with schools in the region.

GMIT responds to challenges faced by people in the community it serves. In 2009, 130 students who had been affected by the economic recession enrolled on a pro-bono Higher Certificate in Business in Enterprise Development. Many of these students have since applied to progress to level 7 qualifications and two graduates have been accepted onto the Graduate Entrepreneurship Programme in the IIBC. GMIT offered advanced level entry to a degree in Energy Engineering in response to the apprenticeship crisis. It also provided mentoring and advice clinics to unemployed people as a targeted response to the recession.

Letterfrack collaboration with the Office of Public Works (OPW)

Over the past 4 years GMIT Letterfrack has run a number of projects with the OPW including:

- Exhibition of student and graduate work in Farnleigh Gallery, October 2006
- Design of seating for the galleries of Turlough Park, Museum of Country Life, Castlebar, Co. Mayo
- Design of three lecterns for use by President McAleese in Áras an Uachtaráin
- Currently working on a project to design seating for the galleries of the Hunt Museum, Limerick.

## 2.10 Internationalisation and collaboration

GMIT is committed to increasing the level of European and international awareness among its students and staff, and to creating a tangible international ethos throughout the Institute. There are 74 nationalities in the GMIT population.

Eighty-four Erasmus and 22 US exchange students studied at GMIT in 2009/10, but only 26 Irish students undertook exchanges abroad. In general, Irish students have been reluctant to study abroad. This concern was addressed during the self evaluation undertaken for the School of Humanities programmatic review and the issues raised are under consideration.

Although few GMIT students undertake opportunities to study on Erasmus programmes in Europe, many undertake European and American work placement opportunities, and study trips abroad or specific initiatives such as the La Rochelle Cultural Exchange initiative.

GMIT plans to grow the services available through the International Office by offering a non-EU support section. Other opportunities include the provision of summer school programmes, extending scholarship opportunities to international students and providing additional opportunities for faculty exchange to and from partner institutes.

*GMIT is formally recognised by the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme (KASP) in Saudi Arabia as being an eligible institution for scholarships for undergraduate programmes. Negotiations are ongoing to extend the recognition to taught postgraduate programmes. The KASP provides supports for Saudi students wishing to study abroad. All undergraduate programmes in GMIT are recognised under this programme.*

GMIT has a number of Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with institutes in the USA, Asia, Middle East and Australia. These Memoranda set out the framework to progress the international relationship. The Institute is focused on developing active MOUs. International best practice, as highlighted by the Association of International Education Administrators, confirmed that all aspects of internationalisation must be embedded throughout the organisation for it to work successfully. GMIT is committed to this practice.

## 2.11 Alumni

GMIT regards itself as 'alumni-engaged'. Some parts of the organisation, such as Letterfrack and the Hotel School, have strong links with alumni. However, in general the Institute recognises that its relationship with alumni needs to be strengthened. This will become part of the implementation plan for the Strategic Development Plan. GMIT plans to conduct an alumni survey 3–4 years post graduation in addition to improving the 'first-destination' graduate survey.

# Chapter 3 - Strategic planning and governance

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the strategic planning, governance and management of GMT.

The Governing Body of the Institute has overall responsibility for governance and strategy. It has specified functions under legislation and reserved functions. The President is the Chief Officer of the Institute and is supported in this role by the Executive Board, Management Group and Academic Council.

## 3.2 Strategic planning

The Institute's Strategic Plan 2004–2009 consisted of four drivers dealing with the student, the staff, the region and research. A new Strategic Development Plan entitled Your Place – Your Future 2010–2015 was developed and approved by the Governing Body in April 2010. The new strategy consists of five pillars:

- Learning and teaching
- Student environment
- Research and innovation
- Community engagement
- Internationalisation and collaboration.

The consultation process for the Institutional Review (see following chapter) was used both to evaluate perception of the previous strategy and gather opinion on the pillars for the new Strategic Development Plan. Responses from staff indicated a lack of awareness of operational planning for the previous Strategic Plan, despite an annual plan of work being agreed by the Executive Board.

A number of successes were achieved by the 2004–2009 Strategic Plan, including:

- The design of a modularisation framework and its implementation
- Improvements in access and opportunities
- Increased activity in the international area
- The development of Innovation in Business Centres (iIBC) at Galway and Castlebar
- The promotion of the Irish language
- The appointment of a schools liaison officer
- A partnership approach to industrial relations
- The development of the learning resources centre
- Improved research facilities with an emphasis on accommodation and facilities for postgraduate students.

As a result of the consultation process with staff, the Institute changed the number of pillars in the new strategy to five, rather than the four proposed at the beginning of the consultation phase.

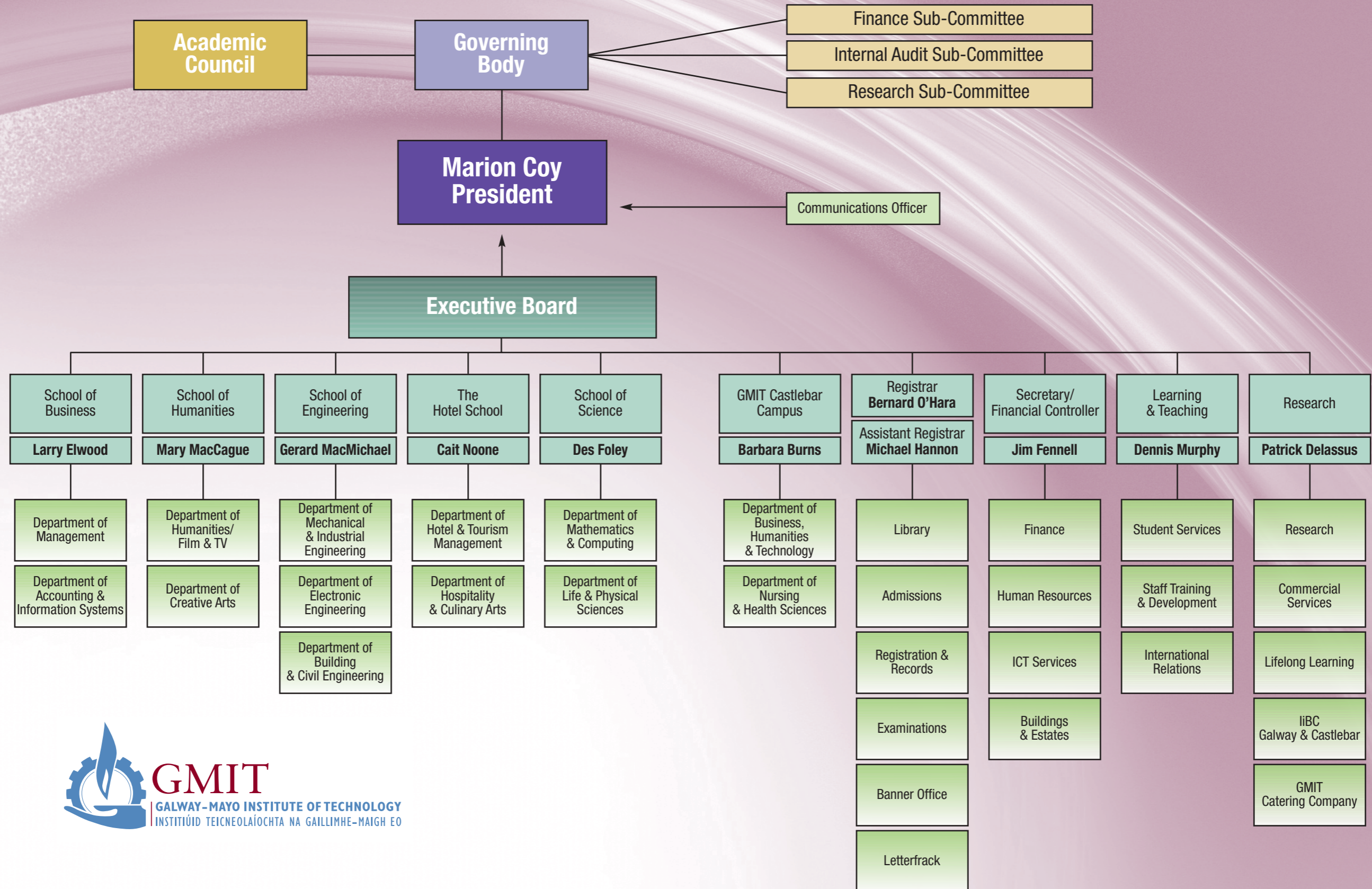
In order to better inform staff and improve their involvement in the new Strategic Development Plan, executive leads for each pillar have been appointed. They are drafting implementation plans for each pillar to ensure that all stakeholders, including staff, will be actively involved. Key performance indicators (KPIs) built into these plans will measure progress and indicate annually where refocusing may be required.

The objective is the development of an overall strategic planning framework for the Institute where school and functional area plans will be aligned with the implementation plans of the key objectives set out in the Strategic Development Plan.

The Strategic Development Plan requires that the executive leads report on a regular basis to the Governing Body on implementation progress and expected outcomes for the following period. Similarly, review and planning is reported at Executive Board and Management Group level for each period.

3.3 GMIT organisation chart

Fig. 3.1 GMIT's organisational structure



### 3.4 Governing Body

The Governing Body is appointed under legislation and has overall responsibility for the governance and strategic direction of the Institute. It complies with its reserved and other functions in a very professional manner. The HEA has acknowledged its efficiency in budgetary control.

#### 3.4.1 Membership of the Governing Body

The chairperson of the Governing Body is appointed by the Minister and the membership of the board comprises the President of the Institute and seventeen other members. The term of the current chairperson will expire on April 24, 2011. The five-year term of the new Governing Body will expire on March 31, 2015. In addition to the members, the Secretary/Financial Controller and the Registrar attend all meetings.

#### 3.4.2 Governing Body Sub-committees

The Governing Body has three sub-committees:

- Audit Committee
- Finance Sub-committee
- Research Sub-committee.

#### 3.4.3 Meetings

The Governing Body meets at least ten times per year. Standing items on the agenda for each meeting are:

- Income and expenditure
- Staff appointments, retirements and career breaks
- Academic affairs including academic plans, quality assurance, programme recognition, student statistics and related issues
- Campus development plans
- Reports and documentation to enable it to have oversight of the ongoing activities of the Institute.

Some of the key achievements of the outgoing Governing Body include:

- Ensuring Institute compliance with statutory and corporate governance obligations and responsibilities
- Ensuring that GMIT operated within budget. It has been commended by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for this
- Developing an Institute focus on equity and social inclusion
- A strategic focus on research, innovation and development
- An exemplary record in relation to internal audit
- Ensuring that student representatives have an effective role
- Overseeing the development of a new Strategic Development Plan
- Completion of a Risk Register for the Institute.

### 3.5 Academic Council

The Academic Council is a statutory body appointed in accordance with legislation which specifies its functions.

The Academic Council consists of ex officio members, elected members and student representatives. By decision of the Council, elected members and students shall exceed ex officio personnel by at least one. Members have Institute-wide responsibilities and the size and composition of the Academic Council is

reviewed during the year preceding its re-election. The composition of the Council has been subject to change over the years and the consensus was that the Council, with a membership of 50, which completed its term in office in May 2010 was considered to have worked well.

The Students' Union is responsible for electing or nominating its two representatives. The composition of the current Academic Council and the basis of its membership is set out in Academic Code of Practice no. 1.

The full Academic Council meets at least eight times in the academic year and the Registrar reports on the proceedings to Governing Body, where they are considered and changes to academic policy are approved.

Minutes of Council and Standing Committee meetings are published on the intranet for all staff. It was noted during the review process that Academic Council meetings are generally well attended with high levels of engagement.

#### 3.5.1 Academic Council Standing Committee

The Standing Committee meets in any month where no full Council meeting is convened. It has authority to make decisions on behalf of the Academic Council.

#### 3.5.2 Academic Council Sub-committees

The Academic Council can recommend the appointment of sub-committees, on a standing or ad hoc basis, to the Governing Body. The following sub-committees have been established:

- Academic Standards Sub-committee
- Research Sub-committee
- Admissions Sub-committee
- Disciplinary Sub-committee
- Learning, Teaching and Assessment Sub-committee (previously the Assessment Sub-committee)
- Aegrotat Board.

