National University of Ireland, Galway

Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report 2018

Based on the reporting period 1 September 2016 – 31 August 2017

The Cyclical Review Process
Part 1

Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures

Overarching institution-level approach and policy for QA (ESG 1.1)

1. Overarching Institution Quality Policy
A brief synopsis of the overarching institution quality policy which sets out the links between QA policy and procedures and the strategy and strategic management of the institution.

Continuous improvement to the quality of all activities across NUI Galway is the responsibility of every member of staff through their own individual efforts and through various organisational committees and units. Staff are guided in this endeavour through three key external standards:

- Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines
- Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

In addition, staff activities are guided by a number of additional external guidelines published by Quality and Qualification Ireland (QQI) and other bodies including IHEQN.

Continuous improvement by all staff to improving quality is also guided by the University’s Vision 2020 Strategic Plan that outlines specific goals for quality and performance enhancement and also by an agreement between the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and NUI Galway in the Mission-Based Performance Compact 2014-2017.

NUI Galway implements external standards and guidelines through a comprehensive QA system focussed on over 250 internal Policies and Procedures (P&Ps) and that includes specific P&Ps around internal monitoring and Quality Reviews (QRs). QA is also implemented through a comprehensive annual Operational Planning process linked to Strategic Planning.

An extensive number of internal statutes and organisational structures also define the role, duties and responsibilities of key organisational units and committees and the responsibilities of key individual staff.

NUI Galway manages the competing needs of external regulations, internal strategic objectives and risk management through the enhancement of a responsive culture characterised by a willingness by staff to engage with stakeholders including learners in a way that responds to their needs for continuous improvement to quality.

A guiding concept behind enhancing this culture is the so called “tripartite approach” envisioned by University management as integrating quality assurance, strategic planning and performance
measurement - with quality focusing on assuring an appropriate standard of excellence, strategy guiding the University towards a vision of the future and performance providing measures designed to support both quality enhancement and strategy execution. Quality Assurance in this context is not solely guided by external rules and regulations but also by internal strategic and performance goals and feedback from students and other major stakeholders.

2. Quality assurance decision-making fora
A brief description of institution-level quality assurance decision-making fora

Decisions around the development and continuous improvement to all internal Policies and Procedures (P&Ps) including those related to internal monitoring and Quality Review (QR) are taken at a number of major committees and meetings. These are led by the Governing Authority (Údarás) and its principle sub-committees that include Academic Council and the Support Services Committee representing all Support Services and the University Management Team (UMT). Decisions around development and changes to P&Ps related to academic activities are taken mainly by the Academic Management Team (AMT) whose Deans represent all of the University’s Colleges and Schools.

Decisions around P&Ps related to internal monitoring and Quality Review (QR) are taken by the Quality & Innovation Committee (QIC) which reports to Údarás through key committees in particular, the Support Services Committee (SSC); Academic Priorities and Resources Committee (APRC) and Academic Council (AC). The Quality Office is responsible for executing P&Ps related to internal monitoring and QR and for supporting all units in the development of internal P&Ps.

Both Údarás and the Academic Council have a number of other key subcommittees that discuss quality improvement on various aspects of the University’s processes and typically meet immediately prior to the meetings noted above and more frequently, as required. These subcommittees are:

- Graduate Studies Board
- Research Committee
- Standing and Strategic Planning Committee
- Academic Council – Standing Committee
- Finance and Resources Committee
- Colleges and School Boards
- Risk Management Committee
- Library Policy Committee

Quality assurance and enhancement is also covered through the operational planning process where every major unit in the University – Schools, Colleges and Support Services – annually provide details of completed and planned enhancements to a special Institutional Operational Planning Sub Group (IOPSG) of the UMT.
Learners are represented on all major committees dealing with quality and quality assurance and liaise directly with the University through the committees above and also through the office of the Vice President for Student Experience.

NUI Galway staff meet regularly with counterparts from other Universities through the Irish Universities Association (IUA) Quality Committee to discuss P&Ps across the sector and also meet with various external stakeholders, in particular, the Higher Education Authority (HEA), IUA and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). These meetings inform NUI Galway’s key decision-making processes.

NUI Galway has a comprehensive documented approach to Quality Assurance (QA) illustrated initially through its P&P Repository and an archive of meeting minutes and records accessible via the Quality Office website.

**Confirmation of QA Policy and Procedures**

1. Programme Design and Approval (ESG 1.2)
   Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance policy and procedures for the design and approval of new programmes.

NUI Galway’s teaching mission is delivered through taught programmes at undergraduate, postgraduate and professional, part-time and evening levels.

All programmes undergo a rigorous design and approval process. Schools and Colleges prepare programme and module templates that include programme objectives, learning outcomes, progression rules, and student workloads (ECTS). This is compliant with the National Framework for Qualifications. All programmes also have Programme Boards who consult various stakeholders including employers and students when designing, revising or evaluating programmes.

NUI Galway’s Vision 2020 Strategic Plan requires that all new programmes contain placement opportunities for students and that these opportunities be provided to appropriate existing programmes by 2020.

