



# lyit

Institiúid Teicneolaíochta

Leitir Ceanainn

Letterkenny Institute  
of Technology

## STRATEGIC PLAN

Our Commitment to the  
North West Gateway Learning Region

**2014-17**



**Institiúid Teicneolaíochta  
Leitir Ceanainn  
Letterkenny Institute  
of Technology**

Bóthar an Chalaigh, Leitir Ceanainn  
Contae Dhún na nGall, Éire

Port Road, Letterkenny  
County Donegal, Ireland

**Telephone** +353 74 918 6000  
**Fax** +353 74 918 6005

**[www.lyit.ie](http://www.lyit.ie)**

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# Foreword

The framing of this Strategic Plan has been particularly difficult given the turmoil that higher education has endured over the last six years. In setting out on the implementation of our previous plan from 2007-13, we were optimistic about what lay ahead. Our plan was based on the Government backed National Development Plan 2007-13 which was hugely optimistic. In 2007 LYIT had become a designated institute under the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the Tourism College Killybegs had become our fourth academic school. Given the focus on cross border engagement we were also ambitious and excited about our emerging North West Gateway Alliance with the University of Ulster.

While the ambition remained and a great deal of good work was achieved over the lifespan of the previous plan, this was continuously overshadowed by the impact of funding cuts and staffing reductions, even though we continued to increase our student enrolment and expand our course offerings.

The advent of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (January 2011) brought a new set of parameters for the development of Irish Higher Education. A significant focus of the strategy was the development of a coherent framework of higher education that would facilitate system-wide collaboration. The suggestion of regional clusters and technological universities presumed a restructuring of the sector, while the emphasis on teaching and learning and the engagement agendas focused on new policy directions.

Throughout this time LYIT remained faithful to the main thrust of the previous plan. Through strong engagement from staff a new modularisation and semesterisation framework was implemented in 2007 and subsequently revised in 2012. The impact of this was to change significantly how programmes were offered at LYIT and to create more choice and flexibility for students.

From a capital development perspective we invested in the expansion of CoLab and the securing of funds for the development of the North West Regional Science Park, again on a cross border basis. Our Wind Energy Centre in Killybegs was launched in 2011 and our new science facilities were opened by An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, TD in 2012.

There was also substantial change in the profile of our staff with many experienced staff retiring in 2012. The current staff have really put their shoulders to the wheel to continue to provide a positive service to our students.

HEA's Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape (February 2012) set core objectives for regional clusters of collaborating institutions together with the criteria for the re-designation of two or more merged Institutes of Technology as a Technological University.

The Connacht-Ulster Alliance (CUA) was signed in July 2012 to cover collaborative activity between LYIT, IT Sligo and GMIT; through this alliance LYIT is committed to delivering on jointly agreed strategic objectives that meet the needs of the Connacht-Ulster region.

HEA Report to the Minister (April 2013) detailed the strategic dialogue and performance funding model proposed for the higher education sector and recommended the establishment of five regional clusters. LYIT was included in what is now referred to as the West/North West Cluster with the other members of the CUA and NUI Galway.

In October 2013, LYIT submitted its first draft Mission-based Performance Compact to the HEA for the period 2014-16. Compacts underpin the move to performance funding and for LYIT the compact was completed at a time when the Institute was only beginning the work of framing Strategic Plan 2014-17.



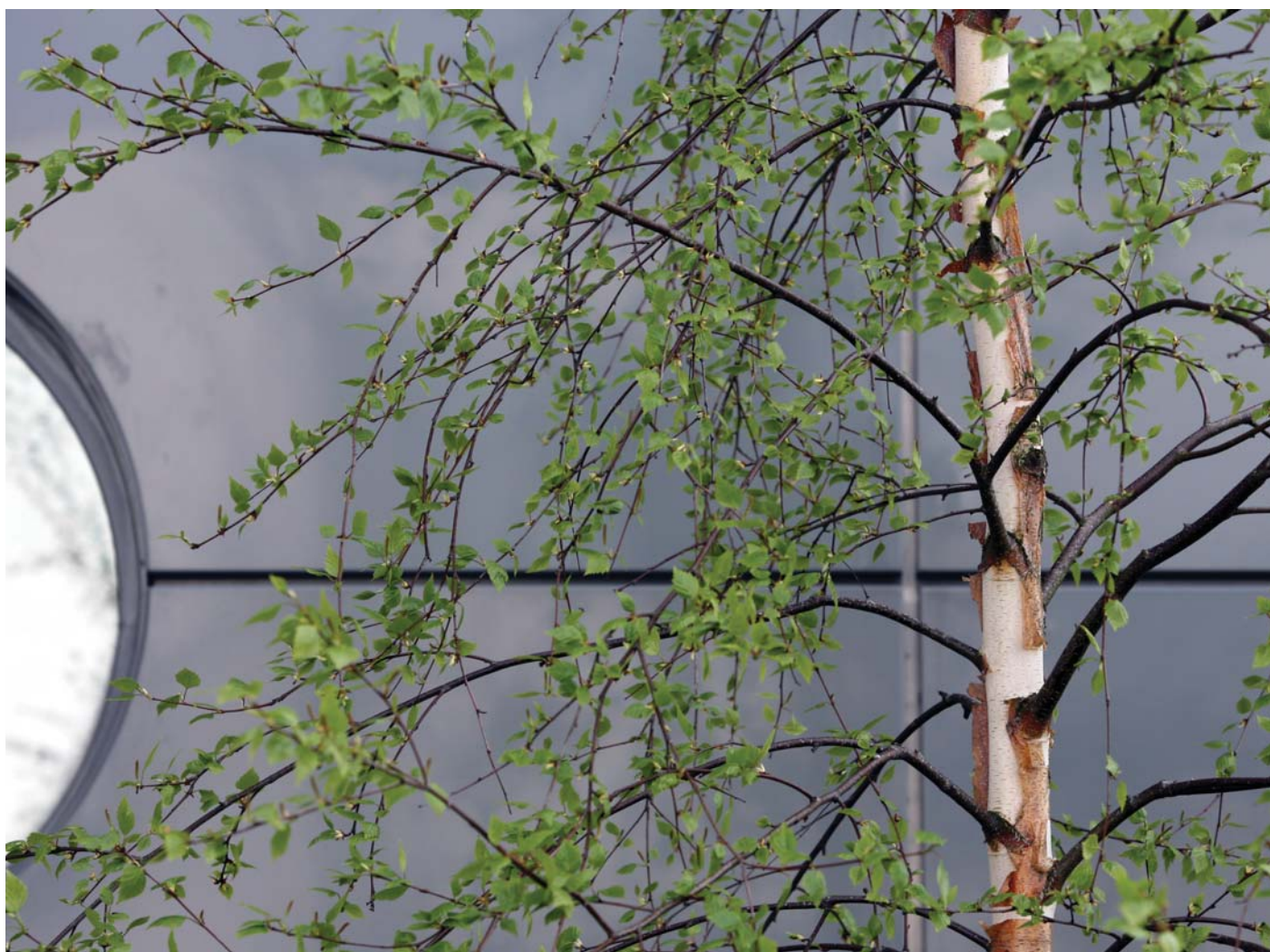
So in developing a plan for the next three years 2014-17 all of what has gone before and all of what lies ahead has been considered. The plan reflects the agreed performance compact with the HEA and therefore performance metrics have emerged naturally through the process.