The terms of reference of each sub-committee are outlined in Academic Code of Practice no. 1. Each sub-committee agrees an annual work schedule with the Registrar and reports at least once each year to the Academic Council. Recommendations are presented to the Academic Council for adoption.

#### 3.5.3 Programme Boards

Each programme in GMIT has a board consisting of all the lecturers involved in its delivery and, ex officio, the Head of Department, Head of School and a minimum of two student representatives from the programme. Programme Boards act in an advisory capacity to the Academic Council and reporting is normally through the line management structures of the Institute. Boards must have an elected chairperson and secretary and are responsible for the quality assurance of their programmes, including monitoring of the delivery of the programme and student performance. The terms of reference for Programme Boards are specified in Academic Code of Practice: no. 2.

Programme boards have actively engaged in:

- The implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), including programme outcomes
- The review of student performance, assessment and attendance
- Evaluating the currency and relevance of programmes and proposing innovative solutions where required
- Helping to identify and respond to student needs
- Identifying resources required to support programmes.

### 3.5.4 Academic quality assurance

The Academic Council is responsible for developing and promoting academic quality assurance throughout the Institute in a spirit of partnership with Schools, Centres and Departments and embedding academic practices across the Institute. The arrangements whereby these are implemented are outlined in the Institute's Academic Codes of Practice and are discussed in detail later in this report.

### 3.5.5 Ethics framework

A sub-group of the Academic Council prepared a draft report on the development of an ethics framework for all members of the Institute. This is to be considered by the new Academic Council.

### 3.5.6 Activities of the Academic Council 2004–2010

Key activities of the Council were:

- Implementation of the Bologna Declaration and NFQ framework
- Development, approval, review and implementation of a comprehensive quality assurance framework as outlined in the Institute's Academic Codes of Practice and Academic Policies, all of which were updated recently
- Internal and external approval of all new programmes and periodic reviews of all existing programmes
- Approval of a policy and framework in 2006 for the phased implementation of modularisation, and revision of the policy during the implementation phase.
- Review of annual data on retention.

## 3.6 President

The President is the Chief Officer of the Institute with the authority and responsibility for day-to-day management and reporting. The President reports to the Governing Body on setting and meeting objectives consistent with the Institute's mission and strategy.

## 3.7 Executive Board

The Executive Board comprises the senior management team of the Institute. It includes the President, Registrar, Secretary/Financial Controller, Head of Learning and Teaching, Head of Research, Heads of Schools/Centre with the joint chairpersons of the Management Group in attendance at each meeting. The Board meets twice monthly and its principal role is to advise and support the President in the leadership, development and management of the Institute.

### Key achievements

- Developing and resourcing an appropriate learning and teaching environment in a multi-campus institution
- Management and control of budgets and finance in a difficult economic environment
- Ensuring currency and relevance in the provision of all programmes in the Institute
- Effective management of capital development programmes
- Development of the new Strategic Development Plan
- Strategic engagement, on behalf of Institute, with external bodies.

## 3.8 Management Group

The Management Group is comprised of the heads of academic departments and central services managers. It meets twice monthly and supports the President and Executive Board in the evaluation, planning, implementation and monitoring of key operational and strategic activities across the Institute. The joint chairpersons of the Management Group attend all meetings of the Executive Board, which helps to facilitate active engagement between the two bodies.

### Key achievements

- Improved communications and inter-disciplinary linkages between all departments – academic, technical and administrative
  - Management of the operational aspects of the implementation of modularisation
  - In conjunction with the Executive Board the following Institute-wide studies and assessments were undertaken:
    - Student attendance
    - Timetabling
    - Student registration
    - Student assessment
- A work plan is being developed to address issues arising in each of these areas.
- Improvements in operational planning and management in areas such as:
    - Student induction
    - Open days
    - Mature student access.

## 3.9 Multi-campus institute

GMIT operates as a multi-campus institute, with its administrative headquarters located on the Dublin Road Campus in Galway City. The Dublin Road Campus, which opened in 1972, has five schools of study in the disciplines of Business, Humanities, Engineering, Science and Hotel. Each school has a number of departments.

The Castlebar Campus, which opened in 1994, is approximately 100 kilometres to the north of Galway city and offers a broad range of programmes including specialist offerings in outdoor education, nursing and health sciences, and applied social studies. Since its earliest days, the campus has had a strong focus on accredited part-time provision.

The Cluain Mhuire Campus, which opened in 1996, offers a range of programmes in the creative arts and is located approximately 3 kilometres from the Dublin Road Campus. The campus is managed by the School of Humanities on the Dublin Road Campus. There is a unique co-operation with The Galway Film Centre.

The Letterfrack Campus, which opened in 1987, is located 100 kilometres to the west of Galway and operates as a department. The department offers a range of highly specialised programmes in furniture design and technology which are unique in the higher education sector. The department also offers a concurrent four-year teacher training programme for post primary teachers of technology-based subjects. This campus is a recognised centre of excellence in third-level education. The department is supported by Connemara West plc, a rural development organisation.

GMIT, in conjunction with Mountbellew Agricultural College, offers programmes relating to agriculture and the environment in Mountbellew, which is approximately 50 kilometres from Galway. The programmes are managed under the auspices of the Schools of Business and Science in Galway. A key feature of the student experience at Mountbellew is the high level of retention.

Recently a working group was established with a brief to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats inherent in the operation of a multi-campus organisation and to develop a clear vision, mission, strategy and profile for each campus. GMIT has gained valuable experience in the governance and management of a diverse multi-campus Institution. Some of the initial findings of the working group include:

- The need to develop a clear identity for each campus
- The need to address issues of sustainability (especially in relation to student recruitment) in the context of the forthcoming National Strategy for Higher Education
- The need to consider re-orientation where appropriate.

GMIT expects that the publication of the Higher Education Strategy will change the landscape of education in Ireland. Further consideration and consultation is required to develop and build formal strategies for each of the GMIT locations to identify niche areas of development and address challenges for integration and sustainability. It is essential to continue to build linkages between locations to enhance a sense of connectivity across the Institute.

The draft findings have been referred to the Executive Board for detailed consideration in the context of the new Strategic Development Plan and emerging national developments.

### 3.10 School and campus executives

The Head of School or Centre, as a member of the Executive Board, has a strategic development role and is responsible for the academic leadership in the school. Heads of Departments are responsible for operational and staff management, information reporting, and academic development of the department. Each school or campus is supported by an administration team.

Each of the school and campus executives comprises the relevant Heads of Schools or Campus and Heads of Departments. School and campus executives meet on a regular basis and two-way communication exists between them and Executive Board and Management Group.

### 3.11 Management structure

The current organisation structure has served GMIT well. However, various stakeholders have proposed that changes are now required, in particular to align its management structure and capacity in support of the Strategic Development Plan. The Prospectus Report (October 2007) highlighted the need for such a change.

Deloitte, as internal auditors, have been asked to review the existing structure and to research the types of structures used in parallel organisations both national and international. Deloitte has consulted widely both internally and externally and the Executive Board has fed back a range of observations on Deloitte's preliminary analysis. The final Deloitte Report will be reviewed by the executive and the Internal Audit Sub-committee of the Governing body in September/October 2010.

This restructuring is planned for 2011. In the interim, the President has assigned responsibility for each pillar of the strategy to a member of the Executive.

Work has commenced on implementation plans and key performance indicators (KPIs) to support the achievement of strategic objectives.

### 3.12 Conclusion

The institutional review process has shown that governance and management in GMIT is working successfully. In conclusion, future priorities for the governance and management of GMIT must include:

- Responding to the impact of the forthcoming National Strategy for Higher Education
- Successfully implementing the Strategic Development Plan
- Realigning the management structure to reflect the pillars of the new Strategic Development Plan
- Ensuring that the multi-campus structure fulfils its potential and remains viable
- Continuing to operate within budget.

# Chapter 4 - Public confidence and stakeholders' perspectives

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## 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to: describe the regular consultation mechanisms and the additional consultation undertaken as part of the institutional review; demonstrate that there is public confidence in the quality of GMIT awards and its graduates. The public in this context includes both internal and external stakeholders as outlined in table 4.1.

## 4.2 Stakeholders of GMIT

GMIT stakeholders include everybody that the Institute interacts with, both inside and outside the organisation.

Stakeholder Group	Consultation Type				Frequency of meetings	
	Internal	External	Formal	Informal	Regular	Ad hoc
Students*	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Student Union*	✓		✓	✓		✓
Industry*		✓	✓	✓		✓
Employers*		✓	✓	✓		✓
Professional bodies		✓	✓		✓	✓
Public organisations*		✓	✓	✓		✓
Voluntary and community groups*		✓		✓		✓
Guidance counsellors*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Secondary schools		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Governing Body*	✓		✓		✓	
Executive Board*	✓		✓		✓	
Management Group*	✓		✓		✓	
Academic Council*	✓		✓		✓	
Programme Boards	✓		✓		✓	
School Executives	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Academic staff*	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Non-academic staff*	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Trade unions*	✓		✓		✓	

**Table 4.1 Stakeholder groups GMIT interact with on an ongoing basis**

\* Additional consultation conducted for the institutional review.

## 4.3 Ongoing process of stakeholder engagement

### 4.3.1 External stakeholders

The Institute is continuously engaged with its external stakeholders. In addition to continuous formal engagements, there is ongoing informal communication and consultation at Institute, school and individual level. External stakeholders are involved in the key decisions made by the Institute.

#### *Industry, employers, professional and public bodies*

Industry experts participate in panels to validate new programmes, review existing programmes and all school-based activities. They are also engaged on interview boards to appoint new staff. Schools have, or are in the process of, engaging an industry advisory board which provides strategic input on new developments and on the relevance and viability of programme offerings. This ensures the applied nature of the programmes on offer in GMIT. The IBCs also have an industry advisory board which selects entrants to the centres. Industry representatives and employers consistently indicate satisfaction with graduates.

Professional bodies accredit a number of GMIT awards and express satisfaction in the quality assurance procedures in place at the Institute. For example, the Institute recently gained approval from the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) to offer a programme at the final level of professional examinations. This indicates confidence in the quality of teaching and the standard of awards.

Private and public sector employers further express confidence in GMIT by their willingness to provide internships and work placements for students, their support for project-based learning and their employment of GMIT graduates. Furthermore, the achievements of graduates, nationally and internationally, is testament to the outstanding quality of the education provided by GMIT.

#### *Guidance counsellors and secondary schools*

The Institute meets with guidance counsellors annually at open days and uses this forum, in addition to the college prospectus and website, to promote new programmes and advise changes to existing programmes. Feedback from counsellors is sought annually and actioned so that confidence is strengthened within this important group. There is ongoing communication with individual guidance counsellors throughout the year at school level. Guidance counsellors express satisfaction on interaction with Heads of Schools at a special seminar each year during Institute open days.

A programme of school visits is undertaken each year by the schools liaison officer. In addition, academic staff undertake school visits, interact with secondary school students on open days and organise a range of 'taster' programmes.

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### 4.3.2 Internal stakeholders

Students and staff, as key stakeholders of the Institute, meet regularly and actively contribute to the operation and management of GMIT.

#### Students

Student engagement and feedback is crucial to the success of GMIT. Students are represented on the Governing Body, Academic Council, programmatic review boards, programme boards, and the institutional review steering group.

Students' views are captured annually in the first-destination survey of graduates conducted by the Careers Service. A summary of findings from 2004 to 2009 has been compiled.

Student evaluations of the quality of their programmes are sought annually through quality assurance evaluation forms. This is a nationally agreed, three-part process (QA1, QA2 and QA3), but is deemed to be ineffective by the Institute. Although the forms are completed on an anonymous basis, students have expressed concern about being identified should they note areas in need of improvement.

