



**Economic Impact of International Students attending Athlone Institute of
Technology to Athlone**

By

Farzad Azizi

**“This research project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the Degree of Masters of
Business at the Athlone Institute of Technology”**

Masters of Business

School of Business

Athlone Institute of Technology

Research Supervisor: Linda Reidy

Submitted: August 2017

Signed Statement

I have read the Institute's code of practice on plagiarism. I hereby certify this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Master of Business is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save and to the extent that such work has been cited within the text of my work.

Student ID Number: A00169568

Name of Candidate: Farzad Azizi

Signature of Candidate: _____

Date: August, 2017

*I would like to dedicate this piece of work to my
parents for believing in me and being the most
encouraging and inspirational people in my life.
We all miss you dad*



Rest in peace daddy

Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Linda Reidy, my thesis supervisor, for her guidance, patient, enthusiastic encouragement and useful critiques throughout this challenging research.

I also would like to thank all of the international students and interviewees that participated in this research.

I would like to extend my gratitude thanks to staff of Athlone Institute of Technology, in particular the staff of the international office and the library for their help and guidance throughout my master degree course. Special thanks to Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin for all his endless help, motivation, spirit and for giving me the opportunity to complete my MBS at Athlone Institute of Technology.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to thank my family for their patience, understanding and encouragements while I was away from home working on completing my master degree course and this thesis.

Table of Contents

List of tables	viii
List of figures	ix
Abbreviation and terms	xi
Abstract	1
Chapter One: Introduction	2
1.1 Introduction.....	3
1.2 Research aim.....	4
1.3 Research objectives.....	4
1.4 Research rationale.....	4
1.5 Background to research.....	5
1.6 Thesis structure.....	6
1.7 Summary.....	8
Chapter Two: Literature Review	9
2.1 Introduction.....	10
2.2 Athlone.....	11
2.3 Athlone economy.....	11
2.4 National education system (NES).....	16
2.5 Stability of international education.....	19
2.6 Study on international students' contribution (Sheffield and Wales).....	21
2.7 Marketing in AIT.....	24
2.8 Competition to recruit international students.....	26
2.9 Students' spending.....	28
2.10 Economic impact.....	29
2.11 Tuition.....	31
Summary.....	36
Chapter Three: Methodology	37
3.1 Introduction.....	38
3.2 Research aim.....	38
3.3 Objectives.....	38

3.5	Research philosophies.....	40
3.5.1	Interpretivism.....	41
3.6	Research approach	42
3.7	Research strategy	43
3.8	Methodological choices	43
3.8.1	Mixed methodology	44
3.7	Time horizon.....	48
3.8	Techniques and procedures.....	48
3.9	Questionnaire pilot testing	50
3.10	Ethical consideration.....	51
3.11	Summary	52
Chapter Four: Findings and Analysis.....		53
4.1	Introduction.....	54
4.2	Overview of research results.....	55
4.2.1	To ascertain where international students spend their money in the local economy (Research objective one).....	56
4.3	To ascertain economic benefit brought to Athlone economy by relatives and friends visiting international students (Research objective two)	79
4.4	To evaluate the economic impact of international students on Athlone from business owner's perspective (Research objective three).....	80
4.5	Summary	82
Chapter Five: Discussion.....		83
5.1	Introduction.....	84
5.2	Research aim.....	84
5.3	To ascertain where international students spend their money in the local economy (Research objective one).....	85
5.4	Tuition fees	88
5.5	To measure the economic benefit brought to Athlone's economy by relatives and friends visiting these students (Research objective two)	88
5.6	To evaluate the economic impact of international students on Athlone from business owner's perspective (Research objective three).....	90
5.7	Summary	91
Chapter Six: Conclusion		93
6.1	Introduction.....	94

6.2	Research conclusion.....	94
6.3	Recommendation and future research.....	96
6.4	Limitation.....	98
6.5	Personal reflection	99
References.....		101
Appendices.....		108

List of tables

Table 2.9.1	Estimated average of expenditure for one international student in Ireland for one month
Table 2.11.1	Average Course fees for 2016/2017 for non-E.U. undergraduate students
Table 2.11.2	Average fees at US universities, 2016-17
Table 2.11.3	Average fees at US universities, 2015-16
Table 2.11.4	Tuition and Fees and Room and Board
Table 3.5.1	Classification of Research Philosophy
Table 4.2.1.1	Table of payable rent
Table 4.2.1.2	Table of public transport and taxi
Table 4.2.2	Monthly total spending of international students at AIT
Table 4.4.1	Profile of the interviewees
Table 5.3.1	Monthly expenditure for average of an international student in Ireland
Table 5.3.2	Monthly expenditure for average of an international student at AIT

List of figures

- Figure 2.3.1** Number of international students attending Athlone Institute of Technology for last 5 years
- Figure 2.8.1** Countries Chinese students choose to study at
- Figure 2.10.1** Number of EU and non-EU Students. 2010/2011 and 2014/201
- Figure 2.11.1** Percentage of jobs created by international students in the United States
- Figure 2.11.2** Economic contributions, enrolment data, and jobs supported over a ten-year timeframe
- Figure 3.4** Research Onion
- Figure 3.6** The process of quantitative research
- Figure 4.2.1.1** Graph of country profile
- Figure 4.2.1.2** Graph of age profile
- Figure 4.2.1.3** Graph of semesters already attended AIT
- Figure 4.2.1.4** Graph of semesters remained to complete academic year
- Figure 4.2.1.5** Graph of telecommunication expenses
- Figure 4.2.1.6** Graph of accommodation type
- Figure 4.2.1.7** Graph of utility bills
- Figure 4.2.1.8** Figure for use of own vehicle
- Figure 4.2.1.9** Alcohol expenses in bars
- Figure 4.2.1.10** Graph of alcohol purchase in off-licence and supermarkets

- Figure 4.2.1.11** Graph of monthly spending in supermarkets
- Figure 4.2.1.12** Graph of eating out – restaurants and take away
- Figure 4.2.1.14** Graph of retail purchase
- Figure 4.2.1.15** Graph of entertainment
- Figure: 4.2.1.16** Graph of personal grooming
- Figure: 4.2.1.17** Graph of gym membership
- Figure: 4.2.1.18** Graph of GNIB card holders
- Figure 4.2.1.19** Graph of visit from family and friends

Abbreviation and terms

AIT	Athlone Institute of Technology
B&B	Bed and Breakfast
GNIB	Garda National Immigration Bureau
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HES	Higher Education System
IEE	International Education Exhibition
ICOS	Irish Council for International Students
IOT	Institute of Technology
IPEDS	Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
NAFSA	Association of International Educators
NES	National Education System
NQAI	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

Abstract

While studies have been published on spending and economic benefits of international students both nationally and internationally, there is still no evidence of a study being focused on only one institute, even in Ireland. Thus, this thesis only focuses on the international students at Athlone Institute of Technology. Literature from Ireland, Wales, Sheffield-based Universities and the United States are included in this thesis which shows that international students contribute money through their expenditure to the economy. However, it is worth acknowledging that this area still lacks knowledge. The study includes both European and non-European examples.

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to understand the economic contributions brought to Athlone economy by international students including their spending, visits from family and friends and their contribution to businesses in Athlone from the perspective of business owners. International students spending were found to be surprisingly high in Athlone. Based on these findings there were a number of recommendations given to Athlone Institute of Technology and for future research.

Data was collected using mixed method approach to obtain the relevant qualitative and quantitative results to investigate the 'economic impact of international students attending Athlone Institute of Technology to Athlone'. Quantitative data was gathered through the distribution of on-line and off-line questionnaires to sixty two international students at Athlone Institute of Technology. Qualitative data was gathered using semi-structured interviews to gather information regarding international students' spending and their impact on businesses in Athlone. The findings are presented and discussed within this thesis.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide the reader with a brief background and comprehensive understanding of this research. International students are now one of the main focus of third level institutes in Ireland and around the world as Enterprise Ireland (2016) estimated that international students contribute more than €1 billion to the Irish economy and they also plan to increase that to €1.3 billion by 2020. This makes this research important to understand fully the economic impact that international students attending Athlone Institute of Technology attribute to Athlone. The author also found there is a lack of research in this area as such research has not been conducted in the past for international students attending Athlone Institute of Technology.

In addition, this chapter also includes the research aim and objectives, the author's rationale for undertaking this research and summarising the key components of each chapter within this piece of research. Finally, methods of gathering information will also be outlined by the author.

1.2 Research aim

To determine the economic value of international students attending Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) to Athlone economy.

1.3 Research objectives

The author has identified the following objectives to reach the aim of this research

1. To ascertain where international students spend their money in the local economy
2. To ascertain economic benefit brought to Athlone economy by relatives and friends visiting international students
3. To evaluate the economic impact of international students on Athlone from business owner's perspective

1.4 Research rationale

Lack of research in this area has motivated the author to conduct this thesis. The context included in this thesis is to determine the main economic benefits that are contributed to Athlone economy by international students attending AIT. The author wishes to explore where international students spend their money in the local economy and whether their family and friends contribute to the economy during their visit. Furthermore, recommend what can be done to get international students to spend more money locally.

Additionally, this research will help AIT, business owners and the higher education sector to better understand the economic value of international students in their institutes. From the

figures presented they will be able to understand where international students spend their money thus, they will be able to implement a more targeted marketing campaign to recruit more international students.

Lastly, the author hopes to gain valuable knowledge on this topic as he hopes to pursue a career in international student recruitment.

1.5 Background to research

It was mentioned earlier in this chapter that international students are one of the main focus of third level institutes in Ireland. Ireland attracts students from all around the world, Project Atlas Ireland (2015) displayed the top 10 countries from which students come to study in Ireland. Most of these are from outside the European Union (EU) and require a visa to enter Ireland, which include the United States, China, France, Brazil, Canada and Saudi Arabia. ICOS (2015) states that there are more than 3,900 international students studying in the Institutes of Technology in Ireland.

International students are very important to Athlone Institute of Technology and considerable attention is given to increasing the number of international students to study at AIT. The international students at AIT are divided into different categories; those who need a visa to come and study in Ireland (non – EU), and those who do not (EU). Those that do not require visa to study in Ireland are the European national students. In terms of fees, EU students are required to pay up to €90 tuition fee but other nationalities, such as Chinese, Malaysian and those from Arabic countries are required to pay a much higher tuition fees. Those coming

from Asian and Middle Eastern countries pay €9,150 for undergraduate studies and €10,150 for post graduate courses.

The aim of this thesis is to gather significant information from the international students at AIT, such as their spending for accommodation, utility and other expenditures such as food, drinks and entertainment. Also, to get an estimation of the amount of money spent by family and friends visiting international students in Athlone as well as conducting interviews with business owners in Athlone to fully understand the impact of international students on their business.

This research will determine the sum of money spent by international students at AIT and its economic contribution towards the town of Athlone.

1.6 Thesis structure

This thesis is systemised as per the guidelines set out in the ‘Master of Business Studies at Athlone Institute of Technology’. This thesis has been segregated into six chapters.

Chapter One – Introduction

The thesis begins with the introduction of the aim and objectives and offers the research rationale as to why the author chose to carry out the study on the economic contribution of international students.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

Chapter two focuses on introducing Athlone and its economy along with the Irish education system so anyone reading this thesis would not only understand Athlone's economy but also understand the Irish Education System. Further, this study focuses on literature already published on international students' spending and their economic contribution to the region where they study.

Chapter Three – Methodology

The third chapter of this thesis is the primary research methodology, which explains how the thesis is planned, conducted and analysed. The research classification, approach, philosophy and strategy used in this research are examined and justified.

Chapter Four – Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents the key findings derived from the main research carried out in relation to the international students' spending, their tuition fees, and money generated from visits of their family and friends. Along with semi-structured interviews with business owners in Athlone to understand the impact of international students on their business.

Chapter Five – Discussion

The purpose of Chapter Five is a detailed discussion of findings. This chapter analyses the key findings from chapter four and compares and contrasts with literature discussed in chapter two.

Chapter Six – Conclusion

The final chapter of this thesis represents the conclusion and recommendation of the research and will state whether the aim and objectives were justified. Further, the research limitation and personal reflection on the journey prior to and during completion of this master thesis are outlined in this chapter.

1.7 Summary

The introduction chapter forms a basis for understanding for the following sections. The key background information to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research and introduction of the main aim and objectives. Additionally, it illustrates how the thesis is structured. Chapter two will investigate the economic contribution of international students.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The primary aim of this chapter is to investigate, evaluate and critically analyse existing research and literature on the economic contribution of international students. Furthermore, the study gives an introduction to Athlone economy and the Irish Education System to provide background knowledge as an aid for understanding this thesis.

The scope of the literature review includes the following topics:

- Brief introduction to Athlone town
- Stability of International Education
- Compare other regions' international students spending to Athlone and the impact of international students to a region. Research in this area is limited. The author also investigates strategies made by the Irish government bodies and other studies published outside of Ireland looking into the economic impact that international students bring to a region. There was a lack of research in the European countries on the researched topic but there is more related research from the United States.

2.2 Athlone

This thesis is based on Athlone so a brief introduction of Athlone is necessary so all readers would have an idea of the size and scope of Athlone in Ireland. Athlone (*Baile Atha Luain* in Irish) which literally means the town of Luan's Ford is a town which sits on the bank of the Shannon River in the middle of Ireland (Murtagh, 2000). Athlone is located on the border of two counties Roscommon in the Province of Connaught and Westmeath in the Province of Leinster (O'Brien, 2017).

According to the most recent information reports by the CSO (2016), Athlone is the second most populous town in the Midlands with a total population of 21,349 people which has seen an increase of 5.9% since 2011.

2.3 Athlone economy

As a '*big small*' town in Ireland' CSO (2011), Athlone has a number of strong points which includes, being at the focal area in the country with great territorial connectivity and closeness of Westmeath to Dublin city and airplane terminals. It also has a high quality road infrastructure with M4 and M6 which makes it easy for international students to visit the capital city and get to the airport. With the growing population of Athlone, the train station has implemented lines going to two major cities in Ireland, Galway and Dublin.

Athlone Institute of Technology is the only third level institute in the Midlands and keeps on developing and building up an extensive variety of courses in the region with strong outreach

links. AIT is a significant point of convergence for the development and reinforcing of the industry and advanced education interfaces in research and development (Midland Regional Authority, 2010)

Athlone Institute of Technology has put in a bid to upgrade itself from an Institute to a Technological University, which would make Athlone Institute of Technology the only university in the Midland (McQuinn, 2016). The Irish Times (2014) reports indicates Athlone Institute of Technology plans to grow its postgraduate research enrolments programme by thirty percent and increase the recruitment of international students from the current 11% to 15% by 2018 (Humphreys, 2014).

Athlone has over forty pubs and clubs which are popular with local and tourists. Listed on Mytown.ie (2017) website are over fifty restaurants serving food from many different nations including Italian, Lebanese, Turkish, Thai and Chinese. Some of these are quite traditional and old, such as Sean's bar which is established by the Guinness World Record as the oldest pub in Ireland and Europe (Irish Mirror, 2015) and (The Daily Telegraph, 2006).

Athlone town shopping centre which has over sixty stores ranging from men and women's fashion to crafts and bookstores. These offer the international students at AIT variety of options and these international brands make it easier for students to settle down more comfortably because they have access to things they are familiar with.

Athlone attracts some of the biggest companies in the world such as Teleflex, a global supplier of specific medical technology devices for a brand of procedures that enhance clinical advantages, enhance patient wellbeing and provides safety while in critical care (Teleflex, 2017). Ericsson, a multinational networking and telecommunication equipment and services company with more than 140 years of experience and the inventor of Bluetooth (Ericsson, 2017).

Sheppard (2015) reports on the top reason that why people should consider visiting and moving to Athlone and Mr Sheppard stated some of the obvious that was published by Athlone Town Centre (2017) included Golden Island and Athlone Town Centre, both have many of the big retailers, including number of hotels such as The Sheraton, The Prince House Hotel and shops such as Tesco, Argos, T.K. Maxx, Mark and Spencer and Zara. Athlone has branches of numerous semi-State and State businesses, including the Revenue Commissioners, Iarnród Éireann, the Department of Education, Bus Éireann, Enterprise Ireland, therefore ensuring a strong local economy (Sheppard, 2015)

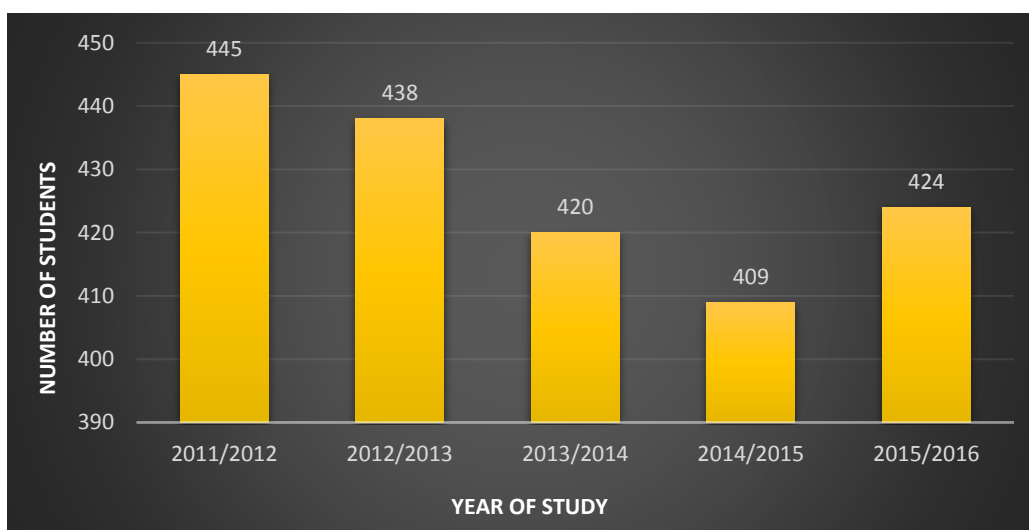
The CSO (2016) report has shown that there are 11,667 people employed in Athlone within different industries. The report also shows that majority of people are employed in the commerce and trade industry with 2,824 which accounts for 24.2%, followed by professional services at 21% such as education. The least number of people were employed in the agriculture, forestry and fishing with only 0.4% of the total people in employment.

Table 2.3.1 illustrates the number of international students attending AIT from 2011-2016. It can be seen that there is an unpredictability in the number of international students choosing to study at AIT each year.

According to reports from thejournal.ie (2015) and Irish Universities Association (2013) that Brazil and Saudia Arabia were two of the main market for Irish third level institutes. This figure has changed dramatically because of the struggle Brazillian and Saudi students are facing to get scholarship to study abroad due to the national budget (Forbes.com, 2016). This is relevant because it impacts the number of international studying at AIT each year.

AIT has kept an incredibly steady intake of an average of 427 international students in the past six years with all the difficulties they are facing due to bans of scholarship from Saudi Arabia and Brazil (Www.qs.com, 2017).

Figure 2.3.1: Number of international students attending Athlone Institute of Technology for last 5 years



Source: AIT (2017)

2.3.2 Hotels in Athlone

Since part of this research examines the financial contribution of students' visitors to Athlone, an assessment of accommodation costs for tourists is important. Research from www.booking.com (2017) shows results for hotels in Athlone for the months of September 2017 from €120 per night for one visitor to €200 and Bed and Breakfast (B&B) from €45 and up. The website that offered the cheapest rate of stay for a night in Athlone was offered by Jescost (2017) at the lowest rate of €41.