Programmes approval begins within individual Schools before proceeding to approval by College Boards. They then need final approval by the Academic Council following evaluation by its Standing Committee. This process separates responsibilities between proposers and approvers and provides oversight by senior officers of the programme design and approval process.

P&Ps are largely implemented through committee work as well as a number of online systems (e.g. AKARI) and other forms available from NUI Galway’s Syllabus Team. Detailed programme outlines are available to the public through the main University website.
All programmes undergo annual review through Programme Boards and External Examination process and periodic review through the Quality Review process. New and major changes to programmes are available on the Quality Office website.

Additional policies and procedures related to this heading and available from the P&P Repository include:

- General Calendar
- Bologna & NFQ Standards and Guidelines
- Course Fee Establishment
- Module Bonding
- New & Changed Modules
- New & Changed Programmes
- General and Academic Calendars

2. Programme Delivery and Assessment (ESG 1.3)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance policies and procedures for the ongoing delivery and assessment of programmes.

Programme assessment is dealt with through a variety of Policies and Procedures (P&Ps) and in particular NUI Galway’s Marks and Standards and the Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy (LTA Strategy) supported by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT). The Examinations Office provide a number of P&Ps related to examinations, re-checks and special circumstances.

The LTA strategy and associated P&Ps describe how staff engage with the following:

- Bologna Process
- Assessment
- Attendance Requirements

Teachers are made aware of a variety of assessment methods and receive support from CELT through a range of professional development courses and personal advice. This guidance includes marking criteria, formative assessment and assessment rubrics.

NUI Galway offers all students the possibility to inform examiners of mitigating circumstances during the assessment process and to appeal results of the assessment process.

A sample of additional P&Ps related to this heading from the P&P Repository:

- Breaches of Examination Regulations
- Exam Appeals and Rechecks
- Grade Descriptors
- Learning Outcomes
3. Research Quality (ESG 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.9)

Links and/or text relating to any specific quality assurance procedures for the design, approval, delivery, assessment and monitoring of research programmes, if they exist.

The Research Office, Graduate Studies and Technology Transfer teams provide a variety of P&Ps for all aspects of NUI Galway’s research activities. These P&Ps include codes of practice for research degree programmes, good practice in research, intellectual property, governance and open access.

A key mechanism in the implementation and evaluation of quality research is the Institutional Review of Research Performance (IRIP). The overall aim of the current IRIP cycle (IRIP2016) is to enhance research performance at NUI Galway and to comply with the Irish Universities Act for a peer review of research quality. Assessment of 11 schools has already taken place and the other five are being assessed in the current academic year.

A sample of additional P&Ps related to this heading from the P&P Repository:

- Research Committee-Terms of Reference
- Governance of Research Institutes
- Open Access to Research Outputs
- Research Integrity
- Code of Good Practice in Animal Research
- Control of Laboratory Animal Allergies
- Alleviation of Duties related to External Funding
- Research Misconduct
4. Student Lifecycle (ESG 1.4)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures that are encompassed by the student lifecycle.

Students can access NUI Galway programmes of learning through a variety of means administered by the Admissions Offices. Assess mechanisms include the following students: Leaving Certificate, A Level, EU & EFTA and Non-EU. Access is also provided to Irish, UK and EU/EEA Transfers, Advanced Entry, FETAC, International/Non-EU and Mature Students. All admissions are overseen and approved through School committees and later approved by University Management.

Extensive use is made of the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) for assessing applicants coming from outside the Irish education system.

Student access and progression is dealt with through the following key offices that implement a variety of related Policies and Procedures (P&Ps):

- Academic Records, Conferring, & Registration
- Access Office
- Undergraduate Admissions Office
- International Affairs Office
- Postgraduate Admissions Office

A sample of additional P&Ps related to this heading from the P&P Repository:

- Recognition of Prior Learning
- Code of Conduct
- Scholarships & Fellowships
- Student Attendance
- Guidelines for Work Placement
- Access & Disability
5. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring the competence of teaching staff, including staff recruitment and staff development.

Human Resources (HR) and the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) have developed a comprehensive range of P&Ps for all aspects of teaching and research throughout the employment lifecycle for teaching, research and support staff. This lifecycle also includes starting employment to staff development and on to end of employment.

In addition, CELT offer teaching staff a number of P&Ps that support learning, teaching and assessment including a series of Professional Development courses with a range of P&Ps around promotional outlets and recognising excellence in teaching and research.

The Graduate Studies office offers staff training on research supervision.

NUI Galway operates a comprehensive communication network mainly through committees that involve reports that are circulated to staff. The University also has an internal staff newsletter, weekly digest and list of events and many opportunities for staff to engage in discussions surrounding teaching and learning through conferences, seminars and training workshops.

A sample of the many additional P&Ps related to this heading from the P&P Repository:

- Equality and Diversity
- Further Eduations Policy
- Sabbatical Leave
- Carer’s Leave
- Temporary Absences
- Transition to University Teacher (Grade II)
- Triennial Travel Grant (Academic Staff)
- Unpaid Leave of Absence for Academic Staff
6. Teaching and Learning (ESG 1.4, 1.5, 1.6)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring the quality of teaching and learning.

