

An Overview of Placement Practices in Athlone Institute of Technology

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Introduction

There is strong evidence to suggest that placements and work experience are extremely valuable to students, both in terms of their academic performance and their employability skills. Research conducted with higher education staff has established that the primary benefits of work placements for HEIs include opportunities to enhance networking and mutual understanding with workplaces, integrating employability skills into the curriculum, and applying theoretical knowledge in practice (Sheridan & Linehan, 2011).

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 endorses the fact that many undergraduate programmes in Irish higher education institutions already include work placements or internships, but notes that more such opportunities should be provided. The report's authors recommend that 'undergraduate students should be encouraged to spend some time in a work or service situation, and formally acknowledge such work through accreditation or inclusion in the student's Diploma Supplement (Department of Education and Skills, 2011, p. 61).

The benefits to students of formalised work placements are recognised in the current Strategic Plan of Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT). In the chapter titled 'Learning, Teaching and Educational Experience', the plan states that AIT's programmes 'will be distinguished by a strong practical focus in which engagement with the workplace, applied industrial projects and internships are central' (Athlone Institute of Technology, 2014). The strategic plan envisaged that work-based learning (WBL) and internships would be emphasised in programmatic reviews. As we enter its final year, this internal review is timely as it aims to provide a snapshot of how placements are currently organised, supervised and assessed across AIT. Some programmes are currently reviewing and updating their placement modules, but every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this document is an accurate reflection of current placement practices within the Institute.

Methodology

During the course of the review, face-to-face interviews were carried out with a number of stakeholders, including Lecturers, Heads of Department, Heads of Function and Placement Co-ordinators involved with the organisation and supervision of placement. In certain

instances, questions were sent by email and the responses were collated and tabulated. Where possible, an overview has been provided for all programmes within the Institute that incorporate a placement, and the placement practices of selected departments and programmes are described in more detailed case studies.

Current placement practices within AIT

The language used when describing and discussing work-based learning (WBL) varies greatly nationally and internationally. For example, the British Columbia Accountability Council for Co-operative Education (ACCE) distinguishes between work-integrated *education* and work-integrated *learning*, whereby work-integrated education comprises applied research, apprenticeships, clinics, co-ops, internship, field placements, practicums or clinical placements and work experience, while work-integrated learning includes research assistantships, post-credential internships, teaching assistantships, volunteering, externships and co-curricular community service learning (British Columbia Accountability Council for Co-operative Education, 2015). Within AIT, the most commonly used terms are 'placement', 'clinical placement', 'work-based learning' and 'internship', terminology which is widely used across the Higher Education sector in Ireland.

Findings

The following sample case studies offer an in-depth description of how placements are managed within AIT, both at departmental level and on a selected programme. In addition, data for all programmes that incorporate a placement module are presented below in tabular form.

Case study # 1: The Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Studies

Organisation and Preparation

Within the Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Studies currently, students on the Higher Certificate in Sport and Recreation, BA in Hotel and Leisure Management, Higher Certificate in Culinary Arts and Higher Certificate in Bar Supervision programmes complete a placement during the course of their studies. Each placement is allocated 10 credits (ECTS). All students have three timetabled hours per week for placement preparation, during which they receive guidance and instruction on topics such as compiling CVs, writing cover letters, professional development, Health and Safety and discipline-specific terminology.

Prior to commencing their placement, students receive a handbook that includes contact details, guidelines for their placement and for the use of Student Diary Pro, a code of practice and details of the skills and competencies that they should acquire while on placement. They also sign a learning agreement.

Students may find their own placement, but the Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Studies is well networked and staff within the department regularly receive queries and requests from employers seeking to recruit placement students. A database of student placements is maintained by the Department.

Assessment

Placements are graded. The placement preparation element of the placement module is allocated 30% of the overall mark. The remaining 70% is allocated for the students' performance in the field, including the marks awarded for written work submitted using Student Diary Pro, an e-portfolio integrated into Moodle, to which 40% of the marks are awarded. Students respond to specific questions asked by the lecturer, and in certain instances also upload supporting documentary or photographic evidence. Employer feedback generally accounts for 20% of the mark, although the mark itself is awarded by the lecturer. The final 10% is awarded by the lecturer following the on-site visit with the student and his/her supervisor.