2.4 National education system (NES)

The NES in Ireland for international students coming to Ireland can access courses in the higher education sector, the English language sector and further education sector. The structure of NES, Irish system of further and higher education encompasses public and private institutions including higher postgraduate degree levels, full degree courses, vocations and technical courses and post second-level courses. The Higher Education System (HES) combines the universities, Institutes of Technology (IOT), colleges of education, chosen Higher Education Authority (HEA) colleges, private colleges that offer higher education credentials, colleges accepted by the National University of Ireland, and some other State-aided third-level institutions (O'Connell, 2012).

To more clearly understand the significance of international students in Ireland, the following policies and organisations will be mentioned.

2.4.1 Department of Education and Skills

This department is commonly responsible for the general duty regarding policy relating to and financing of education in Ireland and regulates all parts of education policy including national examinations, syllabi and educational program. The International Section of the Department assumes a focal part in the development of national policy towards international students coming to Ireland (O'Connell, 2012).

2.4.2 The Higher Education Authority (HEA)

The more developed the HEA, the more attractive it is for international students to choose to study in Ireland. The HEA is the body responsible for the planning and development for research and higher education in Ireland. The HEA has a wide counselling powers over the entire of the third-level education in Ireland. In addition, it is the financing authority for the universities, the IOTs and several of chosen higher education institutions (O'Connell, 2012).

2.4.3 The Qualification and Quality Assurance Authority in Ireland

This section is linked closely with the HEA which provides for the establishment of a body known as the qualifications and quality assurance authority of Ireland to provide for the dissolution of the national qualifications authority of Ireland (QQI, 2012).

O'Connell (2012) agrees that the qualification and quality assurance authority joins the elements of the Irish Universities Quality Board, Higher Education and Training Awards Council, Further Education and Training Awards Council and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), with the NQAI having already incorporated the functions of Accreditation and Co-ordination of English Language Services

2.4.4 Enterprise Ireland

Another example of how international students are valued in Ireland is by looking at some of the work of Enterprise Ireland. Enterprise Ireland is presently in charge of the brand of 'Education in Ireland', a brand to which educational institutions can join and under which they can take advantages of the expertise and networks of Enterprise Ireland. Enterprise Ireland

organises education promotion overseas known as International Education Exhibition (IEE), within which the Department of Education and Skills can enable Ministerial participation (O'Connell, 2012). Ireland was awarded the country of honour of 2016 IEE which was held in China and led by Minister for Education and Skills Richard Bruton. The IEE is to reinforce Ireland's presence in the market and to support the Irish higher education (IHE) institutions. Nineteen of IHE institutions were exhibiting in both Beijing and Shanghai including AIT (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Ireland, 2016) and (Education Ireland, 2016).

2.4.5 Irish Council for International Students (ICOS)

ICOS works together with its members, government agencies and student unions to guarantee that international education strategy and practice in Ireland is quality driven and remains solidly centered around the social and educational needs of all students. ICOS supports staff in colleges who work with them and advocates the rights and welfare of international students who choose to study in Ireland (ICOS, 2016).

2.5 Stability of international education

An international student is defined as those that are studying full-time outside their place of origin (Education.ie, 2016). *"An international student is defined as an individual who is enrolled for credit at an accredited higher education institution in a foreign country on a temporary visa, and who is not a refugee, an immigrant or an undocumented immigrant"* (William Paterson University, 2017).

The study conducted by Clark & Sedgwick (2005) specified that students have become experienced consumers to discover the best options in higher education. These authors additionally noticed that factors influencing where a student end up are reliant on educational system compatibility, language, proximity, enrolment affordability and degree attractiveness for occupation after graduation. Unlike Clark and Sedgwick, De Wit (1999) offered different perspective of enthusiasm in the rationale for expanding internationalisation of higher education focused on the economic side which included: academic, socio-cultural, economic and political factors.

Further, Clark & Sedgwick (2005) stated that international students choosing to study outside their home country has increased with 1.9 million students recorded in 2002. Approximately 30% of the 1.9 million international students chose to study in the United States which was 570,000 international students. A Recent study published by Opendoors (2016) states that the number of international students in the U.S. institutions were recorded at more than one million for the first time in its history.

Even though there was a high record of international students in the United States (US), De Wit's (1999) study becomes more relevant after nearly twenty years that international educators have expressed concern over the political instability surrounding foreign national in the United States. Survey conducted by Institute of International Education (2016) was completed by more than 250 US institutions and the key findings were that 39% of responding institutions reported decline in international students' applications, 35% reported an increase, and 26% reported no change in applicant numbers. Middle Eastern students studying in the US make up of 10% of current international students enrolment in the US which is more than 100,000 students and the finding showed 39% decrease in undergraduate applications and 31% reported declines in the graduate application for September 2017. 26% of institutions stated decline for undergraduate application from India and 25% reported application decline from China.

The Atlantic (2017) reports the same views as De Wit (1999) and Institute of International Education (2016) that even in the twenty-first century the economic impacts of international students is influenced by cultural and political factors. The Atlantic (2017) reported that there were 15,000 international students from the 6 countries that the president of the United States, Donald Trump planned to ban. A new study conducted a survey of more than 1,300 international has shown that international are less interested in studying in the US due to political factors in the United States (VOA, 2017).

2.6 Study on international students' contribution (Sheffield and Wales)

For comparative purposes, this thesis looks at the following study from Sheffield and Wales. This report was conducted in for the academic year 2012/2013 to understand the costs and benefits of international students in Sheffield. The report studied 8,222 international students that studied at universities in Sheffield. According to the report 93% of these students were full time.

The University of Sheffield (2013) report notes that international students bring analogous economic benefits to those generated by international tourists. The study identified three distinct channels through which international students support and strengthen the economic activity;

1. Fee income paid directly to the university – It was estimated in the study that international students contributed more than £104.5 (€119.4) million to universities in the Sheffield area alone.
2. The subsistence spending on international students whilst studying - This refers to all spending by international students on services and goods excluding tuition fees, for example, rent, food expenditure, travel and entertainment. A Students Income and Expenditure Survey was used to estimate the subsistence expenditure and this showed that each student spends £11,688 (€13,462) per year. In conclusion, it estimates that international students studying at Sheffield-based universities spend £99.4 (€114.5) million on subsistence.

3. The expenditure of friends and relatives that come to visit international students - The data source used for this report was gathered from International Passenger Survey. The report identifies that it is not clear if those tourists are visiting international students but figures from 2011 Census showed that there were 2,854 Malaysian citizens living in Yorkshire and Humber area and the data from the University published that out of the 8,222 international students 489 of those are Malaysian. 489 is 17.1% of the total of Malaysian living in the Yorkshire and Humber area. Based on those findings the report assumes that 17.1% of visitors are visiting international students at Sheffield-based universities. It is 'assumed' that 17.1% of those visiting are visiting family and friends.

In conclusion, the report states that international students at Sheffield contributed £120 (€138.5) million directly to sub-regional GDP and £147.5 (€170.24) million in total (University of Sheffield, 2013).

A study conducted by Kelly, et al. (2015) identified the international students' spending and economic benefits of those attending Wales universities. The study looked at international students' expenditure off-campus including rent, groceries, travel, personal items and entertainment and estimated that EU and non-EU students expenditure came to £303 (€345) million.

The study also estimated £24 (€28) million expenditure from family and friends visit associated with international students to Wales's economy. This means that international students' expenditure and visitors excluding the tuition fees were estimated to be as much as £327 (€373) million for the year of 2013.

The study highlighted the presence of international students in Wales as way of a bridge to connect Wales to the global economy and international students leaving Wales after completion of their studies as an ambassador for Wales. Another main significant that was high in the study was international students contribute to the current economy and in the long term with the goal of raising the profile of Wales and attract investment.

The study completed by University of Sheffield (2013) and Kelly, et al. (2015) have similar results regarding international students and both justified that international students bring a significant and positive economic benefit to the region where they study.

2.7 Marketing in AIT

National and state associations allied with the academic community and governments have noticed that international students are influenced by marketing practices abroad. These associations concerns are centred not just with respect to the political, social/cultural and academic perspective, but also as a way to improve the economy (Bekhradnia, 2005).

Winkler and Argawal (1985) expressed that foreign students create incomes for universities and colleges by paying tuition fees or potentially accumulating proclamation government grants on account of public institutions and that numerous universities and colleges recruit and even enrol international students. Both authors also noted that from the institutional point of view, there are genuine gain to the department of education.

AIT has developed international partnerships with driven multinational companies and international universities which has attracted significant funding. *“Collaboration is central to the attainment of AIT’s strategic goal to become a technological university. This philosophy will drive our engagement with educational, research and industry partners towards our mutual benefit and that of our respective communities”* (O’Cathain, 2014). Simpson (2016) states when Athlone Institute of Technology started to put money and effort into recruiting international students, AIT was mainly concerned promoting through IEE because AIT was able to meet with international institutes and was able to meet with agents. It worked out to be very expensive for AIT but allowed for the institute of technology to successfully promote itself on an international level. AIT was able to recruit students and as Ms Simpson put it *“those students became our ambassadors”*. AIT is not very concerned with attending these IEEs and their marketing is now through existing agents and words of mouth. Ms Simpson, the Director of International

Relations at Athlone Institute of Technology, expressed that this marketing strategy is working very well with AIT's expansion and that they intend to keep this marketing strategy.

AIT considers the international office to be an important source for providing information to international students and international agents. AIT has offices both nationally and internationally. AIT's most recent internationalisation was on March of 2017 where AIT opened its second China office in Wuhan at Foundation College of China for Scholarly Cooperation. Wuhan is located in Hubei province with a population of over 10 million people, the ninth largest city in China (AIT, 2017).

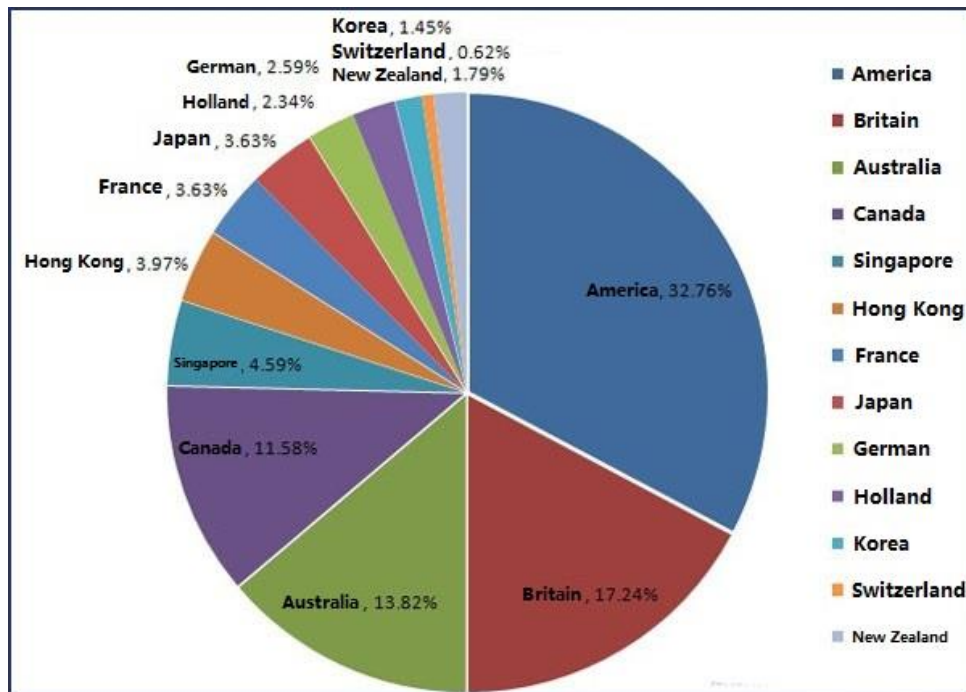
2.8 Competition to recruit international students

Even though Ireland is the only English-speaking country in the European Union (apart from the UK), it does not give them any particular advantage. Firstly, Ireland is promoted as a destination for education by the education governing bodies and the Irish Institutes, then, the institutes narrow it down to promoting themselves as “best” institutes for higher education (Enterprise Ireland, 2016). Ms Simpson further expressed, many of the Irish Higher Institutes see China as a target and they are very “aggressive” with their promotion, offering scholarship and cheaper tuition fees. There are many Chinese who still do not fully understand Ireland as a separate nation. The Director of International Relations agrees with this statement and claims AIT needs to educate potential Chinese students on Ireland and its differences with the United Kingdom (UK).

AIT is competing with not only the Irish institutes but also with other third level education institutes around the world, in particular, the US, the UK, Canada, Australia, and the Netherlands. Ms Simpson (2017) highlighted that most Chinese students would first choose to study in the US because it has greater social status recognition. Figure 2.8.1 illustrates the top countries Chinese students choose to further their study. The Netherlands offers lower tuition fee than AIT which makes it more affordable for international students to study there (Study Finder, 2016).

According to Study International (2015), Chinese families would prefer to send their children to prestigious universities with high-quality education and history and the US is more known to Chinese and other non-European international students.

Figure 2.8.1: Countries Chinese students choose to study at



Source: Nanjing Marketing Group (2012)

2.9 Students' spending

Education.ie (2016) strategy 'Irish Educated Globally Connected, 2016-2020' reports the overall spending for 2014/2015 of international students in Ireland and estimated that each student spends €907 per month. The accommodation was the highest expenditure of all the other items which were considered at an average cost of €385 per month.

Table 2.9.1: Estimated average of expenditure for one international student in Ireland for one month

<u>Category</u>	<u>Expenditure (€)</u>
Accommodation	€385
Food and drink	€152
Social activities	€108
Shopping	€87
Transportation	€59
Garda National Immigration Bureau	Once off payment €300/10 months €30
Other spending	€86
Total:	<u>€907</u>

The report estimated the total expenditure for both public and private higher education in Ireland was €182 million in 2014/2015. With the increase of rent in many areas nationwide in recent years, it is more likely for international students to spend more than previous years (The Irish Times, 2016)

There is no evidence in the age category of international students in Ireland. Interestingly, Faw (2012) wrote in her article that millennial college students spend more money than they

earn. The study also compared that older adults prioritised family-focused expenditure, such as buying a car, a house and savings while in their 20s, today's millennials focus on spending their money on themselves, mainly on travel and technology and also noted that sale of jewellery has increased among young college students.

2.10 Economic impact

The Economist, David (1997) gave a one of a kind origination of the role of the college in the knowledge-based economy as "*not just as an inventor of knowledge, a mentor of youthful personalities and a transmitter of culture, but also as a significant expert on economic growth: the knowledge factory as it were, in a manner of speaking, at the focal point of the economy.*"

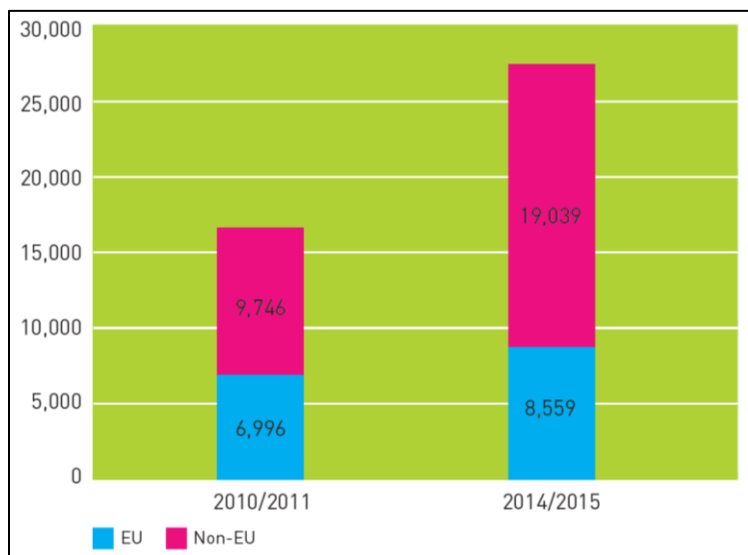
In the current era of knowledge-based economies, the sustainability of long-run economic growth has turned out to be a great degree subject to the accessibility of high calibre knowledge. International students offer a wellspring of skills and expenditure and numerous nations around the globe rely upon them to expand economic development (Siddiq, 2014).

Lopez, et al. (2016) agrees with Siddiq (2014) that globalisation societies and markets have increased the number of students seeking education outside their country of residence. They used quantitative research along with secondary resource information such as Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to gather the relevant information. In the study, they looked at international students from a tourism perspective and the result

indicated that the impact per unit of academic tourist is positive and shows that it would be slightly higher than actual tourists. In short, neither considering the overall value of their spending nor its indirect impact they argued that the economic impact of academic tourism is higher than that of the international tourists in Galicia, Spain.

There has been a significant increase in the economic value of International Education to Ireland from 2010 to 2015. The result from www.education.ie (2016) illustrate that the number of international students in Ireland has increased significantly from 2010/2011 – 2014/2015. The figure below illustrates the changes of international students attending education in Ireland. It indicates there has been 22% increase in the number of E.U. students and 95% increase in non-EU students in Ireland.

Figure 2.10.1: Number of EU and non-EU Students. 2010/2011 and 2014/201



Source: (Education.ie, 2016) and (ICOS, 2016)

2.11 Tuition

Tuition fees in Ireland vary depending on the institution and the study programme. Tuition fee for Irish higher education is not static and it can change due to changes in the Institute. The table below illustrates the tuition fees for 2016/2017 for non-E.U. undergraduate students at a Higher Education Institution (HEI) in Ireland.

Table 2.11.1: Average Course fees for 2016/2017 for non-E.U. undergraduate students

<u>Study Programme</u>	<u>Tuition Fees</u>
Medicine and related	€45,000 - €52,000
Engineering	€9,750 - €23,000
Science & Technology	€9,750 - €22,000
Arts & Humanities	€9,750 - €20,000
Business	€9,750 - €18,000

Source: (Education Ireland, 2017)

The author understands the size difference of the United States and Ireland but it makes sense in the sense that both countries are English speakers. The author decided to look at the US comparison to Ireland in terms of tuition fees and expense for international students. Please refer to

Table 2.11.2: Average fees at US universities, 2016-17

	Public two-year colleges	Public four-year colleges (in-state fees)	Public four-year colleges (out of state fees)	Private non-profit four-year colleges
Tuition and other fees	€3,306	€9,063	€23,414	€31,444
Room and board	€7,570	€9,805	€9,805	€11,167
<u>Total (per year)</u>	<u>€10,876</u>	<u>€18,868</u>	<u>€33,219</u>	<u>€42,611</u>

College Board (2017) gave out surveys to international students around the colleges in the U.S. and found that there has been insignificant changes to tuition fees and rents from the year of 2015/16 to 2016/17. The table below illustrates the changes that occurred during 2015/16 and 2016/17 for tuition and fees, and room and board.

Table 2.11.3: Average fees at US universities, 2015-16

	Public two-year colleges	Public four-year colleges (in-state fees)	Public four-year colleges (out of state fees)	Private non-profit four-year colleges
Tuition and other fees	€3,231	€8,847	€22,606	€30,364
Room and board	€7,448	€9,533	€9,533	€10,838
<u>Total (per year)</u>	<u>€10,679</u>	<u>€18,380</u>	<u>€32,139</u>	<u>€41,202</u>

It illustrates that expenses and tuition fees are increasing in the United States but American third level institutes have recorded fewer applications from the Middle Eastern and Asian countries. Even though China and Saudi Arabia were not two of the seven countries it is suggested that it has impacted them and other seven Muslim countries that were banned by the current president of the United State, Donald Trump (Redden, 2017).