Students are engaged in programmes using a variety of Policies and Procedures (P&Ps) captured in NUI Galway’s Learning, Teaching & Assessment (LTA) Strategy developed by the LTA Committee and supported by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT).

This strategy and associated P&Ps describe how staff engage with the following:

- Bologna Process
- Learning Outcomes
- Academic Integrity
- Accessibility
- Attendance Requirements
- Feedback Policy

Different modes of delivery are encouraged and supported using a variety of pedagogical methods that include the Blackboard Learning Management System. NUI Galway also provides support for a comprehensive suite of teaching technologies that includes:

- Clickers - TurningPoint Cloud (TP7)
- Kaltura - MediaSpace
- Language Lab
- Lecture Capture - Echo360
- Qwickly Attendance
- Recording Studio
- Turnitin
- Video Conferencing
- Webconferencing

CELT administers the President Award for Teaching Excellence and supports NUI Galway in assessing teacher performance during promotion competitions. Academic staff members are provided with a Competency Framework to assist in Programme Delivery focusing on Academic, Leadership and Organisational Excellence.

CELT also hosts one of Ireland’s major conferences on teaching, learning and assessment.

Colleges and Schools across the University have developed an extensive suite of teaching and research focussed laboratories. These laboratories extend to local industry, arts events and the local...
environment including archaeological sites and weather stations. Details are available within School websites.

7. Resources and Support (ESG 1.5)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring funding and resources for learning, teaching and research. Also, links and or text relating to the quality assurance procedures for learning resources and student support.

Student resources and support is provided through a number of P&Ps delivered primarily through the offices of Student Services, the Library and the Student Information Desk (SID).

Student Services is supported by P&Ps around: student access, accommodation, careers development, counselling, disability services, health promotion, sports and societies.

The Library implements a number of P&Ps considering:
- Academic Skills
- Training
- Support for Researchers
- Archives Support
- Special Collections Support
- Assistive Technology Service

The Library also has a P&Ps for providing dedicated study space for students and supports students through the Academic Writing Centre. The Student Information Desk offers support that interface between students and administration services including access, transfer and progression, admissions and examinations.
The centre for Support for Undergraduate Maths Students (SUMS) offers all students support with learning Mathematics. The Computer Programming Drop-In Support Centre supports students from all Schools and Colleges with self-directed learning in computing programming and computer related topics and in addition to supports provided by the Information Solutions and Services.

The International Office implements a range of P&Ps focussed on NUI Galway’s international community and that includes admissions, Erasmus, accommodation, financial assistance, mentoring and local assistance.

A sample of additional P&Ps related to this heading from the P&P Repository:

- Students' Union Services
- The Language Laboratory
- Placement Services
- Student Fees & Grants
- Career Development
- Accommodation Services
- Community Knowledge Initiative (CKI)

8. Information Management (ESG 1.7)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for collecting, analysing and using relevant information about programmes and other activities.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are provided by the Institutional Research Office (IRO) and are used extensively throughout NUI Galway and during quality reviews. These indicators are defined largely by NUI Galway’s Vision2020 Strategy and the HEA’s Mission Based Performance Compact and include data on student population profiles, student progression, student completion rates, international and non-traditional student participation, career paths as well as a wide range of research performance data. Indicators are also informed by University and Subject Area ranking schemes, in particular those developed by THE and QS university ranking agencies.

The impacts of QA and enhancement activities are measured through qualitative and quantitative indicators. Quantitative indicators have been defined and are regularly used at all major meetings.

Student Satisfaction and Feedback data are developed from results of the National Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and NUI Galway’s student feedback policy (QA221 Feedback on Modules and Programmes) where all staff receive and act on student feedback. Other survey data collected include surveys of Graduates, First Year Students, International Students, Graduate Employment and Facilities.

NUI Galway operates a number of learner information systems supported by comprehensive information systems services and supports. The Quercus student record system is the provider and consumer of data to and from a number of other University information systems, including,
Blackboard, Campus Account Self Service (CASS), Akari, OAS, Email (Microsoft Active Directory), Discoverer and Microsoft Dynamics CRM. Quercus provides integrated data and data archives for:

- Student Records
- Registration Records
- Exam Records
- Graduation Records

Other information systems provided and supported by NUI Galway are available through the Information Systems service catalogue.

NUI Galway operates a Freedom of Information Office for servicing information requests from students, staff and the public.

Other P&Ps related to this heading from the P&P Repository:

- Institutional Research Services
- Institutional Research Information Systems (IRIS)
- ISS Policies and Procedures

9. Self-evaluation and Monitoring (ESG 1.9)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for self-evaluation and internal monitoring.

NUI Galway has a number of key policies related to self-evaluation and monitoring that include the topics Quality Review (QR), Operational Planning, External Examinations and Student Feedback. Specific Quality Assurance P&Ps related to this heading are listed below and available from the Quality Office website:

- QA001 Quality Assurance
- QA002 Policies and Procedures
- QA003 Review of Schools
- QA004 Review of Research Performance
- QA005 External Examiners (Taught)
- QA007 Operational Plans
- QA008 Programme Boards
- QA009 Review of Linked Providers
- QA012 Review of Research Institutes
- QA013 Review of Services
The QR process is comprehensive and involves key steps around self-assessment, benchmarking, independent peer review, stakeholder interviews and surveys, recommendations for quality enhancement and action planning followed by periodic progress reports.

