

Institutional Review Report 2019

University College Dublin



QAI REVIEW

CINNTE 

Executive Summary

UCD is a large, research-intensive university with an extensive global profile; it is recognised as one of Ireland's global universities. The institution is going through a period of considerable growth and investment, despite the significant restrictions brought about by non-growth in exchequer funding and the limitations caused by the Employment Control Framework. The UCD Strategy 2015-2020 has been an effective unifying force and, during the main review visit, the depth of understanding amongst faculty and staff of the institution's strategic direction was evident to the review team.

The review team met with a range of faculty, staff, students and stakeholders and reviewed extensive documentation in preparation for and during the review. The review team concluded that UCD showed due regard to the expectations of the QQI *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*, the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015)* and other relevant QQI topic- and sector specific quality assurance (QA) guidelines, as well as the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012*.

Over the period of the strategic plan, and since the previous institutional review, there has been considerable change in the economic, financial and political environment in which UCD is based, and significant investment from UCD in the Belfield Campus, driven by the need to generate a greater amount of non-exchequer funding.

The review team identified excellent examples of good practice in supporting student learning; in effectively growing the international impact of the institution; and in the implementation of the university's corporate strategy. It also identified areas for improvement and enhancement of consistency in experience across a large, devolved institution, and opportunities for greater benefit from use of data and international benchmarking.

The review team approached the review in a constructive and supportive manner, with the intention of producing a report that is constructive and will ensure UCD's continued excellence. The commendations and recommendations should be seen in this light.

TOP 5 COMMENDATIONS

1. The review team commends UCD's effective, systematic QA processes, which ensure the rigorous evaluation of learning and teaching, and the effective use of externality in review methods.
2. The review team commends UCD for its Performance for Growth process and the commitment to creating parity of esteem between learning and teaching, and research.
3. The review team commends the opportunities available for students to engage with university processes and commends the induction that UCD provides to its Students' Union representatives sitting on the Governing Authority (GA), which enables student representatives to engage effectively as members of the GA.
4. The review team commends UCD's commitment to delivering a high-quality student experience, as well as the existence of effective support structures, such as student advisors within colleges and the Residence Life office.
5. The review team commends the university's commitment to global engagement, to considering the intercultural learning experience, to valuing diversity in the curriculum, and to recognising and rising to the challenges of internationalisation

TOP 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The review team recommends that UCD review its QA processes and consider consolidating processes to ensure that schools have the capacity, and are enabled, to effectively self-evaluate, reflect and implement quality improvements.
2. The review team recommends that UCD reflect on the reasonableness of expectations placed on faculty in key leadership roles such as heads of school. UCD must ensure that schools and professional service units are adequately resourced to ensure that faculty can deliver a high-quality learning and research experience.
3. The review team recommends that UCD review the implementation of the Researcher Career Framework to ensure that it is equally and equitably implemented across the university so that faculty on fixed-term contracts (e.g. postdoctoral fellows, faculty and staff appointed to international campuses) have the opportunity to undertake appropriate career development.
4. The review team recommends that the university capitalise on the extent of quantitative data and external benchmarking available to derive greater analytical value from this data to inform decision-making.
5. The review team recommends that, as a globally-competitive, research-intensive institution, UCD review its quality processes with a view to securing a more effective balance between learning and teaching, and research and to demonstrating robust institution-level research quality (recognising the lack of ESG framework for research quality and the infancy of research quality expectations).

The Review Team

Each CINNTE review is carried out by an international team of independent experts and peers. The 2019 institutional review of University College Dublin was conducted by a team of six reviewers selected by QQI. The review team was trained by QQI on 3 September 2019. The Chair and Coordinating Reviewer undertook a planning visit to University College Dublin on 4 September 2019. The Main Review Visit was conducted by the team between 14 and 18 October 2019.

CHAIR

Professor Eva Åkesson, has been Vice-Chancellor of Uppsala University in Sweden since January 1, 2012, and is a professor of chemical physics. She completed her undergraduate education in chemistry and her doctorate in physical chemistry at Umeå University. She did postdoctoral work at the University of Minnesota, USA. She has served as titular member, secretary and deputy chair of the IUPAC Committee on Chemistry Education. She has served as chair of the Matariki Network of Universities and chair of the Southern African-Nordic Centre (SANORD). She is a member of the Council of the University of Tartu, a member of the Scientific Advisory Board of Tübingen University and a member of the International Advisory Board of Helsinki University. Since 2017, she has been vice-chair of The Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities. In 2015, she received an honorary doctorate from the University of Edinburgh. In 2018, Eva was awarded H.M. the King's Medal of the 12th size with the ribbon of the Order of the Seraphim for "exemplary work in Swedish higher education" and in 2019 she received the Skytte Medal of the University of Tartu.

COORDINATING REVIEWER

Gavin Lee is an experienced higher education professional working largely within the field of policy and strategic planning, and policy development in relation to funding, learning and teaching, governance and quality, data management and business intelligence, widening access and equality. Gavin is currently Head of Strategic Planning at the University of the West of Scotland (UWS), overseeing strategy and development, statutory and statistical returns, business intelligence, and relationships with funding partners. Prior to his role at UWS, Gavin worked in policy and planning for three years at the University of Stirling. Gavin's broad knowledge of the Scottish HE

landscape – and education more broadly across the United Kingdom – is grounded in this experience, as well as in experience gathered in a number of further roles at the University of Glasgow and the Scottish HE sector representative body, Universities Scotland. Gavin has worked with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for ten years – working closely with QAA Scotland, in particular, as an ELIR Reviewer.

INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Professor Antonio Serrano González is currently Director of ACPUA (Aragon Agency for Quality Assurance and Strategic Foresight in Higher Education). Antonio is a member of the Board of Directors of the Red Española de Agencias de Calidad Universitaria (Spanish Quality Assurance Agencies Network [REACU]) and served as Executive Secretary of the Board of Directors of REACU from January 2014 to April 2015. He is a member of the Comisión Universitaria para la Regulación del Seguimiento y la Acreditación (Spanish National Accreditation and Follow-Up Regulation Conference [CURSA]) and has been a member of review teams undertaking institutional evaluations and reviews of QA agencies in Germany (Akkreditierungsrat; German Accreditation Council) and Kazakhstan (IQAA).

LEARNER REPRESENTATIVE

Megan Reilly is the Vice-President for Equality and Citizenship at the Union of Students in Ireland, following a year as Students' Union President at NUI Galway for the academic year 2018/19. Megan is a graduate of Commerce with Accounting, and, before her election to the role of president, held the post of Welfare Officer in NUI Galway's Students' Union. Megan was a member of NUI Galway's *Údarás na hOllscoile* (Governing Board) and participated in the CINNTE institutional review of NUI Galway, which took place in March 2019.

IRISH REPRESENTATIVE

Dr Eucharia Meehan MRIA is the Registrar and CEO of the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies. Prior to joining DIAS in June 2017, Eucharia was the inaugural Director of the Irish Research Council. She was Head of Research and Innovation (policy and investment) at the Higher Education Authority (HEA) from 2002 to 2012. Before joining the HEA in 2001, Eucharia was Head of Programme Management at Elan Biotechnology Research (EBR). She holds a PhD in Pharmacology (Neuropharmacology) from NUI Galway, in addition to a number of postgraduate management, accounting and finance qualifications from Trinity College Dublin (TCD) and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA). Her board memberships have included the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of Ireland, the National Institute for Bioprocessing Research and Training (NIBRT), the European Strategy Forum for Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) and ScienceEurope. She was designated as ScienceEurope's inaugural Gender and Diversity Champion in 2016/2017. She was admitted as a member of the Royal Irish Academy in 2017 and elected a council member the following year.

EXTERNAL REPRESENTATIVE

Michael Nason's current role is CEO of the Cork University Hospital Charity, where he works with one of Ireland's foremost hospitals in delivering world-class service to over 500,000 patients annually. Michael has held a number of senior roles within fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) and retail. He is former CEO of Arnott's Department Store, former Managing Director of Musgrave Retail and former Marketing Director of Tesco Ireland. He worked with these organisations during periods of dynamic change and transformation. He has also worked in strategic international roles. He has served as a non-executive director of, as well as mentoring, a number of Irish SMEs in the food and retail sectors. He was appointed International Retail Director of TCD in 2016 to implement a growth plan for the creation and commercialisation of premium gift merchandise inspired by the brand architecture of TCD and its related assets. While working at Trinity from 2015 to January 2019 he worked closely with many Trinity departments on a number of change programmes. He is passionate about customer engagement, analysing global business trends, and the impact of changes on consumer behaviour and relationships with brands.

1. Foreword

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is responsible for the external quality assurance (QA) of further and higher education and training in Ireland. One of QQI's most important functions is to ensure that the QA procedures that institutions have in place are effective. To this end, QQI carries out external reviews of higher education institutions on a cyclical basis. This current QQI cycle of reviews is called the CINNTE cycle. CINNTE reviews are an element of the broader quality framework for institutions composed of Quality Assurance Guidelines; each institution's Quality Assurance Procedures; Annual Institutional Quality Reports (AIQR); and Dialogue Meetings. The CINNTE review cycle runs from 2017-2023. During this period, QQI will organise and oversee independent reviews of each of the Universities, the Institutes of Technology and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI).