Collaboration dominates the higher education landscape and the Connacht-Ulster Alliance (CUA), the West/North West Cluster and the proposed cross-border higher education cluster will all define the future of LYIT.

We must concentrate on what LYIT can deliver for this North West Gateway Learning Region, working with all relevant stakeholders whether on the island or elsewhere to ensure that the region we serve continues to prosper for the future.

Our commitment is laid out in these pages, we are optimistic about our future and we hope to build on the emerging green shoots in the recovery of the economy. We will continue to be at the vanguard of change and to ensure that all our actions result in a better result for our students, staff and relevant stakeholders. The turmoil of the past number of years is likely to continue but we need to be able to ride this wave and deliver on our ambitions.

**Paul Hannigan**  
**President**







# Chairman's Statement

A plan by its very nature is aspirational and expectant. A good plan needs a degree of inbuilt flexibility as well as a focused and united team to see it through to fruition. As Chairman of the Governing Body since October 2013, I am confident that our LYIT team can achieve the results aspired to under this plan.

Looking to the future the proposed Connacht-Ulster Alliance Expression of Interest for Re-designation as a Technological University, is a reflection of the greater positivity in the region following a period of severe austerity and gloom.

The Strategic Plan encompasses a spirit of collaboration and shared interest in achieving a sustainable economic, social and cultural environment which will train and retain graduate talent in the region.

Wishing all associated with this plan continued success and assuring you of the constant support of the Governing Body membership.

**Fintan Moloney**  
**Chairman**





# 1. Introduction

Strategic Plan 2014-17, *Our Commitment to the North West Gateway Learning Region* is LYIT's third strategic plan. The two previous plans had five year timeframes; however, with the significant change currently underway in higher education in Ireland it was decided on this occasion to opt for a more focused implementation period. The timeframe is effectively three academic years and a significant impetus will be applied to deliver on this ambitious agenda.

Reference in the title to the North West Gateway reflects LYIT's continued commitment to cross-border collaboration and this nationally strategic region. Collaboration is a key focus of this plan with LYIT's participation in two regional clusters and ongoing involvement in the Connacht-Ulster Alliance. In addition, this plan also sees a renewed commitment to the further development of our Killybegs campus.

A consultation process was established with stakeholders to capture their input into the plans development. A significant body of relevant background documentation was made accessible to internal stakeholders including a review of activity during the timeframe of the previous strategic plan, an identification of matters likely to influence higher education policy over the lifetime of the new plan, and a detailed profile of our region. The final strategy was significantly revised to address detailed feedback obtained via meetings organised at departmental and function level across the Institute.

Strategic Plan 2014-17 includes a revised Mission Statement and a revised Vision Statement and the articulation of Core Values that replace previously detailed Institute Values.

High level objectives are grouped into five strategic domains: Learning and Teaching; Student Experience; Research, Innovation, and Enterprise; Collaboration and Regional Engagement; and Sustainability and Resource Utilisation.

Enhanced operational planning and implementation will be achieved through new functional area plans that break the objectives down into constituent actions, establish an appropriate sequencing of actions with attributed timelines, set out metrics for measuring achievement of objectives, identify responsible post-holders, and facilitate tracking of progress against each individual objective.





## 2. Mission, Vision & Core Values

## 2.1 Mission Statement

Letterkenny Institute of Technology will confirm its significant national profile for excellence in higher education through the pursuit of an ambitious development agenda informed by public policy, strong regional engagement, and a fundamental commitment to a student-centred ethos.

- **Nationally Significant**
- **Regionally Engaged**
- **Student Centred**

## 2.2 Vision Statement

To be widely recognised as a leading higher education institution for the quality of our graduates and our employment-focused education programmes.