The independent peer review process begins with the selection of expert panellists, reviewers, examiners and authenticators from similar organisations outside Ireland who are prepared to declare their ability to maintain confidentiality, that they have no deep or long-standing relationships with the unit being assessed and that they have received gender bias training. All panellists, reviewers, examiners and authenticators receive payment for their services in return for providing value to the University in terms of a thorough and comprehensive review of quality and statements of recommended changes that will enhance quality.

**QA001 Quality Assurance** and **QA002 Policies and Procedures** guide the development of all P&Ps in use across NUI Galway. While the majority of P&Ps are contained on website pages, manual and online forms, internal statutes and committee reports, a number now follow NUI Galway’s ‘QA’ P&P template that aids policy writers in the design of P&Ps that improve communication, encourage revision and lower risk. Most P&Ps are made available to the public in a variety of formats through the University’s [public websites](#).

### 10. Stakeholder Engagement (ESG 1.1)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for the involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.

NUI Galway’s policy is to engage widely with all of its stakeholders. Stakeholders include learners, schools, other Colleges and Universities, research funding agencies, general public, industry and employers, national and local government and many more.

Key stakeholders in the context of quality assurance include:

- [Irish Universities Association](#)
- [Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)](#)
- [Higher Education Authority (HEA)](#)
- [Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQ)](#)
- [European Universities Association](#)
- North-West Cluster ([GMIT, LYIT, ITSligo](#))
- Research Funding Bodies ([SFI, HRB, etc.](#))

Students are a primary stakeholder and regarded by NUI Galway as competent, active and constructive partners as opposed to consumers. Students are regularly invited to engage in programme design, governance and corporate image while also engaging with their own learning.
11. Engagement with Other Bodies (ESG 1.1)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for engagement with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies and other quality assurance and awarding bodies (details of specific engagements should be provided in the online section of the form).

NUI Galway has a policy of engaging widely with many other external bodies through all of the teaching, research and governance activities outlined earlier including:

- North-West Cluster (GMIT, LYIT, ITSligo)
- NUI Galway-University of Limerick Alliance
- Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PRSBS)
- Linked Providers and Collaborative Partners

The Quality Office provides links on its public website to details of all accredited programmes and collaborative providers (links above).

12. Provision and Use of Public Information (ESG 1.8)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for the provision of clear, accurate, up-to date and accessible public information.
NUI Galway has a policy of providing a wide variety of Teaching, Research and QA related information to the public. This is done mainly through the comprehensive main public website but also through public websites of all its Schools, Colleges and Student Services. Other mechanisms include information booklets and press releases from the Press and Information Office.

Publicly accessible information includes results of all Quality Reviews and access to publicly available Policies and Procedures. Academic staff also use the Library's publicly accessible ARAN repository for research publications. Other information is available under Freedom of Information.

A sample of other information sources are outlined below for illustration with links provided.

- Programmes and Modules
- Research Outputs
- Library Collections

13. Linked Providers (for Designated Awarding Bodies) (ESG 1.1)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring engagement with linked providers including the procedures for approval, monitoring, review, withdrawal of approval and appeal for linked providers.

NUI Galway provides a list of linked providers under the heading ‘collaborative providers’ on its public website and relies on two national guidelines (IHEQN and QQI) to define and implement P&Ps in this area for all Schools and Colleges.

- Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision (IHEQN)
- Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards (QQI)

One internal policy defines the cyclical review process for Linked Providers and draws on legislation:

- QA009 Review of Linked Providers

14. DA Procedures for use of QQI Award Standards (IoTs only)
Links and/or text relating to the specific procedures for the approval of programmes in keeping with Core Policy and Criteria for the Validation of Education and Training Programmes by QQI, the Sectoral Protocols for the Awarding of Research Master Degrees at NFQ Level 9 under Delegated Authority (DA) from QQI and the Sectoral Protocols for the Delegation of Authority by QQI to the Institutes of Technology to make Joint Awards, May 2014.
15. Collaborative Provision (ESG 1.1)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for engagement with third parties for the provision of programmes.

NUI Galway has 19 collaborative partners, 18 of whom are defined as collaborative provision (e.g. joint, multiple, double degrees and articulation arrangements. One collaborative partner is defined as a Linked Provider: St Angela’s College that will soon be incorporated into two existing NUI Galway schools. Full details are available on this link: http://www.nuigalway.ie/quality/collaborative_providers/

Two national guidelines (QQI and IHEQN) guide and define P&Ps in this area for all Schools and Colleges:

- Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards (QQI)
- Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision (IHEQN)

16. Additional Notes
Any additional notes can be entered here.
### Internal Review Schedule

The internal reviews schedule or cycle at the level of unit of review within the institution. The units of review can be: module; programme; department/school; service delivery unit; faculty. The cycle will usually run over a 5-7 year period and all units should be encompassed over the full period of the cycle.