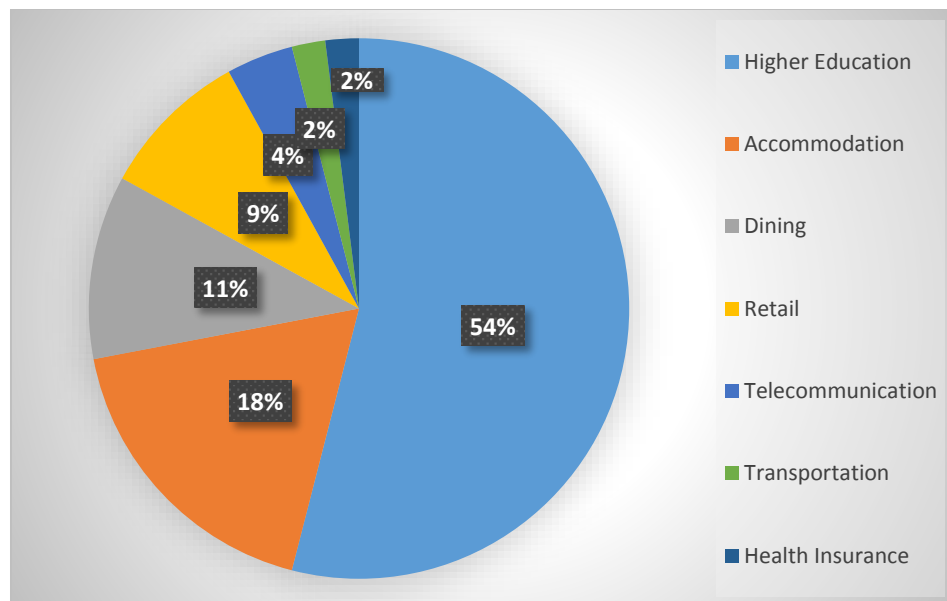
Table 2.11.4: Tuition and Fees and Room and Board

	Public two-year colleges	Public four-year colleges (in-state fees)	Public four-year colleges (out of state fees)	Private non-profit four-year colleges
2016/17	€10,876	€18,868	€33,219	€42,611
2015/16	€10,697	€18,380	€32,139	€41,202
€ changes	€179	€488	€1,080	€1,409
% Changes	1.8%	2.7%	3.4%	3.4%

NAFSA (2016) reports on the economic contributions of international to the US. NAFSA known as Association of International Educators, received the data for international students' enrolment from Open Doors which gives comprehensive statistics on the number of international students at colleges and universities in the United States, as well as analysis of trends over time, produced by the Institute of International Education and supported by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, US Department of State. Tuition and living expense data, which is used to calculate the total amount of economic benefit, comes from the US Department of Education's National Centre for Education Statistics Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS) (IPEDS, 2016). The economic benefits and accompanying job analysis are derived using formulas developed for NAFSA.

The result of the finding mainly focuses on the jobs created and the benefits of international students in various industries. From 2015/16, NAFSA indicates international student economic value and stated that there are 1,043,839 international students in the United States and they are worth \$32.8 billion and have created more than 400,000 jobs, which means for each 2.6 international students a job is created. It also displays the jobs created by international in percentage and indicates that 54% of jobs were created within the Higher Education sector, 18% in international student accommodation, 11% for dining, 9% in retail and the remaining jobs were created were among telecommunication, transportation, and health insurance.

Figure 2.11.1: Percentage of jobs created by international students in the United States

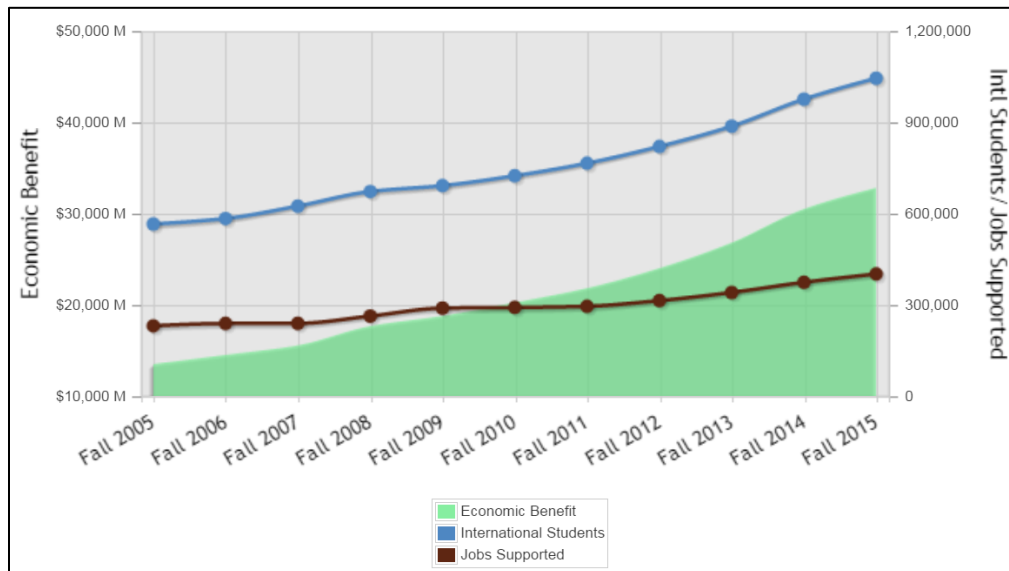


Source: (NAFSA, 2016)

The report highlights the importance of internationalisation and the significant finding shows that international students are considered one of the important elements in the job sector industry in the U.S.

The report also indicated the economic benefits of international student enrolment to the U.S. for a 10-year trend. It shows that the economic benefits went from \$12 billion in 2005 to \$32.8 billion in 2015. It also shows the increase of international students in the United State.

Figure 2.11.2: Economic contributions, enrolment data, and jobs supported over a ten-year timeframe



Source: (NAFSA, 2016)

Summary

In conclusion, it is apparent that international students bring with them economic benefit to the region where they study. These include spending money in shops, restaurants, for accommodation and food and drink. Other things they bring with them are tourists that visit the international students. Chapter two includes examples from Wales, Sheffield, The United States and Ireland about international students' spending habits and jobs which are created by international students.

The next section is the methodology chapter which looks at the methods used to conduct this thesis.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to outline the stages the author followed in leading the essential research for this thesis. A variety of different types of methodologies were considered and then carefully chosen to find the best method suitable for the research. Schindler, (1995) defined business research as “*a methodical inquiry that provides material to guide business decisions*” (p. 14). Sekran (2003) defined it as “*an organised, systematic, data-based, critical, objective, scientific inquiry or investigation into a specific problem undertaken with the purpose of finding a solution to it*” (p. 5). Both authors’ view are valid but the author of this thesis agrees with Goddard & Melville (2004) that “*research is more than just a process of gathering information; it is about answering unanswered questions or creating that which does not currently exist*” (p. 1).

The sections below describe the research aim, research objectives, processes, models and approaches that were undertaken to complete this thesis.

3.2 Research aim

Based on a lack of knowledge and understanding of the economic benefit of Athlone Institute of Technology’s international students to Athlone, the author decided to conduct this research with the primary aim of determining the value of international students to Athlone.

3.3 Objectives

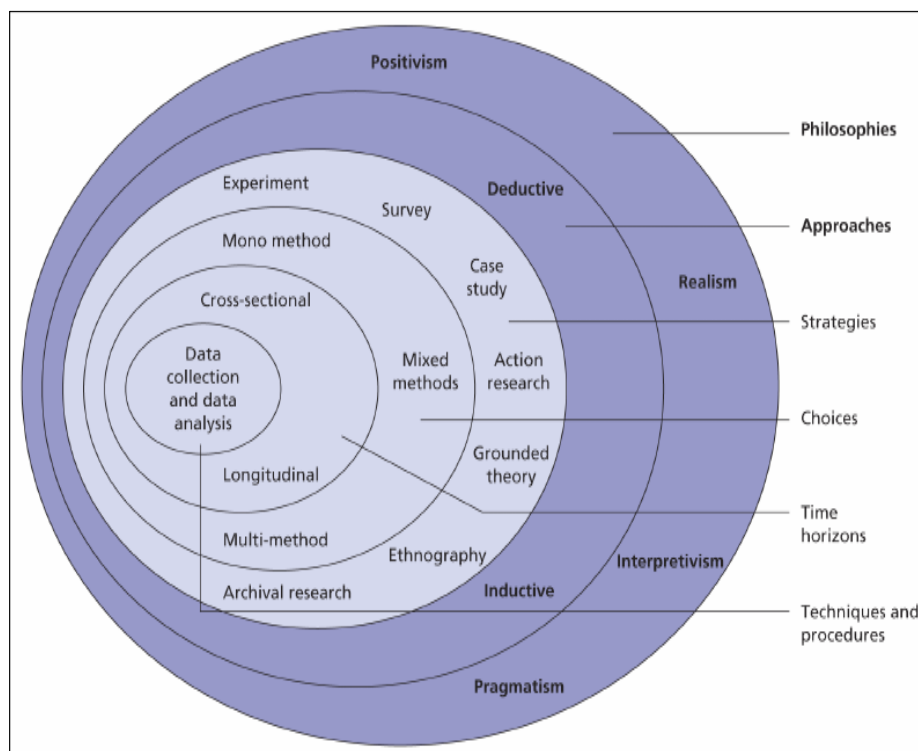
1. To ascertain where international students spend their money in the local economy
2. To measure the economic benefit brought to Athlone’s economy by relatives and friends visiting these students.

3. To evaluate the economic impact of international students on Athlone from business owner's perspective.

This chapter alludes to the 'research onion' as it is essential for achieving this thesis's aim and objectives. The research onion comprises of six distinctive layers which are adopted to framework this chapter to be understood clearly. The research layers in the research onion are as follows:

- 1: Research Philosophies
- 2: Research Approaches
- 3: Research Strategies
- 4: Methodological Choices
- 5: Time Horizons
- 6: Techniques and Procedures

Figure 3.4: Research onion



Source: (Saunders, et al., 2012, p. 128)

3.5 Research philosophies

In order to conduct a research to achieve the aim and objectives of this thesis the appropriate research philosophy must be chosen. Research philosophies make up the first layer of the research onion. It indicates the methods that can be used as a part of the research as it characterises and evaluates the various methodological tactics that are applied. Saunders, et al. (2009) defined the research philosophy as “*the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge*” (p. 107).

Johnson & Clark (2006) noted that business and management researchers should be aware of their philosophical approach in settling on a research strategy since this has a huge effect on what they do, as well as clarifying what is they are researching. Research philosophies can be classified as Realism, Pragmatism, Positivism and Interpretivism.

Table 3.5.1: Classification of Research Philosophy

Realism	Pragmatism	Positivism	Interpretivism
Methods picked must fit the topic, quantitative or qualitative	Mixed or multiple method designs, quantitative and qualitative	Highly structured, large samples, measurement, quantitative, but can use qualitative	Small samples, in-depth investigations, qualitative

Source: (Research Methodology, 2017)

The author will briefly analyse and explain why interpretivism is used for this research as it helps to understand the economic benefits of international students to the Athlone economy. More on Realism, Pragmatism and Positivist can be found in the appendices.

3.5.1 Interpretivism

To achieve the aim and objective of this thesis the author noticed that an interpretivist philosophy as a suitable approach to be used in this thesis. Interpretivism philosophy is implemented to achieve objective number three, which is to interview business owners in Athlone and literature researches conducted on the economic contribution of international students in other regions outside of Athlone such, the U.S, the U.K and Europe. Interpretivism is identified as post-positivist by Blaikie (1993) and anti-positivist by (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). It is anticipated by interpretivism philosophy that the work we call our data is actually our interpretation of other people's constructions (Researchmethodology.net, 2017). Subsequently, a researcher may build up the elucidation of discoveries as time passes by and the significance of data progresses.

Interpretivism and positivism hold a divergent perspective with respect to how data is derived from a given research and can be dissected to deliver facts and insights. This is confirmed by Mayers (2008) and Alan & Emma (2011) that advocates of interpretivism assume that access to reality is only through social constructions such as language, shared meaning, instruments and consciousness (p. 16).

The interpretivist method depends on the naturalistic approach of information gathering, for example, interviews and perceptions. Auxiliary information research is also prominent with interpretivism philosophy. Saunders, et al. (2012) notes that it is important for researchers as a social actor to understand the differences between people. Furthermore, interpretivism studies often concentrate on meaning and may use multiple methods in order to reflect a different aspect of the issue.

3.6 Research approach

There are two main research approaches that can be considered when conducting a research, deductive and inductive approaches. Considering the amount of literature available on the economic benefit and spending of international students, the current research employed both deductive and inductive approaches which included hypothesis identified with a current theory, evaluation proposition in view on the data analysis and inductive approach in terms of the new findings in the survey questionnaire and interviews.

As per Saunders, et al. (2007) a deductive approach can be characterised as a matter in which there is an abundance of literature from which you can assemble a theory and hypothetical system (p. 102). For the research with another subject where very little literature exists, it might be more fitting to work inductively by dissecting information, reflecting and investigating what hypothetical subjects the information are suggesting and offer no conclusion.

Saunders, et al. (2007) view is similar to Ketokivi & Mantere (2010) that deductive approach happens when the conclusion is derived sensibly from a set of premises when all the premises are true and the conclusion being genuine. While for inductive approach, there is a hiatus in the logic contention between the premises and the conclusion observed, the conclusion being "judged" to be strengthened by the perceptions made. Both approaches have been used because the author felt using only one approach was not enough for collecting information regarding to international students spending and their economic impact.

3.7 Research strategy

A Research Strategy is a well-ordered arrangement of activity that provides guidance to the researcher's efforts and thoughts, allowing him to conduct research efficiently and on schedule to deliver quality outcomes and detailed reporting. Denzin & Lincoln (2005) describes a research strategy as the methodological connection between the researcher's philosophy and consequent selection of strategies to gather and analyse data. Saunders, et al. (2012) defined a research strategy as the "*general idea of how the author will go about answering the research questions*" (p. 680). Further, Saunders, et al. (2012) notes that researchers have a number of strategic choices when conducting a research including experiment, survey, case study, ethnography and archival research (p. 680). This strategy is used throughout this research which can be very resourceful in regard to this research

The research strategy leads us to the next layer of the research onion, Methodological Choices.

3.8 Methodological choices

Methodological Choices makes the fourth layer of the research onion as shown in Figure 3.4 is related to the research choices. The researcher has three choices to use for conducting this research: mixed method, multi-method or mono method. After identifying the methods, the author has decided that mixed method is the most appropriate strategy to achieve the aim and objective of this research. Mixed methodology is explained below.

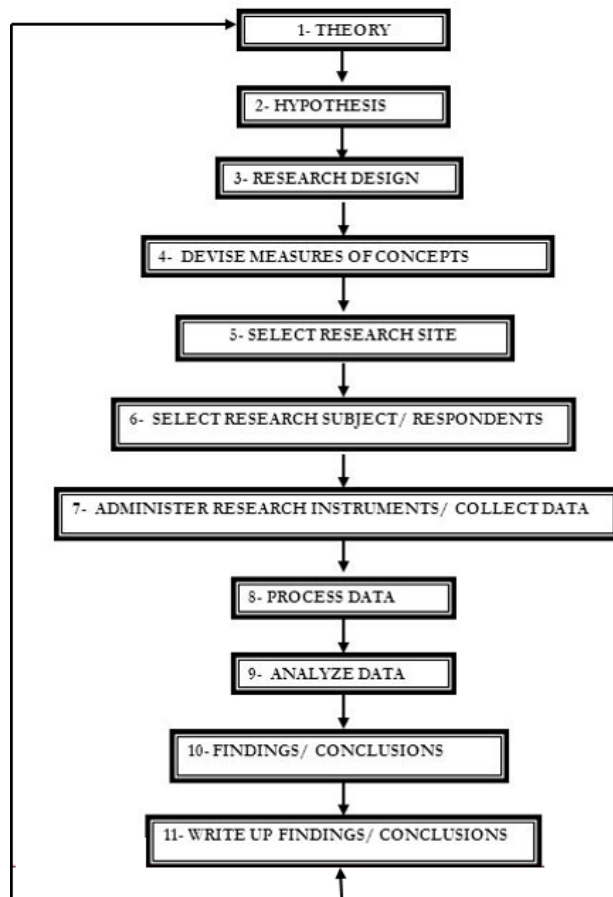
3.8.1 Mixed methodology

“Mixed methods research is used as a simple shorthand to stand for research that integrates quantitative and qualitative within a single project” (Alan & Emma, 2011, p. 628). There are researches that can be conducted using the mono method but using mixed methods is more suitable for this research as it includes both quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative research is defined by Alan & Emma (2011) as *“involving the collection of numerical data as exhibiting a view of the relationship between theory and research”* (p. 150). Saunders, et al. (2012) claims that quantitative research is usually associated with positivism and a deductive approach which determines if relationships exist between variables.

The research is firmly centred around numerical data and factual strategies that can act as a control to promise legitimacy (Saunders, et al., 2012). With the end goal of this research, a quantitative approach is used to guarantee that a large sample can be incorporated. Also, this will empower the information to be measured in a generally simple way. Results of findings of this research are illustrated by using graphs where applicable and other questions will be analysed in a structured sentence form. Qualitative approach was used in regard to interviews with business owners in Athlone.

Figure 3.6: The process of quantitative research



Source: (Alan & Emma, 2011, p. 151)

Some of the information for this research was obtained by interviewing relevant people. This is known as Qualitative research. Qualitative Method is described by Saunders, et al. (2007) as a research method which is used predominately for generating information through interviews or data procedures and Alan & Emma (2011) agree that this includes categorising information that does not use numerical data. Qualitative research requires the researcher to gain access participants as well as establishing trust with every participant. In this research Qualitative method is used in a form of interviews with international students and shop owner in Athlone to gain a greater understanding of the economic benefits of international students.

Note that the researcher may use multiple methods at a point in time to give different viewpoints. For instance, qualitative research may use numerical data to strengthen discoveries. *“Qualitative research is described as a social science research that gathers and works with non-numerical data and that seeks to interpret meaning from these data that help us understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places”* (Crossman, 2017) This triangulation can expand the unwavering quality of discoveries. Altrichter, et al. (2013) oppose that *“triangulation gives a more detailed and balanced picture of the situation”*. The author has implemented the use of triangulation to achieve a greater understanding of the research conducted.

Table 3.5.2: Profile of the interviewees

Name	Company Name	Job Title
Petras Sakari	Agape Electronics	Owner of Computer Shop
Sean Zhang	Ken's Oriental Restaurant	Manager
Anonymous	Anonymous	Manger of Sport Shop

Three business owners were selected from Athlone town to be interviewed for the purposes of gathering more relevant information for this study. Petras Sakari, the manager of Agape Electronics was approached because he was a former student of AIT and was considered an international student during his studies at AIT. His contribution would be very beneficial to this study as he has made connections with a huge number of international students.

Sean Zhang, the manager of Ken's Oriental Restaurant was chosen because of what he offers which are, Asian and Western food. Mr Zhang is a Chinese national business owner in

Athlone. He was chosen because there are more Chinese students at AIT than any other nationality and from the author's experience while living in China that Chinese people care too much about their food.

The sports supplement shop was chosen because the author has seen a significant increase on the number of students exercising this year than the year of 2014 which was the year the author completed his honour degree. This was also chosen because studies have shown that the use of sports supplements has significantly increased among gym goers (Harrison, et al., 2014). In fact, "nutritional supplements' industry is currently an international market worth billions of dollars" (Thuyne, et al., 2016). The author is very involved in sports and competes professionally on national level and believes the information received from this supplement would be helpful to this research.

Anecdotally and less formal discussion with bar men on a number of establishments in Athlone region, the author found that international often visit these bars and spend money there regularly. All the people involved with businesses in Athlone region noted, international students are good for the growth of the economy.

All participants were approached by visiting their store and asking them for an availability of an interview for the current research. Originally, there were more than three business owners. Table 3.5.1 shows the business owners that agreed on a time that suited both parties.