To retain the excellent relationship that we enjoy with our student body and be an exemplar for student services and campus facilities.

To play a key role in driving the development of the North West region through research, innovation and enterprise initiatives and our well established partnerships with education and industry bodies.

To support the implementation of public policy and particularly the national higher education strategy, exploiting LYIT's particular strength and track record on cross-border engagement.



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## 2.3 Core Values

- i) **Integrity** – We are accountable, honest, transparent, and responsible in all our activities.
- ii) **Inclusion** – We are welcoming, respectful, supportive, and student-centred.
- iii) **Ambition** – We are continuously challenging ourselves to deliver on the aspirations of our students, staff and external stakeholders.
- iv) **Excellence** – We are committed to a best practice approach that encompasses all Institute interests with an emphasis on learning and teaching, research, and the student experience.
- v) **Region** – We are focused on delivering for this nationally strategic region through engagement with development agencies, employers and the broader community.
- vi) **Collaboration** – We are determined to deliver on the potential of regional clusters and existing strategic alliances, and further develop partnerships to achieve the Institute's mission.



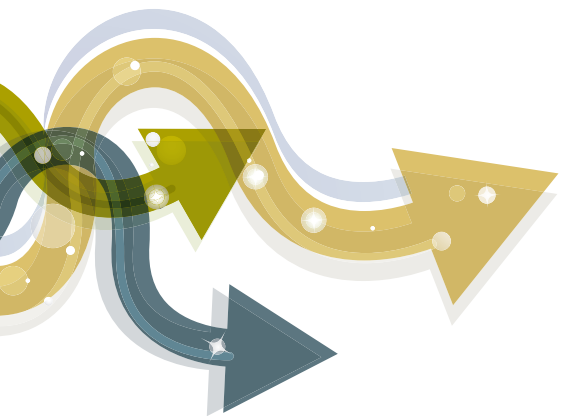


### 3. Strategic Domains & Objectives

## A. Learning and Teaching

*LYIT is committed to ensuring that students can fulfil their potential by empowering learners to take greater responsibility for their own learning on high quality coherent programmes of study that are closely aligned with the needs of employment.*

- i) Develop our student-centred culture and further support students to fulfil their potential; important initiatives will include easing the transition into higher education, encouraging students to take greater responsibility for their own learning, and preparing students for a lifetime of learning.
- ii) Assist lecturing staff with their continuous professional development, including: developments in their particular discipline area, trends in teaching and learning, new technologies, and initiatives of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning.
- iii) Foster excellence in curriculum design to ensure a portfolio of programmes of the highest quality reflecting existing strengths in the STEM area; the resulting portfolio will be aligned with national and regional policy objectives, best practice in teaching and learning, innovative assessment methodologies, QQI award standards, and student demand.
- iv) Enhance structures at an Institute level that will underpin students' career ambitions and offer pathways to employment in partnership with employers; initiatives will include integrated career supports, generic and transferable skill development, industry visits, service learning, and work experience.
- v) Implement procedures that recognise the increasingly many ways in which students may wish to access programmes of study, ensure greater parity in terms of access for part-time students to programmes and services, further develop RPL mechanisms, and ensure that the standard of award made is independent of the mode of study.
- vi) Build on our success as a national leader in widening participation by growing student numbers assisted via the Access Office (The Curve), enhance supports for these student groups, coordinate these activities with the academic schools, and further integrate Access processes within the Institute's quality assurance framework.



## B. Student Experience

*LYIT is determined to build on the excellent relationship that we enjoy with our student body by working collaboratively with students on all aspects of student services and campus facilities to contribute towards an improved student experience.*

- i) Prioritise the student experience in all aspects of Institute activity by embedding a service ethos that is focused on excellence, informed by strong engagement with students and is underpinned by documented quality assurance procedures.
- ii) Ensure that all educational delivery spaces are state of the art, comprising flexibly resourced general teaching spaces together with sufficient additional specialist facilities, and complemented by access to up to date learning resources.
- iii) Review and enhance the Institute's virtual learning environment (VLE), this will involve an examination of opportunities presented via new technologies and consideration of best fit models for blended learning.
- iv) Enhance student-centred support services so that they are easy to access, integrated, and responsive; these services will be shaped by significant engagement with students to ensure services continue to meet the demand of a growing student population.
- v) Improve the campus experience for our increasingly diverse student body by ensuring the suitability of Institute facilities and access to attractive spaces for social interaction and recreation.
- vi) Develop supports for both incoming and outgoing international students, continue supports for lecturing exchanges, encourage language learning and cultural understanding, develop collaborative initiatives with both national and international partners, and deliver on revenue generating opportunities.

## **C. Research, Innovation, and Enterprise**

*LYIT is focused on building a suitable framework of research supports to sustain and grow existing research centres, leveraging collaboration with partner institutions; in addition the Institute will continue to offer a broad suite of services to local enterprise through CoLab and the NWRSP.*

- i) Develop a revised Research Plan that will prioritise established research centres (particularly the WiSAR Gateway - an EI Technology Gateway Network research centre), encourage emerging research areas with evident potential, make provision for improved research leadership, embed research skills and exposure to research within undergraduate programmes, link with the research objectives of the individual Schools, and set out the supports to sustain research activity.
- ii) Engage with the Institute's schools, research staff and collaboratively with partner institutions to ensure that LYIT retains Research Approval from QQI at Level 9 and Level 10 of the NFQ and work to extend Research Approval and Research Accreditation to cover areas where the Institute has demonstrated strengths.
- iii) Enhance the research experience of research students by meeting the general principles governing researchers as set out in The European Charter for Researchers, the development of a new Research Student Handbook will be important in this regard.
- iv) Ensure that available Institute supports for enterprise and industry are easily accessible through a single point of contact and develop additional services through the North West Regional Science Park (NWRSP) and via the Institute's incubation, enterprise, research and development centre, CoLab.
- v) Establish at Institute level a North West Industry and Employment Forum (comprising representatives of employers, relevant policy-making bodies, development agencies, and national and international experts) and exploit its potential for the economic development of the region and the valuable underpinning it can provide for the Institute.



