This briefing has been compiled by representatives of the Athena SWAN Ireland National Committee and the Higher Education Authority. Its purpose is to share relevant contextual information about the Irish higher education sector with the Athena SWAN review panellists.
1. Overview of Athena SWAN in the Republic of Ireland

1.1 Launch and eligibility
Athena SWAN was officially launched in Ireland in February 2015, with the first round of applications submitted in April 2015. Universities, colleges and institutes of technology are eligible to apply for awards.

1.2 Application forms
Applicants may use what is known as the “pre-May 2015” or the “original” process until April 2020. In November 2017, the “post-May 2015” or “expanded” process was launched in November 2017. From November 2020 applicants from Ireland must use the expanded process.

Panellists should be aware that although the Athena SWAN application forms in Ireland are modelled after the UK forms, they are not the same form and have been adapted to the Irish context (examples are mentioned in this briefing). Copies of the application forms can be downloaded from the Advance HE website. https://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swanswan-ireland/

1.3 Irish sector observer
An additional observer takes part in the assessment process for applicants from Ireland. This observer does not have a role in the decision making process, but is there to provide sector specific knowledge for UK-based panellists that wish for clarification points related to policy issues on submissions from universities and institutes of technology in addition to what is covered in this briefing.
2. Higher Education in Ireland

2.1 General Description
Higher education in Ireland is provided in the main by seven universities, 14 institutes of technology and several colleges which are designated under the responsibility of the Higher Education Authority (HEA). Table 1 (page 4) provides an overview of this breakdown. The Institutes of Technology offer higher education programmes which lead to awards across levels 6 (Higher Certificate) to 10 (Doctoral Degree) of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications, including apprenticeships. In addition to this, there are a number of other higher education institutions who provide specialist education in a variety of fields as well as a number of private colleges which deliver programmes across the spectrum.

2.2 Legislative context
The legislative context for Irish Higher Education is primarily through the Universities Act 1997, the Institutes of Technology Act, 2006, and the Dublin Institute of Technology Act 1992, which set out the relationship between the Universities and the Institutes of Technology respectively with the HEA, as well as addressing general matters of governance, autonomy and accountability. These pieces of legislation also specifically address Equality policy, both in relation to student access and in relation to the affairs of the Universities/Institutes generally. The other significant legislative context is the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, the various institutional statutes, as well as the broad body of employment legislation and the Equal Status Amendment Act (2012).

In April 2018, the Irish parliament legislated to establish Technological Universities, as originally proposed under the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030. The legislation provides for the merger of consortia of institutes of technology, and the designation of those merged institutes as Technological Universities (TU). TUs will have a particular, though not exclusive, focus on science and technology programmes that are industry and profession-oriented, including apprenticeships. TUs will have full awarding powers and offer programmes from apprenticeship level to doctorate level in the Irish National Framework of Qualifications.

Four consortia are currently progressing with plans to merge and seek TU designation under the new legislation (see table 1 below). The timelines for merger and TU designation will vary across the different consortia.

An additional 1000 words will be made available to institutes of technology when submitting an institutional Athena SWAN application for the purpose of discussing an upcoming TU merger.

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1 http://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/National-Framework-of-Qualifications-(NFQ).aspx
### Table 1 Publicly funded higher education institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Universities</th>
<th>Institutes of Technology</th>
<th>Related Technological University Consortia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dublin City University</td>
<td>Athlone Institute of Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National University of Ireland, Galway</td>
<td>Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology</td>
<td>Munster Technological University Consortium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maynooth University</td>
<td>Dundalk Institute of Technology</td>
<td>TU4Dublin Consortium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity College Dublin</td>
<td>Limerick Institute of Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University College Cork</td>
<td>Cork Institute of Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University College Dublin</td>
<td>Institute of Technology, Tralee</td>
<td>Connaught-Ulster Alliance Consortium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Limerick</td>
<td>Dublin Institute of Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institute of Technology, Tallaght</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institute of Technology, Sligo</td>
<td>Technological University of the South East Consortium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letterkenny Institute of Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institute of Technology, Carlow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Waterford Institute of Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlow College *funded by DES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Immaculate College, Limerick</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National College of Art and Design</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National College of Ireland *funded by DES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Angela's College, Sligo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Patrick's College, Maynooth *funded by DES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3 Key Facts and Figures Higher Education (2016/17)

The Higher Education Authority reports annually on the key facts and figures in HEA funded institutions.