Higher Certificate in Sport and Recreation

Duration

Students on the Higher Certificate in Sport and Recreation programme undertake 120 placement hours at the end of 2nd year. Typically, these placements are with community and sports organisations or with schools, in which case they are generally unpaid. Other students may find placement opportunities in sports retail or marketing. Garda vetting is a requirement of the course.

Supervision and Liaison

Students on this programme receive a phone call from a lecturer during the course of their placement, but they are not visited.

BA in Hotel and Leisure Management, Higher Certificate in Culinary Arts and Higher Certificate in Bar Supervision

Duration

Students on the BA in Hotel and Leisure Management programme complete a ten-week, 400-hour placement. Many students complete their placement within the region, but some also travel abroad to carry out their placement overseas. The Head of Department meets all students who opt for an overseas placement informally before they travel.

Students on the Higher Certificate in Culinary Arts and Higher Certificate in Bar Supervision programmes also complete a 400-hour placement during the summer between the first and second years of the programme. Placements are paid.

Supervision and liaison.

All students who remain in Ireland are visited by a lecturer from AIT. Fáilte Ireland mandates that students on the Higher Certificate in Culinary Arts and Higher Certificate in Bar Supervision programmes must be visited by a lecturer.

As stated previously, the Department of Hospitality, Leisure and Tourism enjoys strong links with industry, and maintains regular contact with the placement providers, many of whom are themselves graduates of AIT or have visited the Institute as members of industry panels. Because of the requirements of industry, placements on programmes within this department must take place during the summer months, when demand for placement students is at its highest. Typically, there are few if any opportunities for student placements in this sector prior to Easter.

Case study # 2: The Department of Social Science and Design

Organisation and Preparation

Currently, all students on the undergraduate Social Science programmes (BA in Early Years Care and Education, BA in Applied Social Studies in Social Care, BA in Social Care Practice) must undertake three placements during the course of their studies. The number of placement hours that the students must complete is determined by the requirements of the relevant sector. Each placement is allocated five credits (ECTS).

The Department of Social Science and Design, in the Faculty of Science and Health, is unique within Athlone Institute of Technology in having a Placement Co-ordinator assigned to deal with the administrative elements of the placement modules on the programmes. In general, students find their own placements. The Placement Officer maintains a database of where students are doing their placements, and is the point of contact for both students and on-site supervisors.

Before undertaking their first placement, students must undergo Garda vetting. In subsequent years, students submit a vetting declaration, confirming that nothing has changed since their initial Garda vetting.

A placement preparation module is offered to all students in advance of the start of their placement, during which they receive guidance and instruction on topics such as self-care, transferable skills, the use of Student Diary Pro (BA in Applied Social Studies in Social Care, BA in Social Care Practice), reflective practice, the role and nature of placement supervision etc. In addition, prior to commencing their placement students receive a placement manual (BA in Applied Social Studies in Social Care, BA in Social Care Practice) or placement handbook (BA in Early Years Care and Education), and a Placement Policy Document which they must sign.

Currently, all students on the undergraduate Social Science programmes (BA in Early Years Care and Education, BA in Applied Social Studies in Social Care, BA in Social Care Practice) must undertake three placements during the course of their studies. The number of placement hours that the students must complete is determined by the requirements of the relevant sector. Placements are unpaid.

[BA in Early Years Care and Education](#)

Duration

Students on the BA in Early Years Care and Education must complete 500 hours before they graduate, in accordance with the *Model Framework for Education, Training and Professional Development in the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector* published by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in 2002. In AIT, students on the first year of the BA in Early Years Care and Education complete 162 placement hours, comprising one day per week of the semester, plus a three-week block at the end of semester 2. Second-year

students complete 204 placement hours, comprising one day per week of the semester, plus a two-week block at the end of semester 2, and third-year students complete 144 placement hours, undertaken one day a week over the course of the academic year.

Supervision

Lecturers are assigned to visit students while on placement. Where possible, students are visited once during the course of their placement, when they are on block release (Years 1 and 2). In instances where students complete their placement on a one-day-a-week basis (Year 3), a site visit may not be possible and the placement supervisor is contacted by phone. Lecturers complete a feedback form and students receive a copy.

Assessment

Students on the BA in Early Years Care and Education submit a written portfolio to AIT, but ultimately, the student is deemed to have passed or failed the module by the on-site supervisor.