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*An electronics lecturer sought independent comment from students using a soapbox approach with an external facilitator. Students spoke freely and the results were considered to be more meaningful than those from the QA evaluation forms.*

To address the limitations of the present QA evaluation forms, the Institute began a pilot online student satisfaction survey in May 2010. By the end of May, this had been completed by approximately 1,300 students. The results are being collated centrally. GMIT based the survey on a Course Evaluation Questionnaire (CEQ) that has been adopted nationally as a graduate questionnaire in Australia, and has published benchmarks with which GMIT can compare its results. The initial findings indicate that the profile of responses from GMIT's students is remarkably similar to those from the Australian universities. The strongest responses were in intellectual motivation, general satisfaction and on the generic skills scale. The weakest scores were in the broadly linked themes of appropriate assessment, appropriate workload, and clear goals and standards. The Institute is addressing these issues in its current Strategic Development Plan.

The Institute is committed to facilitating more open and regular evaluation of programmes, modules and teaching methodologies by students. The outcomes of this CEQ will help the Institute to develop more effective feedback mechanisms for students.

Heads of School and Department meet student representatives on average once a term and, along with staff, are available to meet students. These informal meetings are ideal for addressing areas of concern at an early stage.

#### Staff

The ethos of the Institute is to consult on developments and objectives. To this end there are regular school, department and functional area meetings and wide participation by staff in Institute committees and bodies. In addition, formal consultations occur for significant developments or innovations as they arise, such as the sessions that were held for the development of the modularisation policy. The modularisation consultation process was acknowledged in the Downes report (2007)<sup>1</sup> as a model to be followed by other institutes.

<sup>1</sup> Downes, M. (2007). Modularisation in the Irish Institutes: Review of the CAPP Modularisation Model, its Implementation in the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology and Recommendations for the Roll-out of the Model (not published)

### 4.4 Specific consultation for the institutional review

In addition to the ongoing consultation referred to in section 4.3, the Institute undertook a significant consultation process with its stakeholders during the last 12 months to assess confidence in the Institute and inform the new Strategic Development Plan. The methodologies employed included surveys, focus groups and exploratory workshops. Full consultation reports and details of the methodologies are available.

Feedback on the consultations was communicated to staff through the Institute's online discussion forum and further comment was invited. An Institute-wide seminar to discuss the findings was held in early June.

### 4.5 Summary of findings, reflections and recommendations

Key recommendations for improvement identified as a result of the widespread consultation undertaken are summarised at the end of each of the following sections, along with reflection on the areas noted for improvement:

#### 4.5.1 Students

Nine separate student focus groups were held across campuses. In general students expressed satisfaction with the Institute. Notable findings were:

- Students were attracted to GMIT by the programmes on offer, the practical nature of the programmes and a perception that they would be well prepared for the workplace
- Lecturers were seen in a positive light by students, found to be approachable and perceived to have significant practical experience
- Mature students valued that experience in the workplace is recognised and appreciated in GMIT
- Continuous assessment was viewed as a positive factor in facilitating learning
- Students enjoyed using technology as a learning tool, but would not like to learn exclusively using this approach.

In addition, students' views were sought through an online survey designed in collaboration with the student union and run in November 2009. In general the findings were very positive, with GMIT viewed as a friendly place where they "were, by and large, happy".

A separate focus group was conducted with the Student Union executive in November 2009. GMIT's key strengths, as identified by the Student Union, are its spirit, practical education and strong lecturer support.

#### Recommendations

- The framework for active student engagement should be further developed. This could include:
  - Fora to address student engagement, for example attendance, participation, first-year preparedness, induction etc.
  - Training and mentoring for students involved on committees and councils
  - Definition of clear procedures for student communication with GMIT
  - Clear procedures to deal with problems students may have
  - Increased student participation on programme boards
- Sports facilities, social centres and student facilities require improvement
- GMIT web services need to be developed further
- Promotion of the unique aspects of the GMIT student experience should be improved.

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#### 4.5.2 Industry, employers and public bodies

Industry focus groups were held in November 2009 to seek objective opinion and advice from GMIT's key industry stakeholders on the Institute's past and current position and future strategy. The findings highlight a very positive perception and affiliation to GMIT among its industry stakeholders. A key perception was that GMIT provides a 'practical, hands-on' education and this was viewed by employers as very valuable. They identified GMIT's approach as informal, innovative and student-focused. The group noted that GMIT needs to keep true to its 'practical education' philosophy and maintain its position as one of the leading IoTs in the country. In this context, the group expressed confidence that GMIT had nothing to fear from the forthcoming National Strategy for Higher Education.

*The Schools of Business and Engineering work closely with professional bodies to ensure that their specialist disciplines are both industry relevant and current. As a result, many GMIT students gain exemptions from these bodies when pursuing further studies.*

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The group expressed confidence in GMIT's awards, demonstrating a good understanding of the levels of programmes on offer. Employers confirmed that the quality of the graduates stood out in relation to their practical knowledge and confidence demonstrated at interviews. The Institute gives the community a sense of pride and belonging. GMIT's students add to the region culturally and enhance its vibrancy. It was felt that GMIT has progressed in recent years, but that it is not taking advantage of valuable public relations opportunities. The quality of the graduate pool was noted as key to securing inward investment and encouraging companies to set up in the region.

The group acknowledged that there is good interaction with the Institute, referring to very positive experiences and a professional, open and informal approach, but feel there is room for further engagement. The benefits of work experience were highlighted with a recommendation that longer placements (3–9 months) were of more benefit to both student and employer.

*The Hotel School and the Galway Chamber of Commerce recently began developing a strategy on work placements in the retail sector. This partnership will give GMIT students easier and more immediate access to employers for work placements, part-time employment and, eventually, career opportunities.*

#### Recommendations

- The Institute needs to improve promotion of its strong brand and achievements both to industry and to the greater public, emphasising in particular the quality of teaching
- GMIT should retain its 'practical education' philosophy; collaborate with NUIG to bring more students to Galway and offer more choice, flexibility and progression; develop further industry partnerships through GMIT's Innovation in Business Centres (iIBCs); and develop programmes that are aligned with government development strategies and regional growth areas
- The implementation plan should include a systematic approach to industry links, regional partners, the voluntary sector and an ongoing formal stakeholder consultation plan.

#### 4.5.3 Voluntary and community sector

GMIT has extensive, diverse and active links with the voluntary and community sector, driven mainly by the initiative of individuals. However, these links are largely informal. Both GMIT and the voluntary sector recognise that great potential for mutually beneficial collaboration exists.

In this context, there is a need for a more formal and structured approach to building collaboration than has been the case heretofore. This will be addressed by the community engagement pillar of the new Strategic Development Plan.

#### Recommendations

- A voluntary and community sector advisory/liaison committee should be established, and representatives from the sector should be included on existing school and Institute consultation and liaison panels
- 'Points of contact' in GMIT for the sector should be specified, a database of organisations should be established and existing collaborations documented
- GMIT should seek more active participation in representative bodies within the voluntary and community sector.

#### 4.5.4 Guidance counsellors

Guidance counsellors perceive the strengths of GMIT to be the range of programmes on offer, the Institute's responsiveness through the schools liaison officer (appointed since the last review) and the briefing seminar on open days.

Suggestions for improvement include progression to level 8 for all level 7 programmes, work experience on all programmes, visits to schools by staff other than the schools liaison officer, the development of a promotional DVD, additional seminars for counsellors throughout the year, and to consider more 'taster' courses and/or visits for students before they begin the Leaving Certificate cycle. Overall the counsellors expressed a high level of satisfaction with how the Institute engages with them and the programmes on offer.

#### Recommendations

- The Institute needs to develop promotional materials similar to those developed for the Letterfrack campus
- The Institute needs to encourage a greater range of GMIT staff to visit secondary schools
- The Institute needs to consider offering work experience in more of its existing programmes.

#### 4.5.5 The Governing Body

An exploratory workshop was facilitated by an external consultant with the Governing Body in February 2010. This occurred at an appropriate time for reflection and analysis, as the Governing Body was at the end of its five-year term.

The report from this workshop states that 'the overall view on the current governing body is that it has performed well. In particular, the financial well-being [of the Institute] and a strong ethical and legal compliance culture are features of this GB's performance.' It attaches high importance to student engagement and representation on Institute committees.

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**It concluded that:**

- The organisational structure should be key priority for the new Governing Body
- The research function should have an applied focus and complement the teaching activity
- The Institute should reinforce its focus on the quality of its teaching
- The strong links forged with industry and regional partners should be formalised to reach their full potential.

This was the first time the Governing Body had engaged in formal, facilitator-led reflection of this nature and, based on its success, the Institute plans to conduct similar workshops with Governing Bodies in future.

**Recommendations**

- Changes are required to the organisation structure to align responsibilities in support of the Strategic Development Plan, to encourage the growth of interdisciplinary developments and a more integrated structure. The objective is to achieve an organisation capable of meeting the evolving challenges of the higher education environment. This process is underway
- The Governing Body recommends that training and mentoring be provided to students to prepare them for their role on Institute committees.

**4.5.6 The Executive Board Exploratory Workshop**

A workshop was conducted with the Executive Board in December 2009. The Executive Board is of the opinion that the 'student' and 'closeness to the student' needs to be central to all future strategy.

Issues were raised in relation to the role and function of the Executive Board and how this had changed as a consequence of the establishment of the Management Group. The Executive Board acknowledged that the Management Group works well.

The board expressed satisfaction with the success of the previous strategic plan, but recognised the need for formal implementation plans for future strategic plans.

It considers that the organisational structure of GMIT is too hierarchical and needs to be reviewed. The lack of a formal management reporting system was identified as an inhibitor to informed decision making. There was agreement on the need to assign executive responsibility to each of the pillars in the Strategic Development Plan.

**Recommendations**

- A implementation plan for each pillar of the Strategic Development Plan should be developed
- Improvements are needed to GMIT's management information system, which currently comprises a number of individual information systems. An integrated reporting system is required for management and executive level reporting and decision making. Following investigation, a pilot project to develop a management information dashboard is about to commence.

**4.5.7 The Management Group Exploratory Workshop**

The Management Group considers that a key strength of the Institute is education geared towards employability of graduates. In this context, it views industry advisory boards as very worthwhile. Similar to the Executive Board, it sees the management structure as 'too hierarchical'.

The Institute needs to market itself more strongly and promote its teaching focus as a core activity. It needs to take a more considered position in planning and implementing change and reflect on ideas generated by managers and staff across the organisation.

The Management Group did not express confidence that staff views would influence the Strategic Development Plan, however the plan was changed following staff consultation.

**Recommendations**

- The Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) strategy should ensure that the focus of the Institute will continue to be on learning and teaching
- A formal communications strategy needs to be developed for all future proposed change initiatives
- Better planning and research is required for major process improvement initiatives.

**4.5.8 Staff**

An Institute-wide staff survey was conducted in November 2009 based on the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) survey which was previously run in National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG). The survey's purpose was to inform GMIT's first LTA strategy and address proposals for the Strategic Development Plan. The survey had a 40% response rate and overall analysis demonstrates that GMIT is predominately a student-centred institution. Ninety-two per cent of staff noted that GMIT's brand and identity is most closely associated with the students' value of cordial relationships with staff. Eighty-eight per cent of staff highlighted GMIT's ability and willingness to lead national projects in higher education.

*Due to collaborative Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) projects with Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT), the same survey was subsequently conducted in AIT. Plans are in place for GMIT to meet NUIG and AIT to further analyse the findings across the three institutions and devise targets and indicators against which each institution can be benchmarked. This is an example of how GMIT engages and shares information with other HEIs in the region.*

GMIT Employee Focus Groups were facilitated in Galway, Castlebar and Letterfrack in November 2009. Although diverse opinions were voiced by the 50 staff who participated, many areas of consensus emerged. Differences between campuses and locations were evident in some responses, but overall there was considerable agreement between staff on the issues facing GMIT. The focus groups for the most part demonstrated little awareness of the Strategic Development Plan and limited knowledge of its contents.

School briefing sessions were held to inform staff of the new Strategic Development Plan and to seek their views of the process. Drafts of the Strategic Development Plan were posted on the intranet as they evolved along with a background context document.

