

Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) won the Student Engagement and Communications (SE&C) award at the Irish Education Awards (IEA) 2017 and 2018. Like all award winners, we were invited to apply again this year, we aim to retain our status as a winner in this category. Winning three in a row is a tall order, however, we have been reassured that each application stands on its own merit. We hope to be a serious contender for overall IEA award, given our track record and substantial, ongoing development this year.

We are evidencing substantial growth and development internally by **expanding our reach and impact** through increasing **alliances/projects** with students and staff of **all 27 academic departments across all 4 campuses and Student Services**. During the past 12 months we have also built solid working relationships with relevant partners/expertise external to CIT including: NStEP – The National Student Engagement Programme, NFETL – National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, sparqs (Student Partnership in Quality, Scotland), European First Year Experience Network, Birmingham City University, Edinburgh Napier University and the John N Gardner Institute (USA).

Throughout our applications to IEA 2017, IEA 2018 and this current IEA 2019 application we are evidencing year on year incremental development and value added. **For reference, our previous applications can be viewed by judging panel on <http://studentengagement.cit.ie/anseo/recognition>**

This year, we have identified several core areas where development has been significant:

- Based on our growing reputation for Student Engagement and Communications, **CIT won the international bid to host the prestigious European First Year Experience conference in June 2019 putting CIT on the international map of SE&C exemplars** (EFYE conference attracts >300 international delegates annually).
- **Collaboration with all 27 academic departments across all 4 campuses** enabling expansion of reach and impact and development of **tailored SE&C activities** that best reflect student need and discipline context.
- **Development of SE&C over the student lifecycle from pre-entry to post graduation** in collaboration with other key central student services eg Careers Office, Alumni Office, Clubs and Societies, CITSU and Access Office.

CIT continues to invest in improving student engagement, progression and success. This cross-Institute commitment is evidenced by the proactive establishment and resourcing of AnSEO – The Student Engagement Office. AnSEO actions this commitment through relationship building, consultation, partnership and collaboration across the entire student and staff community. This thoughtful approach we hope reflects the positive incremental change process we are engaged in here in CIT: building institutional trust and capacity for new ways of thinking about and ‘doing’ impactful student engagement and communications across the Institute.

Since 2014, CIT student progression has improved by 10%, ensuring CIT has met and continues to meet its agreed targets under our mission based performance compact with the HEA.

Dr Barry O'Connor, President, Cork Institute of Technology

BACKGROUND

Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) has a long and well-earned reputation for being student focused. Our students matter and every student counts.

CIT is a leading higher education institution based in Cork City, comprising of four campuses: Bishoptown, Crawford College of Art and Design (CCAD), Cork School of Music (CSM) and the National Maritime College of Ireland (NMCI) offering a wide range of full-time and part-time higher education courses, at all levels up to and including PhD, in art & design, business, engineering, humanities, music, maritime studies, science and information technology.

CIT was awarded the Sunday Times Institute of Technology of the Year in 2007, 2010 and 2016.



≈ 12,200 REGISTERED STUDENTS

1,425 STAFF MEMBERS

≈ 2,200 NEW STUDENTS ANNUALLY

Active engagement, partnership and communications with students and staff is a hallmark of how we work to co-create and establish student engagement programmes and create culture change.

AnSEO has six main programmes: **Good Start** Student Induction Programme, **Academic Learning Centre (ALC)**, **Academic Success Coaching**, **sparq at CIT** (Student Partnership in Quality), **Peer Assisted Learning and Support (PALS)** and **Transitions to CIT** projects (Department-led induction activities supported by AnSEO). For more information please visit: <http://studentengagement.cit.ie>



In line with our stated vision in IEA2018 winning submission to ‘further develop mission, policy and brand of AnSEO and TLU - as a uniquely student and staff facing Teaching and Learning enhancement function’ we are connecting up team members from AnSEO and TLU to take this proposal forward. The mission of TLU is to provide accessible and useful CPD to teaching staff and those who support student learning with a view to enhancing **student engagement and communications**, progression and success. This past year this work has seen **over 400 staff engage in CPD through the TLU, with 24 Teaching and Learning Unit Projects up and running in current academic year - 2018/19.**

REPUTATION, RECOGNITION AND EVIDENCE OF STANDING OUT

The following table evidences why we feel our service stands out. We have gained local, national and international recognition as an exemplar in SE&C. We have been deliberate in presenting our work for critique and comment with some of the best practitioners in the field. This is a practice that we have engaged in since the inception of AnSEO and will continue as we strive for excellence. Testimonials from some of these people are included later in this document.