BA in Applied Social Studies in Social Care and BA in Social Care Practice

Duration

Forthcoming guidelines from the Health & Social Care Professionals Council, CORU, will require that students on Social Care programmes complete 800 placement hours prior to graduation. Currently, students on the BA in Applied Social Studies in Social Care programme undertake a nine-week placement each year. Students on the BA in Social Care Practice complete a six-week placement in Year 2, a nine-week placement in Year 3, and a 12-week placement in Year 4.

Supervision

Lecturers are assigned to visit students once during the course of their placement. Lecturers complete a feedback form and students receive a copy.

Assessment

Students on the BA in Applied Social Studies in Social Care and BA in Social Care Practice programmes are assessed using a combination Student Diary Pro (50%) and an evaluation by their on-site supervisor (50%). The entries in Student Diary Pro contain reflections on the competencies that the students are expected to acquire while on placement. They should be signed off by the on-site supervisor and are graded by lecturers. Students must pass

both the supervisor evaluation and Student Diary Pro elements of the assessment to be deemed to have passed the module.

AIT vetting of and liaison with placement providers

Generally, students find their own placement. Currently, there are no specific criteria in place by which placement opportunities are deemed to be either suitable or unsuitable, but the Placement Co-ordinator does a background check to ensure that the placement found by the student is satisfactory. Many of the placement providers are governed by the guidelines and regulations imposed by state agencies such as the HSE or TUSLA, but lecturers have expressed concerns about the quality and benefits of some of the placements completed by students on these programmes.

When on-site supervisors receive placement-related documentation from AIT such as Garda vetting and insurance forms, evaluation forms and supporting documentation, they are invited to participate in a three-day Supervisor Training Course which takes place in AIT each year.

Case Study # 3: BSc in Veterinary Nursing

The BSc in Veterinary Nursing programme in Athlone Institute of Technology is accredited by the Veterinary Council of Ireland and consequently, the structure and management of the placement modules are determined by the regulations of that professional body. As quality assurance and standardisation are key requirements, the organisation of the placement on this programme adheres to the sector's best practice guidelines.

Organisation and Preparation

There is no Placement Officer in the Department of Life and Physical Science. Currently, one lecturer has been allocated four timetabled hours per week to co-ordinate the 90 placements on the BSc in Veterinary Nursing programme, and a pool of lecturers undertake site visits. Lecturers have recently started using CASPIO, an online platform that facilitates the recording of all elements of student placements, including competencies and feedback. Staff involved with the programme emphasise that the appropriate and adequate allocation of resources, including the allocation of timetabled hours so that one person with expertise in the sector has responsibility for placements, is key to the continued success of this placement model.

Before undertaking a placement, students receive a document with guidelines and information about their duties, obligations and rights while on placement, as well as instructions regarding the portfolio that they will submit upon completion of the module. They also have a class with the lecturers on the veterinary nursing programme about the requirements of their placement and portfolio. Students find their own placements with veterinary practices that have been approved by the Veterinary Council under the Premises Accreditation Scheme (PAS) and deemed suitable by AIT. A tripartite contract is entered into by the student, the veterinary practice and AIT. Students are required to acquire specific competencies, and a document attesting that these have been achieved is completed electronically by the on-site supervisor (Veterinary Surgeon or Veterinary Nurse). Each student is contacted by phone and visited once by a lecturer from AIT during the course of each placement, during which a feedback form is completed. Students have access to the feedback forms submitted by their supervisors. Placements are unpaid.

Duration

In the first and second years of the programme, students complete an eight-week placement during the summer. Students must attend the veterinary practice for 40 hours per week, over the course of five days.

Assessment

Upon completion of the placement, students will be deemed to have either passed or failed, based on their attendance and the submission of written portfolio work, some of which is reflective, which has been signed by the supervisor and assessed by lecturers. The determination as to whether a student has passed or failed the module is made by AIT. The module carries ten credits (ECTS).

In the final year of the programme, students complete a 14-week placement that commences in Semester 2. A total of 30 credits is awarded for this placement, with three separate elements being awarded 10 credits each. Some of the skills achieved and learning outcomes met are cumulative over the 3 placements. Students must submit a completed portfolio for 10 credits, which also contains entries from the first two years of the programme. [They have the opportunity to repeat any failed cases from year 1 and 2.] In addition, they must complete a practical Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)

(10 credits) and an on-site clinical exam in Gurteen College (10 credits). A grade is awarded for the module at this stage of the programme.