## **D. Collaboration and Regional Engagement**

*LYIT is dedicated to maximising the unique benefits arising from our inclusion in two regional clusters and through strong engagement with stakeholders play a key role in regional development and promoting the region's rich cultural heritage.*

- i) Establish an effective Regional Cluster of HEIs in the West/North-West region leveraging our involvement and commitment to the Connacht-Ulster Alliance, and build on a history of cross-border collaboration through the establishment of the cross-border North West FE and HE Cluster.
  - ii) Map regional learning pathways with partner FEIs and HEIs to provide clearly articulated progression opportunities for students with a focus on revitalising the ladder of progression, including the provision of new opportunities for students to access a broad range of high demand programmes.
  - iii) Develop and implement a plan for active engagement with stakeholder groups to assist them in pursuit of their respective agendas including community groups, schools, public service employers, private industry, and development agencies; this engagement will address regional development and include a focus on promoting the region's heritage and particularly the Irish language.
  - iv) Detail and execute a tailored student recruitment plan that builds on effective Institute communications, targeted marketing activity, strong school liaison, good quality programme literature, innovative social media presence, and a high quality website.
  - v) Exploit the economies of scale of working collaboratively with a network of providers in relation to shared services and also progress resource intensive activities, such as, eLearning, postgraduate provision, research supports, and internationalisation endeavours.
-

## **E. Sustainability and Resource Utilisation**

*LYIT is committed to achieving greater coordination between its various policy and strategy bodies, improving Institute capacity for data capture and evidenced based decision making, and taking significant strides in strategy implementation.*

- i) Review the operation of the Institute's key policy and strategy bodies (Academic Council, Executive Board and Executive Council) to provide for their ongoing efficient operation, implement identified good practice to ensure these bodies support each other and the Governing Body to achieve the Institute's mission.
- ii) Enhance operational planning and develop new functional area plans that will set out how the broad objectives detailed in this strategic plan will be addressed.
- iii) Ensure that through the implementation of the Human Resources Plan: LYIT continues to be an environment conducive to productive engagement, Institute staff are provided with the necessary supports to deliver on LYIT's mission, staffing levels are appropriate, and that provision is made for planned Institute growth.
- iv) Establish a risk based approach to assessing potential strategic projects with a particular focus on unintended mission drift, financial risk, and reputational risk; and further develop the existing planning framework through the Academic Council and Executive Board which will inform the revision of the Institute's portfolio of programmes.
- v) Engage in an open and transparent way with the HEA through the strategic dialogue process and the transition to performance funding, build Institute capacity in terms of data capture, identify appropriate key performance indicators, align targets for individual functional areas with the agreed compact, and measure performance against these targets.







## **4. Institutional Targets & Functional Area Plans**

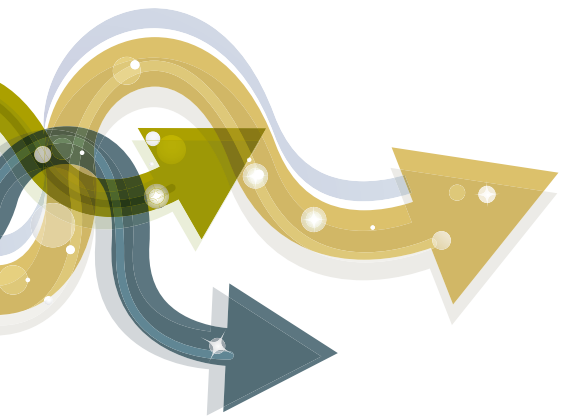
## 4.1 Mission-based Performance Compact

The first draft of LYIT's Mission-based Performance Compact with the HEA was submitted in early October 2013 when work was commencing on this strategic plan. The compact reflected Institute thinking at the time and the completed compact provided a framework for this strategic plan's development. A matching of strategic domains in this plan with the objective groupings in the Mission-based Performance Compact will be an important focus of the functional area plans.

LYIT Strategy 2014-17 Strategic Domains	Mission-based Performance Compact Elements
A. Learning and Teaching	1. Regional Clusters
B. Student Experience	2. Participation, equal access and lifelong learning
C. Research, Innovation and Enterprise	3. Excellent teaching and learning and quality of the student experience
D. Collaboration and Regional Engagement	4. High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation
E. Sustainability and Resource Utilisation	5. Enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge exchange
	6. Enhanced internationalisation
	7. Consolidation

A number of specific targets have been set out in the compact and these targets will now form an important part of the targets in the functional area plans. The key principle is that Strategic Plan 2014-17 encompasses all elements of Institute strategy including the Institute's Mission-based Performance Compact.

In addition, the criteria for a Technological University (TU) have also informed the targets to be achieved in the functional area plans.



## 4.2 Institute Benchmarking

The HEA has now published Institutional and Sectoral Profiles for both 2010/11 and 2011/12. These profiles are comprehensive in nature covering over 80 different data measures for each of the 7 Universities, 14 Institutes of Technology, and 6 other colleges. LYIT has commenced using this information to benchmark Institute performance and this data has also been used to establish realistic targets to be achieved through the implementation of this strategic plan.