Each CINNTE review evaluates the effectiveness of the QA procedures of each institution. The review measures each institution's compliance with European standards for QA, its regard to the expectations set out in the QQI QA guidelines or their equivalent and adherence to other relevant QQI policies and procedures. CINNTE reviews also explore how institutions have enhanced their teaching, learning and research and their QA systems and how well institutions have aligned their approach to their own mission, quality indicators and benchmarks.

The CINNTE review process is in keeping with Parts 2 and 3 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) and based on the internationally accepted and recognised approach to reviews, including:

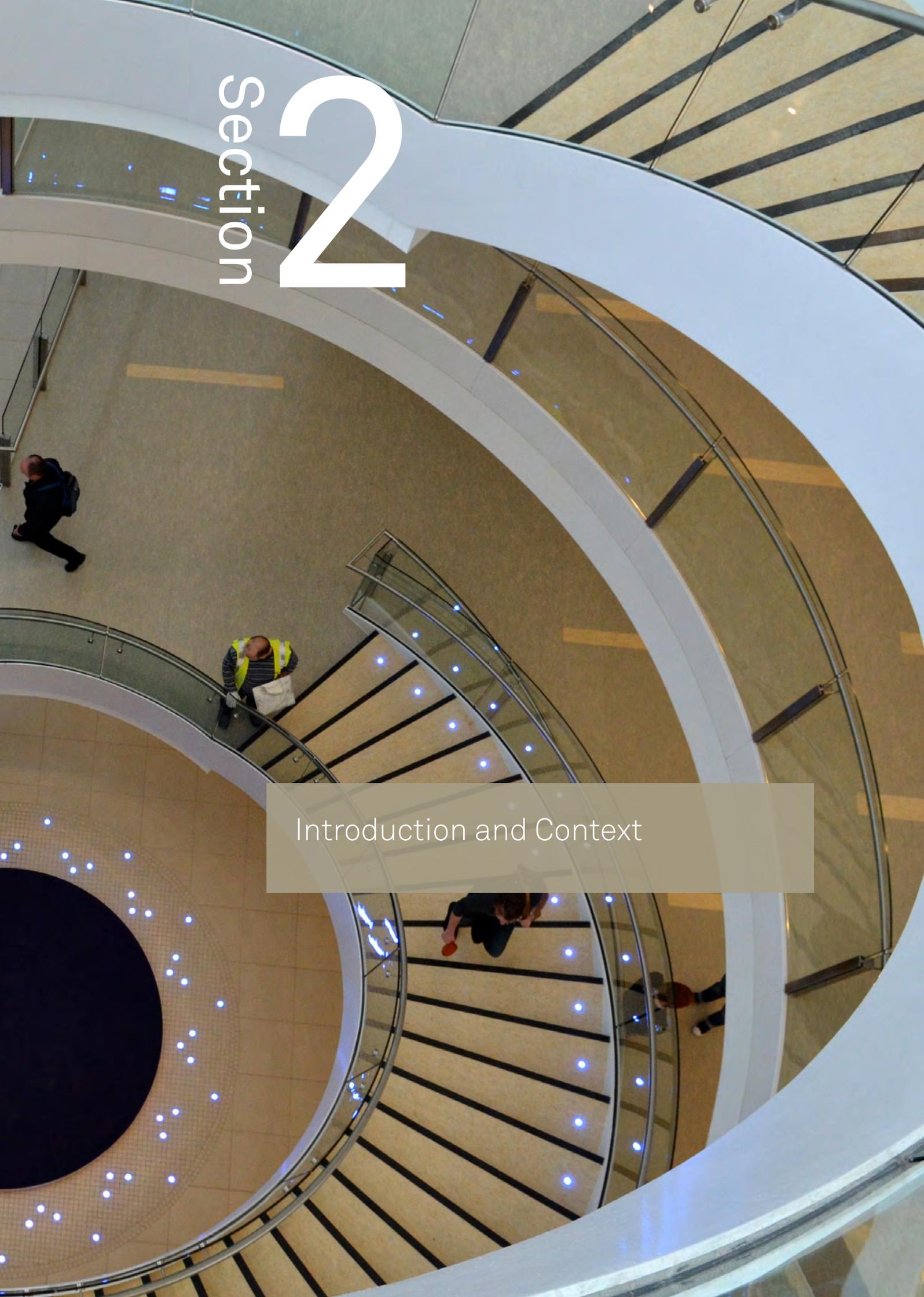
- the publication of Terms of Reference;
- a process of self-evaluation and an Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER);
- an external assessment and site visit by a team of reviewers;
- the publication of a Review Report including findings and recommendations; and
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken.

This QQI CINNTE review of the University College Dublin (UCD) was conducted by an independent review team in line with the Terms of Reference in Appendix A. This is the report of the findings of the review team. It also includes the response of University College Dublin to the report.



Section 2

Introduction and Context



Introduction and Context

2.1 University College Dublin (UCD) is Ireland's largest university, with almost 34,000 students studying in Ireland and across the world and 3,500 faculty and staff. The university grew out of the Catholic University of Ireland, founded in 1854, and became a constituent college of the National University of Ireland (NUI) in 1908. UCD became an autonomous, independent university following the commencement of the Universities Act 1997.

2.2 UCD's 2015-2020 Strategic Plan outlines the institutional mission to 'contribute to the flourishing of Dublin, Ireland, Europe and the world through the excellence and impact of our research and scholarship, the quality of our graduates and our global engagement; providing a supportive community in which every member of the University is enabled to achieved their full potential'. The Strategic Plan refers to UCD as 'Ireland's Global University', and this theme runs strongly through UCD's ethos. The extent of UCD's international presence and the importance of global engagement to the institution were evident in the university's Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER), and during discussions with the faculty, staff, students and stakeholders who met the review team. The Strategic Plan outlines ten key objectives:

1. *Increase the quality, quantity and impact of our research, scholarship and innovation*
2. *Provide an educational experience that defines international best practice*
3. *Consolidate and strengthen our disciplines*
4. *Conduct strong interdisciplinary research and education in important areas of national and global need*
5. *Attract and retain an excellent and diverse cohort of students, faculty and staff*

6. *Build our engagement locally, nationally and internationally*
7. *Develop and strengthen our University community*
8. *Further develop world-class facilities to support the vision*
9. *Adopt governance, management and budgetary structures which enable the vision*
10. *Overcome financial, human resource management and other external constraints*

2.3 At the time of the review, UCD was preparing the next institutional strategic plan for the period 2020-2024. The university outlined a consultative, developmental approach to developing the strategy including workshops and engagements with faculty, staff and students across the campus and through formal committee structures such as the Academic Council (AC) and Governing Authority (GA). The 2020-2024 strategy was described as an 'update' to the successful 2015-2020 strategy. Members of the GA confirmed that they felt fully engaged in the development of the new strategy and described effective, detailed discussions on institutional performance and horizon-scanning and a positive focus on impact from the strategy. The review team was provided with a draft strategy, which was to be approved and implemented from 2020.¹

2.4 The review team commends UCD for the UCD Strategic Plan 2015-2020, which is well articulated and well understood across the university. The development of the new Strategic Plan 2020-2024 has involved an open, consultative process to evolve the new strategy, including engagement with business and industry to inform future needs, and the review team welcomes the new strategic focus on challenges.

¹ The UCD Strategy 2020-2024 was launched in December 2019.

- 2.5 During its briefing by representatives of the Irish Universities Association (IUA) the review team heard that there had been considerable challenges in the Irish higher education sector following the global recession in 2008. Between 2008 and 2017, public funding per university student fell from c. €8,700 to €4,400 and impacted on the ability of Irish universities to invest in and secure the highest quality student experience. Irish universities were also heavily restricted in the staffing changes they could implement, being required to follow the Employment Control Framework for the Higher Education Sector set by the Irish government. The review team heard that the framework limited the ability of institutions to adjust staffing levels and controlled salary levels through the public sector pay policy. The restrictions on staffing changes limited the university's ability to respond to, for example, changing patterns of demand in student subject choices.
- 2.6 Over the period of the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, the proportion of UCD's student population studying in Ireland has grown by almost 10%. The primary driver of this growth has been in the postgraduate taught community, which has grown by almost 25%. As shown in the table below, there has been steady growth in undergraduate students and small changes to the postgraduate research community.

- 2.7 Of the 29,000 students studying at UCD's campus in Ireland in 2018-19, 28.1% of the students were international (i.e. their permanent domicile was from beyond Ireland or the EU). The gender breakdown was 55:45 (female:male).
- 2.8 Through the period of growth since 2014-15, the international population has grown from 24.6% of the UCD student population in 2014-15 to 28.1% in 2018-19, and the percentage of female students increased slightly from 53% to 55%.
- 2.9 UCD's student population accounts for 25.6% of all international students, 29.2% of all graduate students and 21.8% of all doctoral enrolments across the seven Irish 'previously-existing universities'².
- 2.10 UCD has a large number of extensive international partnerships and in 2018-19 almost 4,000 students were studying on UCD programmes overseas. This was a reduction from 5,636 in 2014-15. The majority of students (2,030) were studying with international partners in Singapore.