Supervision and Liaison

There is regular contact between AIT and the veterinary practices where the students carry out their placements, and recommendations are implemented on an ongoing basis. A review by the Veterinary Council takes place every five years. The five veterinary nurse educators in Ireland (UCD, AIT, LyIT, DkIT, St. John's College Cork) meet once yearly to review veterinary nursing training in general, and often implement changes to help standardise the students' experience on placement.

Students can contact the lecturers assigned to them as supervisors during the academic year. During the summer holidays, they can contact the Faculty office.

International Placements at AIT

Within the Faculty of Business and Hospitality, the BA in Hospitality Management (with International Placement) has recently been validated and will be offered from September 2018. This programme will include a mandatory 600-hour international placement, to be completed in the summer between the 3rd and 4th year of the course. There are currently no other programmes in Athlone Institute of Technology with a mandatory international placement. Nevertheless, students from AIT have completed placements in Europe, China, Canada, Australia, South Africa and the USA. Some of these international placements are organised and managed by individual lecturers, while others are organised with support from the International Office.

Much of the success of international placements depends on the strong academic links which have been forged and maintained with both European and non-EU partner institutions. As a result of ongoing dialogue with, and visits to and from these partner universities and colleges, there is a network in place which facilitates the sourcing and supervision of international placements for AIT students. For example, students on the BSc in Sports Science with Exercise Physiology have completed placements in Australia, South Africa, USA and Slovenia, and the Faculty of Engineering and Informatics has negotiated international placements with partner universities in Europe and China. Currently, there are seven Software Engineering students on placement in Europe; six are in France, and one is in

Spain. The placements, which are unpaid, are being completed within the research units of partner universities and colleges. Two Software Engineering students are currently on placement in the research department of partner universities in China. Within the Faculty of Business and Hospitality, there are currently two undergraduate and one graduate students on placement in Europe. Four students from the Department of Social Science and Design are currently in Canada on placements mediated by MacEwan University with appropriate agencies.

Students on placement in Europe receive Erasmus funding. As there is no Erasmus funding available to students on placement in non-EU countries, a scholarship has been made available by AIT for students on programmes with mandatory work placements who would like to complete those placements overseas. This reflects the commitment to international mobility outlined in AIT's Strategic Plan 2014-2018.

An Overview of current placement practices in AIT by Faculty

Faculty of Business and Hospitality

Department of Business and Management / Department of Accounting and Business Computing

Name of programme	Number of placements undertaken by students	Year[s] in which placement[s] occur	Duration of placement[s]	Number of credits awarded to placement	Pre-placement documentation provided?	Preparatory session[s] / module provided?	Garda vetting required?	Student Diary Pro used?	Number of placement visits per placement	Option of international placement available?	Intercultural awareness training provided?	Assessment based on evidence of experience and competency?	Assessment based on reflection?	Graded or Pass/Fail?	Paid or unpaid?
HC in Music Technology	1	2	40 hours	5	Y	Informal	N	Y	0	N	N/A	Y	Project	P/F	Depends on employer
BBS (<i>ab initio</i>)	1	3	Semester 2 (From 2017-2018)	30	Y	Y	N	N	1	N	N/A	Y Evaluation from supervisor	Y Reflection, report, and presentation	P/F	Ideally, paid
BA in Accounting*	1	3	Semester 2 4 – 6 months	35	Y	Y Preparatory module 25 credits	N	N	1	N	N/A	Y	Y	P/F	Ideally, paid
Additional Comments * This is optional and has not been completed by any student to date. *AIT tries to source the placements, but students may find their own, in which case they will be validated by AIT															

Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Studies

Name of programme	Number of placements undertaken by students	Year[s] in which placement[s] occur	Duration of placement[s]	Number of credits awarded to placement	Pre-placement documentation provided?	Preparatory session[s]/ module provided?	Garda vetting required?	Student Diary Pro used?	Number of placement visits per placement	Option of international placement available?	Intercultural awareness training provided?	Assessment based on evidence of experience and competency?	Assessment based on reflection?	Graded or Pass/Fail?	Paid or unpaid?	Alternative to placement?
HC in Sport & Recreation	1	2	120 hours	10	Y	Y	Y	Y	Phone call	No	N/A	Y	Diary and employer report	Graded	Unpaid	N
BA in Hotel & Leisure Management	1	2	400 hours /10 weeks	10	Y	Y	Y	Y	Phone call	Student led	N	Y	Diary and employer report	Graded	Paid	N
BA in Spa Management	1	2	120 hours / 4 weeks	10	Y	Y	Y	Y	Phone call	Student-led	N	Y	Diary and employer report	Graded	Paid	N
HC in Culinary Arts 'Work-based learning'	1	1	400 hours	10	Y	Y	Y	Y	1		N	Y	Diary and employer report	Graded	Paid	N
HC in Bar Supervision 'Work-based learning'	1	1	400 hours	10	Y	Y	Y	Y	1		N	Y	Diary and employer report	Graded	Paid	N
Additional Comments Students receive placement preparation for 3 hours per week prior to commencing placement A new programme was validated in May 2017. The BA in Hospitality Management (with International Placement) incorporates two placements, one in Ireland and one internationally																

Faculty of Engineering and Informatics
Department of Electronics and Informatics

Name of programme	Number of placements undertaken by students	Year[s] in which placement[s] occur	Duration of placement[s]	Number of credits awarded to placement	Pre-placement documentation provided?	Preparatory session[s] /module provided?	Garda vetting required?	Student Diary Pro used?	Number of placement visits per placement	Option of international placement available?	Intercultural awareness training provided?	Assessment based on evidence of experience and competency?	Assessment based on reflection?	Graded or Pass/Fail?	Paid or unpaid?
BSc (H) Software Design in Cloud Computing•	1	3	5-6 months	25	Y	Y	N	N Moodle	0	Y	Y•	Y	Reports	P/F	Paid
BSc (H) Software design in Game Development•	1	3	5-6 months	25	Y	Y	N	N Moodle	0	Y	Y•	Y	Reports	P/F	Paid
MSc in Applied Software Engineering ^Δ	1	5 - 3rd semester	13 weeks	15	Y	Y	N	N	0	N	N/A	Y	Y	Graded	Paid
H. Dip in Science in Software Development (Springboard)	1	3rd semester	12-16 weeks	30	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	P/F	Whether paid or unpaid depends on placement
<p>Additional Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Students are interviewed by staff members and this usually happens in AIT or over Skype. Employers are contacted separately. •Cultural awareness sessions are provided for students travelling to China •Typically, 10% of students fail to get an Industrial placement. These students are accommodated with a college research project. <p>^ΔThis Placement is part of the MSc in Applied Software Engineering. Students on the programme go on placement in Ericsson if they achieve the required level of the taught modules. Students are monitored and are given feedback by their line manager every 4 weeks. At the end of the placement there is a meeting between the course coordinator in AIT and the coordinator in Ericsson. Students also compile a diary and a reflective log which is submitted to AIT.</p>															

Department of Mechanical and Polymer Engineering / Department of Civil, Construction and Mineral Engineering

Name of Programme	Number of placements undertaken by students	Year[s] in which placement[s] occur	Duration of placement[s]	Number of credits awarded to placement	Pre-placement documentation provided?	Preparatory session[s] /module provided?	Garda vetting required?	Student Diary Pro used?	Number of placement visits per placement	Option of international placement available?	Intercultural awareness training provided?	Assessment based on evidence of experience and competency?	Assessment based on reflection?	Graded or Pass/Fail?	Paid or unpaid?
B Eng. in Manufacturing Technology*	1	4	2 days per week in Semester 2	10	Y	Lecture outlining requirements	N	N	1	N	N/A	Y*	Y*	Graded	Usually unpaid.
BEng (H) in Mechanical & Polymer Engineering+	1	3	6 months	25	Y	Y	N	N	1	N	N/A	Y	N	P/F	Paid.
BSc (H) in Quantity Surveying	1	3	8 months	25	Y	Y	N	Y		N	N/A	Y	Y	Graded	Paid
BSc (H) in Energy & Business Management	1	3rd Semester	12 weeks	10	Y	Y	N	N	1	N	N/A	Y	Y	Graded	Industry based Unpaid
Postgraduate Diploma in Green Engineering	1	3rd semester	12 weeks	10	Y	Y	N	Y	0	N	N/A	Y	Y	Graded	Unpaid
Additional Comments * Students submit a placement report. This outlines projects that they have worked on together with day to day activities such as attending meetings etc. The industrial supervisors provide feedback based on criteria requested by the lecturer, and they assign a placement mark. Students also write a report on their reflections and experiences in relation to usefulness, new skills, teamwork etc. A mark is assigned, based on the following; The final report, diary, Industrial supervisor's mark, completion of a CV, reflection/personal experience. +Assessment based on portfolio, two interim reports and a final report +The availability of a portal-type facility whereby companies could access students' CVs was suggested by lecturers involved in coordinating placements.															