This HEA data for each higher education institute is presented under ten headings: Student Numbers, Disciplinary Mix, Participation, Internationalisation, Teaching and Learning, Research, Knowledge Transfer, Staff, Financial Data, and Space. LYIT performs strongly in terms of participation criteria: students from County Donegal, students from our region, students from semi-skilled/unskilled families, mature students, and students with disabilities. Progression represents another strength for LYIT with levels of non-progression from year 1 to year 2 in most instances substantially lower than the average for the IoT sector. The Institute is also better than average for attracting higher percentages of students both from other EU countries and non-EU countries. Challenges for LYIT are in areas impacted by institutional scale, such as, total student numbers and expenditure per student.

U-Multirank is a multi-dimensional system for ranking of universities and colleges covering particular aspects of higher education: research, teaching and learning, international orientation, knowledge transfer and regional engagement. The U-Multirank project provides independent rankings of HEIs and is supported in its initial years by the European Union.

U-Multirank facilitates the comparison of more than 850 HEIs, 1,200 faculties and 5,000 study programmes from 70 countries. Data made available in March 2014 covered only four fields of study (Business Studies, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and Physics) with LYIT being only one of four IoTs included from a list of 10 Irish HEIs.

It is evident that benchmarking of HEIs through the HEA profiles, the results from the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and the annual National Employer Survey will be an increasing feature of higher education planning in Ireland in the future and LYIT is determined to use all of this data to help focus Institute development over the lifetime of this strategic plan.



## 4.3 Functional Area Plans

Key companion documents for Strategic Plan 2014-17 are the following functional plans:

Learning and Teaching	Estates
Research	Technology
Quality	Service Development
Academic Schools	Innovation and External Engagement
Financial	Killybegs Campus
HR	Collaboration

The strategic plan commits to building Institute capacity in terms of data capture, identifying appropriate key performance indicators, and aligning targets for individual functional areas with the agreed compact. HEA's Guidelines for completion of mission-based performance compacts (July 2013) provides a very useful framework for monitoring achievement of individual objectives.

The compact provides an important resource in terms of monitoring and verifying the achievement of individual objectives, however, it does not assist in setting out the many component actions to be completed or identify an individual senior manager with responsibility. To bolster operational planning, additional columns on *Component Actions*, *Ownership*, *Progress*, and *Comments* have been included in the functional area plan template.

The template for each objective in the Mission-based Performance Compact requires the statement of the Institute objective, identification of a performance indicator, baseline data, and the selection of interim targets for the end of 2014 and 2015, and final targets for 2016.

In terms of LYIT's annual functional area plans, these elements of good practice from the performance compact have been adopted and revised.

That is:

- *Objectives* that LYIT has set to be achieved by the end of Strategic Plan 2014-17.
- *Performance indicators* by which achievement of the component actions associated with the objective can be monitored or assessed – these should be high-level or key performance indicators only, although they need not be quantitative. In some cases the indicators might relate to processes completed rather than metrics or values attained.
- *Baseline* for the performance indicator from which progress will be measured –this is the verified position from which the institution is starting the academic year.
- *Targets* that the institution has set in relation to each component action associated with the objective for the current academic year.

A template for monitoring achievement of objectives will be an integral part of each functional area plan. The monitoring template will break each strategic objective down in terms of component actions, ownership, performance indicators, baseline position, targets, progress (quarterly) and allow for additional comments.







## 5. Plan Development

A small Steering Group was established in September 2013 to help guide the Institute through the development of the successor to Strategic Plan 2007-13. The group was charged with identifying best practice in strategic planning, completing an appropriate environmental scan, coordinating internal and external consultations, drafting various elements of the emerging plan, and completing a final plan taking cognisance of feedback received.

A digital repository of important documents was made available to Institute staff at the end of January 2014. This repository included all relevant HEA publications, LYIT submissions to HETAC and the HEA for the period 2007-13, the strategic plans of all IOTs and Universities in the country, and a number of best practice guides for developing higher education strategic plans.

The consultation process commenced with a plenary session on 24 January 2014 involving three external speakers: Mr Tom Boland, Chief Executive of the Higher Education Authority (HEA); Professor Philip Nolan, President of the National University of Ireland, Maynooth; and Dr Mary Fleming, Head of the School of Education NUI Galway.





## 5.1 Strategic Planning Context

To coincide with this very successful Institute seminar the Steering Group released its first document Strategic Planning Context. This document was drafted to inform the development of Strategic Plan 2014-17 and contains a summary of LYIT activity from 2007-13, including an examination of the Institute's operating environment and an Institute profile for December 2013.

Brief summaries of initiatives addressed in this first document are presented below:

### 5.1.1 North West Gateway Strategic Alliance (NWGSA)

On 17 February 2008 the Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin, TD, announced details of the allocation of funding under Cycle 2 of the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF). Among the successful projects was the North West Gateway Strategic Alliance (NWGSA) proposal which was aimed at developing closer collaboration between LYIT and the University of Ulster. The proposal was costed at €1,786,000, with €893,000 coming from the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF).

SIF aimed to stimulate innovation in higher education and research through collaboration between institutions. The North West Gateway Strategic Alliance project was a collaborative proposal with the University of Ulster.

In the proposal the argument was made that the proposed alliance was in line with government policy on both sides of the border and particularly the priority under All-Island Co-operation in the National Development Plan (NDP) 2007- 2013 for: A significant upgrading of higher education capacity in the North West and the border region through strategic alliances between the educational institutions, North and South.