(HEADCOUNT)	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	GROWTH
Undergraduate (UG)	16,310	16,684	17,054	17,169	17,003	4.25%
Graduate taught (GT)	6,045	6,414	7,017	7,079	7,546	24.8%
Occasional UG	2,262	2,533	2,569	2,649	2,658	17.5%
PhD	1,580	1,546	1,536	1,571	1,611	1.96%
Occasional GT	330	450	395	459	403	22.1%
Masters Research	224	242	206	199	168	-25%
Total	26,751	27,869	28,777	29,126	29,389	9.86%

2 Previously-existing universities: Dublin City University, Maynooth University, NUI Galway, Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork, University College Dublin, University of Limerick

2.11 Despite the growing student population, the university faculty full-time equivalent (FTE) has remained reasonably stable over the period 2014-15 to 2019. This reflects the continued restrictions on budgets and employment controls imposed on Irish universities by the exchequer, as noted above. UCD's [Institutional Profile \(IP\)](#) noted that: 'Underfunding in the sector continues to be the biggest financial challenge facing the University.'

(FTE)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Student FTE	23,587	24,285	25,038	25,406	25,681
Faculty FTE	1,119	1,121	1,164	1,216	1,231
Student-faculty ratio	21.1	21.7	21.5	20.9	20.9

2.12 To counter flat-funding settlements from the Irish state grants, UCD has sought to increase significantly non-exchequer income. During the period 2013-14 to 2017-18, UCD's income grew by 10%, driven by significant increases in non-EU tuition fees. Over that period, there was small growth in EU student fee income and research income. In 2017, state funding was increased to support partial pay restoration, but this restored funding only to 2013-14 levels.

UNIVERSITY INCOME (€)	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	GROWTH
State grants	68,149	63,422	61,952	62,028	67,486	-1%
EU fee income	136,209	136,125	38,326	139,923	141,242	+4%
Non-EU fee income	54,003	60,605	66,936	74,651	82,589	+53%
Treasury and other income	6,114	8,786	11,282	12,352	9,598	+57%
Funded research (included overheads)	83,952	84,330	82,244	84,564	87,040	+4%
Total income	348,427	353,268	360,740	373,518	387,955	+11%

- 2.13 UCD is structured in 6 colleges and 36 constituent schools encompassing:
- UCD College of Arts and Humanities
 - UCD College of Science
 - UCD College of Business
 - UCD College of Social Sciences and Law
 - UCD College of Engineering and Architecture
 - UCD College of Health and Agricultural Sciences
- 2.14 Each College Executive comprises a college principal, a vice-principal for teaching and learning; a vice-principal for research, innovation and impact; the director of the graduate school; a college finance manager; a college human resources (HR) partner and the relevant heads of school. This team provides academic leadership and assumes responsibility for strategy, administration, financial and other activities in the college.
- 2.15 In addition, there are seven major multidisciplinary research institutes at UCD, which promote cross-disciplinary research or host major research platforms. The directors of the research institutes report to the Vice-Principal for Research, Innovation and Impact. In addition, a number of national research and technology centres are led and hosted/co-hosted by UCD.
- 2.16 In this model, there are considerable levels of delegated authority and a principle of devolved decision-making. This model of delivery requires effective communication, feedback loops and knowledge exchange across the university. The review team encourages UCD to review the consistency of self-evaluation evident in these delegated authority processes across the institution.
- 2.17 The university has ambitious capital development plans for the development of the UCD Belfield Campus site, building on many years of significant investment. The UCD Strategic Campus Development Plan 2016-2021-2026 sets out 'a ten-year development framework for the Belfield Campus. The plan focuses on providing the physical infrastructure necessary to achieve the university's mission in terms of state-of-the-art education, research and innovation, student residences, sports, recreation and support facilities.' The university occupies a 130-hectare campus at Belfield, on the outskirts of Dublin. The campus was created in the 1930s through the acquisition of Belfield House, neighbouring properties and associated land, with significant further development from the 1960s, when the new science facilities opened. In recent years, UCD has invested significantly in new facilities including the UCD Student Centre, the UCD O'Brien Centre for Science, the UCD Sutherland School of Law and more than 3,000 new student residence bed spaces on campus (doubling the current capacity).
- 2.18 UCD is a research-intensive university and the 2015-20 Strategic Plan lists research as its first objective. The institution increased its focus on research during the period of the existing strategic plan, despite the pressures on institutional resources from reductions in state funding. UCD emphasises that it takes a multidisciplinary approach to research and operationalises this approach through cross-disciplinary research institutes and research centres. UCD research quantity has increased through this period, with a 21% increase in publications (measured through SciVal) and an increase in the monetary value of research awards from €107m in 2014-15 to €151m in 2018-19. UCD has the largest scholarly output of all Irish universities, with over 16,000 outputs between 2013 and 2017. UCD's research output has demonstrable impact, ranking the highest field-weighted citation impact of Irish universities between 2013-2017 at 1.74 (average 1.61). UCD has a comprehensive system of support for innovation from NovaUCD, a centre for new ventures and entrepreneurs, NexusUCD, the industry partnership centre, and UCD Enterprise Gateway, which facilitates access to UCD's research community.

- 2.19 UCD manages the quality of its provision through the UCD Quality Framework and the UCD Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement Policy. The aim of this policy is to enhance the effectiveness, and the effective management, of its core activities of learning, teaching, and research. The Quality Enhancement Framework outlines a series of regular, annual, periodic, and external activities which contribute to the ongoing assessment of quality.
- 2.20 The impact and effectiveness of this approach is discussed further in section 4.



Section 3

Institutional Self-Evaluation
Report (ISER)

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O'BRIEN CENTRE FOR SCIENCE

Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)

3.1 UCD's ISER was produced to provide a self-reflective evaluation of the effectiveness of UCD's QA procedures, in line with QQI's guidance. The ISER is not a stand-alone document, rather it is supported by and has regard to a considerable suite of ancillary documentation, namely the UCD IP; the UCD AIQRs; and a series of accompanying appendices. When read collectively, this extensive suite of documents provides an overview of the university's approach to QA and quality enhancement (QE).

3.2 The production of the ISER was led by the Registrar/Deputy President with the support of the ISER Steering Group. The ISER Steering Group drew upon faculty, staff and students from across the university, representing a range of academic disciplines, relevant professional and technical services, and

students. The ISER Drafting Group led the drafting of the ISER document and was chaired by a head of school. These groups were established in summer 2018. The membership of both groups is included in appendix 2.

3.3 The groups led a process that was both consultative and developmental. Phase 1 consultation took place between November and December 2018, during which individual sections of the draft ISER were sent to relevant faculty, staff and student groups for expert review and feedback. A second consultation phase was initiated in February 2019, when drafts of the ISER and IP were circulated to key university governance bodies and made available on the UCD intranet for all staff to review. Student engagement was ensured through engagement with the Students' Union (UCDSU), encompassing discussion with



- elected student representatives. External stakeholders, including linked providers, professional, statutory and regulatory bodies and collaborative partners, were also invited to provide feedback on the draft ISER. **The review team commends the extensive engagement and efforts of the ISER drafting group and recognises the extensive process of information collation undertaken to produce the ISER, and the challenge in editing the vast amount of information collected into a manageable narrative of reasonable length.**
- 3.4 The ISER was reviewed by the University Management Team (UMT) and the AC Quality Enhancement Committee (ACQEC) and approved by AC and GA in spring 2019.
- 3.5 The IP provided an insightful overview of the university and its strategic direction and is a valuable and informative document that supports the external reader in engaging with the ISER. **The review team recommends that UCD publish the ISER and IP to ensure that the institution benefits from the volume of work involved in creating these documents.**
- 3.6 At the time of the review, there had been considerable change both within the institution and in the external environment since the 2011 review of UCD during the 'IRIU' (Institutional Review of Irish Universities) cycle. In the ISER and throughout the main review, UCD referenced the recommendations from the previous review. The 2018 update to the Quality Improvement Plan set out follow-up actions in respect of most of the 2011 recommendations and provided a detailed overview of these actions. The review team noted a number of similar issues arising in the 2011 review that continued to 2019, including delegation of authority, discrepancies in student support, and induction.
- 3.7 The review team met a selection of external stakeholders during the review visit and found evidence of effective professional engagement, clearly structured relationships and interactions, and a healthy reflectiveness on the successes and challenges of their partnerships with UCD.
- 3.8 UCD elected to include case studies as an element of the ISER, which were well-selected to illustrate examples of the institutional culture and activities in support of the 2015-20 Strategic Plan. This approach was welcomed by the review team as an effective way to understand UCD's QA culture. Extracts from the case studies, and details of how they informed the review team, are included throughout this report.
- 3.9 The integration and referencing between the ISER and supporting documents (appendices, IP, and case studies) was extensive and enabled cross-referencing between significant amounts of information. The university was responsive and supportive to the review team in swiftly providing additional documentation, helpfully supplying clarification (both electronically and in person) and in arranging additional meetings. The review team particularly welcomed the additional meeting and information provided on the approach to QA for research processes, which elaborated on the information provided in the AIQRs and ISER.
- 3.10 The ISER presents a detailed, descriptive overview of the institution's academic QA and QE processes. This augments the detailed institutional process overview supplied in the AIQR, which is submitted annually to QQI. There was opportunity for the ISER to have provided an enhanced narrative, presenting a more analytical review of the period 2011 to 2019 (since the last institutional review). **While the review team recognised that UCD identified a small number of 'challenges' through the ISER the review considered that there was opportunity for the ISER to have provided an enhanced narrative, presenting a more analytical review of the period since the last institutional review (2011 to 2019). The review team recommends that UCD adopt a more effective, analytical approach to self-evaluation to enable continued development and excellence.** UCD seeks to measure and benchmark itself globally; this approach should assist and inform effective self-reflection.



