

BeyndScale

Workshop User Story



Workshop Organizer - **Hincks Centre for Entrepreneurship Excellence, School of Business, Munster Technological University, Ireland**



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Type of Activity - **Outbound Workshop**



MTU

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Mumhan
Munster Technological University



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How to read the document

This document represents the series of workshop user stories within the BeyondScale project. These stories are based on the combination of the HEInnovate dimensions and the Value Proposition Canvas, and they depict the experiences of the partner higher education institutions. To understand the concept of the workshop, we provide a **glossary** below:

- **The Aim:** BeyondScale is one of the Forward-looking projects to create a pan-European community of practice, that will share, and document emerging good practices based on the outcomes of the individual and collaborative activities of the participants. Within the BeyondScale project, the HEInnovate tool is deployed beyond its self-assessment capacity.
- **Inbound & Outbound activities:** The HEInnovate dimensions are used to drive entrepreneurial and innovative change across a range of inbound and outbound education and engagement activities in higher education institutions (HEIs) with relevant stakeholders. From the BeyondScale perspective, the inbound activity serves to support HEI's institutional development process and organizational capacity; therefore, it targets internal stakeholders (administrative staff, academics, researchers, students). As for the outbound activity, it aims at strengthening HEI's wider regional and societal engagement, thus it targets external stakeholders (students, employers, social enterprises, business, NGOs).
- **The Value Proposition Workshop:** In order to have a structured workshop format, the Value Proposition Design approach was adopted and the BeyondScale team came up with the new format which incorporates the specific HEInnovate dimensions and the Value Proposition canvas. The Value proposition canvas is a tool that helps to understand the inbound and outbound stakeholders, and to target their needs better, which leads to optimized value creation.
- **Buddy System:** One of the main assets of the BeyondScale project is the Buddy System, in which partners engage in a peer-learning, exchanging experiences, and discussing plans. Our partner higher education institutions have been organized as a buddy team throughout the project based on similar challenges, interests, and the HEInnovate dimensions.

Outbound Workshop @ MTU, our story.

Helen McGuirk, Hincks Centre for Entrepreneurship Excellence, School of Business & Breda Kenny, School of Business, Munster Technological University, IRELAND.

The overarching aim of our outbound activity undertaken by Munster Technological University (MTU) for the BeyondScale project was to activate the thought process and actions needed to expand the entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem beyond the University for the mutual benefit for students, staff and regional stakeholders. As one of Ireland's newest Universities, it is vital for MTU to further develop links with external stakeholder across the region.

Through the guidance of the BeyondScale project team and the use of HEInnovate, the value proposition canvas, the MTU project team led by the Hincks Centre for Entrepreneurship Excellence and the School of Business, a workshop was conducted online in late 2020. A diverse group of entrepreneurs and managers from businesses across the south west region of Ireland met to discuss the challenges and benefits of engaging with the University. The results of the 90-minute-long session, an action plan, and new contacts between the stakeholders and MTU.

This user story aims to provide some insights into how we planned, conducted, and followed up with our outbound workshop as part of the BeyondScale project. While each activity using HEInnovate is unique, we endeavour to provide some tips, highlights, and ideas for your HEInnovate activity. Your activity may differ from ours, in the HEInnovate dimension you chose to focus on, the stakeholders/participants or the aims you set but, like entrepreneurship and innovation itself, learn from peers, listen to others and take advice. We conducted our workshop during severe public restrictions arising from the Covid19 pandemic and the pending merger of our Institution (CIT) with the Institute of Technology Tralee (ITT) to form the new Munster Technological University, Ireland's second Technological University, and the first in the region.

Every activity/
workshop is unique

A message from us to you:

The gains from a well-planned workshop far outweigh the pains of preparing one!

Who are we?

Munster Technological University - MTU (formerly Cork Institute of Technology) is one of the largest third-level educational providers in Ireland with a strong student-centred approach to education and research, ensuring students are work-ready graduates who can add value to organisations and society. MTU is comprised of six campuses across the South West Region of Ireland, including the Faculties of Engineering & Science and Business & Humanities, the Crawford College of Art and Design, Cork School of Music, and the National Maritime College of Ireland, all with strong outreach activities in the region. The University, with over 1,400 staff offers a wide range of flexible full-time and part-time higher education courses, caters for over 18,000 students ranging from undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programmes in faculties of Education, Business, Nursing, Computing, Media, Engineering, Fine Art & Design, Humanities, Maritime, , Music and Science.