There was a perception of the Institute as a large, bureaucratic organisation, with ‘bubbles of community culture’, which was for the most part driven by the individual. A genuine interest in assisting students in their learning was highlighted. ‘Constant change’ without sufficient prior consultation was identified as a significant issue, as was a perceived lack of communication ‘from the top down’.

The unique characteristics of GMIT were discussed by the focus groups. GMIT was deemed to be a provider of industry-focused, specialist programmes. Positive relations with industry and the practical approach of the Institute were also highlighted. The Galway city location of GMIT was identified as a major factor in attracting students to the Institute.

In terms of the priority objectives over the next five years, responses varied. The ‘Student Experience’, adaptability, sustainability, greater acknowledgement of people’s views and opinions, increased physical resources, increased flexibility for the student, increased community engagement, the development of blended learning and the development of a sense of community for staff and students formed the ‘wish list’ of objectives.

#### Recommendations

- A less-hierarchical management structure should be adopted. A more collegiate culture should be nurtured, including encouraging greater staff engagement in all Institute activities
- All change initiatives should have a communications strategy.

#### 4.5.9 Trade unions

There is an excellent working relationship between trade unions and GMIT management. Trade unions recognise the strengths of GMIT as the applied nature of the programmes, the team-based approach to developing and delivering new programmes, the relationship between staff and students and the constructive engagement between senior management and the unions.

The culture of the organisation is considered as a constraint (as it is perceived to be generally negative) and GMIT’s willingness to engage in too many new initiatives is perceived as a threat to its identity. The organisation is weak at planning for change, as exemplified by the introduction of modularisation.

#### Recommendations

- Communications need to be improved, especially the idea of setting up mechanisms to communicate good practice
- The positive culture of the organisation needs nurturing and support.
- A staff development plan should include a particular programme to support new line managers, especially Heads of Department
- The Institute should focus on one area, for example teaching, and develop an excellent reputation in this area.

#### 4.5.10 Academic Council

A new Academic Council was elected in May, 2010. The previous Academic Council held office for the previous three years and was surveyed in June 2010. The response indicated a high level of satisfaction with how the Council operated. The most significant development over the life of the council was the move to Ordinary Degrees from National Diplomas, followed by the updating of existing codes and approval of new codes and policies.

#### Recommendations

- Sub-committees should report on their activities more regularly to the Academic Council
- Assessment methodologies and strategies need to be a key focus for the new Council
- More staff engagement with the operation and decisions of the Council is needed.

#### 4.6 Prospective students and enrolments

In addition to the consultations with specific stakeholder groups, student application numbers indicate public confidence in GMIT.

In 2009/10, 6,201 applicants selected GMIT as their first choice of programme study on the Central Applications Office (CAO) system. Furthermore, in excess of 25,000 mentions (preferences 1–10) were made of GMIT in CAO applications to first year programmes.

In 2008/09 GMIT had 9,000 students and 11,576 have graduated over the period 2005/06 to 2009/10.

Such student demand exemplifies the esteem in which the Institute is held.

#### 4.7 Graduate achievements

GMIT students have performed at a high level in national and international competitions in recent years, which endorses their significant achievements. Noteworthy student achievements include:

- winning the nationwide Newstalk competition in 2007, which led to GMIT students travelling to Haiti to work on a project placement there
- winning the 2009 Crafts Council of Ireland Student Designer of the Year Award
- winning the 2009 Wood Marketing Federation Competition.

Graduates and their achievements also emphasise the excellent foundation to their careers built at GMIT. Some graduate profiles are included in the appendices attached.

## 4.8 Conclusions

The comprehensive stakeholder consultation process has been immensely beneficial in establishing that GMIT is well positioned to capitalise on its strengths and that public confidence in it is well founded.

It is clear that GMIT is highly regarded, by students, staff and external bodies alike, as an Institute that values and prioritises the 'student experience' and provides graduates with practical, applied and industry-focused skills that are relevant to employment. GMIT engages in a meaningful way with industry and the community at large in the immediate locality and the wider region.

GMIT is well positioned to capitalise on its strengths and build on its current programme offerings, and to develop further programmes and initiatives in strategic consultation with employers and other stakeholders. Key industry stakeholders have strong confidence in GMIT and felt that it should not fear changes in the sector, owing to its 'solid reputation' as one of the leading institutes in Ireland. The future positioning of the Institute in the area of 'development and innovation' would, it was felt, serve to strengthen this.

The stakeholder consultation process will result in positive outcomes and actions. Decisions have already been made on the basis of feedback generated, such as the decision to set up a learning and teaching unit, the development of a Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy, the establishment of a pilot project for reporting information and the beginning of realignment of management structures with the pillars of the Strategic Development Plan.

From the consultations undertaken, the student is the centre of the Institute's focus. Perhaps one of the best barometers of the Institute's performance is the expressed opinion of those it exists to serve – the students. Ninety per cent of students who participated in the online survey (November 2009) rated their educational experience at GMIT as either 'excellent' or 'good'.

# Chapter 5 - Quality assurance

## 5.1 Introduction

'Quality assurance refers to the mechanisms and procedures adopted by providers to assure a given quality, or the continued improvement of quality.'<sup>2</sup>

The Institute aims to foster a quality culture in all its activities through a process of continuous enhancement and improvement.

GMIT aims to ensure that its students, as active learners, together with all the staff of the Institute, assure the quality of learning and teaching.

## 5.2 Policy and procedures for quality assurance

'Quality assurance refers to the mechanisms and procedures adopted by providers to assure a given quality, or the continued improvement of quality.'<sup>2</sup>

The quality assurance framework in GMIT is informed by the following standards, guidelines and procedures:

- European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
- HETAC Standards and Guidelines
- The National Framework of Qualifications and the Bologna Declaration
- Policies and Procedures approved by the Institute's Academic Council and Governing Body
- Relevant regulatory and professional requirements.

The Academic Council is responsible for developing and implementing policies for academic quality assurance in the design, delivery and assessment of programmes. These policies encourage the continuous enhancement of academic standards and quality, and ensure a focus on the relevance of provision. Codes of Practice and Policies in the quality framework are as follows:

<sup>2</sup> HETAC. 2002. 'Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures in Higher Education and Training'

### GMIT Academic codes of practice

No	Title
1	Academic Council: Functions and Procedures (21-01-2010)
2	Academic Quality Assurance (19-02-2009)
3	Student Assessments: Marks and Standards (18-02-2010)
4	Access, Transfer and Progression (25-03-2010)
5	Research (25-03-2010)
6	Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) (09-12-2009)
7	Code of Student Conduct (July 2009)

### GMIT Academic polices

1	Process and Procedures for the Management of Ethics: Research Projects (27-05-2010)
2	Plagiarism (09-12-2009)
3	Garda Vetting (21-01-2010)
4	Learning, Teaching and Assessment (27-05-2010)
5	Nursing Clinical Placement (GMIT / HSE West. Discipline for BSc (Honours) in Nursing students during clinical placements) (02-07-2009)
6	Equality Policy for Students (17-04-2008)
7	External Examining (27-05-2010)

**Table 5.1 Academic quality assurance framework**

GMIT's strong quality culture is underpinned by the framework outlined above. This is further evidenced by the willingness of staff to:

- Engage effectively with the Academic Council, programme boards and the external examining process
- Participate in the process of rectifying problems that may arise in the implementation of the quality framework
- Develop new programmes and awards
- Undertake continuous professional development (CPD)
- Employ new teaching and assessment methodologies.

The quality assurance framework is implemented uniformly across all campuses and outreach activities. Students are an integral part of the quality assurance process through their representation on Institute committees, programme boards and programmatic review boards.

Attracting, retaining and supporting students are key objectives of the Institute's quality assurance system. A new training programme to assist students in their engagement with Institute committees will be delivered starting in September, 2010.

### Academic scholarships

Each year GMIT has awards nine scholarships to first-year students based on academic merit. The award winners are those who received the highest points in the Leaving Certificate and are currently studying programmes in each school / centre in GMIT.

GMIT is committed to the implementation of the Bologna Declaration. Evidence of this is shown in table 5.2 which sets out key improvements in quality assurance during the period under review.

### What we have done

The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) is based on learning outcomes and all programmes in GMIT were redesigned to focus on learning outcomes.

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) has been implemented across the Institute with modules based on five or multiples of five credits.

Modularisation: GMIT was the first institute to introduce modularisation in Ireland. Lessons learned informed national policy. A national approach to modularisation is now established.

Student Centred Learning:

- First Year Experience (PAL + L2L)
- Learner Choice Modules (LCMs)
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

GMIT is participating in an EU Benchmarking in Higher Education Project in the areas of university enterprise and co-operation and curriculum reform.

### Where we are now

The learning outcomes approach is an integral part of design, delivery and assessment of programmes including part of programmatic reviews.

All modules are aligned to the ECTS system.

GMIT has adopted a flexible curriculum framework. A national sectoral approach to modularisation has been agreed.

The new Strategic Development Plan has a strong focus on Student Centred Learning, which will impact on teaching and assessment methodologies.

The project is primarily concentrating on developing a benchmarking methodology and process.

### Proposals

Harness the potential of the learning outcomes approach to support innovation in design, delivery and assessment.

Evaluate total workload assigned to similar five-credit modules at the same level to ensure consistency and balance across awards.

Adopt a more interdisciplinary approach to programme design. Develop new awards from the same broad programme.

The creation of a learning and teaching unit and the implementation of the RPL policy in the region in conjunction with NUIG.

Both strands are proceeding to the benchmarking phase with up to ten participating countries which will offer significant institutional learning to GMIT.

**Table 5.2 Key quality assurance improvements**

To continue to inform and enhance improvements in the quality assurance system, GMIT plans to undertake a regional and employer survey on the quality of provision, and compare findings with the findings of the graduate survey.

### 5.2.1 Quality assurance of research

Academic Code of Practice no. 5 sets out policy and procedures for research. This code of practice complies with 'Taught and Research Programme Accreditation – Policy, Criteria and Processes' issued by HETAC.

Thirty-seven awards at Masters level and ten awards at PhD level were conferred over the last five years. Currently there are 60 students undertaking research Masters and PhDs at GMIT, of which 37 are in areas for which there is delegated authority (diagram 3.2). The quality of Masters and Doctoral research enabled the Institute to achieve delegated authority to make awards at levels 9 and 10 for Aquatic Science and Mechanical Engineering.

In addition to these two delegated authority research areas, the Institute has HETAC approval to offer levels 9 and 10 in the following fields of research:

#### Level 9 / Research Masters

- Heritage Studies
- Tourism
- History of Arts
- Religious Studies
- Business Studies
- Life and Physical Science
- Environmental Science
- Information Technology
- Electrical Engineering

#### Level 10/ PhD

- Environmental Science
- Heritage Studies

**Table 5.3 GMIT postgraduate accredited disciplines**

In consideration of the importance of research to the Institute's mission, a Head of Research was appointed at senior executive grade.

Some issues emerged over the last two years, which the Research Office identified as:

- Transfer from Masters register to PhD register in non-delegated and approved research programmes
- The non-compliance of external review for self-funded projects and the registration of self-funded postgraduate students.

The Institute has already dealt with these matters and is currently reviewing its procedures to prevent such issues arising in the future. An outcome is a requirement for Academic Council approval prior to a transfer taking place. No issues have arisen in research areas where the Institute has delegated authority.

A review of delegated authority for the research area is due to take place in December 2010.

## 5.3 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards

### 5.3.1 New programme approval

GMIT has robust quality assurance procedures for the approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards (Code of Practice no. 2). All policies and procedures were thoroughly reviewed and updated during the term of the last Academic council. All new programmes must be aligned to the Strategic Development Plan. The Institute is effective in developing new programmes as evidenced by the success rate in table 7.1 in chapter 7.

A new innovation that should support the development of new programmes is the Module Manager System (MMS), which facilitates the design team to gain access to and use approved modules.