Section 4

Quality Assurance/Accountability

- Objective 1 – Current Quality Assurance Procedures
- Objective 2 – Quality Enhancement
- Objective 3 – Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression
- Objective 4 – Provision of Programmes to International Learners

4 Quality Assurance/ Accountability

4.1 The review team assessed QA and QE at UCD as a continuum, recognising the importance of robust QA to enable QE. The following sections are set out referring to QA/QE objectives but have significant cross-reference and cross-reliance.

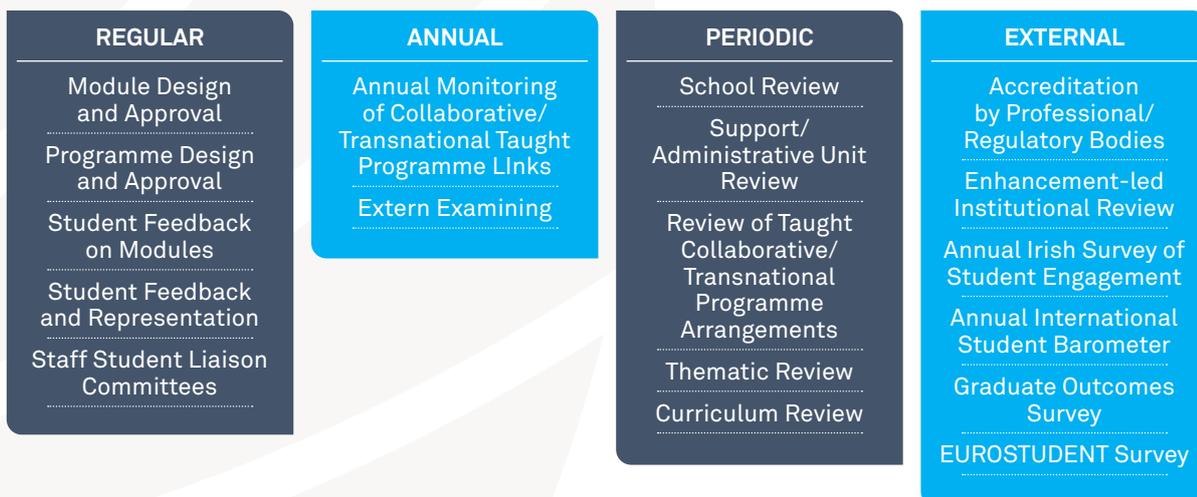
Objective 1 – Current Quality Assurance Procedures

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

- 4.2 The review team concluded that there was satisfactory evidence to confirm the effectiveness of UCD’s QA procedures. The review team agreed that UCD had robust, integrated QA procedures, as stated in the ISER. The review team found that, in general, UCD’s approach to QA showed due regard to the *QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*, ESG 2015 and other relevant topic- and sector-specific QA guidelines, as well as the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012*.
- 4.3 **The review team commends UCD’s effective, systematic QA processes, which ensure the rigorous evaluation of learning and teaching, and research, and the effective use of externality in review methods.**
- 4.4 UCD has a policy for QA that forms part of its strategic management and contributes

to the accountability of the institution (ESG 2015, section 1.1; *QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*, section 2, unit 2.1). UCD’s Academic Regulations 2019/20, as well as its Programme Development, Approval and Review Framework (PDARF) and the programme approval documentation provided, demonstrate that comprehensive quality mechanisms are in place, and that these are effectively implemented (ESG 2015, section 1.2; *QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*, section 2, unit 2.2).

- 4.5 As set out above, the institution reports annually on its quality processes and outcomes through the AIQR to QQI. These comprehensive documents provided the review team with a clear overview of activity within the institution and the impact achieved by UCD’s approach to QA and QE. UCD has translated that policy into practice through a variety of internal QA processes.



- 4.6 UCD's QA mechanisms are considerable, extensive, and appropriately robust.
- 4.7 **The review team commends UCD's effort to monitor and periodically review its programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and that they are responsive to the needs of students and society.** The institution enhances quality of teaching through an extensive range of monitoring and review mechanisms, with a strong emphasis on external validation by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. These reviews lead to the continuous improvement of the programmes. Valuable externality is also provided by external examiners.
- 4.8 Faculty and staff who met the review team highlighted good practice across the university and both faculty and staff provided many examples of routine quality improvement at all levels which indicated institutional commitment to embedding a quality culture. In the 2018 QCI *Summary Report on Quality within Higher Education*, UCD was cited as an example of good practice in a case study to highlight "Creating a Quality Culture", outlining its success in embedding quality in governance structures and alignment with strategic objectives.
- 4.9 However, the review team identified evidence of variability in engagement in the quality culture between schools and in the effectiveness of self-evaluation across the institution. There was evidence, also, of fatigue and passive resistance to QA processes among schools and professional services, leading to inconsistency in approach. Effective self-evaluation would be enhanced in schools and professional services by revising qualitative and quantitative key performance indicators and agreeing benchmarks. **The review team recommends that UCD review its QA processes and consider consolidating processes to ensure that schools have the capacity, and are enabled, to effectively self-evaluate, reflect and implement quality improvements.**
- 4.10 While the team was confident that there are effective QA processes in place in UCD, inconsistency in engagement with QA processes among departments, schools and faculties is impacting on the institution's ability to ensure consistency in the student experience. This was particularly well highlighted in the diversity of student experiences; there was evidence during the main review visit that students in smaller schools experience better engagement with academics and have a better understanding of learning and teaching policies and processes than those in larger schools. Specific examples were provided in respect of clarity on assessment practices, marking schemes and student support mechanisms.
- 4.11 **The review team recommends that UCD review its QA processes to ensure that these processes adequately assess the consistency of undergraduate and postgraduate student experience and that, where evidence of inconsistency is found, robust actions be taken to enhance consistency.** UCD should ensure that governance and oversight mechanisms are adequate to measure the student experience across, and within, schools. In practice, the review team could not identify a 'baseline' set of expectations that students could have of the university. It was noted in particular that the authority for some elements of student support delegated to schools and colleges by the institution can lead to great variety in budgetary priority set by each school, which can significantly affect the services available to students.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

- 4.12 The university GA has ultimate responsibility for QA at UCD. Members of the GA who met the review team clearly expressed their commitment to this and demonstrated a clear, nuanced understanding of the GA's role.
- 4.13 To enable the GA to discharge its duties, the members of the GA receive all Quality Review Group Reports for schools and support units, along with the UMT's commentaries on each report. The GA also receives an annual report on quality from the ACQEC which provides a comprehensive overview of school and unit

quality reviews, benchmarking, and examples of QA mechanisms and QE initiatives delivered during the year.

- 4.14 The UMT and AC share responsibility for the implementation of QA, reporting to the GA, and are supported in this respect by a series of learning and teaching, research and quality-focused roles throughout the university, including college principals; heads of section; heads of school; vice-principals for teaching and learning; vice-principals for research, innovation and impact; school heads of teaching and learning; programme deans; subject-area heads; and module co-ordinators.
- 4.15 The Registrar and Deputy President is the UMT lead for quality and is supported in the oversight and management of QA by the UCD Quality Office through its ownership of the UCD Quality Framework and its coordination and delivery of QA and QE activities.
- 4.16 In 2015, UCD formally adopted its current structure of six colleges and 36 schools, and adopted revised principles of academic leadership, management, and governance to enhance the effectiveness of key roles across the institution. This followed the 2011 IRIU report, in which UCD was encouraged to rationalise and simplify its academic structures. Recommendation 1.8 from the 2011 IRIU report encouraged the university to review the size and composition of the GA expeditiously. In 2017, UCD undertook a review of the effectiveness of the GA with recommendations implemented from 2018 onwards. The 2011 IRIU report also recommended the review of the composition of AC, to decrease the membership and the number of sub-committees. The follow-up report to IRIU confirmed that UCD did not reduce the membership of AC but did reduce the number of sub-committees from 10 in 2011 to 9 in 2018. UCD has since commenced a review of its AC with a planned objective of reducing the overall membership.
- 4.17 UCD appropriately and robustly reviews the effectiveness of its committee structure on a routine basis and, in 2015 and 2017, undertook reviews of its academic structure,

AC, and GA. These periodic reviews are important in ensuring that the effectiveness of the committee structure continues to be enhanced. However, the review team encourages the university to ensure that these reviews lead to demonstrable action within a reasonable timeframe.