**All Enrolments by Sector, 2016/17**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>125,281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges</td>
<td>10,642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutes of Technology</td>
<td>89,705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>225,628</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Undergraduate by Gender, 2016/17**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>75,645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>80,873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>157,518</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Postgraduate by Gender, 2016/17**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10,289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>12,803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>23,092</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STAFFING**

- **17,494** core staff in higher education institutions
  - **9,450** Academic staff (+4% over the last five years)
  - **8,044** Non-Academic staff (-3%)

- **6,680** No. research and specialist staff
  - **55%** Male
  - **45%** Female
  - **26%** over the last five years
3. Arrangements for Student Admission to Higher Education

Ireland operates a national system for admission to higher education through a Central Applications Office (CAO). The CAO awards points to students based on their achievements in the Leaving Certificate examination, the final state examination in the Irish post-primary school system. A student’s points are calculated by counting their best six subjects only. The number of points awarded depend on the level at which the subject was studied. Available places in courses are offered to those students ranked highest by the points scale.

Institutions do not have control over entry requirements for their undergraduate courses. **Because admissions to undergraduate courses are managed centrally, Athena SWAN departmental applications do not ask applicants to provide data on course applications, offers, and acceptance rates in departmental forms.**

Decisions on the number of places offered onto undergraduate courses are made by the HEIs who instruct the CAO to make offers to successful candidates.

The admissions requirements to postgraduate studies in Ireland are set by institutions themselves.

4. Benchmarking data

The HEA operates a student record system that provides gender data by subject [http://hea.ie/statistics-archive/](http://hea.ie/statistics-archive/). High-level staff data is available by gender and as either academic or non-academic and by grade. It is presented as either whole-time equivalent or headcount. Staff data is not available by field of study, but instead is grouped overall as either STEMM or AHSSBL [http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/Higher_education_institutional_staff_profiles_by_gender.pdf](http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/Higher_education_institutional_staff_profiles_by_gender.pdf)

Departments in particular may struggle to find appropriate discipline-specific staff benchmarking data. Panellists may see a range of approaches taken to benchmarking, that may not fit as “neatly” as UK departments’ experiences with benchmarking with HESA data.
5. Employment Control and Pay Policy in Irish HEIs 2009-2014

Arising from the crisis in the Irish public finances since 2008, the measures taken by government to correct the problem have impacted on Higher Education Institutions staffing profiles in the number of ways. This section sets this out briefly, in order to provide some contextual information in relation to Republic of Ireland HEIs to assist Athena Swan Assessment Panels.

At the outset of the crisis, circa April 2009, the Irish government implemented a moratorium on recruitment and promotion in all public bodies. However, in view of the critical mission of the higher education institutes in assisting in the recovery, a degree of flexibility from the blanket moratorium was afforded to HEIs, and this was managed through the introduction of an employment control framework (ECF) by the Ministers for Education and Skills and Finance.

Certain measures within the ECF impact on HR practice and HEIs staffing profiles as follows;

1. The ECF introduced an employment ceiling and has dictated a required reduction in Exchequer funded employment levels in HEIs of ca. 12% between 2009 and December 2014.
2. In achieving this reduction, HEIs must retain the same ratio of junior to senior academic posts as existed at December 2008.
3. Recruitment to exchequer funded positions should only be undertaken where it is absolutely necessary for the continued delivery of essential services. Essential services are defined in the ECF as those which are required to deliver academic programmes, services to students, essential governance and management of the institution, including financial administration, and to comply with regulatory requirements.
4. Appointments to vacant positions could only be made on the basis of fixed term or fixed purpose contracts. In 2011 this restriction was relaxed for exchequer funded posts, but remains in place for non-exchequer funded positions.
5. New positions funded from non-Exchequer resources are subject to an employer pension contribution of 20% (rather than the previous standard of 10%), but are not subject to an overall ceiling.
6. The running of promotions competitions was prohibited in 2009, but was relaxed in June 2011, subject to the caveat at 2 above in relation to grade distribution.