Faculty of Science and Health

Department of Social Studies and Design

Name of programme	Number of placements undertaken by students	Year[s] in which placement[s] occur	Duration of placement[s]	Number of credits awarded to placement	Pre-placement documentation provided?	Preparatory session[s] /module provided?	Garda vetting required?	Student Diary Pro used?	Number of placement visits per placement	Option of international placement available?	Intercultural awareness training provided?	Assessment based on evidence of experience and competency?	Assessment based on reflection?	Graded or Pass/Fail?	Paid or unpaid?
BA in Early Years Care and Education*	3	1	162 hours	5	Y	Y	Y	N	1	Student led	N	Y	N	P/F	Unpaid
		2	204 hours	5	Y	Y	Y	N	1	Student led	N	Y	N	P/F	Unpaid
		3	144 hours	5	Y	Y	Y	N	1	Student led	N	Y	N	P/F	Unpaid
BA in Applied Social Studies in Social Care*	3	3	9 weeks	5	Y	Y	Y	Y		Student led	Y*	50%	50%	Graded	Unpaid
		2	9 weeks	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	1	Student led		50%	50%	Graded	Unpaid
		1	9 weeks	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	1	Student led		50%	50%	Graded	Unpaid
BA in Social Care Practice*	3	4	12 weeks	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	1	Student led	Y*	50%	50%	Graded	Unpaid
		3	9 weeks	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	1	Student led		50%	50%	Graded	Unpaid
		2	6 weeks	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	1	Student led		50%	50%	Graded	Unpaid
BA in Animation and Illustration+	1	3	Semester 2	30	Y	Y Professional Practice module 5 credits	N	N	1	Student led	Y	Y	Y	Graded	Depends on placement
BA in Graphic Design	1	2	1 day per week for 6 weeks + 6 week block	5	Y	Y Professional Practice module 5 credits	N	N	Phone Call	Student led	N	Y	Y	P/F	Generally unpaid
Additional Comments *Placement preparation modules are offered on Social Studies programmes *An intercultural awareness session may be provided if placement is organised by AIT (e.g. Edmonton, Canada) +The placement module for this programme is currently under review. Placements will commence in the academic year 2018-2019. If a student cannot find a placement, there may be the possibility of completing a campus project instead.															

Department of Life and Physical Science

Name of programme	Number of placements undertaken by students	Year[s] in which placement[s] occur	Duration of placement[s]	Number of credits awarded to placement	Pre-placement documentation provided?	Preparatory session[s] /module provided?	Garda vetting required?	Student Diary Pro used?	Number of placement visits per student per placement	Option of international placement available?	Intercultural awareness training provided?	Assessment based on evidence of experience and competency?	Assessment based on reflection?	Graded or Pass/Fail?	Paid or unpaid?
BSc in Veterinary Nursing*	3	1	Summer 8 weeks	10	Y	Y	N	Y	1	N	N/A	Y	Y	P/F	Unpaid
		2	Summer 8 weeks	10	Y	Y	N	Y	1	N	N/A	Y	Y	P/F	Unpaid
		3	Semester 2 14 weeks	3x10	Y	Y	N	Y	1	N	N/A	Y	Y	Graded	Unpaid
All 3rd year programmes:+ BSc in Biotechnology BSc in Bioscience BSc in Bio-veterinary Science BSc in Pharmaceutical Science BSc in Toxicology	1	3	Summer holidays	5	?	N	N	N	0	Y	N	Y Employer evaluation	Written report	P/F	
Additional Comments * AIT lecturers maintain a database of approved veterinary practices †This is an optional placement with 5 extra credits															