- 4.18 **The review team commends UCD’s robust governance structure, which supports the ongoing management of its QA procedures and processes.**

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

- 4.19 UCD’s Strategy 2015-2020 clearly articulates the university’s global ambitions, and faculty, staff and stakeholders whom the review team met demonstrated an excellent understanding of the university’s strategic direction.
- 4.20 The review team noted considerable progress in implementing its strategic objectives over the five-year strategic period despite the challenging financial environment and the significant requirement to grow non-exchequer income. It was clear to the review team that the university’s strategy had a clarity that had resonated with faculty and staff across the university. Since 2014, UCD has achieved the following:
- An increase of 5% in student satisfaction
 - A reduction of 4.2% in faculty:student ratio
 - An increase of 50% in non-EU student recruitment
 - An increase of over 300% in the number of alumni events held
 - An increase of 23% in research quantity
 - An improvement of 5.5% in research quality
 - An increase of 131% in the number of industry co-authored publications
 - An increase of 100% in the number of spin-out companies
 - An increase of 53% in philanthropic support
 - An increase of 13.3% in the number of employees
 - An increase of over 10% in the student body

- 4.21 As noted in paragraph 3.3, UCD was in the process of developing a new strategic plan at the time of the review, and the review team noted that the plan would be an evolution of the existing strategy. Given that the new strategic plan had not been published when the review took place, the review team was unable to evaluate faculty, staff or student understanding of the strategic objectives. However senior management outlined an effective, engaging, developmental process when developing its strategic objectives to engage faculty, staff, students and stakeholders effectively.
- 4.22 UCD's success has been driven by a clear strategic ambition for growth that is embedded within the Strategic Plan and evident across the university. In periods of rapid growth, it is essential that core functions remain appropriate as the organisation changes. In this context, UCD is encouraged to reflect on the extent to which its QA processes are aligned with and underpin its strategic priorities and key performance indicators. A more focused alignment of quality processes with the university's strategy would enable continued focus on institutional priorities, in parallel with the embedding of QA processes.
- 4.23 UCD is an international university with ambitions to be increasingly 'global'. The ISER states that UCD routinely benchmarks itself against the leading universities of the world and seeks regular feedback from external stakeholders in an effort to develop a virtuous process of improvement in support of delivering its strategic objectives.
- 4.24 This commitment to externality and benchmarking is commendable and UCD is encouraged to ensure that the institution realises its ambition. Notwithstanding this, faculty and staff who met the review team did not routinely report benchmarking of performance. The review team encourages UCD to systematically benchmark its performance as an example of good practice and ensure that faculty and staff at all levels of the university see this as an important part of their role.

STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT

- 4.25 Faculty and staff recruitment, management and development was a key theme of the review. The review team recognises the significant focus placed on these activities by UCD in recent years. The review team found that significant consideration had been given to improving processes, policies and guidelines in respect of faculty and staff, and welcomed this focus. Evidence of a process of continual improvement for HR practices is provided in the ISER case study on faculty promotions.
- 4.26 The UCD Strategy 2015-2020 sets out the expectation that: "UCD will continue to attract excellent and diverse students, faculty and staff from around Ireland and around the world, and will put in place appropriate support measures to develop and retain the members of our community". A supporting HR strategy (*UCD HR Strategy 2016-2020 – Growing through People*) guides this approach. This considerable focus is appropriate to and befitting of a world-class university, with a commitment to be a world-class employer.
- 4.27 **The review team commends UCD's engagement with UniForum (a benchmarking exercise in respect of administration services and support activities) in 2019/2020 to assist in the development and delivery of UCD's strategic objective to ensure professional services support is appropriate.** In this objective, UCD recognises that the appropriate structuring and resourcing of professional services is critical, given the ambitious growth and investment plans UCD has for the next five years. The exercise will enable rigorous external benchmarking with over fifty international universities through detailed data analysis and sharing of best practices.
- 4.28 As with a number of other functions, there is a centralised HR department in UCD, with HR partners also based in colleges and support units across the institution.
- 4.29 A number of initiatives have recently been launched, most notably the Performance for Growth (P4G) initiative, which is a framework

that provides for all UCD employees to have at least one annual conversation with their line manager. P4G is constructed to align to the university strategic priorities and the outputs of P4G inform the analysis of institutional performance. Given the very recent introduction of P4G, it was not possible to ascertain its impact at the time of the review, but the review team welcomes the planned evaluation of P4G and its strategic alignment.

4.30 **The review team commends UCD for its Performance for Growth process and the commitment to creating parity of esteem between learning and teaching, and research.**

This will be supported by the extensive range of learning and teaching enhancement opportunities including, but not limited to:

- diplomas
- teaching fellowships
- recognition of teaching through teaching awards
- learning and teaching recognition in promotion structures
- intercultural modules
- engagement in the National Forum for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

4.31 The review team noted that there were ongoing activities to enhance faculty and staff communication and that a range of vehicles had been established to improve staff consultation. In the context of faculty and staff engagement and development, it was noted that UCD held an institutional Athena SWAN Bronze Award (2017), and, in late 2019, a further eight schools obtained bronze awards for their commitment to gender equality. This brought the total number of Athena SWAN awards held by UCD schools to 12. While 45% of faculty at UCD is female, there is significant under-representation of female faculty at professorial level (26%). UCD is encouraged to continue to focus on improvements in gender balance at all levels of the organisation and across all academic disciplines.

4.32 While many of the necessary institutional faculty and staff recruitment, management

and development structures and policies are in place, and there are clear processes for QA and QE associated with same, there are several areas, particularly in the context of faculty and staff management and development, that require attention. The three areas (i.e. faculty and staff recruitment, management and development) have experienced the consequences of growth in the student population, including in transnational activity, in UCD over the past few years.

4.33 It is clear that there is a drive for positive change and for enhancing quality at UCD. In the context of stretching institutional ambitions, there is considerable pressure on faculty and staff to deliver on a number of priorities. **It is recommended that UCD reflect on the reasonableness of expectations placed on faculty and staff in key leadership roles such as heads of school. UCD must ensure that schools and professional service units are adequately resourced to ensure that faculty and staff can deliver a high-quality learning and research experience.**

4.34 The review team identified considerable variation in the experience of fixed-term faculty, caused by the inconsistencies in approach between schools. **The review team commends the development, and implementation of, the UCD Researcher Career Framework, which seeks to improve support for researchers, to clarify and streamline contractual elements, and to provide a structured training framework for career and professional development.** However, the review team identified inconsistencies in the application of the framework across the university. It was particularly highlighted that faculty with significant responsibilities for teaching on international campuses were limited in their ability to engage and develop their academic career. **The review team recommends that UCD review the implementation of the Researcher Career Framework to ensure that it is equally and equitably implemented across the university so that faculty on fixed-term contracts (e.g. postdoctoral fellows, faculty and staff appointed to international**

campuses) have the opportunity to undertake appropriate career development.

- 4.35 In meetings with postgraduate research (PGR) students and early career researchers (post-doctoral fellows), it was clear that the UCD Careers Network plays a critical role in nurturing and developing these groups and has had a significant, positive impact on their experience. **The review team commends the UCD Careers Network and the excellent support it provides to the student body, to postgraduate research students, and postdoctoral fellows.** During the main review visit there was significant recognition of this across the faculty, staff and student communities in UCD.
- 4.36 Fixed-term members of the research staff who met the review team reported very different levels of support and engagement across UCD, with some postdoctoral fellows being excluded from school meetings or not being provided with appropriate time for development. **The review team recommends that a university-wide induction/orientation of fixed-term research faculty be implemented, and that a series of baseline commitments to fixed-term staff be set to improve the consistency of the fixed-term research staff experience.**

STUDENT FEEDBACK AND ENGAGEMENT

- 4.37 The UCD Student Charter sets out the aspirations and expectations for all members of the university community. The ISER case study on student engagement and collaboration with UCD's Students' Union (UCDSU) presented the student engagement structures in place at UCD, including student representation on the various governance and decision-making structures in UCD. The case study outlined three distinct ways in which UCDSU and UCD work together:
1. UCDSU is represented on the various governance and decision-making structures in UCD, both from an academic and a managerial perspective;
 2. UCDSU collaborates with UCD on a number of key local and national projects aimed at

providing a better environment for students' learning and well-being; and

3. UCDSU is involved in the decision-making process in certain UCD-led initiatives as they are devised, via appointment to temporary judging/evaluation/consultation panels.
- 4.38 UCD implements a comprehensive approach to modular feedback and the Student Feedback on Modules system was reviewed in 2018, following consultation and engagement across the university, during which participants considered ways to close the feedback loop to students. Faculty noted, however, that the online system of modular feedback did not have the high participation rates that an in-class survey would, and faculty expressed concerns about the validity of the feedback on this basis. The review team noted that lecturers could be encouraged to make better use of the tailored questions they can add to feedback forms. Students who met the review team highlighted a number of examples of good practice in student support, pedagogy, and the supportiveness and responsiveness of faculty and professional services staff. During the main review visit, students spoke of their positive experiences of seeing feedback implemented by lecturers, and some commented that, at the beginning of the semester, lecturers often reflected on adjustments made to their module following feedback received from the students during the previous year.
- 4.39 UCD also secures feedback from students through engagement with the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE). UCD made significant progress in increasing the response rate to the ISSE from 13% in 2016 to 23.3% in 2019. Comparatively, the completion rate for postgraduate research students was 39%, which is higher than the national average of 31%. The ISER states that the institution aims to use this data more effectively to inform future improvements to the graduate student experience. The ISER outlined the expected processes for reviewing and responding to feedback from large-scale surveys, such as cascading results and

analysis through college executive groups, discussing these at appropriate fora, and with relevant professional services, and creating and monitoring action plans. In line with the positive experience the review team had meeting UCD students, students' reported overall satisfaction in the ISSE is one of the university's key performance indicators, and, from 2015/16, the percentage of respondents who rated their experience at UCD as good or excellent increased from 82.3% to 85.6%.