It was also pointed out in the proposal that the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002-2020 focuses on providing better balanced social, economic and physical development through nine gateways or engines of growth. Letterkenny with Derry is designated as a linked gateway and the only cross-border gateway, the North West Gateway. Specifically, under regional development, the NDP refers to strengthening innovation capacity at LYIT through collaboration with University of Ulster. The Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025 Shaping Our Future (2001), highlights the importance of strengthening the role of Derry as the regional city and transport hub of the North West.

The aim of the project was to develop a blueprint for a significant upgrading of higher education capacity in the North West and border region through a strategic alliance between LYIT and the University of Ulster.



### 5.1.2 LYIT Institutional Review 2008

The context for the self-evaluation encompassed a strong LYIT focus on improved resource management, continued roll-out of Strategic Plan 2007-13, an examination of Institute activity over the previous five years, and in particular a review of the application of LYIT's award making powers under delegated authority from HETAC since 2004. In addition to the prescribed HETAC objectives, institutions had the option to include additional objectives as part of the review process and LYIT included The North West Gateway Strategic Alliance project.

The institutional review was submitted in December 2008 and the HETAC expert panel, chaired by Professor Tom Collins, visited the Institute from 19-21 January 2009. The panel commended the Institute in relation to a number of areas but significantly stated that they strongly commended the achievement of the Institute on the north south agenda and for the approach to north south cooperation through the North West Gateway Strategic Alliance. The panel also stated the initiative is particularly noteworthy, as the criteria and terms of reference set out for the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) did not provide for such a proposal.

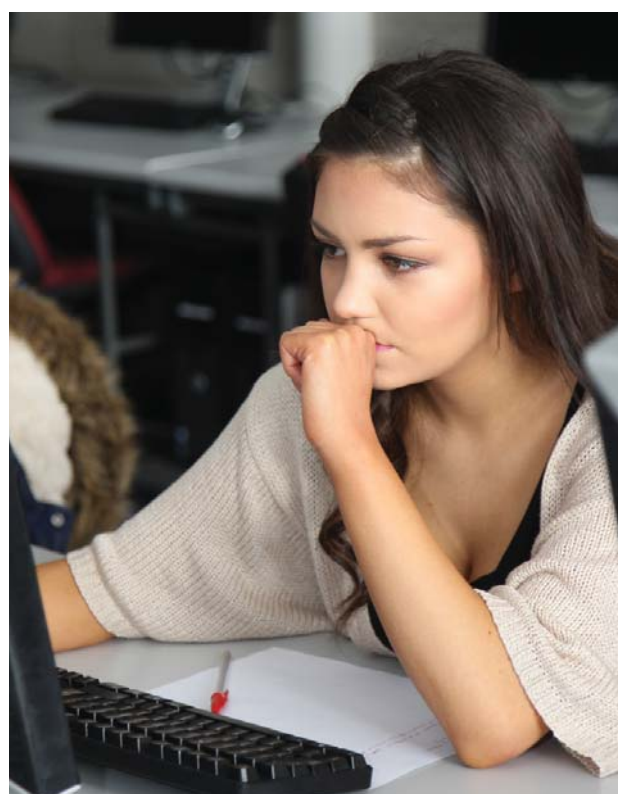
### 5.1.3 PRTL Submission 2009

An LYIT research submission, with significant support from the University of Ulster, was developed in 2009/10 to seek funding under Cycle 5 of the HEA administered Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTL). LYIT's PRTL submission was presented in two parts, an infrastructure project, the Science and Technology Research Facility (STRF) and a structured PhD proposal, the North West Research Doctoral Programme (NWRDP). The deliverables identified for these proposals included provision of a state of the art science research facility, development of a structured PhD programme, establishment of research teams, generation of strong research output, further development of the collaborative research effort to achieve critical mass, and to become a magnet for attracting high value employment to the region.

Funding of the NWRDP would have provided access to research expertise and world class facilities at the two University of Ulster centres of excellence and to programmes and structures for supporting PhD education at the University. This collaborative proposal brought together the top biomedical research

department in the UK (RAE 2008, Health Professions and Studies), the Biomedical Sciences Research Institute at University of Ulster's Coleraine campus, and the Centre for Applied Marine Biotechnology (CAMBio) at LYIT for three work packages. The fourth involved the University of Ulster's Magee (Derry) campus based Intelligent Systems Research Centre, an internationally recognised centre of excellence, and LYIT's Wireless Sensor Research group (WiSAR).

Both proposals were successful under Phase I of the PRTL assessment process; however, the proposals did not secure funding after the final phase (Phase II) despite the international panel recommending that the NWRDP project be funded. The international peer reviewers for the NWRDP proposal "were convinced that if the project is successful, the impact regionally would be enormous." The international peer reviewers for the STRF proposal noted "Given what is proposed here and the regional significance the peer reviewers believed that this should be considered at a senior Government level rather than through PRTL and regional support should also be sought."





#### 5.1.4 Periodic Programme Evaluations 2012

Significant Institute activity was required in 2011/12 to complete the Periodic Programme Evaluation (PPE) process across all four of the Institutes Schools. Section 4 of the Institute's Quality Assurance Handbook provided the template for the development of the PPE documentation and the Academic Council was strongly engaged in the second part of the academic year, working with academic managers to ensure the documentation was in line with quality assurance processes and the Revised Framework for Modularisation and Semesterisation. The PPE process was completed following the visits of the four External Expert Groups to the Institute in May 2012:

- School of Tourism, 22 May 2012.
- School of Business, 23 May 2012.
- School of Science, 24 May 2012.
- School of Engineering, 31 May 2012.