3.7 Time horizon

The time horizon can be characterised into longitudinal and cross-sectional studies. Documented that time constraint for the research projects undertaken for the master program, adopting cross-sectional studies become reasonable. Saunders, et al. (2012) describes time horizon as the amount of time required for a project to be completed. Cross sectional study is used for this because this research looks at a number of factors such as international students' spending, visit from their family and friends and students from different nationalities.

3.8 Techniques and procedures

This makes up the final layer of the research onion which focuses on data collection method and data analysis that may be used by researchers. To complete a research where aim and objectives of this study are met, the author decided to use both qualitative in a form of interviews and quantitative in a form of a questionnaire. Saunders, et al. (2012) defined “*questionnaire as a collection technique in which each person is asked to respond to the same set of questions in a predetermined order*”. The questionnaire eases the accumulation of data from a substantial sample and this was an essential worry for the researcher while picking a data gathering strategy. Consistency is additionally a key for questionnaire as every participant reads an indistinguishable set of questions (Saunders, et al., 2012). This makes the processes easier for obtaining the answers.

The author's choice to use a questionnaire for data accumulation is again vindicated because it is a proficient means by which the information collected can be to some degree controlled. The author is able to accumulate particular information that is specifically connected with the research objectives goals by concentrating the questions set exclusively on the chosen research topic. This limits the level of unrealistic data that is returned. The questionnaire is aimed at international students attending Athlone Institute of Technology. The author used Google forms for the questionnaire and distributed to the international students through the AIT's international Facebook page, their student emails which were gotten from their English teachers and handed out hard copies in the canteen and in class.

The use of the qualitative method is very important as it helps to gain insight knowledge into objective number two. Wyse (2017) described that when conducting an interview for a research the main advantage is that the interviewer has control over the interview which can keep the interviewee focused on answering the questions. As indicated by Saunders, et al. (2012) there are a few typologies used to illustrate interviews (p. 372). The common typology used categorises interviews as either; structured, semi-structured or unstructured interviews. The author trusts that the semi-structured interviews are most suitable for this research. Semi-structured interviews are defined by Saunders, et al. (2012) as a "*wide-ranging group of interviews in which the interviewer begins with a set of interview themes but is organised to vary the order in which questions are requested and to ask new questions in the context of the research situation*" (p. 681)

The semi-structured interview mostly included open-ended questions which allow interviewees to respond in whatever way they choose and the way they like to answer.

Another reason for using semi-structured interview is that more can be discovered during the interview and some of the interviewee's answer can trigger the author to ask more related questions which can ensure that all of the research objectives are covered.

The semi-structured interview was designed to interview shop owners in Athlone to understand the economic contribution of international students and interviewed international students to get an estimation of their spending and extra spending which may not have been included in the questionnaire.

3.9 Questionnaire pilot testing

Failure to allocate a questionnaire that is clear and concise may result in participants choosing not to complete the survey (Denscombe, 2010, p. 158). In order to safeguard that the denotation of questions asked was clear the author integrated options for the participant on many questions as required. For instance, the participant was invited to choose just a single answer to specific inquiries while others required different answers.

The author was aware that this is significant in aggregating a questionnaire that has the capacity to accumulate the essential information. Ensure that the right questions are incorporated into the survey before it is dispersed and to ensure the research aim and objectives are met. Additionally, the author highlighted the need to provide an adequate selection for participant's responses. For this purpose, various questions were composed

deliberately with an "other" alternative which enabled participants to express their response in their own words.

To lessen the risk of the questionnaire being indistinct or discarding essential inquiries the author piloted the questionnaire on a number international students and staff at the international office of AIT. This practice is effectively supported by authors, for example, (Teijingen & Hundley, 2002) and (Thomas, 2004).

As mentioned in earlier chapter, the survey was designed in a way that all of the questions required responses from the participants but some of the questions had two or more parts to it which participants could avoid based on where they come from. This will be further discussed later in the chapter. To ensure that all questions were completed, students were unable to submit the survey until all the 'required' questions were filled in.

The feedback collected from the pilot test was noted and the essential changes were made to the questionnaire before dispersion.

3.10 Ethical consideration

The way that this research was planned, international students have the right to refuse to fill in the questionnaire given by the author. Denscombe (2010) notes that it is significant to

consider the ethical issue that may arise when conducting a research and states that the main concern that arises related to research is confidentiality when conducted via the Internet.

To safeguard that this research project is completely ethical, the author has taken a clear ethical consideration to protect the right of Athlone Institute of Technology's international students to stay anonymous and privacy of participants is protected. The author makes sure that a written agreement is gained from all those partaking in the research and making each of them fully aware that there will be no names used in the research project. For those interviewed, there is a letter to sign that their information can be used in the research with no biased approach.

The research questionnaire was set out in a way that it will not take up too much time from the students' study and if assistance needed, the author will assist the students. The questionnaire and meeting will be regulated to all gatherings required in a friendly and sensitive way.

3.11 Summary

The author has examined the selected methodology and justified the method to that were taken into consideration and decided to use mixed methods research and explained clearly why the use of Qualitative and Quantitative are important for this research. The author also noted that the study carried out is based on the international students attending Athlone Institute of Technology's economic contribution. The following chapter analyses the findings from the questionnaires and interviews conducted for this research.

Chapter Four: Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

Data was gathered using questionnaires and interviews to engender knowledge in connection to the research objectives. The questionnaire was distributed to the international students attending Athlone Institute of Technology via their student emails, international Facebook group page and giving out hard copies to fill-in in class and in the institute's canteen. The author also went and interviewed business owners in Athlone to further understand the international students spending impact to Athlone economy.

1. To ascertain where international students spend their money in the local economy
2. To measure the economic benefit brought to Athlone's economy by relatives and friends visiting these students
3. To evaluate the economic impact of international students on Athlone from business owner's perspective

The analyses of this chapter will enable the author to achieve objective one and objective two.

Majority of the questions were closed and students had options to choose from and in order to gain more insights to the students spending, some of the questions included an 'other' options. The author was able to secure more than sixty responses from international students attending AIT.

Chapter two highlighted the most recent information that there were more than 420 international students at AIT in the year of 2015/2016. The author targeted all of the

international students on the international Facebook page, through their email and gave out hard copy questionnaire. At the end the author received sixty two responses from those that were willing to participate in this research.

4.2 Overview of research results

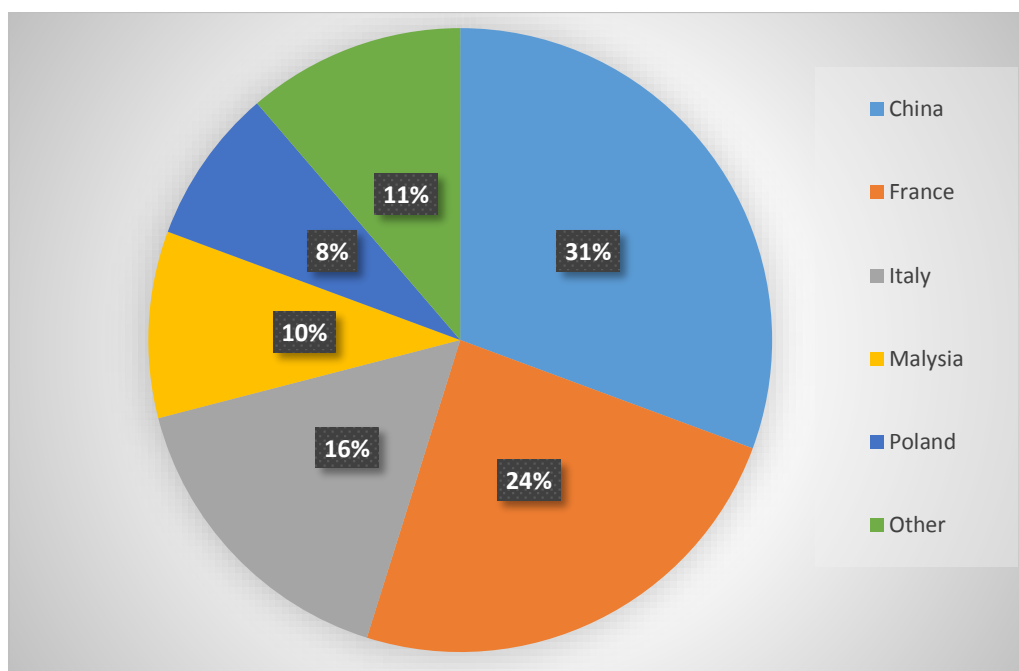
The researcher had acknowledged the significance of conducting a survey that would yield important information to help with accomplishing the research aim and objectives. The analysis of the quantitative data highlights the spending of international students in Athlone and the qualitative data records the interviews with shop owners to understand more clearly the international students' economic impact to the local economy.

4.2.1 To ascertain where international students spend their money in the local economy (Research objective one)

4.2.1.1: Country profile

Sixty two international students filled out this questionnaire. Question one of the questionnaire was directed at establishing which countries these international students come from. The results suggest that majority of international students come from China with 31% which represents 20 of the overall participants, followed by France with 15 which is 24%. The result of the questionnaire puts Italy at third place at 16% followed by Malaysia at 10% and Poland at 8% of the overall participants. The fewest international students responding to the survey were recorded in ‘Other’ which were Saudi Arabia and Holland with only one student each.

Figure 4.2.1.1: Graph of country profile



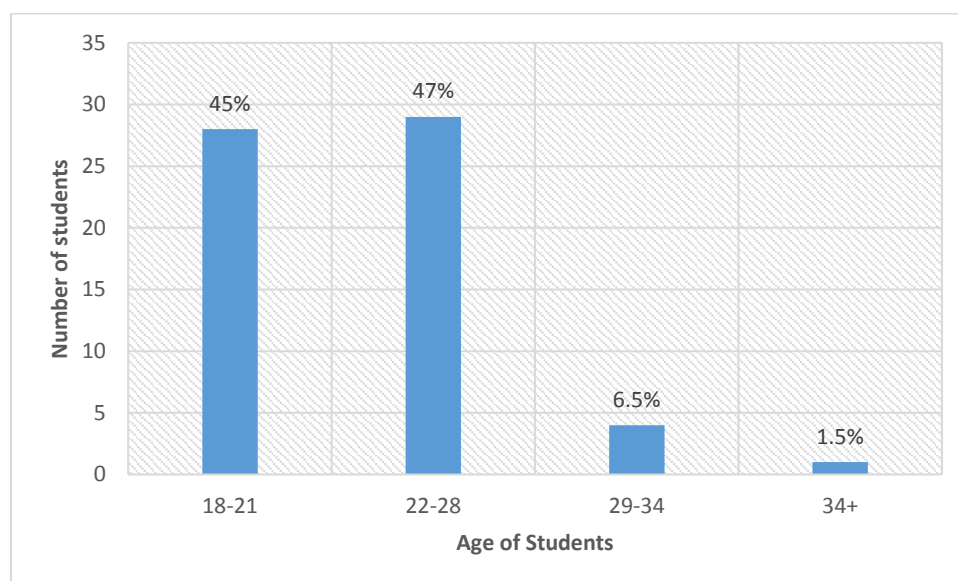
4.2.1.2: Age profile

The focus of question two was to gather information related to the age of participants. The analysis of the age survey respondents represents that variety existed within the sample of international students

The responses gained are from students aged eighteen to thirty four and above.

The majority of the students are in two essential age categories (18-21 and 22-28) which makes up most of the numbers of international students and a small minority in two minor categories (29-34 and 34+). 18-21 year olds which provide a response rate of 28 students which is 45% of the overall participants and 22-28 category with a higher rate of 47%. The 29-34 category record is as low as four international students but the least were recorded in the 34+ category which records a response rate of only 1.5%, which means only one international student over the age of 34+ filled out the questionnaire. This highlight that majority of international students completing this survey are between the age of 18 to 28.

Figure 4.2.1.2: Graph of age profile

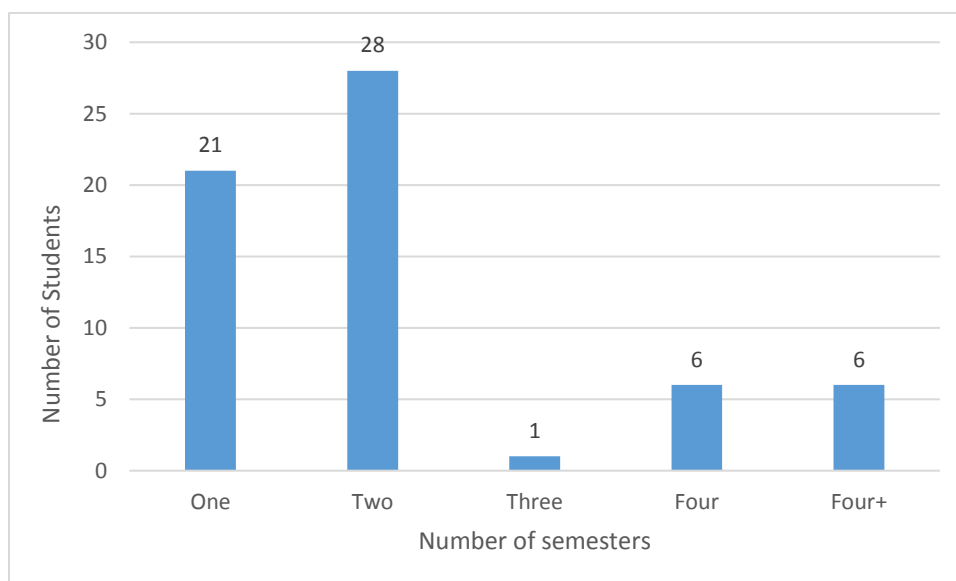


4.2.1.3: Status of students

This question was asked to find out the status of the students. The result indicates that fifty international students out of the sixty two which represents a rate of 81% of the participants were undergraduate students. This means it is possible for them to continue their master degree if they get the required grades in their exams. The other 12 participants which make up the remaining 19% are postgraduate students.

This chart represents the number of semesters attended by international students at AIT. 28 students out of 62 noted that they have attended two semesters at AIT which makes up over 45% of the overall, followed by 21 students, 34% whom noted they have spent only one semester at AIT. Those students that have already spent four or more semesters at AIT make up 19% of the total response. Only one student noted they have attended three semesters at AIT.

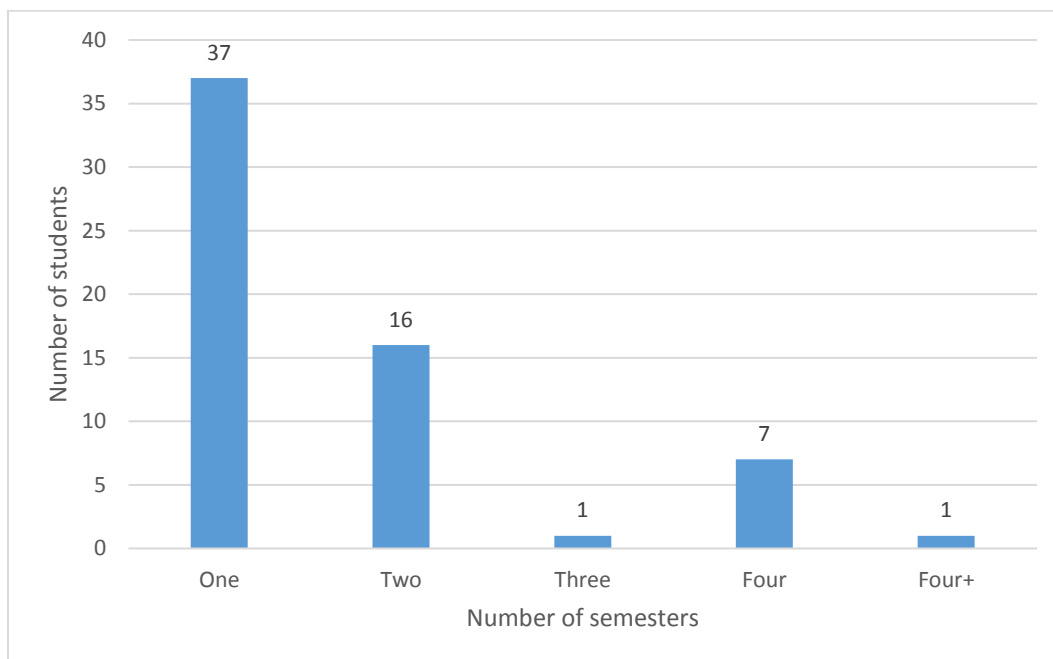
Figure 4.2.1.3: Graph of semesters already attended AIT



4.2.1.4: Semesters remained to complete academic year

The results for the last question indicated that 34% of the students have attended AIT for one semester and this chart indicates that an enormous 60% of students are in their final semester at AIT. The second highest is for those students with two semesters remaining to complete their academic year at AIT makes up 26% of the total response. The remaining 14% is represented by those students that have three or more semester at Athlone Institute of Technology. The study found that some of the Erasmus students attend AIT for one semester only.

Figure 4.2.1.4: Graph of semesters remained to complete academic year



4.2.1.5: Telecommunication expenses

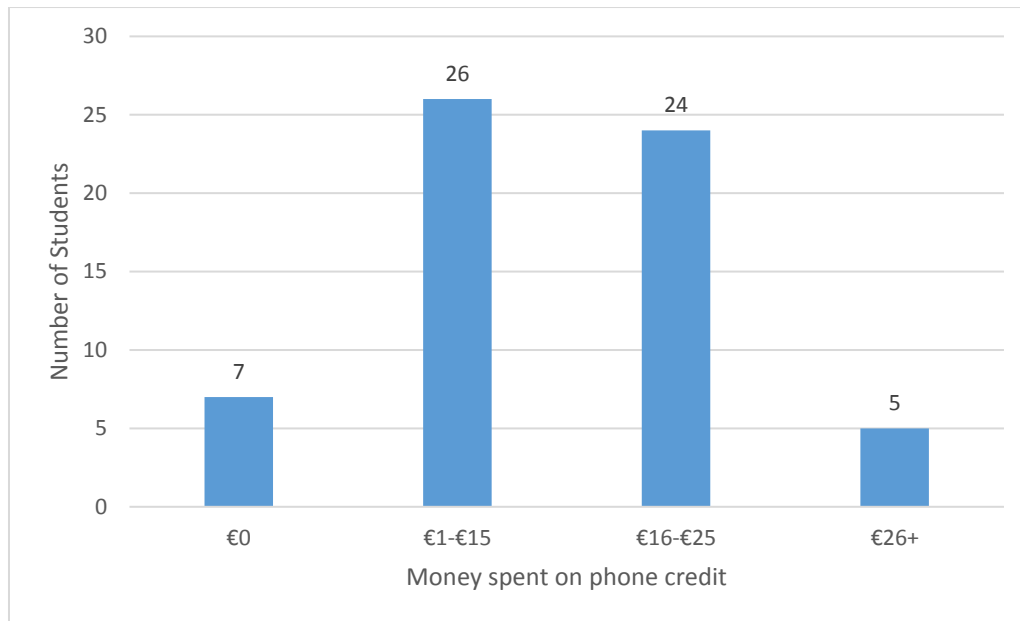
Survey respondents provided information in relation to international students spending on telecommunication while studying at AIT. Surprisingly, 11% of the students noted that they do not spend any money on telecommunication services in Athlone. During an interview with a French national student, the author found that some of the European students do not use Irish Network sim-card, instead they use the French sim-card and for the internet they use WIFI.

Of the sixty two responses received the majority of international students spend €1-€15 each month. Twenty six students spend up to €15 each month, which represents 42% of the total responses. The second highest was recorded for students that spend €16-€25 each month represent twenty four students of the sixty two, which is 39% of the total response. The lowest response was recorded for those that spend more than €26, which represents only eight of the sixty two responses.