The Hincks Centre for Entrepreneurship Excellence (www.hincks@cit.ie) is part of the **School of Business** and is an integral part of the vibrant award-winning ¹entrepreneurship ecosystem at MTU. The Centre supports entrepreneurship in all its forms through research, education, and training. Activities focus on a number of areas: Entrepreneurship Education; Social and Minority Entrepreneurship; Gender and Senior Entrepreneurship; Innovation and Technological Entrepreneurship; Entrepreneurship Growth and Competitiveness. The Hincks Centre has an excellent track-record of project collaborations as lead and as partner, including Erasmus+, Interreg and the European Social Fund. The Hincks Centre also provides off campus education and training opportunities in the region. Nationally, Hincks works with public and private partners including, Regional Development Authorities, SMEs, Non-profit Organisations, Higher Education Institutions and Professional Bodies to Project Management organisations. The Hincks Centre Team lead the BeyondScale Project for MTU.

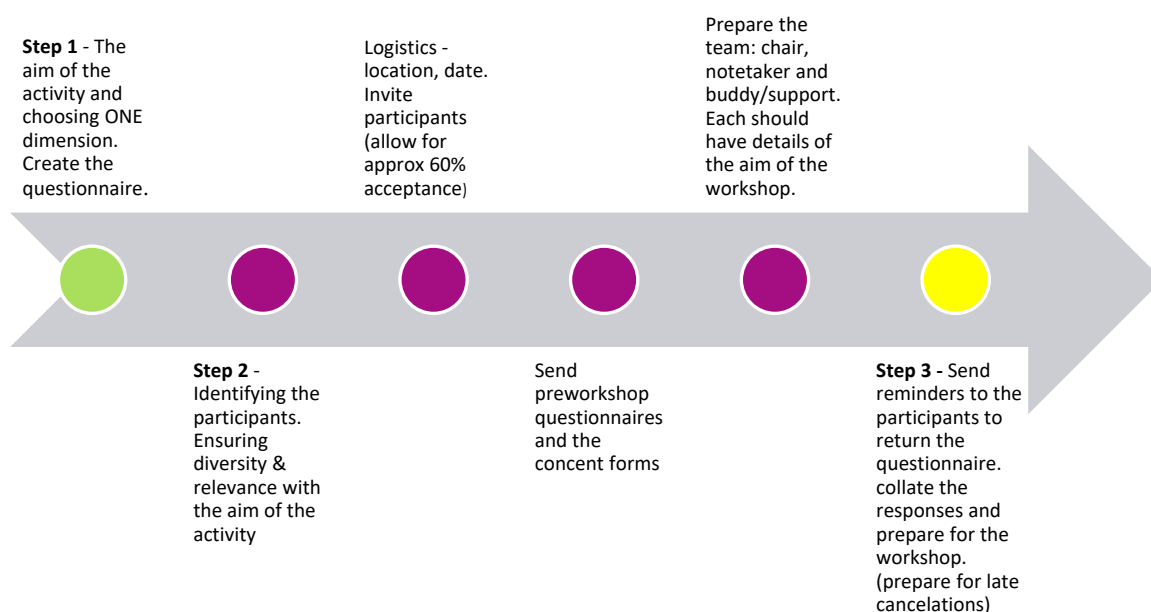
From the beginning

The story of this outbound workshop began at the kick-off meeting for the Erasmus+ KA3 BeyondScale project. As partners we were set a challenge to identify, or at least start thinking about an outbound and an inbound activity, using HEInnovate, to enhance entrepreneurship and innovation at our university.

¹ Awarded the Irish National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning – DELTA award 2018 and 2021.

Once we identified that we would focus on expanding the entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem beyond the University, that is, developing knowledge exchange and collaboration across the now expanded MTU region, the preparation for a workshop began. This preparation process took a three-step approach (see figure 1), which worked well and resulted in questionnaires returned on time, valuable insights from the external participants, and the workshop started and finished on time. The timeline represents approximately six months.

Figure 1: Outline of the three-step approach in preparing for a workshop.