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| Areas/Units | Academic Administration  
|           | Burren College  
|           | School of Chemistry  
|           | School of Education  
|           | School of Engineering and Informatics  
|           | School of Law  
|           | M.A. Journalism  
|           | School of Nursing & Midwifery  
|           | School of Psychology  |
| Number   | 9         |
| Link(s) to Publications | [http://www.nuigalway.ie/quality/reviews/](http://www.nuigalway.ie/quality/reviews/) |

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|           | School of Mathematics Sciences  
|           | School of Medicine  
|           | School of Political Science and Sociology  
|           | Adult Learning and Professional Development Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT)  
|           | Information Solutions & Services (ISS)  |
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| Link(s) to Publications | [http://www.nuigalway.ie/quality/reviews/](http://www.nuigalway.ie/quality/reviews/) |

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                      School of Law  
                      School of Psychology  
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                      Marketing and Communications  
                      Student Services |
| Number   | 7 |
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## Engagement with Third Parties

Details of engagement with third parties, including:
- Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies
- Collaborative Provision
- Articulation Agreements

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<th>Type of arrangement:</th>
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Parts 2-6
Institution-led QA – Annual Information
Parts 2-6 are completed annually with information pertaining to the reporting period (i.e. the preceding academic year only).

Part 2: Institution-led QA – Annual
Part 2 provides information relating to institution-led quality assurance for the reporting period.

Section 1: Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Developments

1.1 The evolution of quality assurance and enhancement systems in support of strategic objectives in the reporting period.

NUI Galway continues to implement a ‘tripartite approach’ to enhancement and improvement by integrating quality, strategy and performance. Quality assurance is the responsibility of every member of staff through their own efforts and through their work on many organisational committees and units – including all Colleges, Schools and Services. All units periodically undergo internal Quality Review (QR) while also continuously complying to over 260 internal and external Policies and Procedures (P&Ps). Quality is also assured through the effective implementation of these P&Ps for example policies on External Examination and Student Feedback. Units also assure quality by implementation of the University’s Vision 2020 Strategy and the HEA’s Mission-Based Performance Compact 2014-2017 – both executed through an annual system for Operational Planning that incorporate quality, performance and capacity related enhancements.

1.2 Significant specific changes (if any) to QA within the institution.

NUI Galway had continued to focus on development of its P&P Repository and focus on a major thematic Review of Research Performance. The Quality Office also now publishes public directories of Professional Accreditations and Collaborative Providers. The P&P Repository represents a significant number of specific changes to QA at NUI Galway. Over 170 P&Ps were reviewed, created and/or revised.
QA activities are overseen by Údarás na hOllscoile (Governing Authority) and developed through its Quality & Innovation Committee (QIC). QIC reports directly to a number of key Údarás committees, and in particular, the Support Services Committee (SSC), Academic Priorities and Resources Committee (APRC) and Academic Council (AC).

Údarás met on the following occasions:

- 1 November 2016
- 16 December 2016
- 28 February 2017
- 28 April 2017
- 30 June 2017

Quality is a permanent agenda item at all meetings of Academic Council (AC) which met on:

- 12 October 2016
- 7 December 2016
- 16 February 2017
- 20 April 2017
- 7 June 2017

Both Údarás and the Academic Council have a number of key subcommittees that discuss quality improvement on various aspects of the University’s processes and typically meet immediately prior to the meetings noted above and more frequently as required. These sub-committees include:

- University Management Team
- Academic Management Team
- Graduate Studies Board
- Research Committee
- Standing and Strategic Planning Committee
- Academic Council – Standing Committee
- Finance and Resources Committee
- Risk Management Committee
- Library Policy Committee
- Five Colleges and 17 School Boards

The committee with specific responsibility for QA policies related to monitoring and review is the Quality & Innovation Committee (QIC) which met on three occasions during the academic year 2016/2017:

- 15 November 2016
- 10 March 2017
• 14 June 2017

The Director of Quality attended an Annual Dialogue Meeting with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) on 20 June 2017.

The Registrar and Director of Quality met three times with counterparts from other Universities through the Irish Universities Association (IUA) Quality Committee to discuss and share QA related policies and initiatives:

• 10th October 2016
• 12th June 2017
• 23rd January 2017

Section 2: Reviews in the reporting period

2.1 Internal reviews that were completed in the reporting period.

School of Chemistry
School of Education
School of Engineering and Informatics
School of Law
School of Nursing and Midwifery
School of Psychology
Academic Administration
Burren College of Art
MA Journalism

In addition, there were a large number of Programme Reviews conducted by individual Schools and Colleges and that followed the P&P QA006 Taught Programme Reviews. Also there were a large number of new programmes and programmes with ‘major changes’ approved during the period. These are available on the Quality Office website.

2.2 Profile of internal approval/evaluations and review completed in the reporting period.

| Number of new Programme Validations/Programme Approvals completed in the reporting year | 19 |
| Number of Programme Reviews completed in the reporting year | 1 |
| Number of Research Reviews completed in the reporting year | 6 |
Number of **School/Department/Faculty Reviews** completed in the reporting year (linked to above) | 6  
---|---
Number of **Service Unit Reviews** completed in the reporting year | 1  
Number of **Reviews of Arrangements with partner organisations** completed in the reporting year | 1

### 2.3 Profile of reviewers and chairs internal approval/evaluations and review for reviews completed in the reporting period.