#### 5.1.5 Connacht-Ulster Alliance and the Regional Cluster

In the aftermath of the publication of the HE Strategy a structured engagement took place with all five IoTs that make up the Lónra network: LYIT, IT Sligo, GMIT, AIT and DKIT. Arising out of these discussions a Strategic Alliance Agreement was drafted to cover collaboration between the three IoTs in Connacht-Ulster (Alliance). Through this alliance the partners LYIT, IT Sligo and GMIT commit to deliver on jointly agreed strategic objectives to meet the higher education needs of the Connacht-Ulster region.

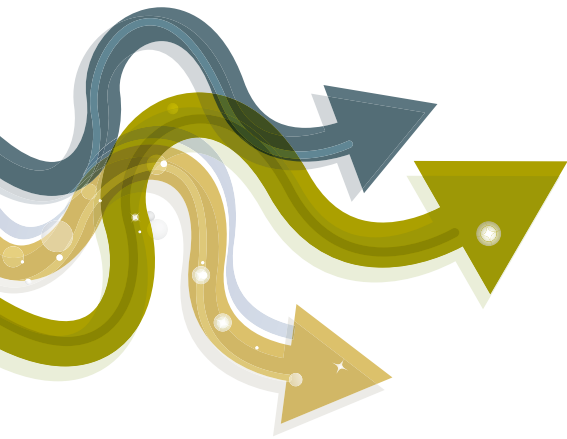
This alliance is to be characterised by:

- leadership of the social and economic development of the Connacht-Ulster region, through enhanced access and the provision of industry-relevant and professionally focused programmes of higher education
- vibrant working relationship with the business community, including employers in the Connacht-Ulster region, who will have a corporate role in providing direction and guidance on the education provision. The collective suite of programmes offered by the Alliance will be developed to meet the needs of employers, students and the wider community
- flexible teaching and learning platform that builds on its established reputation for cost effective and online delivery
- enhanced student access, transfer and progression pathways between and through the institutions in the Alliance
- externally acknowledged as a high profile higher education alliance in the European Higher Education arena in its provision of learning and teaching that is informed by applied research
- a higher education alliance delivering an internationally recognised and valued learning experience for students, leading to greater employment opportunities, as indicated by the demand for its programmes and graduates who are employable upon completion of their programmes of study
- through partnership, delivering its services more cost effectively and efficiently
- more direct and effective access by the business and the wider community to the full range of knowledge transfer, business support and incubation services.

The focus will be on areas such as:

- flexible learning delivery
- research and innovation
- bespoke delivery for industry
- links to local education and training boards
- international student recruitment and staff development.





#### 5.1.6 North West Regional Science Park

In November 2012, it was announced that LYIT in association with Northern Ireland Science Park (NISIP), Belfast, would receive funding of €14 million for the North West Regional Science Park (NWRSP) project in the NSS joint gateway of Letterkenny/Derry. This is a very significant all-island Interreg/SEUPB award designed to build a 50,000 sq ft Science Park in Derry and extend LYIT's existing CoLab by an additional 20,000 sq ft. Project partners include the Northern Ireland Science Park (NISIP) Foundation Ltd, LYIT and the North West Region Cross Border Group (NWRCBG).

The NWRSP is a business support and technology transfer initiative to:

- Encourage and support young innovation led, high growth, knowledge based businesses and those seeking to expand;

- Provide an environment where larger and international business can develop specific and close inter-relations with the centres of knowledge creation in the North West for their mutual benefit;
- Have formal and operational links with centres of knowledge creation such as Ulster and LYIT as well as other higher education institutes and research organisations.

#### 5.1.7 Institute Profile

In terms of the Institute's profile the document details:

- Full-time Student Numbers
- Part-time Enrolment
- Programme Portfolio
- Institute Finances and Staffing
- Research, Innovation and Enterprise Activity

## 5.2 Strategic Plan – Environmental Scan

The document Strategic Plan – Environmental Scan was made available to staff on 28 February 2014. The first part of the document summarised key policy documents including the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (January 2011), HEA 's Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape (February 2012), HEA Report to the Minister (April 2013), Graduating to Success: A Higher Education Strategy for Northern Ireland (April 2012), Review of Apprenticeship Training In Ireland (December 2013). The summaries concentrated on elements that would give an insight into how higher education in Ireland would evolve in the medium and longer term, possible opportunities for LYIT over the period of the new strategy, and specifically opportunities in respect of cross-border collaboration.

The second part of the document includes a profile of our region and relevant national data is presented. This profile includes population by county, summary statistics for Donegal, population by age groups, education attainment, employment data, Leaving Certificate data for 2013, and distances between locations of HEIs. A number of maps convey population density, detail populations of large towns, examine population growth by county between the 2006 and 2011 censuses, and look at population movement out of Dublin between 2006 and 2011. The higher education institute attended by the 2013 Leaving Certificate cohort of Donegal students is also detailed. In terms of Northern Ireland, demographic data is presented by new Local Government District.





## 5.3 Consultation on Draft Documentation

The first outline of the new strategic plan was considered by each of the Academic Council's committees prior to the Academic Council meeting of 7 March 2014. Following feedback from the Council a revised outline of the plan was drafted for consideration by Institute staff.

Meetings were organised at school and functional level to capture the views of Institute staff. In order that all meetings considered similar matters the following five questions were posed.