Department of Nursing and Healthcare

Name of programme	Number of placements undertaken by students	Year[s] in which placement[s] occur	Duration of placement[s]	Number of credits awarded to placement	Pre-placement documentation provided?	Preparatory session[s]/ module provided?	Garda vetting required?	Student Diary Pro used?	Number of placement visits per placement	Option of international placement available?	Intercultural awareness training provided?	Assessment based on evidence of experience and competency?	Assessment based on reflection?	Graded or Pass/Fail?	Paid or unpaid?
BSc in General Nursing	4	1	Semester 1& 2 6 weeks @ 35 hours	30	Y	Y	Y	N*	As often as necessary	Y	Y	Y	Y	P/F - Competencies must be deemed to have been achieved. 80 - 100% attendance is mandatory	Unpaid - except for internship in Year 4
		2	Semester 1& 2 7 weeks @ 35 hours												
		3	Semester 1 8 weeks @ 35 hours Semester 2 6 weeks @ 35 hours												
		4	Semester 1 5 weeks @ 35 hours Semester 2 36 weeks @ 39 hours (internship)												
BSc in Psychiatric Nursing	4	1	Semester 1& 2 6 weeks @ 35 hours	30	Y	Y	Y	N*	As often as necessary	Y	Y*	Y	Y	P/F - Competencies must be deemed to have been achieved. 80 - 100% attendance is mandatory	Unpaid - except for internship in Year 4
		2	Semester 1& 2 7 weeks @ 35 hours												
		3	Semester 1 8 weeks @ 35 hours Semester 2 6 weeks @ 35 hours												
		4	Semester 1 5 weeks @ 35 hours Semester 2 36 weeks @ 39 hours (internship)												

HC in Dental Nursing	2	1	40 days	5	Y	Y	N	N	1	N	N/A	Y	Y	Was P/F/ - changing to Graded	Unpaid
															Was P/F/ - changing to Graded
		2	40 days	5	Y	Y	N	N	1	N	N/A	Y	Y		
Add on BSc in Dental Nursing	1	3	7 - 10 days	5	Y	Y	N	N	1	N	N/A	Y	Y	Was P/F/ - changing to Graded	Unpaid
HC in Pharmacy Technician ⁺	1	2	Semester 2	25	Y	Y Professional Development module	Y	Y	1	N	N/A	Y	Y	Graded using OSCE assessment, reflective analysis and project	Unpaid
Add on BSc Pharmacy Technician ⁺		3	50 days, year long	10+	Y	Y Preparatory sessions with qualified pharmacist	Y	Y	1	N	N/A	Y	Y	Graded using tutor assessment, professional assessment and SDP entries	Unpaid

Additional Comments

*Number of hours determined by Nursing Board of Ireland

*Placements are allocated by AIT's Nursing Allocations Officer who liaises with clinical partners

*Intercultural awareness training provided by Nurture Africa

*Student Diary Pro was 'deemed logistically impossible by clinical colleagues'

+Plan to increase number of credits from 2018

+Placements are secured by AIT lecturers. Students indicate where they would like to go, and lecturers validate the pharmacies.