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<th><strong>Chair Profile</strong></th>
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<td>International</td>
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Section 3: Other Implementation Factors

3.1 A description of how data is used to support quality assurance and the management of the student learning experience.

Key data – both qualitative and quantitative, can be categorized under the following headings and is used to support quality assurance and the management of the student learning experience:

**Key Performance Indicators** are provided by the Institutional Research Office and are used extensively throughout the University. 21 key performance indicators are monitored and widely discussed at various fora including academic Colleges and Schools. These indicators are defined largely through the University’s Vision2020 Strategy and the HEA’s Mission Based Performance Compact and include data on student progression and completion rates, international and non-traditional student participation and many more. Indicators are also informed by University and Subject Area rankings, in particular those developed by THE and QS university ranking agencies. These overarching rankings that incorporate a large number of data provided by the University place NUI Galway in the top 1% of Universities worldwide. NUI Galway was also recently nominated “University of the Year 2018” (Sunday Times University Guide).

**Strategic and Operational Planning** utilises key performance indicators and enhancement plans from Colleges, Schools and Services. Performance targets are reviewed and agreed annually at Operational Planning meetings between University Management and all individual units. Operational Plans are created in response to the University’s Vision2020 Strategy and quality review recommendations, student feedback and other stakeholder requirements.

**Research Metrics** are centrally managed through the Institutional Research Information System (IRIS) that supports the quality enhancement of activities such as research funding, publications, PhD performance and teaching workloads. The impact of QA activities is measured by a specific set of KPIs that are also used in the development of self-assessment reports used during quality review.

**Student Satisfaction and Feedback** data are developed from results of the National Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and the University’s student feedback policy (QA221: Feedback on Modules and Programmes) where all staff are required to review and act on student feedback. ISSE participation and results analysis is carried out by NUI Galway’s Vice President for Student Experience. Other survey data collected include surveys of Graduates, First Year Students, International Students, Graduate Employment and Facilities.

The Blackboard Learning Management System (LMS) provides data on student interaction and engagement with teaching, learning and assessment. This interfaces with the University’s Admissions and Examination records systems.

**Quality Review** data is provided by the Quality Office who publish results of all quality reviews and action plans. The Quality Office Intranet manages data related to Reviewers and External Examiners and reports related to the University’s External Examination Process.
**Policies and Procedures (P&Ps)** provide quality assurance for many processes used throughout the University and are provided in the [P&P Repository](#) where academic, research and services staff and the wider public have access to over 250 P&Ps that inform activities across a range of student facing processes.

**Financial Data** on areas such as student fees, capital investments, budgeting and financial planning is provided by the [Bursars Office](#) and informs decisions by Schools around programme development and enhancement. The Bursars Office also provides data on research funding.

**Library resources** includes [ARAN](#) a digital collection of open access scholarly publications. Authors of peer-reviewed articles and peer-reviewed conference papers resulting from research carried out at NUI Galway must deposit a copy in the ARAN repository. ARAN enables easy discovery of NUI Galway publications through global search engines such as Google and complements [IRIS](#) by linking from author profiles to the full text of University publications.

### 3.2 Factors that have impacted on quality and quality assurance in the reporting period.

The focus on evaluating Collaborative and Linked Providers received more attention in 2016/2017 across the University sector. NUI Galway’s new policy ([QA009: Review of Linked Providers](#)) was implemented as a pilot in the [Burren College of Art](#). There were no major QA issues to report with this pilot and no revisions envisaged.

### 3.3 A description of other implementation issues.
Part 3: Effectiveness and Impact
Part 3 provides information relating to the effectiveness and impact of quality assurance policy and procedures for the reporting period.

1. Effectiveness
Evidence of the effectiveness of QA policies and procedures during the reporting period.

NUI Galway focussed its Quality Review (QR) activities mainly on Research Assessment during 2016/2017 while continuing to develop the University’s Policy and Procedure (P&P) repository. Six Schools underwent QR focussed on research and were assessed by 32 peer reviewers (48% male; 52% female). This resulted in Review Reports for each School. Each Review Report contained ratings for all research documents submitted including statements of strengths and recommendations for quality enhancement. University Management and Heads of Schools agreed Action Plans arising from these Review Reports.

The University’s Policies and Procedures (P&Ps) repository is now updated and continues to be an evolving process with regular additions and updates. 170 P&Ps were created/updated and/or reviewed during 2016/2017. This is a significantly higher number than usual and done in preparation for the Institutional Review in 2018/2019. The repository serves to inform all staff of agreed behaviours and hence assure consistent quality across a wide range of research, teaching and administration activities. Over 250 P&Ps are now available and all are subject to review, and if necessary revision, at least once every seven years.

