

Joint Dual Bachelor's Degree Programme in Design and Digital Media

Jiangnan University and Athlone Institute of Technology

INTRODUCTION

Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) is an Irish government higher education institute with 6,000 students. AIT offers internationally recognised undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in the fields of business, accounting, information technology, hospitality and tourism, engineering and science. Graduates from these disciplines have been very successful in progressing to further studies and in obtaining relevant employment. Researchers at AIT have established an international reputation in the areas of software and polymer engineering, ecotoxicology, environmental science, and cell and molecular toxicology.

Located in the centre of Ireland, Athlone has a population of 30,000 people and is 70 minutes journey time from the capital city, Dublin. It is a thriving urban centre and is well serviced by public transport. The town is situated on the River Shannon, the largest river in Ireland and Britain, and offers excellent sporting and leisure facilities. AIT has won awards for the quality of its student services and received the Sunday Times coveted award of Institute of Technology of the year in 2018. The International Office provides support services to international students on arrival at AIT. English language classes are available for international students to attend while studying on their Bachelor degree programmes. International students are assisted in locating suitable accommodation on arrival in Athlone and an induction programme is organised at the start of the new academic year. These supports assist new international students to adapt to their new academic environment.

Jiangnan University, Wuhan is a long term partner of AIT and has a cooperation programme in Design and Multimedia approved by the Ministry of Higher Education. The first intake of 100 students were enrolled on this Bachelor degree programme at Jiangnan University Wuhan in September 2015. The first cohort of 16 students transferred to the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Design in Digital Media at AIT in September 2018.

LINKS BETWEEN CO. WESTMEATH AND HUBEI PROVINCE

Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin first visited Jiangnan University, Wuhan in November 2014.

AIT is honoured to be a partner to Jiangnan University for the past five years and to note the growing trade and educational links between Co. Westmeath and Hubei Province. Governor Wang Guosheng visited Ireland in November 2014 when an agreement of cooperation was signed between Westmeath County Council and Hubei Province. The agreement lays the foundations for economic, social, cultural and educational links. Governor Wang and his delegation held discussions with the Irish Minister for Education at that time, Ms. Jan O’Sullivan. A delegation from the Department of Education and Skills visited Wuhan in October 2014 and the visit to Ireland marked the growing educational and economic links with Hubei Province.

Representatives from the Department of Education and Skills, Enterprise Ireland, the Embassy of Ireland and other government agencies have attended the opening ceremony at Jiangnan University, Wuhan for the past four years.

The first opening ceremony at Jiangnan University in October 2015 was attended by Ms. Mary Doyle, the Deputy Secretary General of the Department and Skills and Mr. Alan O’Callaghan from the department’s International section. Dr. Don Faller, Dean of the Faculty of Science and Ms. Carmel Smith, Design lecturers at AIT visited the Design students during this first year of study in December 2015. Since then, faculty from AIT have visited each year and met with new students on the programme at Jiangnan University. Discussions take place each year with academic staff on curriculum development and design, assessment methodologies, portfolio assessment, learning and teaching methodologies and use of technology in the classroom to enhance the learning experience of students.

ACADEMIC EXCHANGE

President Li Qiang of Jiangnan University and Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, President of AIT have hosted review meetings in Wuhan each year since the commencement of this programme in 2015. The last meeting took place in Wuhan in October 2018 and was attended by Dr. Sean Lyons, Dean of Engineering and Informatics, Mary Simpson, Director of

International Relations and Dr. Cao Zhi, Researcher from AIT. Communication between staff at AIT and Jiangnan University takes place by the following communication modes during the academic year: Skype, email and wechat. Staff from Jiangnan University and AIT have visited each other each year since the commencement of the programme.

Lecturer exchange is an important component of this agreement. The following faculty from AIT have visited Jiangnan University from 2015 to 2019:

Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin, President

Dr. Don Faller, Dean of Faculty of Life and Physical Sciences

Dr. Sean Lyons, Dean of Faculty of Engineering and Informatics

Ms. Mary Simpson, Director of International Relations

Mr. Meng Jing, Director of Asia

Dr. Cao Zhi, Researcher at Faculty of Engineering and Informatics

Mr. Paul O'Neill, Lecturer in Design

Ms. Carmel Smith, Lecturer in Design

SUMMER PROGRAMMES FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF

AIT has welcomed a group of lecturers and students from Jiangnan University for Summer programme in Design for the past three years. Two lecturers and fifteen students from Jiangnan University attended English and Design classes at AIT in July 2017 and August 2018. Students participated in excursions and activities in the Midlands region and enjoyed staying with host families in Athlone town. Lecturers, technical and support staff at AIT made the students very welcome during their time in Athlone and positive word of mouth from students on their return to Wuhan is helping to promote closer ties between AIT and Jiangnan University. The cultural and social experience is very enjoyable for lecturers and students from Jiangnan University and such programmes will continue to promote AIT and the Midlands region in Hubei Province. These short cultural exchange programmes help to promote interest in study in Ireland and create awareness of the Irish higher education system.

PROGRAMME OF COOPERATION: AIT AND JIANGHAN UNIVERSITY

AIT has strong international partnerships with more than 30 agreements in place with partner colleges in China since 2000. Faculty from AIT has delivered lectures at a number of Chinese partner universities, including Jianghan University during the past three years and these active exchanges have led to growing interest from Chinese students in studying at AIT.

The length of the joint programme of study in Design is four years. Students after successful completing the first three years study at Jianghan University may choose to transfer to AIT for the final year study for award of Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Design in Digital Media degree.

The Joint Dual Bachelor's Degree Programme in Design is operating smoothly by mutual efforts by Jianghan University and Athlone Institute of Technology.

Graduates of this programme will be employed in design and multimedia companies in Ireland and China. Some final year students are now making the decision to progress to postgraduate studies in Ireland and choosing other international destinations for their postgraduate studies. These graduates will contribute to the development of the growth and success of the Irish and Chinese economy. This international experience will give these graduates an advantage in the jobs market in that they have completed an international study abroad experience and adapted well to study in a new environment. They will become excellent ambassadors for AIT and Jianghan University when they continue their future careers.

CONTACTS AT AIT AND JIANGHAN UNIVERSITY

The relevant contacts at AIT and Jianghan University are:

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