4.40 **The review team commends the opportunities available for students to engage with university processes and commends the induction that UCD provides to its Students' Union representatives sitting on the GA, which enables student representatives to engage effectively as members of the GA.**

4.41 Student representation is present throughout the university, and, while it is clear that the student voice on these committees is valued, the review team identified inconsistencies in the support structure, training, and, therefore, capacity for students to inform change through the hierarchy of the student representative structure. **The review team recommends that UCD review the partnership approach it aims to take in engaging with students, ensuring Students' Union representative structures are utilised, creativity and innovation in feedback is encouraged, and that training provided is adequate to enable students at all levels (from class representatives to sabbatical officers) to engage effectively.**

4.42 As outlined in paragraph 4.10 above, through discussion with faculty, staff and students, the review team identified considerable inconsistency in the student experience depending on the individual student's school or college, and UCD is encouraged to implement the recommendation outlined in paragraph 4.11 to ensure equivalence of the student experience.

SUPPORTS FOR LEARNERS

4.43 The university strategy outlines UCD's commitment to 'providing a supportive community in which every member of the

university is enabled to achieve their full potential'.

4.44 Senior management oversees the student experience through the Dean of Students and through the UMT Student Experience Group (SEG). The role of dean of students was introduced in 2017 and the UMT SEG provides the opportunity for discussion, innovation and resolution of university-wide issues that impact on students.

4.45 UCD has a comprehensive suite of support systems available to students, from student advisors based in individual colleges, to the Student Information Desk, which has developed an effective, customer-friendly service that is very much welcomed by students. International students whom the team met were very positive about the Global Lounge and the broad range of services available to them. Students at all levels were aware of whom they could approach for support. International students also commented very positively on the academic support provided to accommodate various learning styles and to assist learners to engage with the learning content – for example, dedicating additional time to explaining the social or political context for particular topics that international students may not be aware of. The valuable support that the Residential Life office provides for students accommodated on campus was highlighted, particularly by international students, who welcomed the social engagement opportunities offered by Residential Life.

4.46 UCD takes a rigorous approach to evaluating and improving the supports offered. The review team met with a series of representatives from professional support services and a continual enhancement culture was evident from the review team's conversations with services staff, who confirmed that they sought and responded to feedback from users of their service. **The review team commends UCD's commitment to delivering a high-quality student experience, as well as the existence of effective support structures, such as student advisors within colleges and the Residence Life office.**

- 4.47 UCD provided evidence of several initiatives aimed at improving supports for learners. Case Study 4 demonstrated a number of impactful ways that student feedback has been instrumental in improving the provision of library services to UCD students. This, and the response to recommendations in the IRIU 2011 report (including introduction of peer mentors and a review of induction), were illustrative of a systematic approach to engaging students and delivering initiatives to improve the student experience, including the introduction of peer mentors and a review of induction.
- 4.48 UCD seeks to approach the review of provision of support for learners systematically through the Student and Academic Services Review (SASR). SASR is a programmatic review of services that engages colleagues across the university to capture current practice that facilitates excellent programme support to students, faculty and staff.
- 4.49 The university has increased the level of support it provides for student mental health since 2017, when UCD commissioned an external review of mental health support provision. The review resulted in recommendations on services provided, proactive support for good mental health, and monitoring of effectiveness. This resulted in increased investment in mental health support and the implementation of the UCD Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy. The review team was pleased to see this recognition of a crucial issue, accompanied by a balanced, evidence-based approach to investment, and encourages UCD to continue to assess need and demand for mental health support.
- 4.51 The review team considered the steps taken by UCD to meet the data security requirements of the *General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)*. In 2018, UCD appointed a Data Protection Officer (DPO) in line with the requirements of the regulation. Through the office of its DPO, UCD has provided a range of resources and training tools via a dedicated GDPR website to assist members of the UCD community to understand their obligations.
- 4.52 UCD captures data from across the university to inform decision-making across all levels and at individual levels of the institution in order to improve the quality of its teaching and learning. This data is connected to UCD's 10 strategic objectives and up to 32 key performance indicators have been identified to date to assist UCD in measuring its performance against its objectives.
- 4.53 The university has an integrated data portal – InfoHub – which provides access to services and information on teaching and learning, research management, financial management, and HR management. InfoHub is also the institutional platform for business intelligence and provides faculty and staff with access to detailed reports on, for example, staff management, cost-centre reporting, student full-time equivalent (FTE), and research activity.
- 4.54 With a commitment to utilising data and analytics to improve the quality of ongoing teaching and learning processes, UCD has a number of mechanisms for collecting and analysing data from students. Senior leadership has oversight of these: collection and analysis is provided by the Deputy President/Registrar and a Student Experience Group (SEG) that reports to the UMT. The SEG includes senior staff from across student-facing services, senior academic managers and Students' Union officers. This group works with key performance indicators to measure the student experience at UCD and links its activities to the university strategic plan, mission and vision.
- 4.55 UCD Registry has established the Integrated Assistance Network (IAN), a student

INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

- 4.50 UCD is a large organisation, which collates a significant amount of data on students, faculty, staff, learning and teaching, research, and enterprise. The university has a framework that governs the use and storage of information and data management including the Data Protection Policy, Data Protection Procedures, and Freedom of Information Policy.

engagement dashboard that facilitates faculty and staff in programme and school areas to proactively identify students who may be at risk of non-retention so that timely, targeted, and successful interventions and supports can be offered. However, the review team identified that engagement with IAN varies across the institution, and that the extent to which it is used as a predictive tool to enable early intervention is limited. The university is encouraged to review the use of the tool. The university may legitimately decide to discontinue the use of IAN; however, if it decides to retain it, UCD is encouraged to ensure that its usage is more consistent.

- 4.56 Student performance data is critical to informing the discussions and decisions of the UCD governing boards, which have responsibility for considering the progression status of all students. Governing boards have access to extensive reporting tools within the InfoHub Reports Catalogue to support their delivery of this critical function. There is a range of data collection tools available, which enables the governing boards to monitor, and take action on, student progression, as well as other important student-related metrics. During the main review visit, governing board members clearly articulated their roles in this process and spoke of the effective and impactful way that the suite of data resources informs decision-making on enhancement of the teaching and learning experience.
- 4.57 The UCD Research Analytics and Impact Team provides heads of school with a 'research statement', which affords a view of research activity at university, college, school and institute levels. These statements include valuable information and metrics on research funding, faculty, and publications, drawing on a combination of the university business systems and bibliometric data. During the main review visit, schools confirmed that they welcome this information, but also commented that the quantity of data and analysis can be overwhelming.
- 4.58 The review team was impressed by the ready availability of data to inform decision-making

at UCD. **The review team recommends that the university capitalise on the extent of quantitative data and external benchmarking available to derive greater analytical value from this data to inform decision-making.**

A revised approach to the provision of data and analysis could enable more effective comparisons across the university, which would facilitate assessment of the equity of the student experience and encourage self-reflection across the university, as well as enabling proactivity.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 4.59 One of UCD's key strategic objectives is to build its engagement locally, nationally and internationally. In order to build partnerships that benefit students, faculty, staff and the university, UCD is proactive in its engagement, and ensures that it communicates regularly with its external stakeholders.
- 4.60 UCD presents public information to an international audience through its website and online communication tools as well as in printed form.
- 4.61 The UCD website has undergone an extensive upgrade in recent times and continues to be regularly reviewed by colleagues across the institution to ensure it is fit for purpose. In addition to online material, UCD produces a range of high-quality printed material. This includes graduate and post-graduate prospectuses, 'Welcome to UCD' induction pages for students and 'how-to' guides, and a range of print material aimed at broader public and business audiences.
- 4.62 The Registry Communications Group – composed of staff from across UCD Registry – meets every six weeks and oversees all communications to students, delivering these through a managed communications plan, and producing a student e-zine every two weeks. The e-zine has an average open rate of 70%. To maintain the effectiveness of communications to students, UCD runs an annual Review of Registration survey, which enables students

to give feedback. In 2018, over 95% of respondents commended the usefulness of communication from UCD to students by email.

- 4.63 The mechanisms in place to assure quality and accuracy of public information appeared to be appropriate.
- 4.64 The review team considered applicant and prospective-student facing information, such as the prospectus and recruitment-facing website. UCD has a detailed and structured website for undergraduate and postgraduate student recruitment, which the review team found to contain appropriate and accurate information. The review team found the Graduate Prospectus March 2019 to be comprehensive and engaging for any audience seeking information on UCD.
- 4.65 **The review team commends UCD for making available to the public its framework for QA and QE via its Quality Office website. Quality review reports and quality improvement plans are also published on this website. The review team welcomed this openness and transparency.**
- 4.66 During the main review visit, external partners confirmed the depth and breadth of their engagement with UCD in, for example, the development of the new strategic plan and the impact of external input.

OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- 4.67 UCD has a range of collaborative partnerships in respect of *inter alia* student exchanges, study abroad, research, articulation, joint degrees, and transnational education delivery.
- 4.68 UCD has published procedures for the approval of UCD linked providers and QA procedures and guidelines for linked provider institutional review. UCD was the first Irish university to publish a quality handbook for linked providers. The handbook outlines the management and oversight processes in respect of QA and QE of the provision of UCD's partner institutions; specifically, it sets out the processes for approving the QA procedures

of those partner institutions and undertaking institutional review of the effectiveness of those QA procedures.

- 4.69 **The review team commends UCD for its framework for collaborative provision, which is benchmarked against international best practice and comparator institutions, and complies with relevant policies and guidelines, such as the Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQN) *Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision*.**
- 4.70 During the main review visit, the review team met with a number of leaders involved in collaborative partnerships with UCD. These partners spoke of the development of effective relationships and effective, mature interactions between long-standing partners. The external partners that met the review team were well established and provided evidence of UCD's ability to work constructively with them to grow the partnerships e.g. expanding the amount of work carried out jointly and effectively partnering as validating institution, research partner and work-placement partner.
- 4.71 The joint programme board structure for overseeing partnerships was regarded by external partners as an effective way for both parties to assess jointly quality and review processes. The role of UCD's Quality Office as a support and guide to all partners was positively endorsed.
- 4.72 The review team supports the university's proposals to establish a series of formal statements that would articulate expectations regarding the monitoring and oversight of these types of partnership, and to map more clearly the process for academic and university management approval of partnerships. These enhancements will support the effective management of higher-risk activities with partners in many overseas locations.
- 4.73 The review team welcomed UCD's commitment to developing formal procedures in consultation with the linked providers, to assist in monitoring the implementation of linked providers' QA procedures.

RISK MANAGEMENT

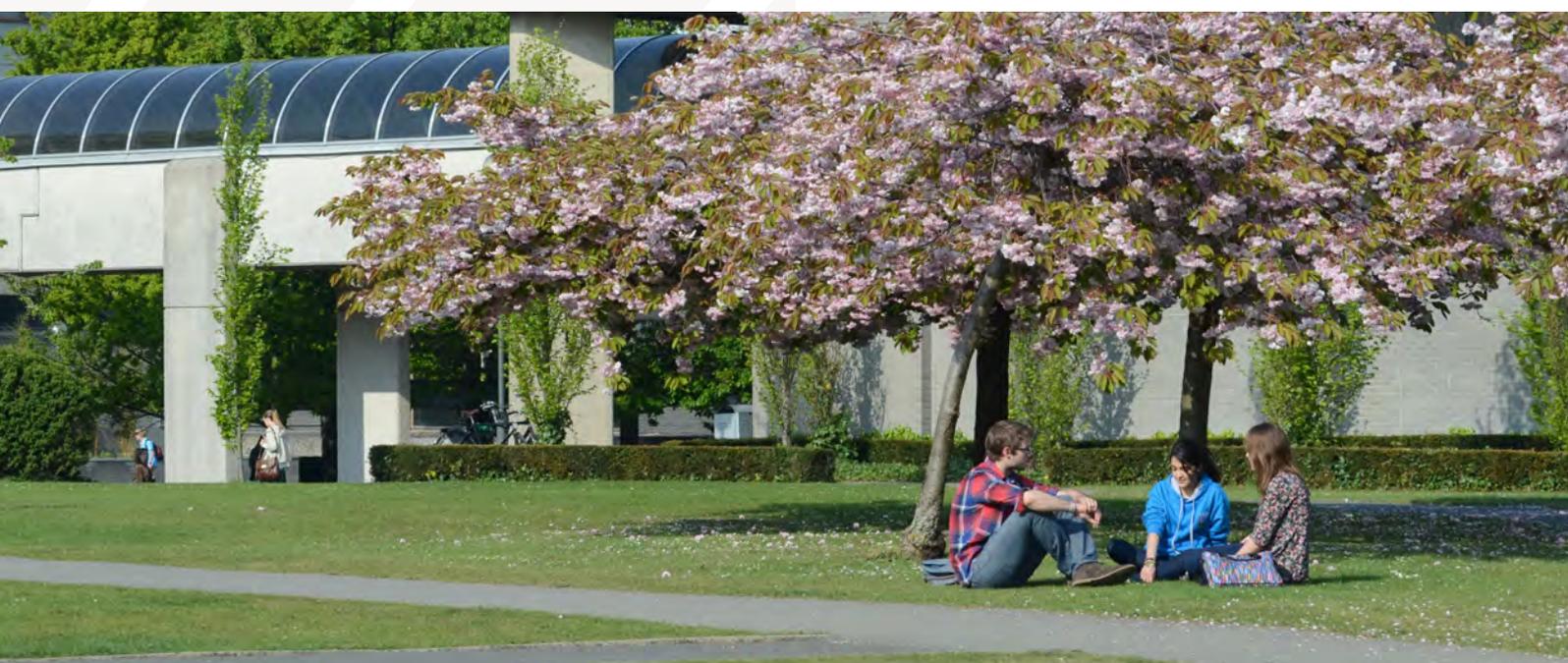
- 4.74 UCD's strategy sets ambitious goals and the ISER outlined significant growth and investment plans in respect of, for example, international student growth and redevelopment of the Belfield Campus. UCD is a university with a vision to be recognised as Ireland's 'Global University'. With ambitious plans that will see a continued growth in student numbers both in Ireland and abroad, significant capital expenditure plans for the campus and growth in research, the university has put a risk management process in place in order to understand and manage the key risks that could impact on the timely delivery of this vision.
- 4.75 Following receipt of additional information from the university during the main review visit, the review team was informed that the risk management process requires senior office-holders across the institution to maintain and develop effective risk registers at local levels (e.g. heads of school, directors of support units), which are aligned to an institutional-level risk register that focuses on risks to the delivery of UCD's Strategy. The risks are clearly defined at institutional level and the action owners are members of the UMT.
- 4.76 During the main review visit, GA members clearly outlined their role in the assessment of institutional risk and articulated an excellent

understanding of this role and the process for managing risks to the delivery of the university strategy.

- 4.77 **The review team commends the university for its clear articulation of the institutional approach to risk management, as well as its effective governance and oversight of institutional risk through the GA.**
- 4.78 However, the review team found variability in engagement with the active risk management process across the university in schools and units. Contrary to the clarity of ownership and responsibility at institutional and GA level, there was limited evidence at other levels of the university of interaction with formal risk registers. **The review team recommends that UCD review the operational risk management process to reduce inconsistency and increase the robustness of risk management across the university.**

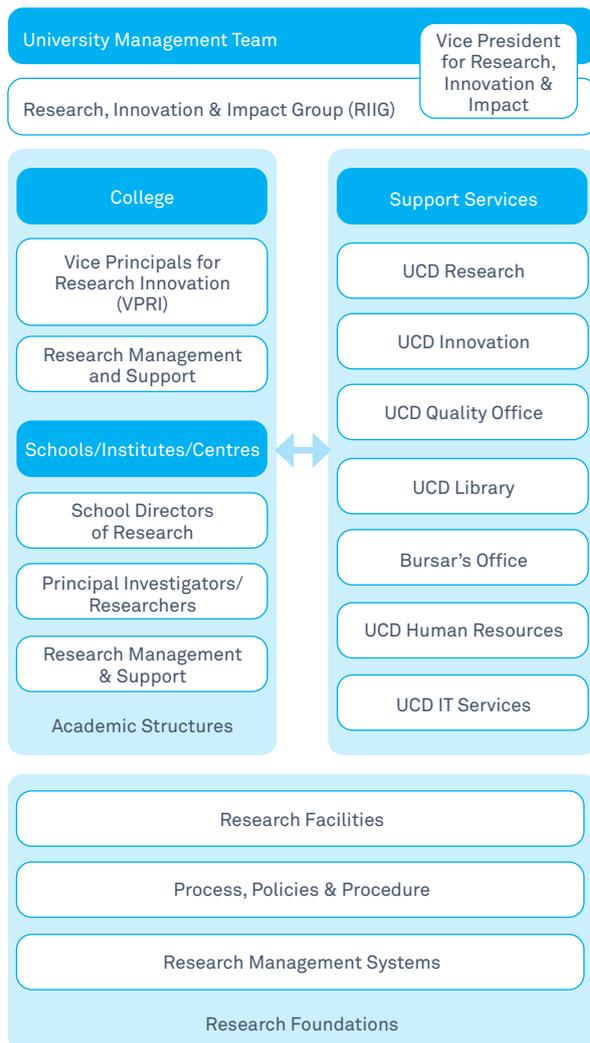
RESEARCH

- 4.79 Research is a core and significant activity in UCD and UCD's research-intensive commitment is outlined in its *Strategy for Research, Innovation and Impact 2015-2020*. There was evidence during meetings with faculty and staff of a research culture and a strategic focus and imperative on research throughout the institution



- 4.80 The review team considers that the research QA processes show due regard for the *QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* and the *QQI Topic-Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Research Degree Programmes*.
- 4.81 The Vice-President for Research, Innovation and Impact (VPRII) has overall responsibility for the quality of research in UCD and is a member of the UMT. The VPRII reports to the President and chairs the University Research Innovation and Impact Group, which provides high-level oversight and co-ordination for the university's activities in respect of research, innovation and impact. There is a cascade structure from the VPRII to the colleges and schools, and this forms a key mechanism for overall management of research quality.