Preparation steps: Green – step 1, Purple – step 2, Yellow – step 3

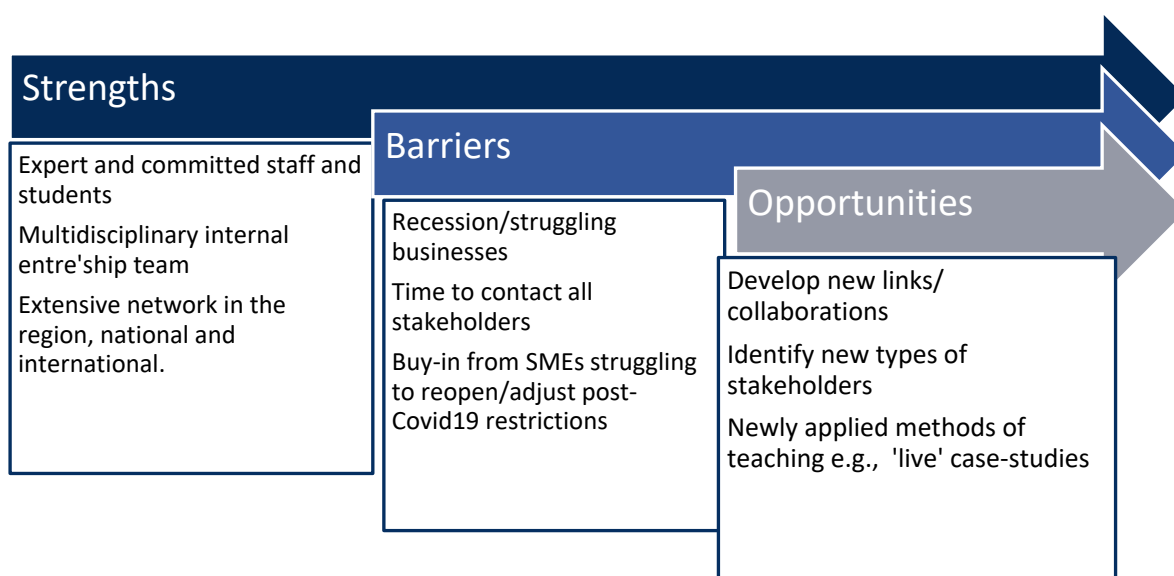
Step 1 - Early stage planning

Choosing the dimension was the first task for the MTU team to gain the overall aim of our outbound activity - *The expansion of MTU's entrepreneurship ecosystem beyond the university campus.*

While CIT (now MTU) had a strong entrepreneurship ecosystem this was confined for the most part on the Cork City and County region. With the merger of two Institutes of Technology, serving the whole South West Region of Ireland, region wide understanding of this network was less developed. Given MTU's aim to contribute to the region through the provision of academic programmes, supporting career focused learners and fostering innovation and enterprise, the value of external stakeholders is crucial for entrepreneurship and innovation through its provision of

evidence-based and applied education, training, and research. Support for entrepreneurship and innovation across the region depends on exchange of knowledge and practices for the mutual benefit of our students, staff, and the region. To further develop links with stakeholders beyond the University, the MTU BeyondScale team carried out preliminary assessment of MTU’s strengths, barriers, and opportunities beyond the University. The following figure (2) illustrates a sample of positive and negative issues which helped identify the dimension and direction of our outbound workshop. These issues were identified through several meetings and brainstorming sessions with the team.

Figure 2: Strengths, Barriers and Opportunities (SBO) analysis use to plan the workshop.



Discussion among MTU’s project team on each of the HEInnovate dimensions and the confirmed outbound activity, we narrowed the eight down to two, *Knowledge Exchange & Collaboration* and *Measuring Impact*. Following conversations with the BeyondScale Project team, and again reviewing the initial aims of the project and the outbound nature of the activity we settled on Knowledge Exchange & Collaboration.



Knowledge Exchange & Collaboration -

Knowledge exchange is an important catalyst for organisational innovation, the advancement of teaching and research, and local development.

Like any job, the use of the correct tools is essential. For the outbound workshop using the Knowledge Exchange & Collaboration dimension of HEInnovate, the MTU team set about collecting the best tools for the job!