### 5.3.2 Programme monitoring

HETAC (2002, 'Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance procedures in Higher Education and Training', para 3.3) suggests the ongoing monitoring of programmes should address these three issues:

- Does the programme remain current and valid?
- Are the intended learning outcomes being met by students on the programme?
- What is the appropriateness of assessment methodologies and curricula in relation to outcomes?

The Institute's Code of Practice no. 2 assigns responsibility to Heads of School, Centre or Department in this regard. The proposed Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) will include a review of the documentation underpinning this process and the follow-up actions that arise from it. Student feedback received at year end for each programme will also be considered.

The introduction of new programmes and termination or suspension of existing programmes are considered annually in the preparation of the Academic Plan. Criteria used for the suspension or termination of a programme are outlined in section 5.12 of Code of Practice no. 2. This process results in a portfolio of programmes that are relevant to students' needs and industry and regional requirements.

In addition to the formal approval and validation process for new programmes, there is the process through which amendments can subsequently be made to validated programmes. Such changes are effected through the Standards Sub-committee of Academic Council. The evolutionary nature of the current system for amending existing programmes is an equally important dimension in the Institute's quality assurance system.

The Programme Boards monitor the delivery of programmes and student performance. Programme Boards are effective, as evidenced in their reports to the Academic Council and feedback from external examiners. Annual quality assurance reports from the Programme Boards are considered by the Academic Council and any necessary action is taken.

### 5.3.3 Programmatic review

Periodic formal evaluation of programmes is an important means of ensuring that:

- The required standards are attained
- Quality improvements are made to programmes
- Programmes remain relevant to the needs of students and industry.

GMIT has carried out Programmatic Reviews in all of its Schools or Centres within the past five years in line with Code of Practice no. 2 (set out in table 7.2 chapter 7).

In addition, GMIT carried out quality reviews of its support services within the last three years. In relation to these reviews, virtually all of the outcomes recommended by the external review panels had previously been identified in the internal self-study exercise, which reflects the effectiveness of the process.

The panels involved with the academic programmatic reviews were broadly satisfied and the overall consensus in the reports was positive. Some summary comments on the outcomes of the process were:

- The panels were impressed by the programme chairs and their level of commitment
- The students were very confident and proud of the Institute. They acknowledged very good collaboration between lecturers and students
- Panels considered the introduction of the FYE as very positive
- More work is required to align learning outcomes to the NFQ level in some programmes
- Retention is an issue in all schools
- Opportunities exist to better exploit the potential of graduates and alumni
- Improved feedback mechanisms should be developed
- A greater range of flexible part-time learning opportunities should be provided
- More placement opportunities should be provided to students
- More career advice and preparation needs to be provided to students.

Following reflection on the programmatic review process, GMIT needs to:

- Improve engagements with alumni
- Offer more flexible part-time offerings
- Offer placement or work experience in more programmes
- Develop further initiatives to deal with attrition
- Provide greater support to students in career planning.

On completion of these programmatic reviews, a focus group was held with the Heads of School and Department to review the effectiveness of the programmatic review process. This is the first time GMIT has formally reflected on the effectiveness of the programmatic review process. In future all staff should be consulted on the effectiveness of the process and the findings should inform future improvements.

#### 5.3.4 Minor, special purpose and supplemental awards

Approval procedures and evaluation criteria for minor, special purpose and supplementary awards are outlined in Code of Practice no. 2. These awards are governed by the same policies and procedures that apply to major awards. The development and management of these awards is still in its infancy (set out in table 7.1 in chapter 7), but GMIT recognises that this area will grow as the Institute becomes more modular and flexible in its programme offerings.

## 5.4 Assessment of students

### 5.4.1 Policy and procedures

In accordance with Section 23(e) of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999, GMIT has established procedures for the assessment of students, which are fair and consistent (Academic Code of Practice no. 3).

Assessment processes in GMIT have changed in recent years and continue to develop. Some innovative examples of student assessment include:

- Engineering students final year poster presentations
- Manufacture of furniture prototypes
- Event organisation and management
- Exhibition of print, drawings, sculptures and art work.

During the next academic year programme boards will devise programme assessment strategies in line with the HETAC Assessments and Standards (2009) document. This will bring greater transparency and accountability to the assessment process.

### 5.4.2 Procedures for examination boards

The roles and responsibilities of internal and external examiners are outlined in Code of Practice no. 3. All internal and external examiners are members of the Progression and Award Boards.

### 5.4.3 Procedures for external examiners

A revised policy for external examiners, in line with HETAC guidelines, was approved by the Academic Council in May 2010. The policy requires further engagement of the external examiner with continuous assessment. The policy also includes providing feedback to external examiners on the status of implementing their recommendations.

Reports from external examiners are considered by the Programme Board and the degree of implementation of the external examiners' recommendations is indicated in the Programme Board annual report.

Procedures for the appointment of external examiners are outlined in the revised policy and will be reviewed in the coming academic year by the Learning, Teaching and Assessment sub-committee of Academic Council.

Following the introduction of modularisation, the role of external examiner was refocused, and results must now be agreed by the internal and external examiners in advance of the Progression and Award Boards.

Continued focus on the independence of external examiners is needed, particularly in the context of collaborations between HEIs that may evolve in the future.

#### 5.4.4 Procedures for student recheck, review and appeal of assessments

Students are issued with the Code of Student Conduct during first year induction. This document is also available on the Institute website. The Code of Student Conduct contains definitions and clear procedures for rechecking and reviewing examination results. Appeals may be made in relation to extraneous circumstances. These procedures are also communicated to students by Heads of Department.

GMIT has established an Aegrotat Board to adjudicate on all cases in the Institute concerning inability to attend an examination or impaired examination performance. This aims to ensure fairness and consistency of treatment across the Institute and there is a high level of awareness of the Board among the student body. The operation of the Aegrotat board is constantly under review.

Consultation days are held following release of results so that students can see examination scripts and discuss their performance and concerns with staff. Students may also request a copy of their script under freedom of information (FOI).

#### 5.4.5 Assessment of students with disabilities

GMIT follows national best practice guidelines as advised by the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) when providing alternative assessment methods and exam accommodations students with disabilities. Staff workshops and training sessions on alternative assessment and examination approaches have been of benefit to students, including those with disabilities.

#### 5.4.6 Student retention

There has been a decline in the pass rate (numbers passing / numbers sitting) from 86% in 2004/05 to 74% in 2008/09 (diagram 1.16 to 1.20). The steepest decline occurred in the first two years of programmes where the comparative figures were 80% to 65% in year 1 and 85% to 68% in year 2. This is one of the prime challenges facing GMIT.

Student retention and achievement is considered by programme boards at each of their meetings, and in particular by the progression and award boards that take place after each examination session. Programme boards report to Academic Council on retention, and considerable attention is paid to retention and achievement at executive board level. Due to the concern at a decline in achievement, the Executive Board has taken an Institute-wide approach to both the analysis of retention and achievement and initiatives to deal with the issues arising.

Substantial work has been done on the first year of programmes to address student retention and achievement at the earliest stage. In September 2009, GMIT introduced the First Year Experience (FYE), which incorporates initiatives such as Peer Assisted Learning and Learning to Learn. The impact of FYE on first-year results is not yet known, but analysis of results, together with student feedback, will inform decisions for further developments.

The Executive Board, in conjunction with the Management Group, convened four working groups to deal with issues that impact on student retention and achievement:

- Registration
- Student attendance
- Timetabling
- Assessment.

Work has commenced on each of these areas and will be a key focus of the Management Group for 2010/11.

### 5.5 Quality assurance of teaching staff

#### 5.5.1 Staff recruitment

GMIT continues to be successful at attracting good-quality staff who are industry oriented and experienced in their discipline. Staff recruitment follows the nationally agreed criteria, procedures and qualifications for each post.

GMIT plans to better support new appointees who do not have a teaching qualification to undertake modules from either the post-graduate certificate or diploma in the post-graduate education programme at NUIG or AIT.

GMIT's staff induction programme needs to be reviewed.

#### 5.5.2 Support for and recognition of teaching excellence

The Institute recognises the benefits of establishing a Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) Unit. The President has requested a senior executive to propose a suitable model for this unit.

An initiative since the last review was the establishment in 2007 of the President's Award for Teaching Excellence. The annual President's Award recognises and rewards teaching of a particularly high standard and recognises that excellence in teaching can arise in a wide variety of ways. This award has been well received in the Institute and has enhanced peer recognition for excellence.

#### 5.5.3 Staff development

In March 2004 the Institute developed a staff development policy. The policy is considered to be effective by staff focus groups. Table 5.4 outlines the staff qualifications obtained since the last review.

Qualification	Numbers
PhD	3
Masters	36
Professional Qualification	5
Postgraduate Diploma	3
Postgraduate Certificate	6
Bachelor Degree	19
Diploma	7
Certificate	12
Special Purpose Certificate	2
TOTAL	93

**Table 5.4 Qualifications obtained under staff development 2004–2009**

The Performance Management Development System (PMDS) was referred to in chapter 2.

The Learning Innovation Network (LIN) project was a three-year collaborative project between the 13 Irish IoTs and DIT, and was jointly led by GMIT and DIT. LIN was established to enhance the delivery of core educational activities through collaboration and reform, and to support innovation and quality improvements in learning and teaching. GMIT staff engaged in various workshops that supported their educational role throughout the Institute.



## 5.6 Learning resources and student support

GMIT continues to allocate substantial resources to support student learning. In addition to a large number of lecture theatres and rooms, specialist laboratories, workshops and kitchens, the Institute has modern library facilities on all campuses and extensive IT infrastructure and services.

The library and Moodle (Learning Management System) were the two most significant learning resources highlighted by both staff and students in a focus group review of services provided.

*Recent developments in renewable energy provided the School of Engineering with an opportunity to open Ireland's first online energy training laboratory in 2009. The laboratory has state-of-the-art renewable energy generation and dissipation systems, which are fully functional and accessible online, all geared towards up-skilling, training and research, and thereby fulfilling Government policy on sustainable energy and reduction of CO2 emissions.*

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### 5.6.1 The library

The Institute has library facilities located on each of Dublin Road, Castlebar, Cluain Mhuire and Letterfrack campuses. Mountbellew students use the Dublin Road library.

The Library continues to be a critical learning resource at GMIT. Surveys highlight that the quality of service is meeting expectations. There is a concern that it is an under-used resource, and library staff commonly cite that the recent trend to automatically 'Google for everything' is of concern to them, as it distracts students from the scholarly resources available in the library. To help counter this, a number of new initiatives have been devised, one example is the development of an 'Information Skills Training' element to be incorporated into GMIT's 'Learning to Learn' module.

*The distinguished theologian, Rev. Professor Enda McDonagh, Maynooth, donated his personal library of some 15,000 volumes and his private papers to the Castlebar Campus of GMIT. It is a huge addition to the campus and was officially opened in April 2009 by Dr. Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland.*

### 5.6.2 Information technology

The Computing Services Department is responsible for the provision of appropriate IT facilities, services, support, and training to fulfil the IT requirements of the Institute's academic and administrative staff and students. There are 42 designated IT laboratories and approximately 1,100 PCs available for students across the Institute.

In November 2009 the department undertook a 'Self-Evaluation and Quality Assurance Review'. The results show that the quality of IT services was rated as being 'Good' to 'Very good' by the majority of respondents.

### 5.6.3 Education technology and services

GMIT is committed to embracing technology to enhance learning and teaching. One example is the implementation of Moodle, which has the functionality required to facilitate active learning.

One of the recommendations in the learning resources review is to: 'Develop initiatives for staff in areas such as instructional design, e-moderating, innovation in pedagogy etc., to enable them to make better use of emerging technologies as well as those already in place.' This will be a focus of the new learning and teaching unit.

The learning resources review also details various other technologies and services that are available, some examples include:

- GMIT's European Computer Driver's Licence (ECDL) programme, which is available online through Moodle and was considered to be a 'valuable service provided by GMIT' in the Computing Services student survey. GMIT is the only Irish higher education institute to fully fund ECDL for all staff and students
- The Letterfrack and Castlebar campuses have benefited hugely from increased broadband capacity, resulting in the capability to develop distance learning resources and activities, which are crucial to these campuses.

