**LETTERKENNY INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY,**

**ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT**

# Overall Strategy – Erasmus+ as a Driver of Internationalisation and Research

The Erasmus+ programme 2020-­‐2027, prioritises investment in people, as a means of growth and prosperity for the region and beyond. Letterkenny Institute of Technology’s (LYIT) Strategic Plan (2019-2023 p20) reflections the important of internationalisation “this plan will be aimed at strengthening ties with national and international partner colleges to facilitate increased student and staff mobility” acknowledges this priority. The need for HEIs to embrace internationalisation has never been greater. Inter alia, the increasing demand for international education, the globalisation of business, the ready availability of information and communication technologies, the pressure for higher education institutions to self-fund and the growing influence of some major world economies have, in the view of many commentators, positioned internationalisation centrally in the strategic thinking of many institutions. Internationalisation is central to many of LYIT’s ambitions. One of LYIT’s objectives in our Strategic Plan is “Creating rich opportunities for national and international engagement which enhances the learning environment…” (p28 LYIT Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023)

LYIT will continue to establish and maintain significant high-quality strategic partnerships with selected overseas higher education institutions, which align with the Institute’s innovation, research, and entrepreneurship ecosystem. Priority is therefore given to signing inter-institutional agreements with HEIs where there is a strong possibility, not only of balanced two-­‐way mobility, but also the potential for “added value” collaborations, such as mutually interesting research and curriculum development areas, as well valuable industry training opportunities for students.

Internationalisation within LYIT reflects the vision of our Strategy Plan and the CUA Internationalisation Framework resting on three key pillars: Internationalisation Abroad, Internationalisation at Home and the development of Institute platforms to promote internationally focused initiatives identified under the first two core pillars. The new plan identified Internationalisation as one key **Strategic Enabler** and has committed to internationalising campuses, activities, and provision. LYIT’s Strategic Plan can be viewed at <https://www.lyit.ie/Staff-Hub/Strategic-Plan>

Objectives of Participation in the Erasmus+ Programme (2020-2027) – alignment with the three Pillars of the CUA Internationalisation Framework Strategy

Internationalisation Abroad Priorities

* Mobility of Students and Staff (EU and beyond)
* Joint/double degree arrangements with credit recognition and accreditation counting towards degrees
* International Student Recruitment and Supports, aligned with Education in Ireland/Government Strategy
* Strategic Partnerships: Research, and expansion of research staff and capacity through mutually beneficial partnerships
* Raising the profile of the Institute’s international activities internationally
* Expanding the extent of engagement outside of the EU
* Accessing international/EU research funding

Internationalisation at Home Priorities

* Internationalising the Curriculum (formal, informal, and hidden)
* Double/joint degrees with strategic partners (EU and Non-EU)
* Work placements for overseas students in Ireland
* Continued hosting of short-term exchange students and staff with Erasmus Partners and Key Non-EU Partners
* Language studies and intercultural competence training/monitoring initiatives for all staff and students (potential development of a centre for languages as part of CUA)

Institute platforms to promote internationally focused initiatives

* LYIT Student Ambassador’s Programme to support internationalisation
* Promotion of LYIT International Society activities across the campus
* Erasmus + Staff Awareness Programme promoting mobilities and other key action supports
* Build upon the existing collaboration with CUA partners (IT Sligo and GMIT) to implement the International Strategic Framework in preparation for designation as a Technological University

All exchange partnerships, both EU and non-EU, emerge from a thorough assessment process which ensures compatibility of curricula and quality of support, and they are based on a shared commitment to academic excellence. Our choice of partners for mobility and other cooperation activities is always based on specific needs and focused on the future. Links are established to meet the requirements of our programmes of study, taking account of the increasingly international dimension of the curriculum and the demand for outward mobility. Strategic compatibility of research activities is another key factor in the selection of partners as we move towards broad and sustainable cooperative relationships that function at undergraduate, postgraduate and staff levels. While we aim to deepen our linkages with existing partners to provide further mobility opportunities for students and staff, we are also mindful of the scope that exists to expand international representation among our student population, and our hopes of attracting high-caliber Master and PhD students from overseas. While a significant part of our international activities will continue to involve the EU, there is a purposeful expansion into areas like Asia/South East Asia, North/South America and the Gulf area, much of this under the auspices of Education in Ireland, the national agency with responsibility for promoting Ireland as a destination for international education. Science (especially medical science), engineering and business are areas of particular interest. Transnational education (TNE) opportunities, involving the delivery of higher education by the Institute abroad, are continuously being explored.

LYIT is also conscious of the social and educational responsibilities of European Education Institutions with regard to developing countries and wishes to foster understanding and respect for the economic, social and biological interdependence of global life. Cooperation and capacity-building strategies that will assist institutions and governments to improve the scale and quality of their higher education provision deserve support and may include exchanges, education and training programmes for international scholars, technical assistance and support, provision of scholarships and joint degree programmes.

LYIT seeks to promote a sense of European and global citizenship in its students by fostering an international culture across the academic community and by incorporating into its degree programmes elements that will help students understand the global context of their studies and enable them to operate effectively in international professional environments. We also ensure that a broader cross-section of our student population can benefit from relevant academic opportunities abroad and work placements and this is facilitated by an increasing number of study abroad options on many programmes of study. Teaching visits complement existing student exchange or research cooperation and are strongly encouraged; moreover, inbound teaching mobility provides international exposure to non-mobile students. Nor is the relevance of staff training abroad to be overlooked: staff of all categories, and their departments, gain valuable skills, new perspectives and useful contacts during such visits, and we see this as a significant element of staff professional development.

Participation in the Erasmus+ Programme will continue to play a significant role in LYIT’s objective of producing high-caliber graduates with the knowledge, skills and international experience that are so important for their future. We recognise that mobility, whether to HEIs or enterprises abroad, adds substantially to the value of our academic offerings and helps increase attainment levels. It reinforces students’ engagement with their chosen discipline, fosters a broadening of academic perspectives and brings heightened cultural awareness and improved linguistic competence, all of which we deem to be of immense significance in equipping our graduates and researchers for future employment.

By widening the participation base by providing additional financial support to disadvantaged groups, we will help extend these advantages to underrepresented cohorts and non-traditional learners, thus unlocking the potential of wider sections of our population. Staff, too, will derive benefits from mobility that will consolidate their professional competencies and so bring added value to the student experience in the longer term. The contribution of visiting staff and students will also enrich the learning environment and promote cultural diversity. Thus it can be seen that by strategically embedding internationalisation into the curriculum, we are improving the quality and relevance of our programmes, helping to produce informed citizens of Europe and offering clear practical benefits in tune with emerging labour markets.

We intend to expand our already strong range of linkages under Erasmus+ and will continue to deepen and enhance this, helping to promote innovation and entrepreneurship and ultimately drive economic growth in the region we serve. Mobility and international cooperation are critical to quality in higher education and therefore participation in the Programme will boost the Institute’s profile and its attractiveness within and outside of Europe.