After adding the average money spent on credit which is €8 for the first twenty six international students, €20.5 for twenty four international students and €28 for five international students. Multiplying those amount of money by the number of international students, the result illustrates that €840 was spent on telecommunication each month. This means on average each of those students spent €15.20 each month on telecommunication.

See Figure 4.2.1.5 next page

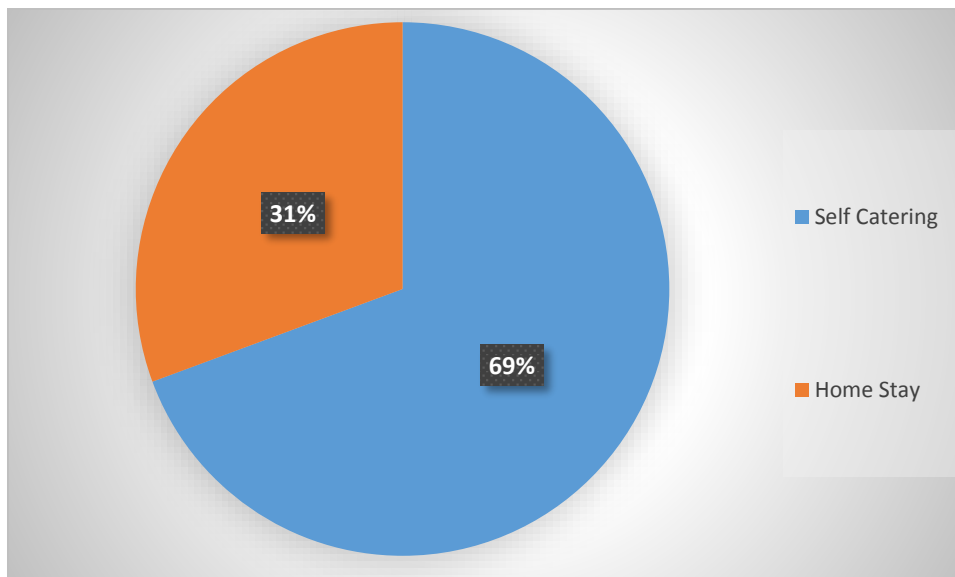
Figure 4.2.1.5: Graph of telecommunication expenses



4.2.1.6: Accommodation type

Figure 4.2.1.6 aimed to find which type of accommodation international students are using. Figure 4.2.1.6 illustrates that 69% of the students live in a 'self-catering' accommodation which means they will do their own cooking, cleaning and shopping. The other 31% of students live in a 'home stay' accommodation which means their cooking and cleaning service is provided by the landlord he/she lives with. Students living in a home stay get three meals a day if they wish, which is included in the rent. From interviews, it was found that those students staying in a home stay paid an extra €100 or more each month but there was no evidence of spending less outside, for example, on food, drinks or other form of expenditure.

Figure 4.2.1.6: Graph of accommodation type



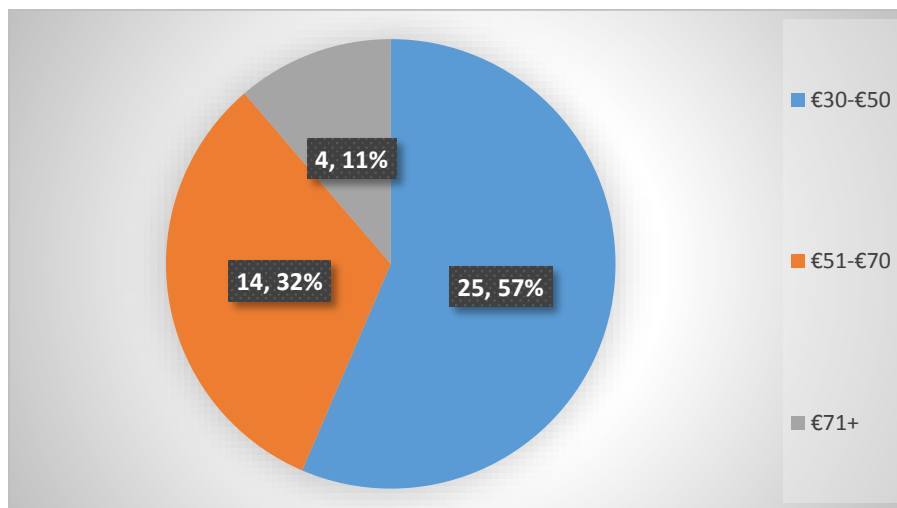
4.2.1.7: Utility bills

It is worth mentioning that this question does not relate to those in homestay accommodation. This estimation is for the forty three students that stayed in a self-catering accommodation because those that stayed in a homestay were covered by the landlord.

This question was aimed to get a monthly estimation of their utility bill each month. Again, the average estimation of each of the monthly utility bills were considered, for example the average between €30-€50, which is €40 was multiplied by those that ticked €30-€50 category.

It was estimated that twenty five students which represent 57% of those that filled out this questionnaire spent €1,000, followed by 32% of the participants which spent an estimation of €847 and four students were recorded to spend up to €296 each month. The total estimation of utility bills was recorded at €2,143 each month in Athlone which means that each student spent an average of €50 each month.

Figure 4.2.1.7: Graph of utility bills



4.2.1.8: Payable rent

Rent varied from one student to another. The maximum rent a student paid each month was recorded as high as €600, which means he/she paid up to €5,400 for the nine months of the academic year. This particular student stayed in a ‘home stay’ accommodation. The lowest rent paid each months was €250. Table 4.2.1.1 shows an estimated average that each student paid €377 for rent each months and the total amount for the sixty two participants is calculated that they paid €23,374 for rent alone each month in Athlone which is accumulated that the international students spent more than €210,000 for the nine months of the academic year 2016/2017.

Table 4.2.1.1: Table of payable rent

Total amount for one Month	Total amount for nine Months	Average each month
€23,374	€210,366	€377

4.2.1.9: Public transport and taxi

Out of the sixty participants who filled out the questionnaire, 40% of the international students attending AIT noted they do not spend money on public transport or taxi in Athlone. The other 60% estimation which is 37 international students was accumulated at €815 each month at an average of €22 for each of these students. This means each student spent approximately €200 on public transportation in Athlone. This question does not include those using their own vehicle which is illustrated in Figure 4.2.1.8.

Table 4.2.1.2: Table of public transport and taxi

Total amount for one Month	Total amount for nine Months	Average amount for each student for nine month
€815	€7,335	€198

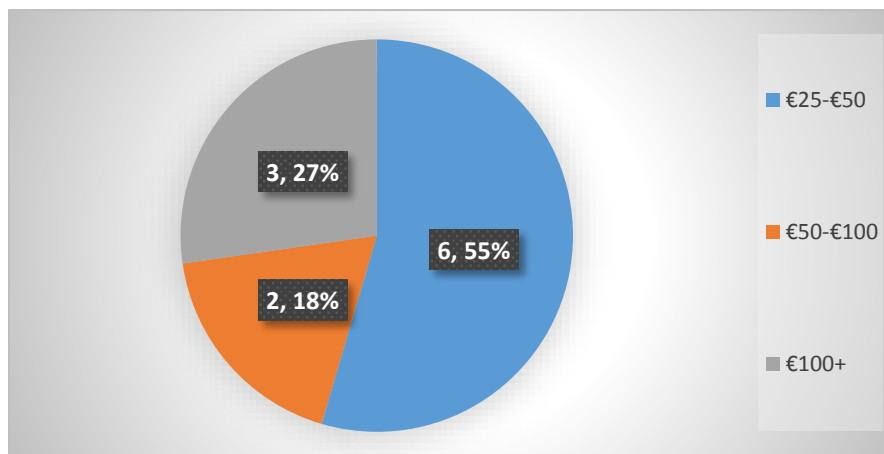
4.2.1.10: Use of own vehicle and cost

The purpose of this question is to find out if any of the international students use their own vehicle and if so, get an estimation of the amount of money they spend on services such as fuel, repair and other expenses. This suggests that eleven students which make up 18% of the total responses use their own vehicle in Athlone.

Figure 4.2.1.8 illustrates the amount of money these eleven students spent on their vehicle. 55% of them noted they spend €25-€50 on their vehicle monthly and 27% of them noted they spend €50-€100 each month but the lowest number was recorded for those that spend more than €100 which present 18% of the total responses of those that use their own vehicle. This shows that the average of €25-€50 category spent €225, two international students which represents 18% of the respondents of this question spent €150 and three of them spent up to €303 each month on their vehicle in Athlone. This means that they spent €678 each month and a total of €6,100 on their car service during their academic year at Athlone.

Please refer to appendices for calculation.

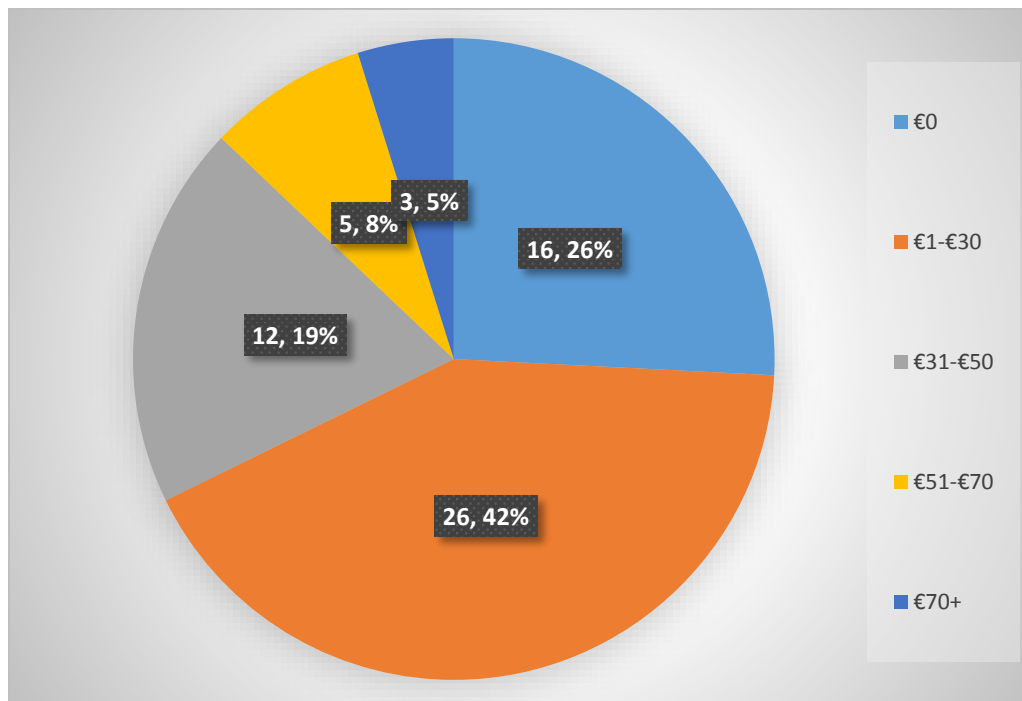
Figure 4.2.1.8: Figure for use of own vehicle



4.2.1.11: Alcohol expenses in bars

This question's aim was to get an estimation of the amount of money spent on alcohol in bars/pubs by international students. The graph shows that 26% of the participants did not purchase any alcohol in bars and Figure 4.2.1.9 shows that 36% of the sixty two do not purchase any alcoholic beverage in supermarkets or off-licence. The majority of the participants' response is recorded to spend up to €30 each month which represents 42% of the overall sample. It is also illustrated that 12 of the sixty two participants which represent 19% of the sample spend more than €30 and up to €50 every month followed by 8% that spend up to €70 and finally 5% of the participants noted they spend more than €70 on alcohol in bars only each month.

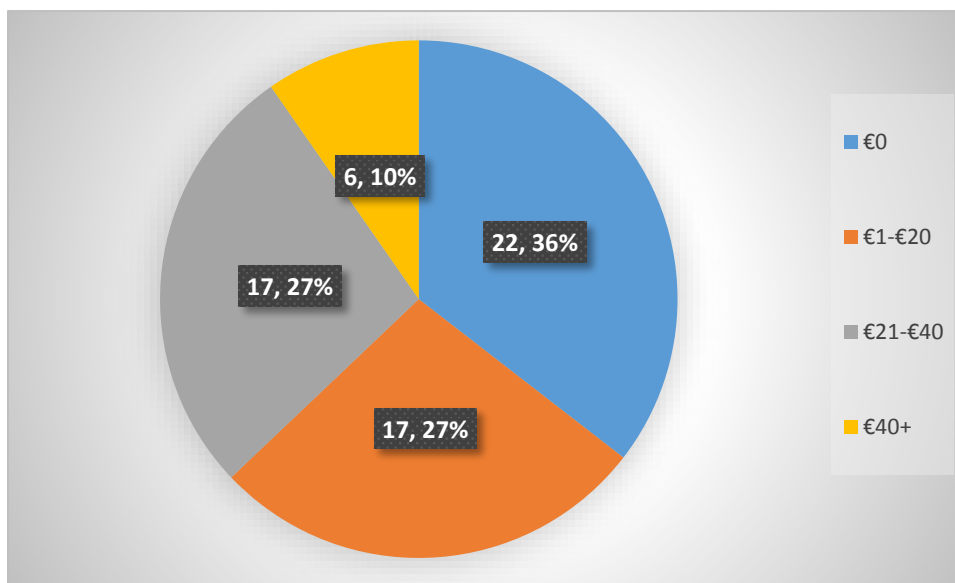
Figure 4.2.1.9: Alcohol expenses in bars



4.2.1.12: Alcohol purchase in off-licence and supermarkets

Figure 4.2.1.9 illustrated the participants' purchase of alcohol in bars and Figure 4.2.1.10 shows purchases of alcohol in off-licence and supermarkets. It is estimated that 36% of the participants which represents the majority do not purchase any alcohol. Also shown in Graph 4.2.1.10, 27% of the participants spend as much as €20 each month followed by another 27% that spend up to €40. Finally, the least of the participants that purchase alcohol that is worth more than €40 is made up of 10% of the total sample.

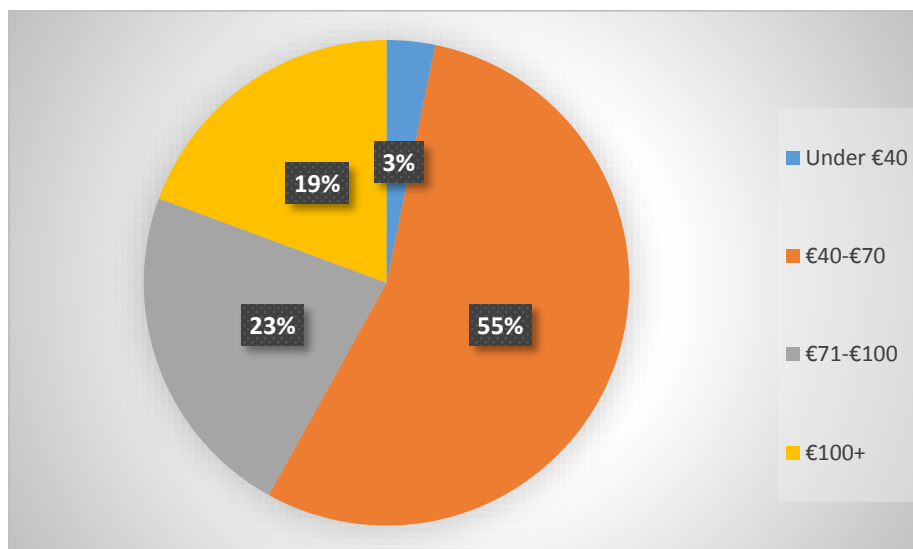
Figure 4.2.1.10: Graph of alcohol purchase in off-licence and supermarkets



4.2.1.13: Monthly expenses in supermarkets

Gathering data regarding monthly expenses is illustrated by figure 4.2.1.11. Originally, this question was asked to get a weekly estimation but for the purpose of making it easier to understand, it is converted into monthly expenses. The result shows that 3% of the participants spend less than €40 and these were some of those students that stayed in homestay care accommodation which is illustrated in Figure 4.2.1.10. The highest percentage of the students that spend up to €70 is 55% followed by 23% that spend up to €100. Those that spend more than €100 present 19% of the total sample.

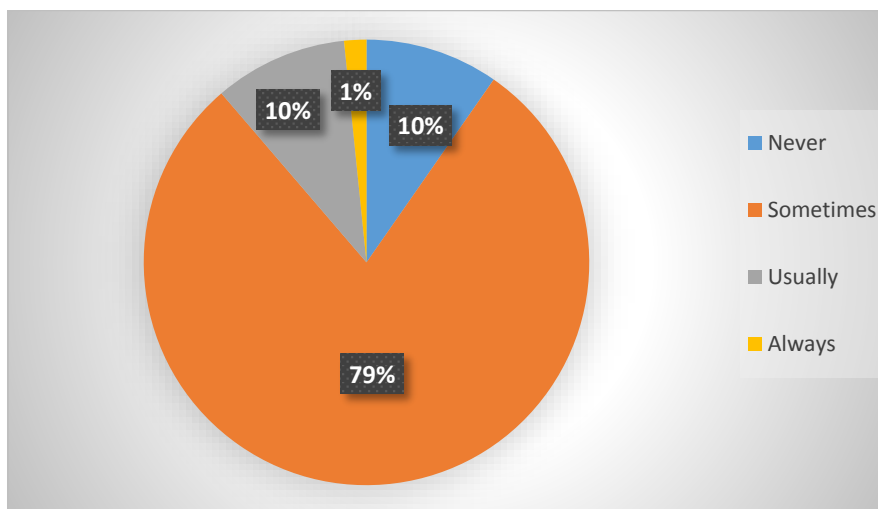
Figure 4.2.1.11: Graph of monthly spending in supermarkets



4.2.1.14: Eating out – restaurants and takeaway

Figure 4.2.1.12 aims to find out how often international students eat outside and Figure 4.2.1.12 illustrates how much they spend each month. It also shows that 10% of them never eat out and from interviews with students it was found that some of these students are restricted from eating certain food outside and some of them did not see the need of eating outside because they were capable enough to cook at home and they could save some money because their parents sent them money from their home country. It is shown that 79% of the international students eat out sometimes followed by 10% that usually go out and eat. Only 1% noted that they always eat out.

Figure 4.2.1.12: Graph of eating out – restaurants and takeaway

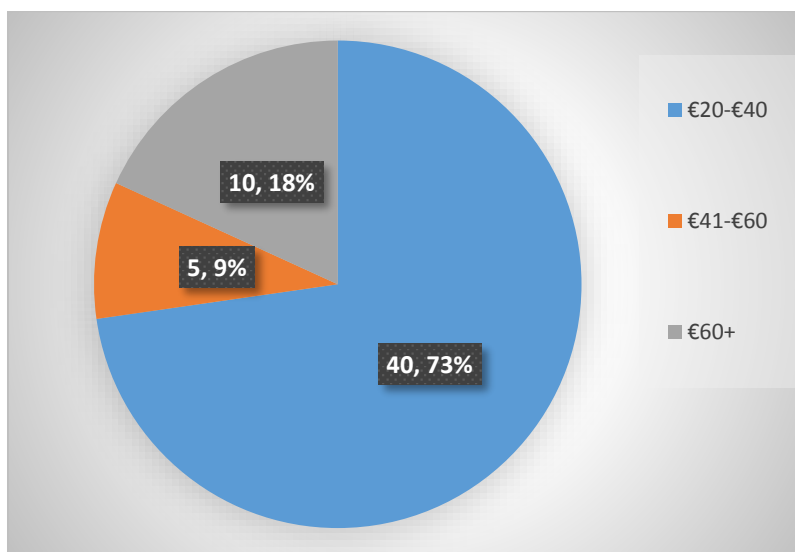


From interview with Ken's Oriental Restaurant owner, he stated: “*We have at least 25% regular international customers*”. Most of these are international and when asked how he can verify if they international students, he responded “*based on the relationship we create with our customers*”

4.2.1.15: Eating out expenditure

Graph 4.2.1.13 communicated that of those that eat out sometimes spend up to €40 each month followed by 9% which represents the lowest of the participants spend up to €60. It is also shown that 18% of the total participants spend more than €60 each month.