### 5.6.4 Student learning support

The Independent Learning Unit is based in the library on the Dublin Road campus. The unit contains a range of equipment and software intended to make the academic challenge easier for those with disabilities.

Staff training is provided for exams office staff, lecturing and administrative staff on issues affecting students with disabilities.

## 5.7 Information systems

GMIT's management information system (MIS) is comprised of a number of individual information systems, some of which are hosted off-site.

### 5.7.1 Banner

GMIT was one of the lead institutes for the introduction of the Banner Student Record System, which was implemented nationally in the institutes of technology sector from 2002. The Institute led the design of a modularisation framework proof of concept in 2006, in conjunction with An Chéim.

The Banner system currently in place operates well where the design of programmes is more rigid and the delivery of programmes is on a stage basis. However, with the introduction of modularisation, and the flexibility required to allow students follow alternative pathways to an approved award, the rigidity of the current system is proving to be a significant constraint. As a consequence, the institutes have now identified that by reverting to 'baseline' Banner and fully implementing a core module of the system called CAPP (Curriculum Advisory and Programme Planning), the functionality available to support ongoing programme design and development will be significantly enhanced.

GMIT is part of the national advisory steering committee on the implementation of the modularisation framework.

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### 5.7.2 Module Manager System (MMS)

This system was introduced as part of the SIF II project 'Student Leadership'. It was first developed in IT Sligo and has now been implemented in GMIT, Athlone IT and Limerick IT. These institutes are now collaborating on further developments to the system.

All of the modules currently approved by the Institute are available on MMS. The system will be the definitive resource for information on all modules offered or in development. Students will be able to view relevant programme and module information on the system to assist them in making informed decisions in relation to elective modules.

### 5.7.3 Information reporting environment in GMIT

Evidence-based decision making is a pre-requisite for effective management and leadership. GMIT, like the IOT sector in general, has a deficit in this area. This has been highlighted as a common issue across the organisation in the course of this review. To address this, a pilot project – using QlikView to develop an information dashboard – is about to commence.

## 5.8 Internal audit

The function of internal audit in GMIT is to conduct a programme of continuous review of the effectiveness of internal control systems, which provides reasonable assurance of operational efficiency, reliable financial reporting, and compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

In compliance with the Code of Governance for Third Level Institutions, a risk management system has been developed. An Institute risk register has been compiled.

An annual internal audit plan is developed after discussion with both management and Audit Committee following review of the risk register. The following were the areas of internal audit focus during the period 2005–2010:

- Internal financial control review
- Timetabling
- Approved course schedules
- Management structures and decision making
- Research and self-funding projects
- Marketing
- HR recruitment process
- Payroll review
- Sick leave
- ISO 17799 (2005) compliance gap analysis
- Institutes of technology information technology review
- Room audits.

## 5.9 Public information

### 5.9.1 Programme details

The Institute publishes details on all its programmes and awards online and in print. Details of programme offerings are also advertised in the local and national media including radio.

### 5.9.2 European Diploma Supplement (EDS)

Graduates receive the European Diploma Supplement (EDS) immediately after conferring. GMIT is planning to incorporate the programme learning outcomes into the EDS within the next two years. This is a requirement of the Bologna Declaration.

### 5.9.3 Annual report and audited financial statements

The annual report and audited financial statements are published each year.

### 5.9.4 Public relations

The GMIT Communications Office is attached to the President's Office and is effective, as evidenced by the number of publications and media impressions. The main public event for GMIT each year is its graduation ceremony, which takes place in November.

## 5.10 Conclusion

GMIT's quality framework is fit for purpose and underpins the confidence the public has in its awards and the quality of its graduates. Employers have indicated high levels of satisfaction with the quality of GMIT graduates entering the workplace. Graduates themselves recognise and appreciate the knowledge, skills and competences they gained by studying at GMIT.

A strong quality culture exists in the Institute, where quality assurance and quality enhancement is the focus of all staff.

The ongoing, continuous review and improvement of QA in all of GMIT's activities will ensure that the present high standards are maintained, as will innovations such as the FYE programme, online student surveys, planned employer surveys, the establishment of the Aegrotat Board, participation in the Learning Innovation Network (LIN) and the development of a Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) strategy.

# Chapter 6 - Qualifications framework, access, transfer and progression

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## 6.1 Background to the National Framework of Qualifications

Arising from the implementation of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999, a National Framework of Qualifications of 10 levels was established by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI). The framework is based on a learning outcomes philosophy with standards of knowledge, skills and competences established for each level.

## 6.2 Extent to which GMIT has implemented the framework

GMIT began implementing the new framework of qualifications in September 2005. During the academic year 2004/05, all programmes were revised in accordance with HETAC guidelines. GMIT organised numerous staff seminars on the framework and its implications at that time.

Overall, GMIT staff adapted well to the new framework, and work continues to ensure the potential benefits of the framework are realised.

## 6.3 Access, transfer and progression (ATP)

### 6.3.1 Introduction

To best support students, the NQAI has published a framework for the development and recognition of all aspects of access, transfer and progression. This framework has shaped the Institute's response to access, transfer and progression. GMIT's Code of Practice no. 4 outlines how the Institute manages all aspects of access, transfer and progression opportunities for all students. The Institute is also guided in this by the GMIT Equality Policy.

The traditional progression route in institutes of technology was by means of a '2-year plus 1-year plus 1-year' ladder system. This ladder system of progression affords students the benefits of gaining qualifications on a stage basis. In addition, it provides flexibility by allowing individuals to transfer between higher education institutions (where arrangements are in place). GMIT has adapted this traditional route to a 3-year plus 1-year model and, in some cases, an ab initio 3-year model (accounting) or a 3-year plus 2-year bachelor model (engineering). The system of qualifications in GMIT enables a student to embark on a three-year ordinary bachelor degree (with an exit qualification option at the end of year two), and then spend one year studying for an add-on honours bachelor degree.

### 6.3.2 Access

*Access – the process by which learners may commence a programme of education and training having received recognition for knowledge, skill or competence required.*

GMIT is committed to the national 'access' strategy, whereby it proactively encourages and facilitates the participation of mature students, students with disabilities, students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, members of the Traveller community and students from ethnic minority backgrounds. Its success is clear from the participation rates, with 25% of the GMIT student body categorised as 'access' students. GMIT understands that barriers to equal participation exist. Since 2004, initiatives have been undertaken to provide real opportunities for equality for these target groups of students.

GMIT has considered all aspects of the Higher Education Authority (HEA) National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008–2013 and this document will significantly influence the GMIT Access Strategy. In addition, the Admissions Committee at GMIT, a sub-committee of the Academic Council, meet and review special admission considerations as required.

GMIT has focused on restructuring mainstream teaching and learning to facilitate equality for all students. To support this, GMIT has one full-time access officer, three learning support tutors and a part-time administrator.

*In response to high failure rates in mathematics in the Leaving Certificate, GMIT developed an access programme – Enabling Maths. Approximately 60% of candidates on the access programme achieve the required standard for entry to third-level education. This model is now being considered by other institutes.*

### 6.3.3 Mature students

GMIT supports mature students by offering a number of pre-entry initiatives to provide participants with the skills and knowledge necessary to pursue full-time third level education. Examples include a transparent and supportive selection process and the provision of additional support with orientation, tuition and learning support when attending college.

First-year mature student numbers in GMIT have grown from 148 in 2004/05 to 367 in 2009/10 (diagram 1.14). In 2008/09 there were 649 mature students in full-time study at GMIT. Between 2004 and 2008, over 400 adults participated on the FETAC Foundation Certificate, with a further 300 participating on the Joint Foundation Programmes in Business, Science and Engineering offered in partnership with NUI Galway.

In 2008 GMIT received additional funding for the development of access programmes for mature students from the national Dormant Accounts Funding Initiative.

In 2008/09 GMIT also received funding under the Labour Market Activation Initiative to develop an accelerated Access Programme for people that were unemployed. This was an intensive programme in

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maths, IT, communications and writing skills with considerable support, advice and guidance. Thirty people were selected for the programme; the majority of applicants were young men that had previously worked in construction. Of the 30 participants selected, 27 completed the programme and all were offered direct admission to full-time degree programmes. Twenty-five of them took up this offer and progressed to GMIT.

#### 6.3.4 Students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties

GMIT actively supports students with disabilities and aims to ensure all necessary accommodations are in place. The Institute has developed a range of supports and services in this context.

GMIT is responding well to a national increase in the number of students presenting with disabilities and learning difficulties. The number of students with disabilities registered with the Access service rose from 74 in 2004/05 to 235 in 2008/09 (diagram 4.11).

#### 6.3.5 Initiatives to address educational disadvantage

Addressing educational disadvantage and social exclusion is also a key part of GMIT's access strategy. In 2007 GMIT developed and implemented an Access Scholarship Scheme for leaving certificate students from disadvantaged backgrounds. In 2008, 12 students received entry on reduced points, financial assistance, support and additional tuition under this scheme. In 2009, a further ten scholarships and additional supports were granted to students and this initiative was incorporated into the Admissions Policy of the Institute.

GMIT currently has three members of the Traveller community registered with the Access Office and availing of supports. In addition, a further 13 members of the Traveller community attended an outreach Higher Certificate in Business in Enterprise Development. GMIT has had considerable success in attracting members of the Traveller community onto the FETAC Foundation Certificate and ten people have successfully completed this programme over the past five years.

GMIT operates the Student Assistance Fund on behalf of the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education. This provides students experiencing financial difficulties with additional funding to facilitate their participation in third-level education.

#### *Access: to the unemployed*

*The Castlebar campus, in conjunction with the local Social Welfare office, has worked with unemployed construction workers in the Mayo region to encourage a return to education. The programme offered to this cohort of learners is the Bachelor of Science in Construction in Refurbishment and Maintenance.*

GMIT received funding from the HEA Dormant Accounts Initiative to further develop links with schools and young people at risk of early school leaving. In addition, the Institute also applied for and was granted funding under the Dormant Accounts Initiative.

#### 6.3.6 Special Sports and Cultural Achievement Scheme (SSCA)

The GMIT SSCA scheme is a special entry scheme targeted at outstanding sportspersons and those who have made a significant contribution to cultural activities. Ten additional places are reserved for candidates who are committed to further developing their sporting, cultural and academic careers.

#### 6.3.7 Transfer

*Transfer – the process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another programme having received recognition for knowledge, skill or competence acquired.*

GMIT encourages applications from students who wish to transfer to another programme in GMIT. In recent years there is an increasing trend to transfer to the same level but a different award.

GMIT accepts applications from external students wishing to transfer from other higher education institutions to continue their studies. GMIT students are also eligible to transfer to other higher education institutions.

Transfer within first year of a programme is restricted by CAO guidelines.

#### 6.3.8 Progression

*Progression – the process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another programme, where each programme is of a higher level than the preceding programme.*

Progression opportunities must be considered in each programme review and new programme development. Virtually every programme at GMIT offers progression opportunities up to level 8. Current exceptions are in the areas of film and television, architectural technology and quantity surveying.

#### 6.4 Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

*Recognition of prior learning is a means by which prior learning is formally identified, assessed and acknowledged.*

RPL is a system whereby learning acquired through certified programmes and/or through experience can be acknowledged as a basis for entry to formal programmes of study, and/or for gaining exemptions from parts of programmes of study.

The purpose of RPL is to expand access to programmes and awards, and facilitate the recognition of knowledge, skills and competence that people have gained through experience.

#### Access via RPL

*Edmund completed 50 credits of a Higher Certificate in Business Studies via Accumulation of Credits and Certification of Subjects (ACCS) mode. This, combined with recognition of his prior experiential learning, enabled him to progress into an add-on Diploma in Accounting and Financial Management (level 7). He completed this over 2 years on an ACCS basis, taking 30 credits in each year. He then transferred to another HEI as a full-time student and completed an honours degree in accounting (level 8). He is now the financial controller of a regional SME.*

GMIT has developed and approved Code of Practice no. 6 in relation to RPL. In June 2010 training was provided for staff from each school to better inform the implementation of RPL.