| 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|--|--|---|
| Recognised as an exemplar for student engagement by HEA | Winners of The Irish Education Awards Student Engagement and Communications Award 2017 | Winners of The Irish Education Awards Student Engagement and Communications Award 2018 |
| Selected for participation in the NStEP (National Student Engagement Programme) by QQI/HEA/USI | Very strongly commended on SE&C work at annual review and strategic dialogue meeting with HEA | Selected to host the prestigious EFYE2019 EFYE2019 (European First Year Experience) conference in June 2019 |
| Semi-finalists of The National Resource Centre for the First Year Experience and Students in Transition, University of South Carolina, USA | Hosted the national launch of NStEP | Invited to speak on SE&C work in CIT at annual review and strategic dialogue meeting with HEA |
| | Hosted the PASS/PAL (Peer Assisted Learning and Support) Leader Conference 2017 | AnSEO is leading the NStEP national project - Building Staff Capacity for Student Engagement |
| | Recipient of Cork Convention Bureau Ambassador Award for hosting PASS/PAL Leader Conference | sparq at CIT and Transitions to CIT & NStEP national project posters selected to be showcased at QQI, HEA and USI Conference on Student Engagement |
| | Invited to speak on SE&C work in CIT at annual review and strategic dialogue meeting with HEA | 5 AnSEO collaborative projects were selected to be showcased at EFYE2018 Utrecht, Netherlands. |

TEAM

Our team has a broad range of expertise and skills including career guidance, counselling, psychology, coaching psychology, education and multimedia and includes the following roles: **Head of AnSEO/Head of TLU, Student Engagement Officer, Academic Success Coaches, sparq at CIT Co-ordinator, Academic Learning Centre Co-ordinator and teaching team, PALS (Peer Assisted Learning and Support) Officer, Events and Communications Officer, 17 Good Start Ambassadors (Students) and PALS leaders (Students).**

In 2018 /19 we have added a number of academic staff with discipline expertise to our AnSEO team meetings to enable us to better develop SE&C actions that respond to the particular challenges to progression and success that students encounter in different discipline areas.

In line with our mission we issue an open invitation annually to students to join our team/ work with us in various capacities including:

- **Good Start Ambassadors** - working with AnSEO team to co-create and deliver our Good Start Induction Programme.
- **PALS (Peer Assisted Learning and Support) Study Leaders and Social Mentors.**
- **Sparq at CIT – Students are invited and trained to co-facilitate sparq at CIT (Students as Partners in Quality) meetings between students and staff.**

STRUCTURE

AnSEO is committed to a ‘working together is better’ approach, partnership with staff and students delivers continuous improvement of the CIT student experience while significantly extending both our reach and impact.

The AnSEO team is very focused on building and maintaining strong collaborations with all academic departments (management, teaching teams) and their students. Our Student Engagement Officer works directly with faculty management teams, CITSU and Student Services to lead the development of tailored SE&C interventions, These links provide solid engagement and communication channels.



DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS SINCE IEA 2018:

- 1. The European First Year Experience Network Committee selected CIT to host their prestigious and highly regarded annual conference in CIT in June 2019.**

We are really pleased that CIT are hosting the conference in 2019. Their work supporting student transitions and developing teaching staff has impressed the EFYE Committee enormously. I have seen many applications to host the EFYE conference, and CIT's energy and commitment to enhancing student experiences and opportunities stood out. Their commitment to building strong relationships both with staff and students is a key element of how they work, and enables the team to achieve a substantial impact. Their commitment to creating national and international links with key organisations is also significant; they both contribute to these bodies (EFYEN is just one) and also clearly learn from them. They are highly regarded for their work in student engagement.

Dr Diane Nutt, Chair, European First Year Experience Conference

- 2. Academic Success Coaching and Early Alert Online Profiling:**

This year, 2018/19 we have allocated an Academic Success Coach to each faculty so that staff and students have a direct link to and relationship with an AnSEO team member. Also, in response to increasing demand and to enable faster responses to students we have this year moved our Early Alert profiling online.

This allows us to identify students who may be unhappy/unsure and enables us to generate very timely information from First Year Students at key points as we can more easily repeat the profiling process they progress through First Year. Based on profiling activity since **September 2018 (>800 students to date)** we anticipate we will have had over **2,000 profiling interactions with students by the end of Semester 1**. In Semester 2, using different profiling questions and the online process we anticipate similar levels of student engagement and communication by our Academic Success Coaching project.

- 3. EDGE³ at CIT - Engaging and Developing Graduates for Employability, Entrepreneurship and Effective Citizenship.**

Building EDGE³ (Educating and Developing Graduates for Employment, Entrepreneurship and Effective Citizenship) allows CIT to recognise, incentivise and value attainment of skills and knowledge by engaged students that add significantly to our students’ ‘graduateness’. AnSEO is leading the project and has established a working group with representatives from across a number of faculties to plan and action the development steps for **EDGE³**.