Graph 4.2.1.13: Graph of eating out



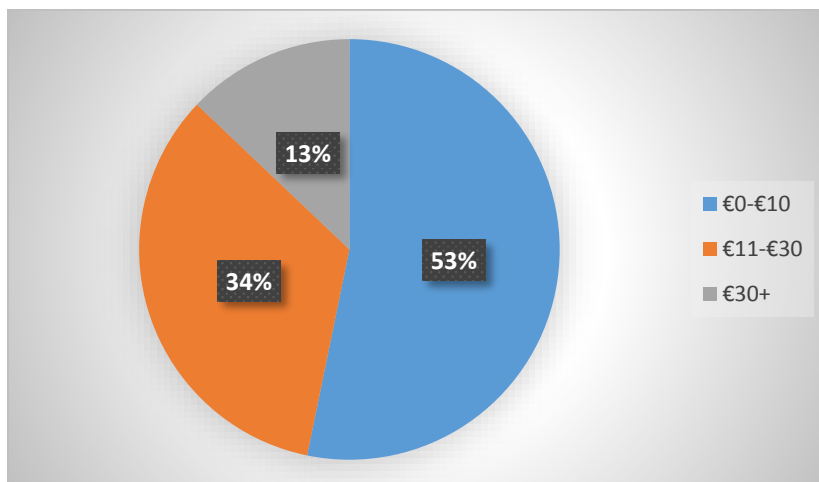
4.2.1.16: Clothes, jewellery and accessories

This question was asked in a way where students give an estimation of how much they spend each month on clothes, jewellery and accessories. The results showed that those sixty two international students spend €1,895 each month. This is an average of €31 for each student each month which means each student spends up to €275 for each academic year while attending Athlone Institute of Technology. Accumulating their spending for the academic year it shows that international students spent more than €17,000 on the items above.

4.2.1.17: Retail items (household, medicine, gifts, and hardware)

Figure 4.2.1.14 helps to find out more about students spending regarding household, medicine, gift and hardware shows that majority of them spend nothing or up to €10 each month followed by 34% which noted they spend up to €30 each month. Only 13% of the participants noted they spend more than €30 each month.

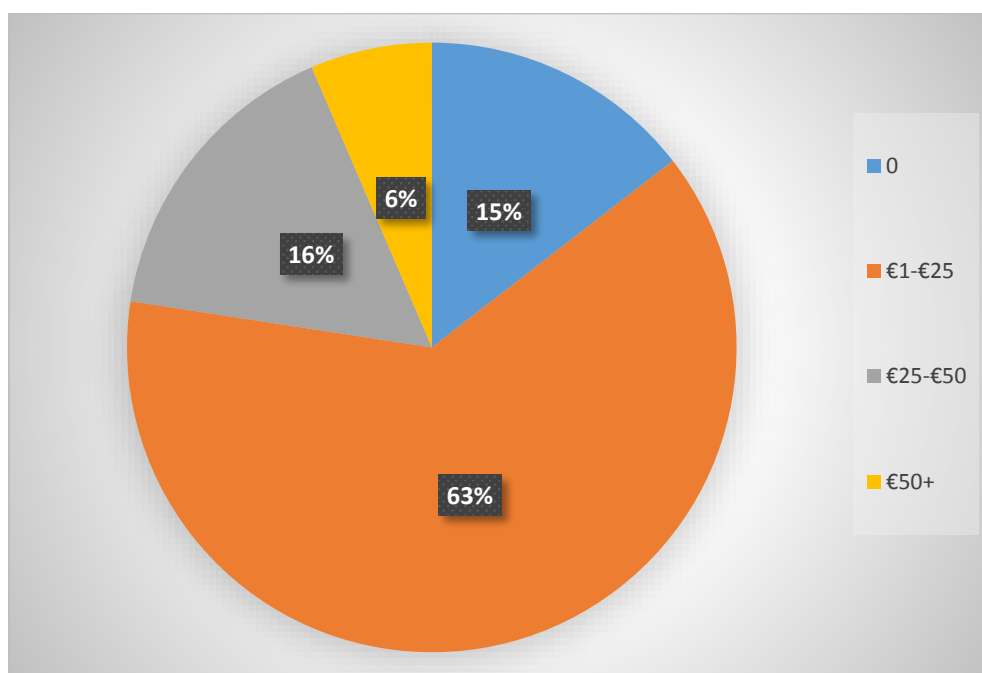
Figure 4.2.1.14: Graph of retail purchase



4.2.1.17: Entertainment (cinema, spectator sports, concerts, nightclub ticket)

Figure 4.2.1.15 illustrates that 15% of the participants do not spend any money on entertainment. During interviews with students it was found that they do not feel the need of spending money on things such as cinema because they can watch movies for free online. In an interview with one of the students that does not spend any money of the items above stated: “I would much rather to go to restaurants than going to a nightclubs or concerts”. Another 60% noted they spend €25 or less each month followed by 16% which spend more than €25 and up to €50. Of those that spend more than €50 represent 6% of the total respondents which is the lowest.

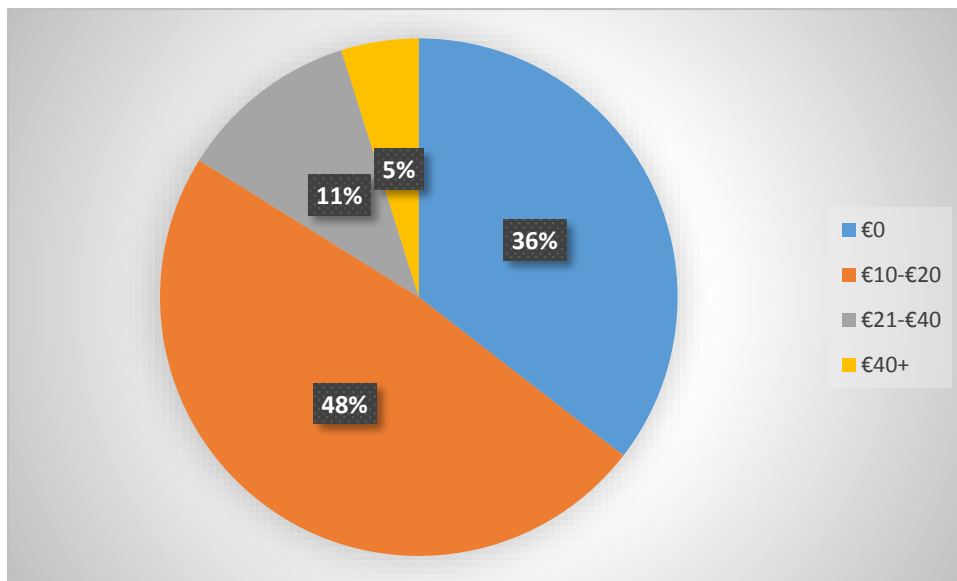
Figure 4.2.1.15: Graph of entertainment



4.2.1.18: Personal grooming

This graph shows the amount of money students spend on personal grooming each month. The graph shows the highest number of students spend €10-€20 each month while 36% of them said they do not spend any money on personal grooming. The result also indicates that 11% of the participants spend up to €40 each month on makeup, hair and tan. The least is recorded among those that spend more than €40 each month which represents 5% of the participants.

Figure: 4.2.1.16: Graph of personal grooming

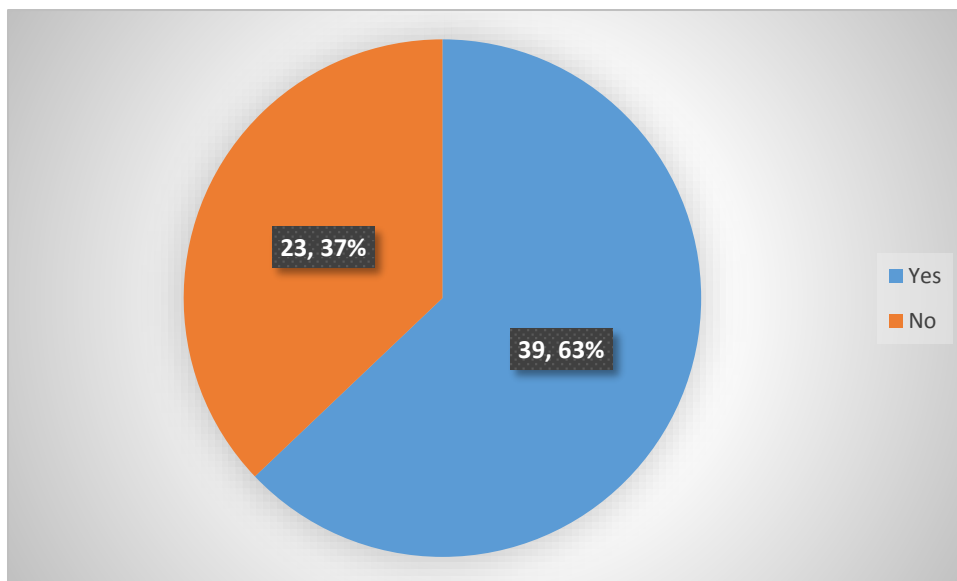


4.2.1.19: Gym membership?

This question was asked to get a more estimation into international students spending. It showed that 63% of them had a gym membership and all of them were a member of AIT gym. Their spending was estimated at €79 for each semester. This means if the students bought membership per semester it cost them €158 for two semesters. In order to get a monthly estimation, the total of €158 was divided by the nine month of academic year, which was €17.5 each month.

The other 23% do not have a gym membership.

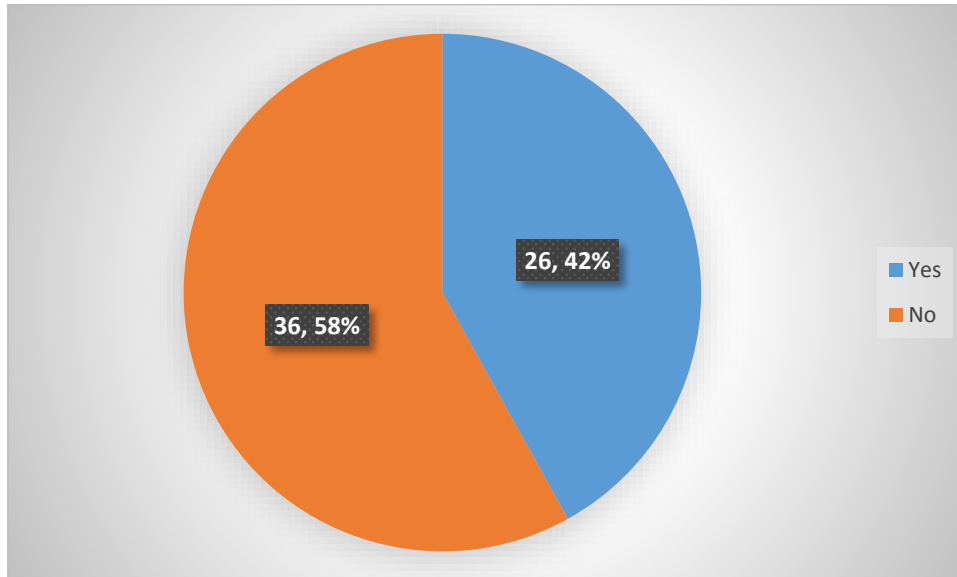
Figure: 4.2.1.17: Graph of gym membership



4.2.1.20: Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) card

Garda National Immigration Bureau card is mandatory for non-European students only. The result shows that 42% of the international students filled out this questionnaire have GNIB card. The cost of the GNIB card for one year is €300. This means it cost each student €33.3 a month if only staying in Ireland for nine months. The total amount of money generated by international students with GNIB card was €7,800

Figure: 4.2.1.18: Graph of GNIB card holders

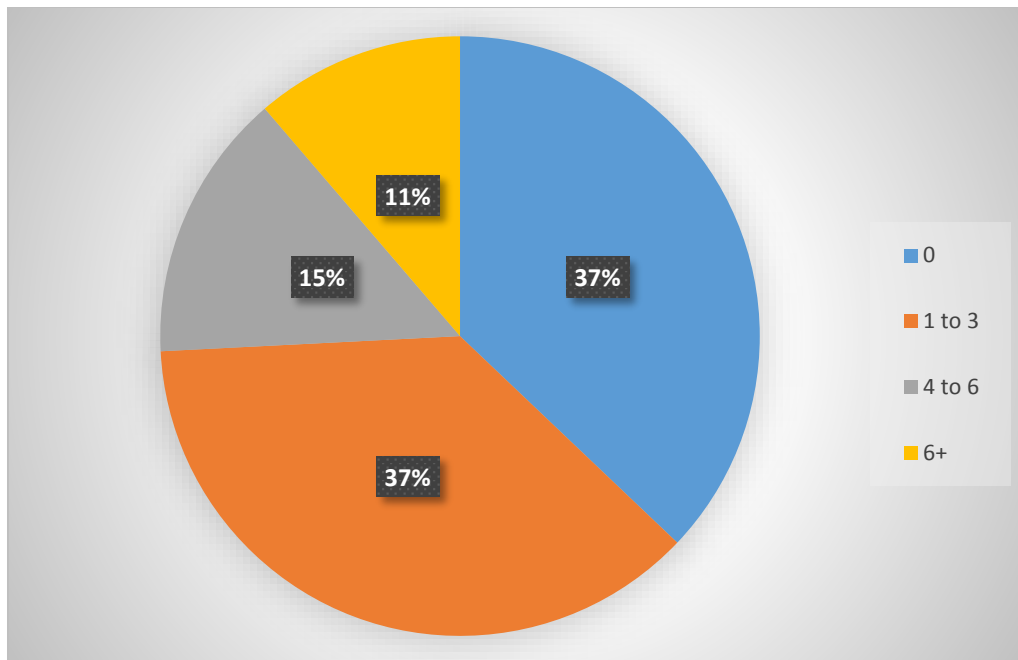


4.2.1.21: Visit from family and friends

This question was related to knowing if relative or acquaintance of the student studying at AIT had visited them while living in Athlone. The question asked was “How many people (friends and family) have visited you or plan to visit you during your studies at (example: if a relative has visited you three times then count their visits as three separate visitors)”.

It was found that 37% of the students did not have a visit from anyone. Another 37% noted they had one to three visitors while they stayed in Athlone, 15% said they had four to six visitors and 11% said more than six people visited them.

Figure 4.2.1.19: Graph of visit from family and friends



Lastly, students were asked if there is anything else they would like to add to the list of their spending. The comments included:

“I spend €70 on cigarettes every month”

“Cost of tokens for washing machine, €10 every month”

“I bought a bicycle for €250 when I arrived in Athlone”

Table 4.2.2: Monthly total spending of international students at AIT

<u>Category</u>	<u>Expenditure (€)</u>
Accommodation	€377
Food and drink	€202
Social activities	€79
Shopping	€76
Transportation	€22
Garda National Immigration Bureau	€33
Utility Bills	€50
Car service	€61 (11 students) (€11 for 62 students)
Other spending	€35
Total:	<u>€935</u>

4.3 To ascertain economic benefit brought to Athlone economy by relatives and friends visiting international students (Research objective two)

4.3.1: Family and friends stay in Athlone

This question is closely linked to figure 4.19. That question was if the student had any visitors from overseas and this question relates to the number of days those visitors stayed in Athlone. The question was asked in this form “How many total days did all the visitors spend in Ireland? (Example: Two visitors stay 10 days each and another visitor stayed 7 days = 27 total days)”

The total of 63% of participants said they had visitors from abroad. After adding up all of the visit days from relative and friends that visited students during their study at Athlone Institute of Technology, the total number of all the visits were 637 days.

The next question asked was to give an estimation of how many days those visitors stayed in a paid accommodation in Athlone such as hotel and B&B. The question was “how many nights did all the visitors spend in hotels in Athlone? (Example: 2 visitors for 5 nights equals to 10 hotel stays)”

Of the thirty nine students that had visitors from overseas, 59% of them said their visitors stayed in a paid accommodation and the other 41% said their visitors stayed with them. According to the survey found that the total number of days those 23 visitors stayed in a hotel or accommodations was added to 226 days. So of the 937 days those visitors stayed in Athlone, 226 of those days were in a paid accommodation and the rest were with the students.

4.4 To evaluate the economic impact of international students on Athlone from business owner’s perspective (Research objective three)

It is very difficult to measure the impact of international students to Athlone economy by figures. Shown in figure 4.4.1 are the business people that were interviewed to better understand the impact of international students to their businesses and also to achieve objective number two.

Table 4.4.1: Profile of the interviewees

Name	Company Name	Job Title
Petras Sakari	Agape Electronics	Owner of Computer Shop
Sean Zhang	Ken's Oriental Restaurant	Manager
Anonymous	Anonymous	Manager of Sports Shop

Mr Sakari, the owner of Agape Electronics is an Iranian national. He believes the international students are a big part of his business to exist. He reported that even though he cannot put an exact figure on the proportion of his customers that are international students, he would find it difficult to keep his business running without them. There are two people employed in his business including himself, “*it is because of the international students that these jobs exist*”. Mr Sakari highlighted that at least 10% of their customers are Asian students from AIT and also said that they have many other regular international student customers. Mr Sakari highlighted clearly that the international students are a big part of his business. He also hopes to be able to employ more people if the business keeps going at its current pace.

The Sports Nutrition shop owner also acknowledged the importance of international students. Noted that international students have a great economic impact on his business and other businesses in Athlone.

The Sports Nutrition owner stated, *“fifteen percent of our customers are international students and while these students are not here we can definitely feel the impact of their absence”*. *“I often hire an extra employee during the academic year, usually a student but only I work in the shop during the summer”*.

“One of the importance about these students is that they are very loyal and now we have many regular customers that would only come here to buy their sports supplement”.

Mr Sakari and Sports Nutrition owner had similar views regarding to international students. The Sports Nutrition shop employs an extra employee during the academic year and he said it is mainly because of the international students and Mr Shakari hopes to employ one or two employees from September 2017.

Sean Zhang, the manager of Ken's Oriental Restaurant explained that the restaurant has many international students which regularly visit. *“Students always come in a group of five to twenty five each time”*. Mr Zhang said he was unable to put an exact figure on the number of international students they receive but noted, *“They are mainly Asian”*. From this, Ken's Oriental Restaurant has adapted its menu to suit the needs of their international student customers. Before getting asked, he said that business goes down during the summer holiday but it is stable during other long holidays such as Christmas and Easter.

All three business owners that participated in this research spoke highly of the economic contributions that international students offered to their business and Athlone economy. They hope to see more investment and marketing into bringing in more international students to Athlone Institute of Technology.

4.5 Summary

The aim of this chapter was to show essential discoveries of the research. The author has delivered an exploration of the student questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. These findings will be discussed in chapter five in order to fulfil each objective. Furthermore, the author will endeavour to tie, where conceivable, similarities to the previous research illustrated in chapter two.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section of the thesis is to offer a detailed discussion of the primary discoveries in connection to the significant literature already examined in chapter two. The author also looked to relate the general discoveries back to the main research aim and objectives. Included in this chapter are plans to compare and contrast of the finding in chapter four with those from previous research on the economic benefits of international students. This chapter also highlights novel knowledge developed from this research while including the opinion of the author

5.2 Research aim

The main aim of this research is to address the lack of data on international students spending and economic benefit to Athlone. This is being fulfilled by literature found in this area in Ireland, the E.U countries and the U.S. The primary research conducted, include survey on-line questionnaires, in class hard copy questionnaire to international students on their spending in the local economy and interviewing international students and business owners locally to realise the economic contributions made by international students.