In addition to the ECF, the government also introduced emergency pay policy measures, which included salary reductions for serving staff, additional reductions in salary scales for new entrants, and appointment mandatorily on the first point of the scale for new entrants to recruitment grades.
6. Performance Management and Development Scheme

HEIs operate a formal personal development system known as PMDS (Performance Management and Development Scheme) that provides for a structured discussion of individual employees’ work objectives, performance, and development needs. While there is variation between HEIs, the scheme is based on a common civil service model. The various schemes in HEIs are under review in accordance with government commitments to strengthen performance management across the public service, and the higher education institutions have agreed common design features with the Department of Education and Skills in this regard. These features include; objective setting, ratings schemes, linkage to pay increments, and performance improvement measures.

7. Current leave policies

Maternity leave
Parents are eligible for forty-two weeks of maternity leave. Twenty-six weeks are paid at the statutory rate to qualifying persons, and the remaining sixteen weeks is unpaid.

Paternity leave
New parents (other than the person availing of maternity leave) can take two weeks of statutory paternity leave following the birth or adoption of a child on or after 1 September 2016. Prior to September 2016, there was no statutory entitlement to paternity leave.

Adoption leave
Adopting mothers or sole male adopters of children under eight years are eligible for forty weeks of leave, with twenty-four weeks paid at the statutory rate to qualifying persons and sixteen weeks unpaid.

Parental leave
Parents are eligible for eighteen weeks per parent per child. Both parents can take the leave at the same time. Parental leave is unpaid.

Carers leave
There is a statutory entitlement to unpaid leave of at least 13 weeks up to a maximum of 104 weeks under the Carers’ Leave Act, 2001.

Return to work after sick leave policy (IOTs)
Following a period of sick leave, Institutes can facilitate a partial return to work for those who have been ill. This is governed by Circular 02/05.6

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5 Information on statutory leave entitlements can be found at http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/employment_rights_and_conditions/leave_and_holidays/

6 https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/it02_05.doc
8. Progression, Promotion & Workload Allocation in IOTs

8.1 Progression and Promotion in IOTs
The academic grades in the Institutes of Technology are Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer I (Teaching), Senior Lecturer II (Head of Department), Senior Lecturer III (Head of School). Terms and conditions of employees require the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills given with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. These are negotiated nationally with the main academic union – TUI – and give little freedom to individual Institutes to vary the terms.

Progression from Assistant Lecturer to Lecturer in IOTs is generally automatic subject to the fulfilment of certain criteria. An application for progression can be made after three years and is subject to meeting a set of criteria which is evaluated by an Institute panel. The vast majority of applications for progression to Lecturer are accepted, either at initial stage or on appeal, thus the gender profile of staff in the Lecturer grade will generally match that of the Assistant Lecturer intake. This is governed by Circular 03/05 from the Department of Education and Skills.²

Appointments to Senior Lecturer II and III posts (Head of Department, Head of School) are currently permanent, full-time posts. There is currently no rotation of responsibilities. Therefore, opportunities for promotion are limited, as it is possible to remain in post for significant periods of time from appointment to retirement (up to 30 years in some cases).

In certain Institutes of Technology there is also an opportunity for staff members to apply for an Honorary Professorship which is a recognition of an individual’s contribution to the Institute. Individuals prepare an application according to certain criteria and it is judged by an International panel of academics.

8.2 Workload Allocation Model for Academic Staff in IOTs
The Institutes of Technology (IOTs) have a strong focus on the delivery of applied courses with significant practical laboratory/workshop content as an integral part. Typically, full time learners have between 18 - 28 contact hours weekly, depending on the nature of the programme. The applied nature of courses means practical content is delivered in small groups. This has resulted in a requirement for a high teaching load compared to traditional universities. Academic staff on full time contracts have a teaching requirement of between 17-19 hours per week depending on grade. While contractual teaching hours remain as the central element in the allocation of workload in the sector, the role of the academic has developed to meet the expectations of an evolving HE landscape. Outputs now go far beyond class-room/teaching activity, with academic staff involved in a wide range of ‘non-teaching’ activities, such as research, knowledge exchange, external engagement, curriculum and programme development and review, etc. These activities represent a continuous and significant workload.

As public institutions that are predominantly funded by the state, all employment terms and conditions are negotiated at national level between the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, and the Trade Unions. The combination of centralised negotiations at national level, coupled with high teaching requirements and resourcing constraints leave little flexibility at Institute level regarding variations in workload allocation.

² https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/it03_05.doc