Industry workshops held in November 2009 suggested a lack of awareness or familiarity with RPL. In response, the Institute is working with NUIG to embark on a regional promotional campaign from September 2010 to create awareness of the benefits of RPL.

### 6.5 GMIT's participation in national and regional policies and initiatives

GMIT has an excellent record in responding to national and regional requirements, and continues to support national strategy developments in ATP.

In particular, the Institute will continue to promote initiatives to provide entry routes for Lifelong Learners based on previous work experience.

### 6.6 Relationships with secondary schools and further education entities

The Institute continues to seek to develop relationships with secondary schools and further education entities. Following the last institutional review, the Institute appointed a schools liaison officer. This has significantly improved communication with secondary schools, leaving certificate applicants, as well as mature applicants, and under-represented groups.

Currently the Institute reserves a minimum of 5% of places on all programmes for applicants with FETAC qualifications seeking entry to third-level education. It has special arrangements in place for transfer at advanced entry level for FETAC level 6 holders and works closely with Galway Technical Institute in this regard.

In February 2010 GMIT formed a working group to better engage with Galway City Vocational Education Committee (VEC) students. The group made recommendations on measures which will enhance access and transition to GMIT programmes. In addition, the group made recommendations on improving mutual knowledge and understanding. A proposed plan of action has been drawn up and will be implemented from September 2010.

### 6.7 Modes of delivery

All schools in GMIT offer some variety in programme delivery (full-time, part-time, block of study, online delivery) to best accommodate student's needs. Students can take up to 55 credits of study per year using the ACCS route. Examples of delivery modes include:

- Innovative approaches from the BA in Heritage Studies staff have resulted in the five-credit modules, Rural Field Course and Urban Field Course being delivered off-site over a period of one week
- The Hotel School offers programmes in culinary arts and restaurant and bar service which allow participants to continue working full time
- In response to the passing into law of the Official Languages Act, GMIT ran a special purpose award programme off-site for legal translators.

#### Flexible learning

*GMIT is part of a recent national flexible learning initiative – BlueBrick.ie. This portal enables applicants to search for, compare and apply online for a range of programmes and modules available on a flexible basis from the Institutes of Technology.*

GMIT is committed to offering greater flexibility and choice in its range of delivery mechanisms. Specific areas currently being considered for further development are:

- Greater promotion and access to lifelong learning
- Further developments in technology-based teaching approaches including on-line delivery
- Workplace-based offerings.

### 6.8 Lifelong learning

GMIT has two lifelong learning centres, one at the Dublin Road campus and one in Castlebar. Their purpose is the organisation and promotion of part-time accredited and non-accredited courses. The mission is to promote and deliver best practice in lifelong learning at GMIT for people making the transition into, through and beyond higher education. On average 2,000 students attend lifelong learning programmes at GMIT annually.

*A recent programme innovation in lifelong learning is the adaptation of 6-sigma, lean manufacturing and project management modules by the School of Engineering to attain dual academic and professional accreditation.*

The NQAI framework, which allows minor, supplementary and special purpose awards to be made, offers exciting opportunities, particularly in lifelong learning. The current offerings are set out in table 7.1 in chapter 7.

### 6.9 Conclusion

In general, the increased diversity of the student body over the last five years reflects GMIT's successful access initiatives and support for all students. The Institute is committed to building on its experience and undertaking initiatives in modes of delivery, lifelong learning and RPL, to improve access and encourage greater participation.

# Chapter 7 - Operation and review of delegated authority

The institutional review process covered all the areas for which GMIT has delegated authority.

## 7.1 Background

Delegated authority has been given by HETAC to GMIT to make awards under Section 29 of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 for approved programmes. As previously outlined, GMIT has delegated authority to make its own awards up to level 9 for all taught programmes and for research awards at levels 9 and 10 in two disciplines – Aquatic Science and Mechanical Engineering. All of the Institute's quality assurance policies and procedures were approved by HETAC in 2003 and have been revised on a continuous basis since.

## 7.2 Delegated authority in GMIT

The granting of delegated authority to GMIT was a public acknowledgement of the overall maturity, confidence and competence of the organisation to manage its own awards in a responsible and professional manner within the guidelines provided by HETAC and its statutory obligations. Delegated authority has had the following positive effects:

- It raised the ambition of the Institute to take new initiatives within its resources. For example, developing new programmes, replacing non-viable programmes, developing curricula to incorporate learning outcomes and altering its offerings from a 2-year plus 1-year plus 1-year model to 3-years plus 1-year with embedded awards
- A more creative and innovative approach to programme design, delivery and assessment, emphasising flexibility, adaptability and agility was followed
- It offered the Institute the opportunity and confidence to continuously evaluate the relevance and value of its programmes, as well as taking ownership of its activities
- It changed the culture of the organisation to self-regulation, and fostered a spirit of pride and confidence among staff, students, graduates and other stakeholders
- It is a considerable asset in the promotion of the Institute.

GMIT values its delegated authority and has used it in a responsible manner, conscious of the trust placed in it by HETAC and the State, as evidenced by the following:

- New programme proposals are evaluated with great rigour
- Programmatic reviews are up-to-date in all schools and support services have been reviewed
- Codes of academic practice and academic policies were developed and implemented, incorporating all aspects of academic management and quality assurance.

The following programmes were terminated or suspended in recent years:

- Higher Certificate in Engineering in Medical Device Manufacturing
- Bachelor of Science (Ordinary) in Furniture Conservation and Restoration
- Bachelor of Science (Ordinary) in Hotel Information Technology
- Higher Certificate in Electronic Engineering (Castlebar)
- Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Physics and Instrumentation
- Bachelor of Science (Ordinary) in Forest Management and the Environment
- Bachelor of Science (Ordinary) in Architectural Technology (Castlebar).

## 7.3 Programme validation process

Procedures for the design and approval of new programmes are set out in Academic Code of Practice no. 2.

It is a five-stage process:

1. Submission of proposals to the Executive Board for preliminary approval based on rationale, link to the Strategic Development Plan, resourcing, viability and employment opportunities
2. Internal academic review by the standards sub-committee of academic council
3. Independent external validation
4. Approval of academic council
5. Issue of certificate of approval and request to HETAC to include in list of approved awards.

New programmes evaluated from 2005 to 2010 are shown in table 7.1.

Status of New Programmes 2005-2010	Internal Review	Approved - A Rejected - R	External Review	Approved - A Rejected - R
BSc (H) in Design and Technology Education			05/04/2005	A
Higher Diploma in Arts in Education (Technology)			05/04/2005	A
BSc in Internet Technologies	30/05/2006	A	10/11/2006	A
B Eng in Engineering in Energy	27/11/2008	A	22/01/2009	A
BB in Retail & Customer Service Management	28/03/2007	A	27/04/2007	A
	17/11/2008	R		
Master of Business in Strategy & Innovation Management	27/03/2009	A	05/05/2009	A
BB in Retail & Customer Service Management	28/03/2007	A	27/04/2007	A
BB in Tourism Management	19/04/2007	A	10/05/2007	A
HC in Applied Social Studies, Castlebar	15/02/2008	A	23/04/2008	A
BA (O) in Applied Social Studies, Castlebar	15/02/2008	A	23/04/2008	A
BA (O) in Applied Social Studies (Part-time), Castlebar	15/02/2008	A	23/04/2008	A
BSc in Broadband & Mobile Technologies	18/12/2006	R		
BSc in Mobile & Broadband Systems	02/10/2007	A	10/12/2007	R
BA (H) in Applied Social Studies, Castlebar	15/02/2008	A	23/04/2008	A
BB in Event Management & PR	11/05/2007	A	05/06/2007	A
	26/09/2007			
B Eng (H) in Civil Engineering	(after 2 reviews)	A	11/12/2008	A
Masters in Environmental Management	07/04/2008	A	16/12/2008	A
H C in Business in Tourism			13/11/2009	A
H C in Arts in Bar Supervision		Migration of national awards	13/11/2009	A
H C in Arts in Hospitality			13/11/2009	A
H C in Arts in Culinary Arts			13/11/2009	A
H Dip in Business	14/04/2010	A	28/04/2010	A
Postgraduate Diploma in Business in Accounting	13/04/2010	A	29/04/2010	
<b>SPECIAL PURPOSE AWARDS</b>				
Certificate in TV Production and Development	May-08	*		
Certificate in Science (Nursing)	May-07	*		
Certificate in Science in Construction Management	Jun-08	*		
Certificate in Arts in Care of the Older Person	Apr-10	*		
Certificate in Arts in Mental Health	Mar-10	*		
Dámhachtain Shainchuspóireach: Teastas i Riarachán Dátheangach (Level 6) (in association with Europus Teo/Údarás na Gaeltachta);		*		
Dámhachtáin Shainchuspóireach: Teastas in Aistriúchán Cáipéisí Dlí agus Stáit (Level 6) in association with Europus Teo/Údarás na Gaeltachta;	22 & 23 March 2010	*		
Certificate in Television Production & Development (Level 7) (in association with Eo Teilifís/Ros na Rún).		*		

\* all recommended through the standards committee of the Academic Council

**Table 7.1 New programme evaluations 2006–2010**

## 7.4 Programmatic review process

Programmes are reviewed every year by the Programme Boards and changes are recommended by the Standards Sub-committee of the Academic Council. In addition, all programmes are subject to a Programmatic Review every five years.

Programmatic review is a three-stage process. Initially the School/Centre undertakes a self-study. This involves consultation with all the main stakeholders including student representatives, graduates of the programme and employers, industry and professional bodies. All programmes are reviewed with regard to the changing external environment. A peer review by an external panel of experts competent to make national and international comparisons in relation to the programmes takes place. The panel issues a report specifying any conditions and recommendations relating to approval it deems appropriate. The School/Centre is responsible for implementing the conditions and recommendations and reporting thereon to the Academic Council.

Following programmatic reviews, a meeting of all staff involved should take place to reflect on the process and report back to the Academic Council as a basis for future improvement.

GMIT has carried out programmatic reviews in all its Schools/Centres within the past five years as shown in table 7.2:

School or Centre	Date of review
Castlebar Campus	January 2007
Hotel	May 2009
Letterfrack Campus	May 2009
Engineering	June 2009
Science	June 2009
Business	June 2009
Humanities	March 2010

**Table 7.2 Programmatic review completion dates**

These reviews provide rigorous evaluation of offerings with many recommendations for improvements, which are to be implemented by the appropriate managers. Implementation is reviewed on a regular basis by the Academic Council.

In addition, GMIT has carried out quality reviews of its other services as follows:

- Academic Affairs in March, 2008
- Finance Office/Human Resources/Buildings & Estates/Computing Services in November 2009
- Student Services in September, 2006
- Library in November 2007.

### 7.5 Appointment of external examiners

Programme Boards propose a panel of potential external examiners for each programme. The Heads of Schools/Centre and Registrar agree the nominations, which are then presented to the Academic Council for approval with regard to the suitability of nominees, national regulations relating to length of service, independence, and overall coverage of subjects. The Registrar's office deals with all appointment, contractual and reporting requirements.

Documentation made available to external examiners includes programme schedules and modules and GMIT marks and standards documentation. An overview of the composition of external examiners and their summary findings are available.

The process of identification and approval of external examiners is currently under review. GMIT recognises the crucial importance of the independence of the external examiner process, particularly in the context of the evolving collaborations between HEIs. Academic staff in GMIT are active as external examiners in other HEIs – the Institute recognises the benefits of this in staff development and collaboration.

### 7.6 Comparability of standards of awards

All external examiners are obliged to comment on the comparability of standards in GMIT with other relevant institutions. When an issue arises in this regard it is dealt with promptly.

The exemptions given to GMIT programmes by various professional bodies provide benchmarks on standards. Feedback from employers and the involvement of industry advisory boards at school level is also used for benchmarking purposes. The participation of lecturers and staff in academic conferences and continuing professional development in various disciplines is also used for benchmarking.