5.3 To ascertain where international students spend their money in the local economy (Research objective one)

Research objective one aims to find out where international students spend their money in the local economy. Both researches, University of Sheffield (2013) and Kelly, et al. (2015) agree that international students spend a large amount of money in the local economy. It is not clear the amount of money spent by each international student in Wales's universities but it is clear for those attending universities in Sheffield as illustrated in chapter two. NAFSA (2016) report indicated clearly that the 1,043,839 international students in the US are worth \$32.8 (€28.8) billion to their economy. This study agrees with the above reports that international students are a good source of economic benefit to the region where they study.

NAFSA (2016) also indicates that each international student in the US spend an average of €27,500 each year including tuition fees and Sheffield study indicated that each international student at Sheffield-based universities spent an average of €13,462 each year. However, this study showed that each international student at AIT spent less than the average of Sheffield and NAFSA. The current study estimated that international students participating in this study spend €8,415 each. Which means a total of €506,106 was spent in Athlone for the year of 2016/2017 academic year.

As high as €8,415 may sound but it is still lower than the average spending of international students in other regions such as the U.K, and the U.S.

Research from Education.ie (2016) shows that overall spending of international students in Ireland was estimated at €907 per months per students for things such as rent, shopping, transportation and GNIB card. Table 5.1 illustrates this publication.

The main point gathered here is that international students are a good source of economic benefits to the region of Athlone and therefore in this particular study there does not seem to be any negative impact regarding international students' spending.

Table 5.3.1 Monthly expenditure for average of an international student in Ireland

<u>Category</u>	<u>Expenditure (€)</u>
Accommodation	€385
Food and drink	€152
Social activities	€108
Shopping	€87
Transportation	€59
Garda National Immigration Bureau	€30
Other spending	€86
Total:	<u>€907</u>

Source: (Education.ie, 2016)

This study shows a common trend between the studies conducted previously and this study that international students spend a large amount of money in the local economy where they study. In comparison to Education.ie (2016), the study found international students at AIT spend €44 more than the average international students in Ireland. This result is illustrated in table 5.3.1 and table 5.3.2.

Table 5.3.2 Monthly expenditure for average of an international student at AIT

<u>Category</u>	<u>Expenditure (€)</u>
Accommodation	€377
Food and drink	€202
Social activities	€79
Shopping	€76
Transportation	€22
Garda National Immigration Bureau	€33
Utility Bills	€50
Car service	€61 (11 students) (€11 for 62 students)
Other spending	€35
Total:	<u>€935</u>

It can be seen clearly that the amount of money spent in each area varies slightly, for example, the average rent for accommodation in Ireland was a little higher than the average rent for accommodation in Athlone but food and drink for AIT's international students was €50 higher than the average international students in Ireland. The estimation for each international student's spending at AIT was higher than the average spending of international students spending in Ireland but lower than those in Sheffield universities. The international students' expenditure is credited by Siddiq (2014) that an economy relies on students' expenditure to expand economic development. 92% of the international students participated in this study are between the age of 18 and 28. This can be a factor for international students at AIT for spending more money in Athlone economy because study from (.....) have shown that millennials college students spend more money than those older people while they were in their 20s.

5.4 Tuition fees

International students tuition fee vary depending on their background. Those students that come from the E.U. countries pay much less than those that come from other part of the world such as the Middle East and Asia. It can be seen from Education.ie (2016) and ICOS (2016) that the number of international students has increased and this means a fixed amount of money would be paid to AIT by those international students attending AIT. Tuition fee for international students studying in Ireland was starting from €9,750 to €52,000 based on the chosen topic (Education Ireland, 2017). The study conducted by the author found that students from the E.U. countries pay as much as €90 or less while other international students pay €9,150 for undergraduate studies and €10,150 for post graduate studies (AIT, 2017).

The study conducted is linked to research in chapter two that tuition fees from international students is a great source of improving the economy.

5.5 To measure the economic benefit brought to Athlone's economy by relatives and friends visiting these students (Research objective two)

Sheppard (2015) report indicated a number of reasons as to why people should visit or consider moving to Athlone and his report mainly concentrates on what already exists in Athlone but not mentioning AIT as one of the sources as a factor to bring in tourist to Athlone economy. For the purpose of objective two, the author concentrates on hotels and B&B and their prices for tourists visiting their relatives or friends studying at AIT.

Www.booking.com (2017) and Jescost (2017) are two online websites for booking accommodation in Athlone and according to the information found in chapter two, a night stay in Athlone during the months of September to June is €41 and up to €200.

A study conducted by University of Sheffield (2013) note that there are international tourists that visit international students but this report lacks clarification of the amount of money spent in the local economy. Kelly, et al. (2015) estimated that there was €28 million expenditure associated with a visit from family and friends of international students to Welsh economy in 2013/2014 academic year.

Chapter four of the research showed that 63% which represents 39 international students had visitors from abroad. It was calculated that 59% of those tourists visited their friends or family at AIT stayed in a paid accommodation in Athlone such as hotels and B&B. The total number of days which those visitors stayed in Athlone was 226 then calculated by the average cost per night which was €120, meant that those visitors paid €27,120 for the year of 2016/2017. These are responses from those that filled in the questionnaire.

According to AIT (2016), there were 424 international students during the year of 2015/2016. 63% of these students is 267 and if 59% of these 267 students' relatives and friends stayed in a paid accommodation while they were in Athlone would have meant that a total of 1,547 days would have been in a paid accommodation. Calculating 1,547 days * €120 per night would give an estimation of €185,668 for staying in Athlone overnight per year.

Lopez, et al. (2016) looked at international students as academic tourists and noted that they bring in more economic impact than an actual tourist visiting Galicia in Spain. They also base this on research as the reasons for all these countries trying to recruit more international students.

The research obtained from chapter two and chapter four are linked as both agree that international students are factors to bringing in tourists from other countries and their spending would be helpful in developing the economy.

5.6 To evaluate the economic impact of international students on Athlone from business owner's perspective (Research objective three)

As mentioned in the literature review international students have a great economical contribution value in the U.S. and it showed that for 2.6 international students a job was created whether direct or indirect (NAFSA, 2016). This finding is interesting because this study also resulted in more jobs being created by the influx of international students in Athlone. Sports supplement shop has already hired an employee and Agape hopes to employ someone starting from September 2017. It is a fact that even increase in local population will result in more job being created but what most international students bring with them is foreign money which can go to the local economy.

Business owner concern was linked to some of the literature review highlighted by Winkler & Agarwal (1985) which was the importance of marketing to recruit more international

students. Business owners believe it would be helpful to invest more money to recruit students and this view is supported by Bekhradnia, 2005.

5.7 Summary

Summarising the discussion chapter, the most obvious finding to emerge from this study is that the results of this study was generally consistent with previous literature. We found that students spend a large amount of money in the economy but tuition fees and rent remained the highest both locally and nationally. We found that international students are factors of jobs being created in the higher education sector and other sectors such as accommodation and dining. It was found in chapter two that international students become ‘ambassadors’ when they complete their study at Athlone Institute of Technology. We found that international students bring with them family and friends to visit Athlone and they spend money in the local area which can be used to grow and develop the economy.

It was established in chapter two that many institutes around the world are competing to recruit students globally and this common trend gives students more options to choose from thus Athlone Institute of Technology must give this immediate attention to recruit more students internationally because research from this study has shown that government regulation can hugely impact on international students coming to study at AIT such as Brazil and Saudi Arabia where their local government stopped the scholarship program for students to study abroad.

Chapter two highlighted the importance of marketing and noted that institutes must put this at the top of their internationalisation agenda and this was supported by business owners in Athlone region. Interviews with staff of Athlone Institute of Technology has found that they have put a lot of effort in marketing AIT to international students and currently working on recruiting Indian and Nigerian students.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The determination of this chapter is to present the reader with the conclusions reached by the author throughout the research process. The study was conducted with the help of 62 international students attending Athlone Institute of Technology and three business owners in Athlone volunteering to participate in the research. The focus of this study was to determine the economic value of International Students to Athlone and achieve the three objectives set out in the introduction chapter. Conclusion, recommendation and limitation of the research are outlined in this chapter. In conclusion, the author includes a personal reflection in completing this thesis.

6.2 Research conclusion

This research project is the first study to provide a benchmark to the spending and economical contribution of international students attending Athlone Institute of Technology to Athlone.

The research has provided a significant gathering of different and novel information and knowledge on the economic contribution of international students in respect to where they spend their money in the local economy, ascertain the economic benefit brought to Athlone by family and friends visiting international students and finally to evaluate the economic impact of international students from the perspective of business owners. The following conclusions have been drawn by the author.

As highlighted by Enterprise Ireland (2016) international students contribute more than €1 billion to the Irish economy and this comes from their tuition fees and other expenses such as

rent, shopping, food and travelling. The study conducted supports this view and as mentioned in chapter four the average spending for each student in Athlone was €935 each month. Multiplying €935 by nine months then by the number of international students for the year of 2015/2016 which were 424 international students means they contributed more than €3.6 million to Athlone economy excluding tuition fees. From the study conducted and supported by literature, we found that the main cost for international students excluding tuition fees were accommodation and food and drinks.

In reality, Athlone town has a number of recreational places, such as bars and restaurant which allows the international students to go out and spend money in the local economy. This was clearly shown in chapter four that international student at AIT spent a large amount of money on social activities such as eating out and drinking.

The author found that all international students pay tuition fees to study at Athlone Institute of Technology but was surprised of the gap between the sums of tuition fee an E.U. student paid and a non – E.U. student paid to Athlone Institute of Technology. E.U. students pay a lot less than those that are not from one of the E.U. countries.

Family and friends of international students are a great source of income to Athlone economy as shown in chapter four and supported by University of Sheffield (2013) and Kelly, et al., (2015) that where international students go family and friends are keen to visit them while studying in their study destination.

In conclusion, it was easier to get an estimation of their spending but very difficult to measure the economic impact of international students to Athlone economy. We can see from research and the findings from this thesis that international students are very important in developing the economy and business owners agree that they are a factor of keeping businesses alive in the region.

6.3 Recommendation and future research

After completing the research, the author suggests the following recommendation to Athlone Institute of Technology. In a world of increasing globalisation and interconnectedness, with the rise of importance of international education, many students want to have education outside their home country. Athlone Institute of Technology needs to continue using their strategic approach to creating more connections that will enable them to continually recruit students from abroad. AIT has a crucial role to play when it comes to Athlone's economy, thus it is recommended for AIT to examine which department be it business, hospitality, engineering, science or lifelong learning contribute the most economically to Athlone and AIT.

Additionally, it is recommended for AIT to put more effort into its marketing the local businesses to international students. This can be done through partnership with local business in Athlone by giving special offer or discount to international students. This way, AIT promotes local markets and those international students that use this may spend more money in the local economy.

Chapter two highlighted that Chinese parents would rather send their children to third level institutes which have a high quality of teaching and better status, meaning they would be happier sending their students to a university than to a college. Ireland has a strong advantage of being the only English speaking country in the E.U. and AIT should take advantage of this fact and seek to position itself as a mass market player when promoting itself to other international students especially those that have little knowledge about Ireland.

As a gap within existing literature has been recognised, it is recommended that research is conducted in the area of economic contribution of international students at Athlone and other institutes in Ireland individually.

Chapter two highlighted that AIT attends less IEE. Even though, AIT has kept the recruitment number of international students stable it can be more helpful to attend more IEEs to be more recognised and also to find new partners.

AIT has applied to be recognised as a Technical University. If AIT receives the University status, it is possible more international students would be attracted to studying in Athlone which will result in more spending by international students.

6.4 Limitation

“You can do anything, but not everything”. David Allen.

Although this research was carefully prepared, there were still some limitations to the research. First, because of the time limit, this research was conducted on a small size population regarding the number of participants of the research. Questionnaire was distributed to international students via international students’ Facebook page, through student email and hard copy hand out in class but only sixty two were generated. The author believes it was because the questionnaire were distributed during tests and students were preparing for their exams.

Another limitation relates to the number of interviews conducted. There were three business owners interviewed for the purpose of this study and a few bar men less formally. However, the author believes if more business owners from different sectors were interviewed would have added value and reliability to this study. The author was unable to arrange more interviews due to time. The author was in the process of finding accommodation in Dublin for the summer and in the process of finding a job which needed number of application to be completed and approved by the Chinese embassy such physical examination, Garda Vetting and college qualification where the author secured a job as a teacher and promoter.

Another limitation for this research was a lack of information in the E.U. countries about the economic contribution of international students in regards to their spending, visit from family

and friends and from the perspective of business owners. Therefore, the author used all that could be found from the E.U. and American studies.

The main limitation of this research was the number of questionnaire responses received from the international students. Based on these findings it is more difficult to generalise because with more participants the results could have been different.

6.5 Personal reflection

“Life is a journey full of obstacles” Farzad Azizi

Prior to commencing the master’s programme, the author was working as a teacher in universities in China and often travelled to different cities to promote AIT and go to seminars to talk about the life of a student in Ireland and AIT. While being there for two years, he always thought about doing his master degree. He was very happy when he received a scholarship to study master of business at AIT. Receiving such a high accomplishment, the author’s wish was for his father to see his biggest achievement yet.

The author’s main reason for going to work in China was to test his own abilities because challenges seem to motivate him and he does not shy away from hard work. At the same time was very nervous about undertaking the master degree, in particular, this thesis. The last time he completed a thesis for his degree he was not satisfied with the outcome of the result. The author feared that history might repeat itself

In relation to choosing this topic, the author enjoyed helping the Chinese students improve their English and know more about the Irish culture and how to make friends while they are at AIT. The author also found that there is a lack of understanding of the economic contribution of international students to the economy and he felt this research will help to fill in this gap. The author also enjoys being able to do the things that have not been done before. This research was the biggest challenge undertaken by the author, more difficult than his first week in the fifth year in school with no prior knowledge of the English language.

“The one who follows the crowd will usually go no further than the crowd. The one who walks alone is likely to find himself in places no one has ever been” Albert Einstein.

Hoping the outcome of this thesis and the master degree course would motivate his younger sisters, brother and nephews and niece to be able to dream big and be a good example to society.

The author does not plan to stop here, next step in going forward is to have commenced his PhD course before the end of 2020.

References

- AIT, 2017. *AIT Open Second China Office in Wuhan*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.ait.ie/news-and-events/news/president-of-ait-professor-ciaran-o-cathain-visited-wuhan-university-of-sci>
[Accessed 21 April 2017].
- AIT, 2017. *Undergraduate Student Fee Information Academic Year 2017-2018*. [Online]
Available at:
https://www.ait.ie/uploads/downloads/Student_Undergrad_Fee_Payment_Information_2017-20181.pdf
[Accessed 10 June 2017].
- Alan, B. & Emma, B., 2011. *Business Research Methods*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press Inc..
- Alan, B. & Emma, B., 2011. *Business Research Methods*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press Inc..
- Altrichter, H., Feldman, A., Posch, P. & Somekh, B., 2013. *Teachers investigate their work; An introduction to action research across the professions*. 2nd ed. Massachusetts: Routledge.
- Anon., n.d. s.l.:s.n.
- Athlone Town Centre, 2017. *www.athlonetowncentre.com*. [Online]
Available at: <http://athlonetowncentre.com/stores/>
[Accessed 20 March 2017].
- Bekhradnia, B., 2005. *Department of Education and Skills*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Higher-Education/Higher-Education-Review-of-International-Funding-Models.pdf>
[Accessed 20 April 2017].
- Blaikie, N., 1993. *Approaches to Social Enquiry*. 1st ed. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Cambridge Dictionary, 2017. *Cambridge Dictionary*. [Online]
Available at: <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pragmatism>
[Accessed 20 may 2017].
- Clark, N. & Sedgwick, R., 2005. *World Education news and Reviews*. [Online]
Available at: <http://wenr.wes.org/2005/07/wenr-august-2005-international-education-its-a-buyers-market>
[Accessed 20 March 2017].
- College Board, 2017. *trends.collegeboard.org*. [Online]
Available at: <https://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing/figures-tables/average-published-undergraduate-charges-sector-2016-17>
[Accessed 4 April 2017].
- Cooper, D. & Schindler, P., 2006. *Business Research Method*. 9th ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill Irwin.

- Crossman, A., 2017. *An Overview of Qualitative Research Methods*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.thoughtco.com/qualitative-research-methods-3026555>
[Accessed 21 July 2017].
- CSO, 2011. *www.cso.com*. [Online]
Available at: <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/saveselections.asp>
- David, P., 1997. The Knowledge Factory: A Survey University. *The Economist*, 22 October, p. 4.
- De wit, H., 1999. Changing Rationales for the Internationalization of Higher Education. *International Higher Education*, 15(Spring 1999), pp. 1-3.
- Denscombe, M., 2010. *The Good Research Guide*. 4th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Denzin, K. & Lincoln, S., 2005. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 3rd ed. London: Sage.
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Ireland, 2016. *China Education Mission led by Minister Bruton*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.dfa.ie/irish-embassy/china/news-and-events/2016/education-mission-minister-bruton/>
[Accessed 19 April 2017].
- Education Ireland, 2016. *China Education Expo 2016*. [Online]
Available at: <http://www.educationinireland.com/en/Events/China-Education-Expo-2016.html>
[Accessed 19 April 2017].
- Education Ireland, 2017. *Non-EU Undergraduate Tuition Costs*. [Online]
Available at: <http://www.educationinireland.com/en/How-Do-I-Apply-/Tuition-Costs-Scholarships/Fees-for-Non-EU-Students/Non-EU-Undergraduate-Tuition-Costs.html>
[Accessed 31 March 2017].
- Education.ie, 2016. *www.education.ie*. [Online]
Available at: <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/International-Education-Strategy-For-Ireland-2016-2020.pdf>
[Accessed 25 March 2017].
- Enterprise Ireland, 2016. *Enterprise Ireland*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/News/PressReleases/2016-Press-Releases/25-per-cent-increase-in-international-students-studying-in-Ireland-since-2012.html>
[Accessed 15 March 2017].
- Ericsson, 2017. *www.ericsson.com*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.ericsson.com/about-us>
[Accessed 22 March 2017].
- Faw, L., 2012. *Forbes*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/larissafaw/2012/05/18/why-millennials-are-spending-more-than-they-earn/#7d907d0c5ddc>
[Accessed 26 06 2017].
- Flowers, P., 2009. *Research Philosophies - Importance and Relevance*. [Online]
Available at: http://blogs.warwick.ac.uk/files/cesphd/flowers_2009.pdf
[Accessed 20 May 2017].

Forbes.com, 2016. *The Scholarship Struggle Saudi Arabian Students Are Facing*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/leifwalcutt/2016/09/28/the-scholarship-struggle-saudi-arabian-students-are-facing/#34b8fc6d1cd9>
[Accessed 11 July 2017].

Funk, D., 2001. The impact of international education: Madison University of Wisconsin,. In: *Dissertation* . New York: s.n., p. 377.

Gallagher, P., 2016. *Westmeath Local Economic & Community Plan 2016-2021*, s.l.: Westmeath County Council.

Gill, J. & Johnson, P., 2010. *Research Methods for Managers*. 4th ed. London: sage.

Goddard, W. & Melville, S., 2004. *Research Methodology An Introduction*. 2nd ed. Dublin: Juta and Co, Ltd..