External Examiners annually provide recommendations for quality enhancement to programmes and modules. A total of 136 External Examiner Reports were received in 2016/2017 across all major units in the University (number of reports in brackets): Acadamh na hOllscolaiochta Gaeilge (4); Arts, Social Sciences & Celtic Studies (33); Business, Public Policy & Law (28); Engineering & Informatics (9); Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences (25); Science (17); St. Angela’s College, Sligo (20).
2. Impact
Evidence of the impact of QA policies and procedures during the reporting period.

There are a considerable number of qualitative impacts arising from all QA activities related to quality review (QR) and specific policies and procedures (P&Ps). Many remain locally rather than centrally reported e.g. enhancements and impacts arising from Student Feedback. Some enhancements are reported and recorded centrally e.g. QR and External Examinations. Key impacts emerging from Quality Review in 2016/2017 include the following:

- Schools developing more comprehensive Research Strategies
- Strengthen focus on research subject areas that reflects competencies
- A clearer relationship with research institutes
- Research mentoring expanded
- Developing more effective societal impact cases
- Focus on improving PhD completion rates
- Schools and Colleges addressing gender and seniority profiles
- School’s developing broader international links

Key impacts emerging from the External Examinations P&P in 2016/2017 include:

- More instructive and consistent feedback
- Reducing the number of continuous assessments
- Using the full marking scale, especially in the higher ranges of the first class band
- Developing marking criteria for the extremes of the marking bands 'A' and 'Fail' to help to expand the range of marks awarded
- Ensuring a balance between individual and group assessments to ensure students receive appropriate grades for their individual effort
- Encouraging higher numbers of students to complete the module evaluations
- Annotating exam scripts when marking
- Removing negative marking in multiple choice papers
- Extending the marking turn-around time prior to the exam board
- Institutional procedure for responding to External Examiners reports
- Supporting students with their writing skills
3. Themes
Analysis of the key themes arising within the implementation of QA policies and procedures during the reporting period.

The specific themes outlined in the Core Statutory QA Guidelines and Sector Specific Guidelines were repeated across all QR’s. One additional theme that has emerged was Gender and Diversity that appeared in a number of QRs. Other emerging themes were Societal Impact, Student Engagement and Internationalisation.
**Part 4: Quality Enhancement**

Part 4 provides information which goes beyond the description of standard quality assurance procedures. Quality enhancement includes the introduction of new procedures but also extends the concept of quality assurance to other initiatives, activities and events aimed at improving quality across the institution.

**4.1 Improvements and Enhancements for the Reporting Period**

Improvements or enhancements, impacting on quality or quality assurance, that took place in the reporting period.

Over the last year NUI Galway has continued to grow in terms of student numbers and research performance based on national and international priorities and now ranking in the top 1% of Universities worldwide for the first time. Quality enhancements have emerged chiefly from the annual Operational Planning and periodic Quality Review processes. These are informed by key information such as student and reviewer feedback and constrained by available funding and resources. Below are a sample of major and overarching enhancements.

**Enhancing Research Performance:** A key priority for the University has been to enhance the quality of our research performance, grow our research income and continue to build our research profile in select priority areas of expertise. NUI Galway has enhanced all of these areas through national and international research funding programmes— including performance in Horizon 2020 and in the various national funding competitions, while our rise to a top 250 position, in both World Rankings reflects a growing international research profile.

**Enhancing Curricula:** Teaching, learning and the quality of the student experience are central to the University’s mission, and in all three areas significant progress has been made. Responding to feedback and market demand, NUI Galway has engaged in extensive curricular reform, in Arts, Business, Law and Engineering programmes, expanding the number of programmes offering work-based learning experiences, prioritising the development of skills modules with a greater focus on employability, and broadening the opportunities for study abroad. The University has made significant investments in student Access and Disability Support Services to support the objective of growing the percentage of non-traditional students studying at NUI Galway. The impact of these initiatives is evident in this year’s CAO data where demand for NUI Galway’s programmes outstripped national trends in every subject area.

**Enhancing Post-Graduate Taught Programmes:** Demographics in the 16-19 year old population in the West of Ireland which have been on a downward trend since 2010 and are recovering slowly to 2020 and beyond. For this reason, the University were conservative but realistic in projections of limited growth in undergraduate students. The enhancement strategy to 2020 is to focus on growing the cohort of taught postgraduate students, including both EU and non-EU students, and we have made significant progress on this objective in the last years.
Enhancing Internationalisation: Enhancing performance on internationalisation has also been a key institutional objective and in this area the University has also achieved or exceeded all targets. Growth in international student numbers over the last year has exceeded expectations.

Enhancing Gender Equality: NUI Galway’s performance on gender equality has been enhanced significantly. Following the establishment of the Gender Equality Task Force to conduct a thorough review of the University’s performance on gender equality in 2015, and the adoption of its 24 recommendations, including the appointment of a new Vice President for Gender Equality and Diversity, the University has seen real and meaningful change in its processes and procedures, its practices and in its culture.

Enhancing Entrepreneurship: The opening of Blackstone LaunchPad, an initiative to support student entrepreneurship on campus, in 2016 put student entrepreneurship at the heart of campus life. To date the programme has exceeded all targets with over 3,000 students engaged in entrepreneurial activities.