As noted, many of the academic staff at GMIT undertake duties as external examiners in a range of disciplines and HEIs. This, in addition to their involvement with the programme approval process, programmatic reviews and institutional reviews in other colleges and institutes, ensures informal benchmarking of standards. GMIT needs to develop a process by which formal institutional learning and measurability of comparison of standards can be gained from the interaction of many staff with other HEIs.

The Institute is a partner in the Benchmarking in European Higher Education project. This supports efficiency and innovation in order to adapt to new challenges in governance, university/enterprise cooperation, curriculum reforms and life-long learning. GMIT is participating in two strands – curriculum reform and university/enterprise co-operation. This collaboration provides opportunities for GMIT to compare expertise and benchmark quality and processes, develop partnerships with other HEIs, and reflect on new developments and new ways of carrying out its business in the context of shared experiences from other institutes and colleges.

A project has commenced to develop systems-wide standards in academic disciplines to determine standards of attainment in awards and modules. The initial findings have been referred to the Academic Council and will be considered early in the 2010/11 academic year. Significant further work is needed in this area, informed by international and national best practice.

### 7.7 Graduate 'first-destination' survey

A graduate 'first-destination' survey is compiled annually by the Careers Service. The data is collated at the point of graduation each November. The survey outlines the percentages of GMIT graduates in full-time employment, further studies, seeking employment, not available for work or study, and unknown. The findings are set out in the appendices (diagram 4.1 to 4.3). The findings highlight a decrease in the number of graduates progressing to further study. This is as a direct result of graduates now pursuing Level 7 and Level 8 ab initio programmes as opposed to Level 6 Certificate Programmes. Another important factor is the sudden increase in the percentage of graduates seeking employment in 2008. This is due to the current recession. Of those in employment, over 65% are working in the western region.

More extensive surveys in relation to student progression are required. The Institute intends to conduct a periodic survey of its alumni 3–4 years post graduation. This is important as feedback will inform future programme and service offerings.

### 7.8 Student assessment

Academic staff follow the assessment procedures approved for each module in the approved programme schedule. Lecturers are obliged to follow the regulations specified in the Academic Code of Practice no. 3.

The Institute recognises that certain aspects of student assessment require continuous focus.

Among these are:

- the balance between continuous and final assessment
- the totality of assessment required of the student
- timing and variety of assessment and consideration of the overall benefit of assessment methodologies to the student.

A wider question for the Institute is the assessment of learning outcomes and integration of the learning outcomes culture into all academic activities. Further developments are ongoing to translate all the benefits of a learning outcomes approach into higher levels of academic attainment for students. It will be a focus of the proposed learning and teaching unit to raise the standard of academic attainment by further engaging with the fundamental principles underlying the learning outcomes approach.

### 7.9 Conditions attached to delegated authority

GMIT fully accepts the conditions attached to delegated authority and has honoured all of them, including the following:

- Adherence to the agreed wording on parchments issued by the Institute as defined in the Order in Council of HETAC granting delegation of authority
- Co-operation and assistance to HETAC and the NQAI in the performance of their functions
- Establishment of procedures for the assessment of learners which are fair and consistent and for the purpose of compliance with standards determined by HETAC under the Qualifications Act
- Consultation with other providers as stipulated under Sections 28 and 29 of the Qualifications Act
- Fulfilment of such other conditions as HETAC may from time to time determine, in consultation with GMIT
- Implementation of procedures for access, transfer and progression determined by NQAI under the Qualifications Act.



### 7.10 Conclusion

Delegated authority has had positive influences on all aspects of the affairs of GMIT. The Institute can respond more quickly to new needs, re-design programmes if necessary, and be seen as an agile, flexible, responsive, outward-looking organisation.

# Chapter 8 - Summary and recommendations for enhancement

## Introduction

GMIT is proud of its history of academic excellence and engagement with the community and of its contribution to the region. The Institutional Review is a valuable process that enables the Institute to 'take stock' of its performance, position and future directions.

In undertaking the review, the Institute has evaluated and reflected on all its stakeholder engagements. The process has been hugely beneficial in establishing that GMIT is well positioned to capitalise on its strengths, and that public confidence in the Institute is well founded. The key considerations and recommendations arising from the process are as follows:

## Strategic management

The implementation of the Strategic Development Plan Your Place – Your Future 2010–2015 is crucial to the continuing development of the Institute. The implementation plans and appropriate metrics to monitor and manage the implementation are currently being developed. These plans must inform the school and functional plans.

A process has commenced to restructure the management of the organisation.

Organisational and academic leadership, at all levels, is vital to ongoing development, and in particular, to nurturing a culture of active engagement and collegiality. This will constitute a critical element of the strategic implementation process.

The multi-campus environment must continue to be developed and strengthened so that each campus can develop a unique identity that is sustainable whilst retaining the overall ethos and identity of the Institute.

The imminent publication of the National Strategy for Higher Education is eagerly anticipated. The stakeholders of GMIT have expressed confidence that the Institute is well placed to play a significant part in the evolving higher education landscape. GMIT is actively engaged in exploring strategic opportunities for greater engagement and collaboration with other HEIs, nationally and internationally.

## Academic excellence

The Academic Council must continue to focus on improving academic standards and quality assurance.

The impact of ongoing initiatives in relation to retention and achievement must be continuously evaluated and a programme of appropriate initiatives must continue to be implemented.

The Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy is a significant development and its full implementation is crucial to ensuring that the Institute continues to be innovative in programme design, delivery and assessment. Within this framework, ongoing evaluation of programmes, modules and teaching methodologies should become the norm. Greater interdisciplinary development and engagement must be encouraged.

The range of programmes offering a work experience component should be broadened.

The roles and independence of external examiners must be strengthened and developed.

The Institute must engage further with the fundamental principles of the learning outcomes based approach.

A quality improvement plan (QIP) must be developed and implemented. It must be aligned to the planning framework.

## Student environment

GMIT offers a broad range of support services to meet the needs of a diverse student population on five campuses. The Institute must endeavour – even in difficult economic times – to continue to provide the range and levels of services now available and to enhance them where possible. Specifically, the Institute has identified the need to develop sporting facilities as a matter of priority.

GMIT recognises the value of international study and work experience. An analysis must be undertaken to determine why this is not happening on a larger scale at present.

A framework for active student engagement must be developed, including training and mentoring, for students involved in boards, committees and councils.

Valued aspects of the student experience in GMIT must be promoted more.

## Staff and staff development

Staff development is a core priority which must continue to be adequately resourced.

A Performance Management Development System (PMDS) aligned to the Strategic Development Plan must be developed. A member of the Executive has been appointed to review the implementation of the existing PMDS and report on its shortcomings.

Staff engagement and interaction with students has been cited by stakeholders as one of the Institute's major strengths. This culture needs to be fostered and developed further to the mutual benefit of staff and students.

A more comprehensive staff induction and mentoring programme needs to be developed and its scope widened to address how staff members can participate and engage to a greater extent as their experience of working within the organisation grows.

GMIT staff members actively engage with external organisations and activities. These engagements must continue to be actively encouraged and processes of knowledge-sharing across the Institute should be facilitated.

An awards scheme should be introduced to recognise excellence and achievements in various activities.

## Research and innovation

The Institute will focus primarily on applied research and development in prioritised areas with clear outcomes in relation to teaching and regional development.

Teaching and learning in GMIT must continue to be informed by research. A comprehensive research strategy must be implemented.

The Innovation in Business Centres (IIBC), on the Dublin Road and Castlebar campuses, must continue to be supported and developed with strong linkages to industry and the activities of the Institute.

## Community engagement and developing the region

GMIT must continue to develop its role in furthering social cohesion within the community and the region.

A voluntary and community sector advisory/liason committee should be established, with GMIT seeking increased participation on representative bodies within the voluntary and community sector.

The Institute needs to build on its existing capacity to address the needs of local employers and the region. This should include the design and delivery of customised programmes for industry and regional needs.

Student and staff volunteering initiatives in the Institute are primarily informal. Consideration should be given to developing its capacity to support such initiatives.

Greater staff engagement with the secondary school community, through visits and other initiatives, must be encouraged.

## Internationalisation and collaboration

GMIT aims to: integrate an international perspective into programmes; promote cultural diversity among staff and students; and enhance the capacity of the Institute to compete in the international market. Important elements of this will include the development of opportunities for students to study or work abroad and the further development of international collaborations.

## Alumni

The Institute recognises that engagement with its graduates and former students can be developed further. Opportunities exist to engage alumni in activities such as advising students on preparing and planning for life after GMIT. Similarly, the Institute should consider broadening the range of flexible part-time offerings and making these available to graduates. The opinions of graduates should be sought on existing programme offerings.

The 'first destination' graduate survey should be expanded to capture greater detail and a similar survey of alumni should be undertaken three to four years after graduation.

A stakeholder engagement process should be initiated with GMIT alumni.

## Communications and information systems

GMIT must continue to develop its capacity for effective internal and external communication. In particular, close attention must be given to the formal communication of change initiatives.

Greater and more effective use needs to be made of online resources such as websites, portals, forums, social media, information services, and other technologies such as those appropriate to learning and teaching and managing the day-to-day business activities of the organisation.

The provision and reporting of timely and relevant information from the Institute's management information systems was also highlighted as an issue to be addressed. An integrated reporting environment appropriate to the needs of users must be developed and implemented.

The 'GMIT brand' is highly regarded by all stakeholders and should be a key element of the Institute's marketing communications strategy.

## Conclusion

This self evaluation process has confirmed GMIT's confidence that it is fulfilling its mandate and mission, and that it has the capacity to meet the challenges of the future.

# Abbreviations

## Introduction

ACCA	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
ACCS	Accumulation of Credits and Certification of Subjects
ACEI	Association of Consulting Engineers of Ireland
AHEAD	Association for Higher Education Access and Disability
AIT	Athlone Institute of Technology
AMLS	Academy of Medical Laboratory Science and Institution
ARE	Applied Research Enhancement
ATP	Access, Transfer and Progression
BAGC	BA i nGnó agus Cumarsáid
BB	Bachelor of Business
BEng	Bachelor of Engineering
BMW	Border, Midlands and Western Region
BSc	Bachelor of Science
CAPP	Curriculum Advising and Programme Planning
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CEQ	Course Evaluation Questionnaire
CIF	Construction Industry Federation
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DA	Delegated Authority
DCU	Dublin City University
DIT	Dublin Institute of Technology
DVD	Digital Video Disc
ECDL	European Computer Driver's Licence
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EDS	European Diploma Supplement
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
FETAC	Further Education Training Awards Council
FOI	Freedom of Information
FYE	First Year Experience
GAA	Gaelic Athletics Association
GB	Governing Body
GMedTech	Galway Medical Technologies Centre (based at GMIT)
GMIT	Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology
H Dip	Higher Diploma
HC	Higher Certificate
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher Education Institutes
HERI	Higher Education Research Institute
HETAC	Higher Education Training Awards Council

HPSU	High Potential Start-Up
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
liBC	Innovation in Business Centre
IOT	Institutes of Technology
IOTI	Institutes of Technology Ireland
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
KASP	King Abdullah Scholarship Programme
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
L2L	Learning to Learn
LCM	Learner Choice Module
LIN	Learning Innovation Networks
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LMS	Learning Management System
LTA	Learning, Teaching and Assessment
MIS	Management Information System
MMS	Module Manager System
MOODLE	Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NFQ	National Framework Qualifications
NQAI	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
NUIG	National University of Ireland, Galway
OPW	Office of Public Works
PAL	Peer Assisted Learning
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PMDS	Performance Management Development System
PR	Programmatic Review
QA	Quality Assurance
QA 1,2,3	Quality Assurance documents
QIP	Quality Improvement Plan
QlikView	Business intelligence reporting software
RIAI	Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RTC	Regional Technical College
SIF	Strategic Innovation Fund
SMEs	Small and Medium-size Enterprises
SSCA	Special Sports and Cultural Achievement Scheme
SU	Students Union
UCD	University College Dublin
VEC	Vocational Education Committee