Our review of the strengths, barriers, and opportunities (Fig. 1) was used in the early stage of planning and drafting the preworkshop questionnaire. The HEInnovate statements were the bases for this questionnaire sent to participants approximately three weeks before the workshop. Table 1 provides an example of how each statement related to the Knowledge Exchange & Collaboration dimension was supplemented with two questions. Creating, writing and developing these questions (the right-hand column) was the most time-consuming part of the preparation process for the workshop. With the expert support and advice of the team at MTU and BeyondScale the questionnaire was finalised.

Table 1: An example (full list in appendix) of how the questionnaire was presented.

Statements from HEInnovate	Stakeholder view of the HEInnovate statements. (please mark the most appropriate)	Supplementary question(s) relevant to the statement (please insert your answers where marked)
1. CIT is committed to collaboration and knowledge exchange with industry, the public sector and society.	In your experience, how would you rate CIT's commitment to such collaborations: 1 Very low 2 Below average 3 Average 4 Above Average 5 Very high	1.1. In your experience, please provide up to three examples of such collaborations. ANSWER: 1.2. In your view, what further collaborations could be established to benefit your organisation? ANSWER:

With the HEInnovate based preworkshop questionnaire firmly in our toolbox, along with the review of the strengths, barriers, and opportunities of planning the workshop, we used the value proposition canvas as the tool to conduct the workshop on the day. This simple yet powerful schema helped us structure the workshop and ignite participants' thought process on how MTU can expand their entrepreneurship ecosystem beyond campus. However, it is worth remembering, tools are only as good as the people who use them. And for this activities, we have the MTU project team, BeyondScale team and the participants.



What would you change/add to your workshop toolbox?

Given the participants of the workshop were external to MTU with limited insights to the University, we would prefer shorter and more focused statements on the HEInnovate dimension. For example, it is difficult to expect people, external to the University, to know whether MTU integrates research, education, and industry (wider community) activities to exploit new knowledge.

Armed with the toolbox and the team from MTU, BeyondScale and participants we moved to the second step in preparing for the workshop.

Step 2 - Preparing for the workshop.

Due to the Covid19 related restrictions, an online workshop was the only option. This was, for us an excellent mode of delivery, in that we had input from expert participants located across the region. This level of participation from a wide geographical area, just before Christmas would not have happened if an in person, half a day workshop was organised. Discussed afterwards with some participants and the team, we concluded that we would have only attracted participants from the city and perhaps not the entrepreneurs and senior managers we had at the online session. Cognisant of the participants time, especially during a period of severe restrictions and economic strain , we set a 90-minute session, assuring each that we would finish on time.

This leads us to our next tip in preparing your workshop... prepare, prepare and prepare!

To start and finish on time and respect your participants, ensure you have the timing of each section of the workshop planned. More of this later.

In preparing and delivering the workshop, it was valuable to the team to review the purpose of the activity. This provided us with a clear view of our deliverables. MTU's purpose:

1. To create a shared plan to further develop *knowledge exchange and collaboration* for the mutual benefit of the region's economy, society and MTU's entrepreneurship ecosystem.
2. Inform research in revising the HEInnovate tool.

In practice, the outbound activity would further develop MTU's:

- Entrepreneurship ecosystem and engagement with outbound stakeholders.
- Optimise business supports for students, spin-outs, regional SMEs and economy.
- Align our education and training system with industry needs and expectation for the future.
- Progress entrepreneurship education, training and supports (e.g., R&D).

In turn, supporting the new MTU to provide education and research opportunities for career-focused learners and foster enterprise and innovation for a stronger economy.

What was unique about our workshop?

It was the last activity the team conducted before MTU designation

Step 3 – the workshop.

In choosing the date, time, and platform for the online delivery we were governed by Christmas holidays, the pending change from CIT to MTU, GDPR, availability of stakeholders, and licenced platform. And so, it was:

- Non-recorded Microsoft-Teams session.
- Friday 18th December, 9:30-11am.
- 5 participants, A Chair, Notetaker, Buddy² and three BeyondScale team members.

Reminders were sent to the participants two days before the date. They included the agenda, the link to the online meeting and the aim of the workshop.

Our workshop: Each person introduced themselves followed by an overview of CIT (as it was then), the aim of the workshop and the schedule for the session. Following the introductions, the main part

²² Buddy refers to our link with a BeyondScale partner who supported our activities, provided advice.