Harrison, R., Holt, D., Pattison, D. & Elton, P., 2014. Are those in need taking dietary supplements? A survey of 21 923 adults. *British Journal of Nutrition*, 91(4), pp. 917-623.

Hatch, M. & Cunliffe, A., 2006. *Organisation Theory*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Humphreys, J., 2014. *www.irishtimes.com*. [Online]
Available at: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/athlone-it-makes-a-bid-for-university-status-1.1918319>

ICOS, 2016. *International Council for International Students*. [Online]
Available at: https://www.icosirl.ie/eng/student_information/student_statistics.html
[Accessed 29 March 2017].

Institute of International Education, 2016. *Institute of International Education*. [Online]
Available at: <http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Publications-and-Reports/IIE-Bookstore/International-Applicants-Fall-2017#.WNZo8G-LRrE>
[Accessed 24 March 2017].

IPEDS, 2016. *National Center for Education Statistics*. [Online]
Available at: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/login.aspx>
[Accessed 11 April 2017].

Irish Mirror, 2015. *www.irishmirror.ie*. [Online]
Available at: <http://www.irishmirror.ie/news/irish-news/seans-bar-see-inside-one-6067930>

Irish Universities Association, 2013. *Increase in numbers of Saudi Arabian students choosing Ireland for their 3rd level education*. [Online]
Available at: <http://www.iaa.ie/increase-in-numbers-of-saudi-arabian-students-choosing-ireland-for-their-3rd-level-education/>
[Accessed 11 July 2017].

Jescost, 2017. *Hotels*. [Online]
Available at:
http://hotel.jetcost.ie/Hotels/Search?languageCode=en¤cyCode=EUR&checkin=2017-09-07&checkout=2017-09-08&rooms=1&mobile=0&includeTaxesInTotal=1&adults_1=2&destination=place%3AAthlone#destination=place:Athlone&radius=0km&checkin=2017-09-07&checkout=20
[Accessed 10 June 2017].

Johnson, P. & Clark, M., 2006. *Mapping the terrain: an overview of business and management research methodologies*. London: Sage.

Kelly, U., McNicoll, I. & White, J., 2015. *The Economic Impact of International Students in Wales*. [Online]

Available at: <http://www.uniswales.ac.uk/wp/media/The-Economic-Impact-of-International-Students-in-Wales.pdf>

[Accessed 03 June 2017].

Ketokivi, M. & Mantere, S., 2010. Two strategies for inductive reasoning in organizational research. *Academy of Management Review*, 35(2), pp. 315-333.

Lonely Planet, 2017. *www.lonelyplanet.com*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/ireland/county-westmeath/athlone>

Lopez, X., Fernandez, M. & Incera, A., 2016. The Economic Impact of International Students in a Regional Economy from a Tourism Perspective. *Sage Journal*, 22(1), pp. 125-140.

Mayers, M., 2008. *Qualitative Research in Business and Management*. 1st ed. Washington: Sage.

McQuinn, C., 2016. *www.independent.ie*. [Online]

Available at: <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/politics/plans-for-upgrade-of-athlone-it-to-university-is-in-deal-34696962.html>

Midland Regional Authority, 2010. *Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Region 2010-2022*. The Midland: www.midlands.ie.

Murtagh, H., 2000. *Athlone history and settlement to 1800*. Dublin: Tech Group Ireland Ltd.

Mytown.ie, 2017. *www.mytown.ie*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.mytown.ie/athlone/Pubs-Clubs>

NAFSA, 2016. *NAFSA International Student Economic Value Tool*. [Online]

Available at:

http://www.nafsa.org/Policy_and_Advocacy/Policy_Resources/Policy_Trends_and_Data/NAFSA_International_Student_Economic_Value_Tool/

[Accessed 10 April 2017].

O'Brien, G., 2017. *www.athlonehistory.ie*. [Online]

Available at: <https://athlonehistory.ie/history-of-athlone/>

O'Cathain, C., 2014. *Strategic Plan 2014-2018*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.ait.ie/uploads/downloads/AIT-e-strategic-plan-2014-2018.pdf>

[Accessed 21 April 2017].

O'Connell, P., 2012. *Immigration of International Students to the EU: Ireland*, Dublin: European Migration Network Ireland.

Opendoors, 2016. *Institute of International Education*. [Online]

Available at: <http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/>

[Accessed 22 March 2017].

QQI, 2012. *Qualification and Quality assurance authority in Ireland*. [Online]

Available at:

https://www.qqi.ie/Pages/searchresults.aspx?k=QUALIFICATIONS%20AND%20QUALITY%20ASSURANCE*NCE*

[Accessed 19 April 2017].

Redden, E., 2017. *Will International Students Stay Away?*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/03/13/nearly-4-10-universities-report-drops-international-student-applications>

[Accessed 11 June 2017].

Research Methodology, 2017. *www.research-methodology.net*. [Online]

Available at: <http://research-methodology.net/research-philosophy/>

[Accessed 19 May 2017].

Researchmethodology.net, 2017. *Interpretivism (interpretivist) Research Philosophy*. [Online]

Available at: <http://research-methodology.net/research-philosophy/interpretivism/>

[Accessed 15 July 2017].

Roscommon County Council, 2016. *www.roscommoncoco.ie*. [Online]

Available at: <http://www.roscommoncoco.ie/en/Services/Planning/Plans/Local-Area-Plans/Current-Plans/Monksland-Bellanamullia-Local-Area-Plan-2016-%E2%80%932022/Chapter-3-PROFILE-OF-MONKSLAND.pdf>

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A., 2007. *Research Methods for Business Students*. 4th ed. Harlow: Prentice Hall Financial Times.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A., 2009. *Research methods for Business Students*. 5th ed. Essex: Pearson Education.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A., 2012. *Research Method for Business Students*. 6th ed. Essex: Pearson Education Ltd.

Schindler, D., 1995. *Business Research Method*. 6th ed. Florida: Irwin/McGraw-Hill.

Sekaran, U. & Bougie, R., 2009. *Research Methods for Business: A Skill Building Approach*. 5th ed. Chichester: John Wiley & sons Ltd.

Sekran, U., 2003. *Business Methods for Business - A skill Building Approach*. 4th ed. New York: Wiley & Sons, Inc..

Sheppard, E., 2015. *www.independent.ie*. [Online]

Available at: <http://www.independent.ie/life/home-garden/top-reasons-why-you-should-consider-a-move-to-athlone-34173794.html>

Siddiq, f., 2014. The Economic Impact of International Students in Atlantic Canada. *International Advances in Economic Research*, 18(2), pp. 239-240.

Simpsons, M., 2016. *Director of International Relation at AIT* [Interview] (18 November 2016).

Study Portals, 2017. *The US Election and International Education: What do Students Think?*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.studyportals.com/blog/students-less-likely-to-study-in-the-us-after-trump-being-elected-president/>

[Accessed 27 July 2017].

Teijingen, E. & Hundley, V., 2002. The importance of pilot studies. *University of Surrey*, 16(40), pp. 33-36.

Teleflex, 2017. <http://www.teleflex.com>. [Online]
Available at: <http://www.teleflex.com/emea/about-us/>
[Accessed 22 March 2017].

The Atlantic, 2017. *How Trump's Immigration Order Is Affecting Higher Education*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/01/how-trumps-muslim-immigration-order-could-affect-higher-education/514925/>
[Accessed 25 March 2017].

The Daily Telegraph, 2006. www.dailytelegraph.com. [Online]
Available at: <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/travel/ancients-in-the-modern-world/news-story/a665b86abd37555ef16f5f791d415466>

The Irish Times, 2014. *Athlone IT makes a bid for university status*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/athlone-it-makes-a-bid-for-university-status-1.1918319>
[Accessed 11 July 2017].

The Irish Times, 2016. *Student rents to rise on all seven university campuses*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/student-rents-to-rise-on-all-seven-university-campuses-1.2761066>
[Accessed 12 July 2017].

thejournal.ie, 2015. *Brazilian students continue to flock to Ireland in big numbers*. [Online]
Available at: <http://www.thejournal.ie/brazilian-students-ireland-numbers-samba-2400685-Oct2015/>
[Accessed 11 July 2017].

Thomas, S., 2004. *Using Web and Paper Questionnaires for Data-Based Decision Making*. 1st ed. London: Sage Publications.

Thuyne, W., Eenoo, V. & Delbeke, F., 2016. Nutritional supplements: prevalence of use and contamination with doping agents.. *Nutrition Research Reviews*, 19(1), p. 147–158.

University of Sheffield, 2013. *The Economic Costs and Benefits of International Students*, Sheffield: University of Oxford.

VOA, 2017. *Report: Fewer International Students Applying to US Colleges*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.voanews.com/a/international-student-applications-drop-at-us-colleges/3780657.html>
[Accessed 27 July 2017].

Westmeath Independent, 2012. www.westmeathindependent.ie. [Online]
Available at: <http://www.westmeathindependent.ie/news/roundup/articles/2012/05/09/4010350-athlone-is-now-midlands-largest-town>

William Paterson University, 2017. *Center for International Education*. [Online]
Available at: <http://www.wpunj.edu/cie/definition-of-international-student.html>
[Accessed 25 March 2017].

Winkler, D. & Agarwal, V., 1985. Migration of foreign students to the United States. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 56(5), pp. 509-522.

www.booking.com, 2017. *www.booking.com/Athlone*. [Online]

Available at: https://www.booking.com/searchresults.html?aid=303948&label=baile-atha-luain-p9M7ZkGh1H_43eBZZHA1mAS151877745581%3Apl%3Aata%3Ap120%3Ap2%3Aac%3Aap1t1%3Aneg%3Afi%3Atikwd-6074338521%3Alp1007902%3Ali%3Adec%3Adm&sid=18bd7431fc5bae11145fb3fe34ea967e&checkin_year

[Accessed 10 June 2017].

Www.qs.com, 2017. *What's Happening to Higher Education in Brazil?*. [Online]

Available at: <http://www.qs.com/whats-happening-to-higher-education-in-brazil/>

[Accessed 11 July 2017].

Wyse, S., 2017. *Snap Survey*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.snapsurveys.com/blog/advantages-disadvantages-facetoface-data-collection/>

[Accessed 22 May 2017].

Appendices

Methodology:

Realism

This study is fit for a realism philosophical approach because it allows the author to give his own view on this research. It also helps with regards to business owners in Athlone as they might have different view on the economic contribution of international students. Therefore, understanding realism philosophy is important. Realism philosophy was made to address the issue of positivism being considered as excessively limiting by not enabling the researcher to offer his/her view and interpretivism being judged as an absolutely relativist (Flowers, 2009). It is understood that realism takes features from both the interpretivist and positivist positions. Saunders, et al. (2007) oppose that “our knowledge of reality is a result of social conditioning”. Blaikie (1993) notes that, while realism is alarmed with what sorts of things there are, and how these things perform, it acknowledges that reality may exist despite observation or science, thus there is legitimacy in knowing realities that are essentially asserted to act or exist , regardless of whether proven or not.

In the same manner as interpretivist positions, realism perceives that the social sciences and natural are distinct, and that social reality is pre-deciphered; however, realists, in accordance with the positivist position similarly hold that science must be observationally based, rational and objective, and thus it contends that social matters could be research philosophies.

There are two elements of realism to success, basic realism and direct realism. Basic realism keeps up that to encounter the world an individual must primarily perceive that the world is

an outside single thing that passes on sensations. Furthermore, what people experience are images and sensations of this present reality by means of a mental procedure, not the world straightforwardly. In this manner, people may experience varying encounters of a similar circumstance such as business owners' view on international students at Athlone Institute of technology. Therefore because of this social constructivism, every individual needs to endeavour to exhibit their own comprehension (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009)

Pragmatism

Pragmatism is an approach taken in this research. This approach is well defined by Cambridge Dictionary (2017) as "*the quality of dealing with a problem in a sensible way that suits the conditions that really exist, rather than following fixed theories, rules or ideas*" but Saunders, et al. (2012) argue that ideas are valid as they support action.

As an immediate outcome, the component that will decide a researcher's position is the research question. Saunders, et al. (2012) contend that if a research question does not certainly propose that a particular philosophy ought to be embraced, the reality of the situation may prove that the pragmatist's point of view is accurate whereby various philosophical positions can be implemented.

A core characteristic of pragmatism is the perspective that there are different means by which the situation and the world can be understood and accordingly maintains that no single perspective can give a reasonable portrayal of multiple realities.

Positivism

Positivism follows the view that only "real" knowledge gained through perception, including estimation, is dependable. In positivism studies, the role of the researcher is restricted in regards to information gathering and translation through the objective approach and the exploration discoveries are generally noticeable and quantifiable. Cooper & Schindler (2006) summarise the purpose of positivism as scientists assess the world from their point of view by using objectivity where subjectivity is prevalent. It expects that scientific enquiry is value-free as the analyst is external to the circumstance that is being contemplated and as a result can do little to modify the information.

Cooper & Schindler (2006) view goes hand in hand with the view of Gill & Johnson (2010) that positivism is a "*scientific method*" that scans for regularities and casual connects in the data to make law-like speculation like those formed/produced by scientists.

In positivism assumption, it is possible for researchers and managers to set up objective facts and ongoing relationship in a given state self-sufficiently of human partiality, interests and beliefs. However, Saunders, et al. (2012) indicates that researchers embracing positivism philosophy are opposed to decisions in connections to research targets and information gathering. Therefore, it is contended that endeavouring to implement a value-free stance proposes that a value position exists.

Positivism is often associated with quantitative data collection, experimental testing and theory. Saunders, et al. (2012) notes that knowledge gained during the period of testing is acknowledged by positivists as being able to be generalised to an extensive populace.

For the purpose of this research, the author uses this philosophy approach with the aid of Google Forms. This enables the author to distribute the questionnaire to international students online. Conducting this method helps to gather relevant information that enables to achieve objective one and helpful in regard to objective two. The significance of this hypothesis is discussed in the following chapters.

Confirmation letter from Athlone Institute of Technology



1 June 2017

Re: Farzad Azizi, C/o Faculty of Business, Athlone Institute of Technology, Dublin Road, Athlone

This is to confirm that the above named Farzad Azizi (A00169568) is registered as a full time student on the Master of Business, Level 9 Programme at Athlone Institute of Technology for this academic year. This programme runs from September to September.

There is a requirement as part of the programme to ensure that students complete a **Research Project** module. This involves completing research in the community.

It would be appreciated if you could assist Farzad in any way you can

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Yours sincerely

Peter Melinn
A/Head of Department
Faculty of Business and Hospitality
Athlone Institute of Technology



Bóthar Bhaile Átha Cliath
Baile Átha Luain
Co na hIarmhí
N37 HD68
Éire

Dublin Road
Athlone
Co Westmeath
N37 HD68
Ireland

teleafón/telephone
+353 (0)90 646 8000
ríomhphost/email
info@ait.ie
suíomh gréasáin/web
www.ait.ie

Agreement letter

Name of Researcher: Farzad Azizi

Name of Participant: _____

Title of Thesis: Economic impact of international students attending Athlone Institute of Technology to Athlone

I, (Participant/Subject) agree to take part in the above-named research project, the details of which have been fully explained to me and described in writing. I also certify I understand the details of this study.

Signed: _____ (Participant/Subject)

Date: _____

I, Farzad Azizi (Researcher) certify that the details of this study have been fully explained and described in writing to the best of my knowledge, to the subject named above and have been understood by him/her. All material gathered will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be exclusively available to the researcher, the research supervisor and the marking examiners. If the participant wishes, they can be given a pseudonym to help protect their anonymity where possible.

Signed: _____ (Researcher)

Date: _____

Questionnaire

Farzad Azizi - A00169568@student.ait.ie ([Master of Business Degree](#))

As part of my Masters of Business Degree, I am carrying out a research into the economic impact of international students attending Athlone Institute of Technology to Athlone. I would be very grateful for your help in collecting the information by completing the following survey. If you are unsure, please use your best estimate. All estimations are in EURO (€)

1. What country are you from?

2. What is your age?

- Under 21
- 22-28
- 29-34
- 34+

3. How many semesters have you been attending Athlone Institute of Technology?

- One
- Two
- Three
- Four
- Four +

4. How many more semesters do you think are required to complete your academic program at Athlone Institute of Technology?

- One
- Two
- Three
- Four
- Four +

5. What is your status as a student?

- Undergraduate
- Postgraduate

6. How much do you spend on telecommunication every month?

- €0
- €1-€15
- €16-€25
- €26+

7. How much do you spend on utilities each month? (Gas and electricity)

- €30-€50
- €51-€70
- €71+

8. What type of accommodation are you staying in?

- Home Stay
- Self-Catering

9. How much rent do you pay each month?

- Under €200
- €200-€250
- €250+

10. How much you spend on taxi each month? Please use your best estimate

€

11. A) - Do you use your own vehicle in Ireland?

- No
- Yes

12. B) - If yes, how much do you spend on your car each month? i.e. fuel, service etc. Please use your best estimate

- €25-€50
- €50-€100
- €100+

13. How much do you spend on alcoholic drinks in pubs in Athlone monthly?

- €0
- €1-€30
- €31-€50
- €51-€70
- €70+

14. How much do you spend on alcohol purchase in off-licence and supermarkets per month?

- €0
- €1-€20
- €21-€40
- €40+

15. Which pub do you visit the most? Please name

16. What is your weekly spending in the local supermarket?

- Under €10
- €10-€30
- €31-€50
- €51+

17. How much do you spend on restaurants/takeaway every month?

- €0
- €20-€40
- €41-€60
- €60+

18. How much do you spend on clothes, jewellery and accessories in Athlone each month?
Please use your best estimate

€

19. Other retail items (household, medicine, gifts, hardware etc.) you buy each month. Please use your best estimate

- €0-€10
- €11-€30
- €30+

20. How much do spend on entertainment each month? E.g. cinema, spectator sports, concerts etc. Please use your best estimate

- €0
- €0-€25
- €25-€50
- €50+

21. How much do you spend on personal grooming per month? I.e. hair, makeup, tan etc.

- €0
- €10-€20
- €21-€40
- €40+

22. A) - Do you have a gym membership?

- Yes
- No

23. Part B) - If yes, how much do you pay per semester?

€

24. A) - Do you hold a (Garda National Immigration Bureau) GNIB card?

- Yes
- No

25. B) - If yes, how much did you pay for your GNIB card?

€

26. A) - How many people (friends and family) have visited you or plan to visit you during your studies at Athlone Institute of Technology (example: if a relative has visited you three times then count their visits as three separate visitors)

- 0
- 1-3
- 4-6
- 6+

27. B) - How many total days did all the visitors spend in Ireland? (Example: Two visitors stay 10 days each and another visitor stayed 7 days = 27 total days) Please use your best estimate

28. C) - How many nights did all the visitors spend in hotels in Athlone? (Example: 2 visitors for 5 nights equals to 10 hotel stays) Please use your best estimate

29. Please add details of any expenditure not included above.

<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Questions for business owners in Athlone

1. Do you have international students that shop here?
2. What proportion of your customers are international students?
3. How important are do you consider international students as customers?
4. Do you notice any changes during the holidays regarding international students, such as Christmas or Easter holiday?
5. How is your business effected by the absence of international students?
6. Is anything that I missed you would like to mention?

Sample calculation example for use of own vehicle and cost question: 11 students responded to this question

Cost	Average	Calculation	Total
€25-€50	€37.5	€37.5*6 students	<u>€225</u>

Cost	Average	Calculation	Total
€50-€100	€75	€75*2 students	<u>€150</u>

Cost	Average	Calculation	Total
€100-€103	€101	€101*3 students	<u>€303</u>

Total estimation for one month €678

Total estimation for nine months €678*9 = €6,102