Department of Sport and Health Science

Name of programme	Number of placements undertaken by students	Year[s] in which placement[s] occur	Duration of placement[s]	Number of credits awarded to placement	Pre-placement documentation provided?	Preparatory session[s] provided?	Garda vetting required?	Student Diary Pro used?	Number of placement visits per placement	Option of international placement available?	Intercultural awareness training provided?	Assessment based on evidence of experience and competency?	Assessment based on reflection?	Graded or Pass/Fail?	Paid or unpaid?
BSc Athletic & Rehabilitation Therapy	5	2	Semester 2 70-80 hours	5	Y	Y	Y	N	0	N	N/A	Y	Y	P/F	Unpaid
		3	Semester 1 & 2 70-80 hours	5	Y	Y	Y	N	0	N	N/A	Y	Y	P/F	Unpaid
		4	Semester 1 20 - 40 hours per week Semester 2	5	Y	Y	Y	N	0	N	N/A	Y	Y	P/F	Unpaid
				30				Y		Y	N				
BSc in Health Science & Nutrition ^Δ	1	3	15 weeks	30	Y	Y	Y	N	1	N	N/A	Y ^Δ	Y ^Δ	Graded	Usually unpaid
BSc in Physical Activity & Health+	1	3	6 months	30	Y	Y	Y	Y	1	Y	N	Y	Y	P/F	Usually unpaid
BSc in Sport Science with Exercise Physiology (Current)*	1	3	10 weeks	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	1	Y	N	Y	Y	P/F	Unpaid
BSc in Sport Science with Exercise Physiology (From 2017 - 2018)*	1	3	6 months	30	Y	Y	Y	Y	1	Y	N	Y	Y	P/F	Unpaid
<p>Additional Comments:</p> <p>Δ This module is assessed as follows: 1. Performance Evaluation: Academic tutor's report 20% (see handbook for assessment form- this is completed when the link lecturer visits the student)</p> <p>2. Performance Evaluation: Student preceptor's report 20% (see handbook for this assessment form) 3. Student's reflective development report and log book 50% 4. Oral presentation based on reflective development 10%</p> <p>+ Placements are found by AIT and student. Student-found placements must be approved by AIT prior to acceptance.</p> <p>* AIT has a bank of placements that has been acquired over the last 6 years with the lecturers' own contacts. AIT contacts them every year (e.g. Connacht rugby, MedEx in DCU, St Jozef Stefan Institute in Slovenia, Croi in Galway) to see if they are willing to take on our students. AIT sets up the interview process with the placement supervisors. This bank of placements is not enough to cater for all the students, and some of the students have no interest in these particular placements, so lecturers encourage all of them to source their own placement in the area of sports science and health that interests them most. Once they make contact and get proposed roles and responsibilities from these organisations, lecturers help them with the final steps regarding paperwork etc.</p>															

Summary

Athlone Institute of Technology has a long tradition of incorporating placements and work-based learning into programmes. At present, certain cohorts of students from each of the Faculties of Business and Hospitality, Engineering and Informatics, and Science and Health complete placements during the course of their academic career. Lecturing and administration colleagues regularly review and revise the structure of these placements within the context of their specific disciplines, responding to the changing needs both of their students and of the professional bodies with whom they work. As a result, different approaches are taken and practices vary across the Institute, within individual faculties and even within departments.

Some programmes have mandatory placements, some have optional placements, and some have no placement at all. In some instances, a campus-based project can be completed as an alternative to placement. With regard to the organisation and supervision of placements, there are differences in how and by whom placements are sourced and managed, whether the students find their placements themselves or whether placement positions are mediated by AIT. Some programmes have access to an administrator who carries out the role of Placement Co-ordinator, while on other programmes, individual lecturers are responsible for organising and managing placements, with variations in the number of timetabled hours allocated to lecturers for placement co-ordination and placement supervision. Some students receive site visits from lecturers while on placement, others receive phone calls. Placement providers in some sectors offer remuneration to students, while in other sectors placements are unpaid.

There are also wide variations between programmes in terms of the number of credits awarded to placements, placement preparation, methods of assessment and how the placement is graded. Many programmes, particularly those in which the placement occurs in Semester 2 or during the summer (also frequently referred to as 'Semester 3'), incorporate a credit-bearing placement preparation or professional development module in Semester 1. On other programmes, students attend a number of preparatory sessions prior to commencing placement. All students receive documentation in advance of their placement; in addition to the administrative elements such as Garda vetting, employment contracts, insurance documents and where relevant, evidence of vaccinations, many

programmes provide a detailed placement manual or handbook, outlining the requirements of the placement and how learning outcomes will be assessed, a code of practice, health and safety considerations etc.

With regard to assessment, the majority of programmes include both an evaluation of key competencies and a reflective element. Evidence that the students have attained the required level of competency is generally assessed on the basis of a combination of employer feedback and work submitted by the students and marked by the lecturer. The submitted work may comprise interim and final reports, portfolios and/or a presentation. Student reflection is an integral element in the assessment of almost all placements, with many programmes using Student Diary Pro. In almost all cases, AIT retains control over the final mark awarded to the student, as noted in the tables above.

There are differences with regard to the timing and duration of placements. Frequently, such decisions are determined by requirements of the regulating bodies within the relevant sector, such as the Irish Nursing Board, the Veterinary Council of Ireland, CORU, the Health and Social Care Professionals Council or Fáilte Ireland.

It is not within scope of this review to make recommendations.

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