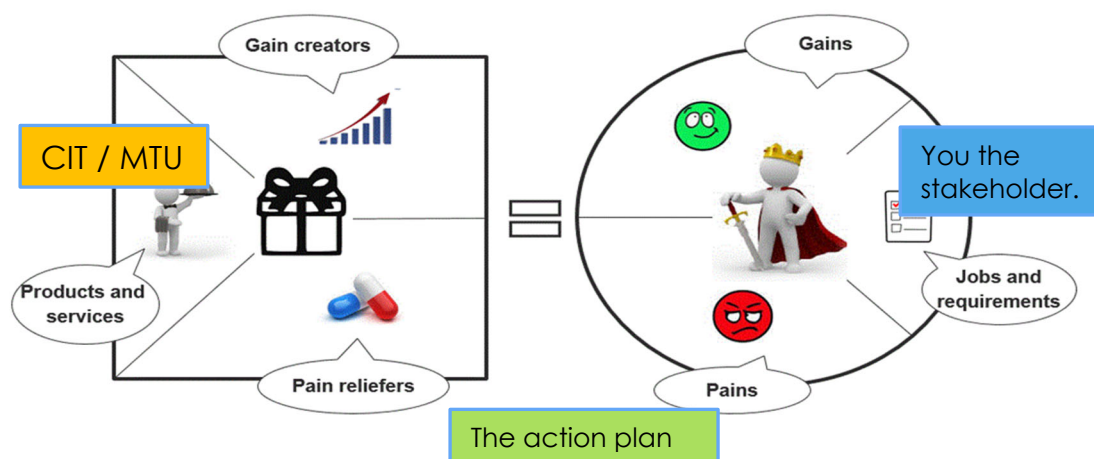
of the session centred around the two questions using the value proposition language of benefits and challenges (pains and gains) of engaging with MTU.

The two questions:

- What can CIT/MTU offer/change to support businesses/organisations in the region?
- How can businesses/organisations support CIT/MTU's entrepreneurship ecosystem in the region?

The value proposition canvas was displayed on screen for a short time while the Chair explained the concept. Figure 3 below is a copy of the one used at our workshop. Note the simple nature of the canvas and the addition of relevant information unique to CIT/MTU. The canvas presented in Figure 4 was completed after the workshop, based on information gathered at the workshop.

Figure 3: Value Proposition Canvas adapted for MTU's workshop.



Of the 90-minute session, each question took 25 minutes (50 minutes), the summary of the preworkshop questionnaire and discussion (15 minutes) and the remaining 25 minutes was divided by the introductions and the summary.

What would you change if you delivered the same workshop again?

Spend less time on the benefits/gains of engaging with MTU and more on the challenges/pains. This would be more useful in planning the action plan. While it is good to hear what we are doing well, hearing about the barriers/pains participants experience in engaging with MTU is more important.

What was the highlight of the session?

The enthusiasm of participants to share their time, their expert knowledge, and ideas to expand the links between the University and businesses.

What was most surprising about delivering the workshop, from the MTU team’s point?

How fast the 90 minutes went and how important planning the session is to ensure the aims of the workshop are attained and that everyone has a say.

Outcomes of the workshop – new steps

Following the workshop, the project deliverables required that MTU complete an activity report and complete the value proposition canvas (Figure 4).

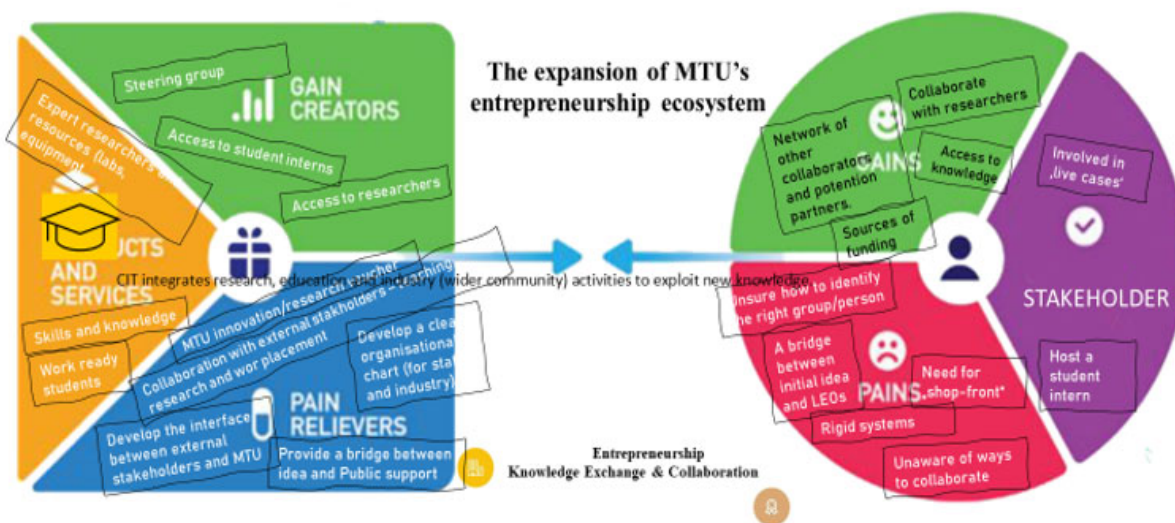
The **benefits/gains** of engaging with MTU included:

- Access to knowledge, collaborate with researchers and network of other collaborators and potential partners.

The **challenges/gain** of engagement included:

- Need for shop-front, unaware of ways to collaborate, unsure how to identify the right group/person.

Figure 4: Completed Value Proposition Canvas



Next stage.

MTU BeyondScale team will embark on activating a plan to develop knowledge exchanges and collaboration across the region.

- ✓ Work with MTU colleagues and external affairs offices to discuss the idea of the University's 'shop front'. (e.g, website, marketing).
- ✓ Collaborate with the University's Enterprise support offices and Research Office to explore how to showcase all research activities and opportunities to a wider external audience in the region.

Appendix: Preworkshop questionnaire (note: CIT at the time of the workshop, now MTU)

Statements from HEInnovate	Stakeholder view of the HEInnovate statements. (please mark the most appropriate)	Supplementary question(s) relevant to the statement (please insert your answers where marked)
1. CIT is committed to collaboration and knowledge exchange with industry, the public sector and society.	In your experience, how would you rate CIT's commitment to such collaborations: 1 Very low 2 Below average 3 Average 4 Above Average 5 Very high	1.1. In your experience, please provide up to three examples of such collaborations. <u>ANSWER:</u> 1.2. In your view, what further collaborations could be established to benefit your organisation? <u>ANSWER:</u>
2. CIT demonstrates active involvement in partnerships and relationships with a wide range of stakeholders.	In your experience, how do you rate CIT's active involvement in such partnerships/relationships: 1 Very low 2 Below average 3 Average 4 Above Average 5 Very high	2.1. Please provide some examples of such partnerships/ relationships. (e.g. in terms of frequency, format, type of relationship). <u>ANSWER:</u> 2.2. In your opinion, why do you regard these as good examples of CIT's active involvement in such partnerships and relationships? <u>ANSWER:</u>
3. CIT has strong links with incubators, science parks and other external initiatives.	In your experience, how do you rate CIT's active involvement in such links: 1 Very low 2 Below average 3 Average 4 Above Average 5 Very high	3.1. Please give examples of such links to incubators, science parks and other external initiatives. <u>ANSWER:</u> 3.2. In your opinion, what further links could CIT establish to benefit your organisation? <u>ANSWER:</u>
4. CIT provides opportunities for staff and students to take part in innovative activities with business /the external environment.	In your experience, how do you rate CIT's innovative activities with your organisation/business: 1 Very low 2 Below average 3 Average 4 Above Average 5 Very high	4.1 Please provide examples of opportunities for staff/students to take part in innovative activities within your organisation. <u>ANSWER:</u> 4.2. In your view, how could CIT improve the opportunities for staff/students to take part in innovative activities which would benefit your organisation. (e.g. through improvements in products, services, ways of working, introducing new technologies, co-creation in R&D). <u>ANSWER:</u>
5. CIT integrates research, education and industry (wider community) activities to exploit new knowledge.	In your experience, how do you rate CIT's integration of research, education and industry (wider community) activities to exploit new knowledge. 1 Very low 2 Below average 3 Average 4 Above Average 5 Very high	5.1. Please provide examples of how CIT integrates research, education and industry/ society to generate new knowledge and innovation. <u>ANSWER:</u> 5.2. In your opinion, how can CIT improve the integration of research and education to benefit your organisation's innovation activities? <u>ANSWER:</u>

Disclaimer:

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