- Question 1:** Outline your views on the future of the IoT sector and identify possible options for LYIT in the evolving landscape.
- Question 2:** Are the suggested revisions to the Institute's Mission statement an improvement? Identify other aspects that could be considered in rewriting the Mission.
- Question 3:** Are the suggested revisions to the Institute's Vision statement an improvement? Identify other aspects of the Institute that could be considered in rewriting the Vision.
- Question 4:** Review the Guiding Principles and suggest amendments that could improve these principles.
- Question 5:** In terms of the strategic domains and the 25 objectives listed, comment on the appropriateness of the domains and identify particular objectives that could be further strengthened.

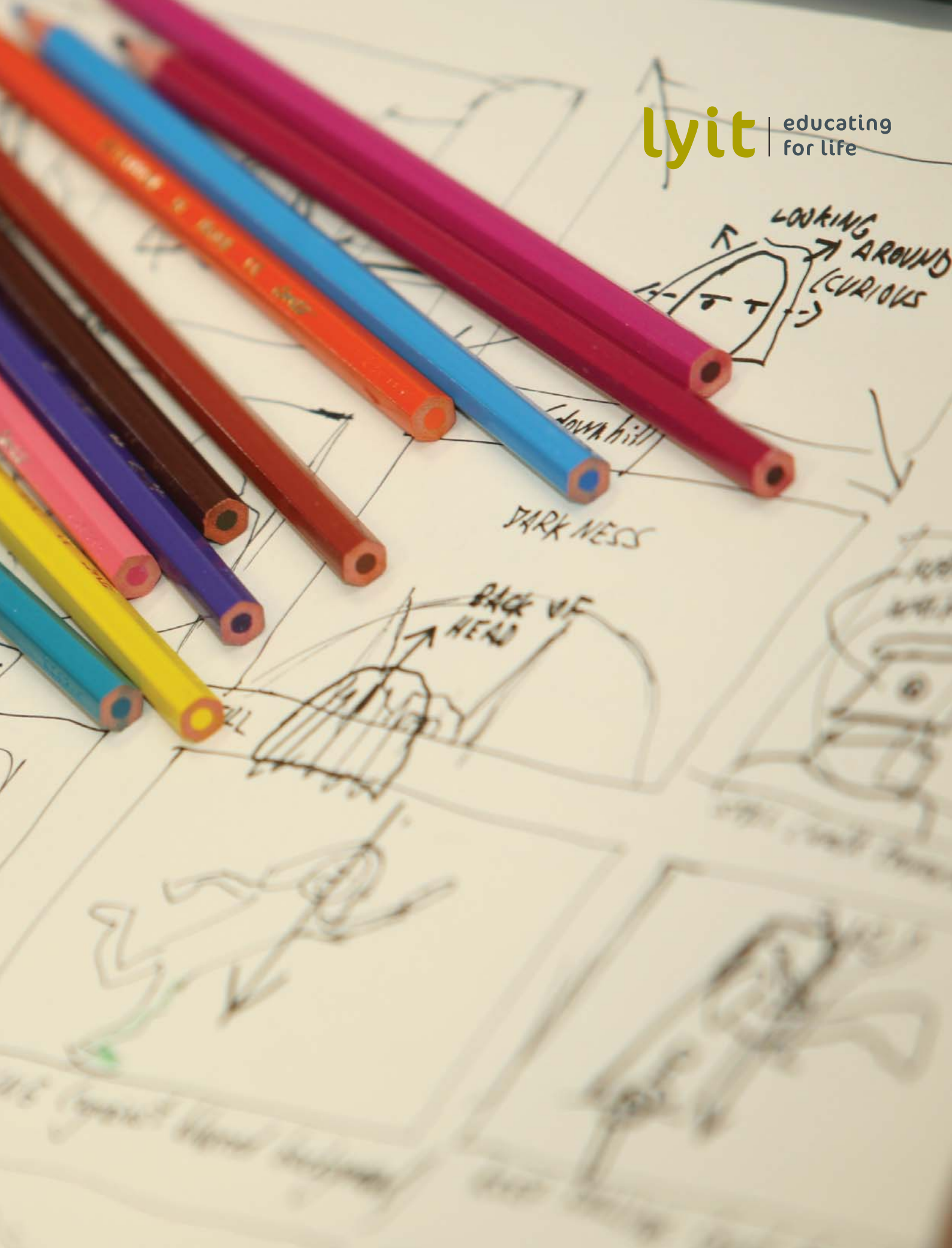
Eight meetings were held with more than 125 staff members in attendance in the run up to the Easter break. The evident commitment by staff in considering the documentation and actively engaging with the consultation process has generated an important resource for shaping Strategic Plan 2014-17.

This staff feedback helped in providing greater focus to both the Mission Statement and Vision Statement and the individual objectives. There was general agreement on the objective domains and in the most part on the focus of the individual objectives; however, a small number amendments were suggested. It was clear that staff did not feel that the proposed Guiding Principle fitted into the outline plan and these were replaced by the simpler Core Values in the revised document.

A summary of staff feedback to the five questions was compiled and circulated to the Academic Council committees on 29 May 2014 together with a further revision to the outline strategic plan.

A Special Meeting of the Academic Council was convened on 13 June 2014 to consider all aspects of the development of Strategic Plan 2014-17. The President committed to continue engagement with the incoming Academic Council with a view to tabling a final plan at the Governing Body in November. This continued interaction with the new Academic Council was facilitated through the Council's Planning Committee. The final plan was agreed at the Governing Body on 6 November 2014.







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