Multi-site University: NUI Galway has made significant progress on institutional consolidation with Shannon College of Hotel Management now fully integrated and made good progress on the integration of St Angela’s College, Sligo. These colleges, in addition to the NUI Galway’s Medical Academies in Letterkenny, Sligo, Castlebar and Ballinasloe; na hionaid Gaeltachta and research centres in Cárna and the Burren, bring to nine the number of satellite campuses run by NUI Galway. This emerging multi-site University provides for cohesion in meeting the region’s needs and addresses the reality of our dispersed student population.

Enhancing the Region: NUI Galway believes that, as the leading educational institution in the West and North-West region it must play a central part in the development of the region. A strongly engaged University can act to rebalance challenging regional demographics by encouraging foreign direct investment, the development of indigenous companies and economic activity in the region. In doing this the University will build on existing regional strengths in MedTech and ICT and the emerging third pillar of the Creative Economy. The integration of St Angela’s College, Sligo into NUI Galway will create new and further opportunities for engagement – with the food sectors.

4.2 Quality Enhancement Highlights
Analysis of quality enhancement activities that were initiated during the reporting period and which would be of interest to other institutions and would benefit from wider dissemination.
**New Facilities:** The new Biosciences Research Building is located on the north end of campus. It is home for new research labs and facilities for bioscience research. The new Lambe Institute for Translation Research & HRB Clinical Research Facility greatly enhances the University’s teaching and research in health sciences.

**Curricular Reform:** In response to falling market demand for Arts programmes, NUI Galway commissioned Millward Brown Market Research Agency to do extensive qualitative market research with the prospective undergraduate market in our catchment area. The survey found that student decision-making has evolved to an extent that a premium is now being placed on career potential and the acquisition of specific job-related skills. Responding to this feedback the College of Arts, Social Sciences and Celtic Studies are now implementing sweeping reforms to the existing curriculum, programme structures and the programme portfolio. Changes include the introduction of Core Skills modules to the standard Joint Honours Arts Degree – skills include Skills for Learning, Skills for Work, and Skills for specific Disciplines, and students accumulate credit via a ‘Skills Passport’ which will be recognised on their degree transcripts.
Part 5: Objectives for the coming year

Part 5 provides information about plans for quality assurance in the institution for the academic year following the reporting period (in this instance 1 September 2017 – 31 August 2018).

5.1 Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Plans

Plans for quality assurance and quality enhancement relating to strategic objectives for the next reporting period.

NUI Galway will continue its ‘tripartite approach’ to enhancement linking quality, strategy and performance. Specifically, the University will finalise its implementation of the Quality Review of Research. The University will also continue to focus on strengthening internal Policies and Procedures (P&Ps). The University is also preparing a self-assessment report for the forthcoming institutional review by QQI (CINNTE).

5.2 Review Plans

A list of reviews within each category (module, programme, department/school, service delivery unit or faculty), as per the internal review cycle, planned for the next reporting period.

2017/2018

- School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures (R)
- School of Natural Sciences (R)
- School of Mathematics, Statistics and Applied Mathematics (R)
- School of Medicine (R)
- School of Political Science and Sociology (R)
- Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development (S)
- Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (S)
- Information Solutions and Services (S)

2018/2019

- Institutional Review of NUI Galway (I)
- School of Geography and Archaeology (T)
- School of Business and Economics (T)
- School of Physics (T)
- Buildings and Estates (S)
- Human Resources (S)
- International Office (S)
2019/2020

- School of Humanities (T)
- School of Health Sciences (T)
- School of Law (T)
- School of Psychology (T)
- Acadamh (S)
- Marketing and Communications (S)
- Student Services (S)

(R) = Research Review
(S) = Support/Service Review
(I) = Institutional Review
(T) = Teaching Review

5.3 Other Plans
## Part 6: Periodic Review

Part 6 provides information that acts as a bridge between the AIQR and periodic external review.

### 6.1 The Institution and External Review

A description of the impacts of institutional review within the institution.

In preparation for the forthcoming institutional Review by QQI, a self-evaluation team has been appointed by the Quality and Innovation Committee and first met on the 7th April 2016. They met again on 13th December 2016 and again on the 13th October 2017. A large number of bilateral meetings have also taken place between the Director of Quality and individual unit heads. To date their work has focussed on evaluating the actions agreed following recommendations from the 2010/2011 institutional review and assessing effectiveness of the implementation of key policies e.g. student feedback. The self-evaluation team will meet again in April 2018 to review a skeletal version of its institutional Self Evaluation Report for submission later in the year.

### 6.2 Self-Reflection on Quality Assurance

A short evaluative and reflective summary of the overall impact of quality assurance in the reporting period or, over a more extensive period, in the review.

A major shift in QA at NUI Galway in recent years has been to focus equally on Quality Reviews (QRs) and on hundreds of Policies and Procedures (P&Ps). A recent survey (Quality Culture Survey 2016/2017) has indicated that Quality Culture at the University has shifted from a ‘reactive’ to a more ‘responsive’ culture firstly in response to a significant rise in external rules and regulations but also due to an increase in the experience and ability of University staff to assure quality within their own units.

### 6.3 Themes

Developmental themes of importance to the institution which will be relevant to periodic review.