Birmingham City University have agreed to partner with us based on their expertise in this space and have presented to the EDGE³ planning team in October 2018.



4. Professional and personal development programmes for students:

In line with EDGE³ we are currently developing a number of SE&C programmes for undergraduate students who have shown leadership potential through their engagement with academic study and/or extracurricular activities. These programmes will focus on **communication and leadership skills**. Manuals and materials are currently in production. First programmes will be run in early 2019 with an initial offering of 100 student places, facilitated by AnSEO Team.

5. Building a whole institute approach to SE&C:

In 2018/19 CIT has 42 Transitions to CIT projects, plus 24 TLU Development Fund projects engaging over 120 staff and approximately 2,000 students. Projects include: staff/ student meet and greets, team-building activities, welcome breakfasts, ice-breakers, role model seminars, site visits, Meet Our Graduates etc. <http://studentengagement.cit.ie/transitions-sampleprojects>.

Outputs and reports from AnSEO programmes (detailed in previous applications) inform the themes of our teaching and learning development offerings. Examples include: **Development of Active Learning Communities** in academic departments, **Staff seminars on Student Engagement** across the student lifecycle, development of **coaching skills for staff that can be applied in supporting SE&C**, **development of student engagement guides, assessment and feedback guides in collaboration with Edinburgh Napier University**.

CIT's AnSEO - The Student Engagement Office has played a pivotal role in designing, developing and delivering an excellent framework for communication and engagement with CIT's students. The framework is multidimensional in nature and covers everything from helping incoming students transition smoothly to life in CIT through to the provision of supports and peer mentoring to optimise opportunities for deep learning, progression and academic success. In addition, the Student Engagement Office has played a pivotal role in establishing fora where student-staff partnerships have been established to tackle challenges in a way where joined-up thinking and sharing of responsibilities for achievement of outcomes is the order of the day. AnSEO constantly innovates and evolves based on international best practices. Students matter in CIT and Anseo leads the way everyday in ensuring that this expression of CIT values is translated into action and outcomes.

Mr Michael Loftus, Head, Faculty of Engineering and Science, CIT

6. Growth and reach of Good Start Student Induction programme: In 2018/19 we have increased our Good Start Ambassador team from 12 to 17 students enabling both CIT CSM and NMCI campuses to run a tailored Good Start campaign onsite. **Notably, this year's Good Start programme had in excess of 9,400 direct face to face interactions with students compared to just over 6,500 last year at pop up help desks, Get Connected Events, Red Carpet Ice Breakers and Meet and Greets.**



As a Good Start Ambassador I highly appreciated the creative freedom given along with the level of trust and responsibility that was present. It made you feel like a valuable and respected member of the AnSEO team. There is also something rewarding about being able to help first years and navigate them through the beginning of their college experience, and then seeing them thrive weeks after your initial encounter.

Dami Fagbamila, 4th Year Social Care Student and Good Start Ambassador 2018/19

I wholeheartedly would recommend becoming a Good Start Ambassador. I think this experience really helped me settle into college and branch out of my class life. It is a great opportunity to develop and learn new skills and give back to the college. It was such a fun and energetic atmosphere, it never felt like we were working. All the AnSEO team were so welcoming and friendly, it made the whole thing so much easier knowing they were always there to help us.

Emma Brennan, 2nd Year Software Development Student and Good Start Ambassador 2018/19

7. Further development of our online communication activity since IEA 2018:

Alongside our interpersonal communications (team meetings, ongoing meetings and presentations across teaching teams and academic departments, presentations to students, listening events and conversations with students, group meetings with students, walk in services) we have seen significant further development of our online communications this year as outlined below.

We utilise the AnSEO website, re-directs from myCIT student website, internal email and the main CIT social media platforms to engage with the wider student body and our stakeholders. **Impact of our communications is evidenced by:**

- **24.65% increase in AnSEO website users during the September/October 2018 period based on the same period in 2017**

- During Good Start's social media 'takeover' in September 2018 CIT Facebook likes increased by 1,026 and videos posted on Facebook were viewed over 9,400 times.
- We have also developed our Academic Success Coaching social media to include messages, tips and tricks generated by students during a *Transitions to CIT* social listening project, these posts have gained over 300 Instagram likes.
- A further development of the **Just Ask! about Exam Results** campaign has been the creation of a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document, in collaboration with the Admissions Office, the Exams Office and the Office of the Registrar and VP for Academic Affairs. **Better communication to students resulted in a 67.1% reduction in basic exam results queries to Academic Success Coaching email account** from June 2016 to February 2018, freeing up skilled staff to work more closely with more complex student queries.
- This year we are publishing case studies of our collaboration activity with CIT departments, this has proved to be highly successful in showing the extent and reach of AnSEO activity to our colleagues and peers and in attracting more staff driven SE&C projects: <http://studentengagement.cit.ie/transitions-sampleprojects>.



The CIT Student Engagement Office ensures that the student voice is heard in CIT, through many positive engagements with students and staff, we can see positive outcomes in retention, student and staff led initiatives and an enhanced student experience. The office empowers students to talk about issues important to them and works with students and staff to address these in a positive way. The real value is that there is follow-up and ownership so students and staff see their ideas implemented which benefits everyone within the Institute.

Mr. Gerard O'Donovan, Head, Faculty of Business and Humanities, CIT

DEVELOPMENT: NEXT STEPS

- CIT has recently been awarded significant funding to build a **new Learning Resource Centre (LRC)**. The overarching theme of this building will be **Engaged Learning**. AnSEO team members are on the Planning Committee.
- **Continued development of focused academic module supports** through ALC working closely with Academic Success Coaching and a renewed peer support programme.
- **Ongoing development of sparq at CIT as a key process for enabling the student voice and building student/staff partnerships.**



STRATEGY

Our student engagement and communications strategy builds awareness of the idea that student engagement is everyone's business. It is based on four pillars:

1. **A strong commitment to the principles of collaboration, student/staff partnership and consultation by AnSEO team;**
2. **Purposeful building and maintenance of high trust relationships by AnSEO team with CIT students and staff;**
3. **Developing an action orientated team that is focused on values and principles;**
4. **Being purposeful in our work through carefully researched initiatives.**



Here at CIT, we have combined the goal of enhancing student progression and success with the goal of making students feel welcome, that they matter and are part of something bigger – a caring community that has the pursuit of their best academic potential at its heart. Students have the most important role to play as engaged learners, and we want them to really recognise this. At the same time, we also seek to develop and support the critical role staff have to play in cultivating an effective partnership approach to student communications and engagement.

Dr Áine Ní Shé, Registrar and VP for Academic Affairs, Cork Institute of Technology

TESTIMONIALS

“The AnSEO and TLU teams work really hard to support teaching and learning staff across CIT in creative and dynamic ways to enhance student engagement, progression and success. A particularly imaginative project I’ve been involved with this year is in the production of really helpful guides for staff on teaching techniques for novices and more experienced staff. Notably this is part of a cross-national project with Edinburgh Napier University in Scotland allowing the two HEIs to reciprocally share resources doubling their value. The team are a joy to work with as they are so committed to helping students achieve their potential through supporting staff to do the same.”

Prof Sally Brown, International Education Consultant, Emerita Professor of Higher Education Diversity in Teaching and Learning at Leeds Metropolitan University and was until July 2010 PVC (Academic)

“It is very gratifying to work with the AnSEO team at Cork Institute of Technology on enhancing Student Engagement and Communication across CIT and beyond. They’ve asked me to work with them to produce a new expanded edition of my guide for new staff ‘In at the Deep End’ because they are committed to addressing ways of making a really good start in the processes of teaching large and small groups, and ensuring that students are actively engaged in their learning. What characterises the CIT team approach is their energy and enthusiasm for making learning happen with both staff and students.”

Professor Phil Race, internationally renowned Educationalist and Author on teaching, learning and assessment, student engagement and making learning happen



“The CIT AnSEO team have become allies and friends to the student engagement work at Birmingham City University. At first, they came to learn from us about our approach, but as their ideas developed it has become a real partnership with ideas bouncing both ways. The integrated way in which Marese and colleagues approach their work, through for example the student induction pathway, aligns with our approach at BCU and now offers new insights that we need to learn from. We are presently collaborating around the recognition of student abilities/skills through extra-curricular awards as we seek to integrate student engagement activities within a further part of the student journey. Once again, I am sure both partners will learn much. The vision of colleagues at CIT and the willingness to change and adapt to the needs of the student population and international evidence is a great strength and one that we intend to embrace for many years to come through our engagement partnership.”

Luke Millard, Director, Education Development Service, Birmingham City University

“It is testament to the CIT student engagement team to consistently seek out synergistic practice that has the potential to feature in the ongoing development of their students and staff. In so doing they also help to raise the bar in offering up shared practice and ideas that can only enhance delivery for all. A recent visit to CIT demonstrated their commitment to collaboration by organising a fact-finding session available to both academic and professional services staff, thus providing an open and transparent forum in which to move forward.”

Ms Lesley Taylor, BCU Grad++ Project Leader