- 4.82 The review team heard thoughtful articulation about research quality from the VPRII and team members were made aware of the implication of a research quality culture in interactions with faculty and professional services staff. The review team was encouraged to hear that this concept was being embedded among key parties in the university.
- 4.83 The ISER states that research is conducted in colleges and schools, and, reflecting the six thematic strategic priorities (Agri-Food; Culture, Economy & Society; Energy; Environment; Information and Communications Technology [ICT] and Health), in seven multidisciplinary research institutes. In addition, a number of major national research and technology centres are led and hosted at UCD.



- 4.84 To optimise performance and assure and enhance quality, a strong and reasonably robust support infrastructure exists in professional services and in the colleges. The ISER (as well as ancillary materials) describes a highly structured support infrastructure for both quantitative and qualitative aspects of research quality. The principal unit of support is UCD Research and Innovation, with significant contribution from other key units.
- 4.85 UCD Research and Innovation leads the provision of (i) information systems to enable research management at strategic, unit, and individual levels, and (ii) staff and processes to optimise the securing of external funding for research.
- 4.86 **The review team commends the research performance support mechanisms, which function both to support the institution and the individual academic researchers.**
- 4.87 UCD has significantly increased the monetary value of externally funded research awards in the past seven years and has increased the volume (+23%) and field-weighted citation impact of UCD publications (+5.5%). The number of research-active faculty has also increased in absolute and percentage terms (+6.7%) over the period. An output-based research support scheme (OBRSS) has been

a factor in supporting this latter growth, while also enabling individuals to monitor their own research performance and quality.

4.88 UCD Research and Innovation provides a suite of support mechanisms that has led to an increase in spin-out companies (+100%) and an increase in industry engagement (+131%) over the period 2014 to 2019.

4.89 UCD has a comprehensive approach to monitoring research and reviewing benchmarked performance. UCD routinely utilises SciVal, research grant income, innovation metrics and university ranking data as key external, quantitative benchmarking information. In February 2019, a Research and Innovation Dashboard was developed and launched to facilitate strategic and operational management at institutional, college and school-level, which has the capacity to be a powerful management tool.

4.90 The extensive data available supports and underpins research QA and QE processes. The primary mechanism is the qualitative review of schools on a five-year cycle. Other components include the peer-review of funded research programmes, external examiner feedback, scientific and industry advisory boards, stakeholder feedback, and major awards and honours. Research quality is a component of the school quality reviews coordinated by the UCD Quality Office. The review team identified that, in these reviews, research quality assessment did not always enjoy parity of esteem with the assessment of learning and teaching. The review team noted that, since the last review, research has been formally integrated into the planning cycle for schools. There was evidence that quality processes have enabled a diversity of practice and self-generated activities, and this has enabled at least one school to conduct its own mini research assessment (the School of Law mini-Research Excellence Framework review).

4.91 **The review team recommends that, as a globally-competitive research-intensive institution, UCD review its quality processes with a view to securing a more effective**

balance between learning and teaching, and research and to demonstrating robust institution-level research quality (recognising the lack of ESG framework for research quality and the infancy of research quality expectations).

4.92 UCD graduate boards have a specific responsibility to lead policy, process, and best practice development to enhance the research student experience. The UCD Graduate Studies service has a critical role in research quality, particularly in the context of the institutional priority to grow PhD (postgraduate doctoral degree) numbers, and to attract an increasingly diverse research student cohort.

4.93 UCD practices reflect the national move to a 'structured PhD model', which is typically four years full time, or six years part time, encompassing the thesis, but with an increased emphasis on training, professional development, and student oversight as part of the programme. The review team identified inconsistencies in the implementation of the Research and Development Planning component of the structured PhD programme at supervisor, Research Studies Panel and school level. For example, students who met the review team welcomed the additional training provision but identified variability in the encouragement that students received from supervisors to attend training or proactive support from supervisors to identify training needs and opportunities.

4.94 The review team recognises the transition period involved in implementing the structured PhD model and the requirement for significant culture change across a large institution with a heavily devolved approach. This was evidenced in the extensive variability and inconsistency of the PGR student experience across the university discussed by PGR students during the main review visit.

4.95 The support provided by the UCD Careers Network in identifying and supporting development needs and opportunities for PGR students was highlighted as a positive by PGR students who met the review team.

4.96 The review team noted proposed revisions to the governance of graduate studies, by centralising responsibilities into one board as a means to improve the PGR experience. The team encourages a holistic approach to this. While a review of structures may lead to some positive change, the primary driver should be the quality of the student experience. The review should consider a variety of measures, among them increased engagement by supervisors in training, and the establishment of baseline expectations for PGR engagement and support (e.g. supervision sessions, allocation of office or study space). A significant element of the inconsistency noted by the review team was driven by approaches adopted by individual supervisors. **The review team recommends that UCD introduce a requirement for all PhD supervisors, including**

existing and experienced supervisors, to undertake training to establish the baseline commitments to PGR students and significantly raise expectations of supervisors.

4.97 While the team acknowledges the institution's efforts to induct successfully PGR students by means of the GradsCONNECT event, **the review team recommends that UCD review its approach to postgraduate induction to ensure consistent quality with the undergraduate induction, given UCD's strategic priority to grow the graduate community.** This review should ensure that, in the context of increased diversity of the PGR student cohort, the induction process equips students to engage successfully in postgraduate research at UCD.



Objective 2 - Quality Enhancement

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

4.98 In accordance with the ESG, section 1.2 (*QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*, section 2, unit 3.1), academic programmes at UCD are subject to a formal process for their design, development and approval. The technical steps of the procedure are defined by the PDARF, but the main reference point when designing and approving programmes of study and modules is UCD's Academic Regulations. The review team welcomed that both frameworks had recently been revised (from 2019/2020 onwards), offering a more comprehensive and consistent approach to setting and assessing academic standards when designing, approving, monitoring and reviewing programmes of study and their constituent modules.

4.99 The Academic Regulations are approved by AC, which has responsibility and oversight of academic affairs at UCD. AC oversees and assures the quality and standards of academic matters, in particular where programmes lead to awards. AC membership includes heads of subject-areas and disciplines, faculty and students (respecting diversity across colleges, disciplines, programme levels and gender), but does not include external stakeholders. This lack of externality is also reflected in the composition of AC sub-committees with QA roles, such as the ACQEC and the University Programmes Board (UPB) (see Appendix C). ACQEC is responsible for the oversight of the implementation of the QA processes in the university, which include governance, strategic planning, compliance, and academic standards, while UPB oversees the QA process in respect of programmes and develops policies and guidelines to promote effectiveness and excellence in the delivery of programmes.

4.100 **ESG 2015 and QQI's *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* incorporate expectations in respect of the engagement**

of external stakeholders during programme design and development and the review team recommends that UCD strengthen AC and committees by engaging external experts and stakeholders as members. This engagement would be in line with UCD's stated intentions to incorporate international benchmarking more systematically in quality monitoring processes. There was evidence of willingness from external stakeholders who met the review team to engage with the institution in this way. There are demonstrable benefits to UCD from engaging external expertise in ensuring UCD programmes of study remain current and relevant.

4.101 The review team found that the process of approval for new academic programmes is appropriate and conforms to ESG 2015, section 1.2 and QQI's *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*, section 2, unit 3.1. The PDARF is a formal, institution-wide staged process that begins with initial programme or module proposals at school-level. The new programme proposals are considered and, ultimately, approved at the highest executive level (UMT), which ensures that the programme objectives are in line with institutional strategy. Additionally, all programmes in the university are overseen by a governing body that is responsible for proposing the new programme's academic structure and monitoring its overall performance through, for example, assessment of student progression and completion. Governing bodies report to the UPB, which takes final decisions about collaborative programme supplements, pathway proposals and derogations. The examination of a number of terms of reference for programme boards shows the involvement of students in governing boards and boards of studies, and reveals skill and care in designing the specific purpose and structure of each programme.

4.102 In addition to the UPB and governing boards, certain faculty roles have responsibilities in relation to academic programmes, such

as Registrar, college principals, Dean of Undergraduate Studies and Dean of Graduate Studies, and school heads of teaching and learning. This structure assists in the monitoring of possible inconsistencies between schools and in promoting – specifically through college-level roles – an interdisciplinary approach to programmes.

- 4.103 UCD's approach to learning outcomes is comprehensive. All UCD taught programmes have explicit intended learning outcomes and qualifications. This has been achieved through rigorous review of programmes to ensure alignment with the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA (in accordance with ESG 1.2 and QQI's *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*, section 2, unit 3.1). Learning outcomes of the modules are aligned to programme outcomes. UCD Academic Regulations (sections 1-4) have introduced new programme structures to promote both depth and breadth in learning outcomes. The review team recognises UCD's commitment to the quality of teaching and the academic welfare of students. The review team reviewed module descriptors and was satisfied that they were accurate and complied with UCD's Academic Regulations.

TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

- 4.104 The UCD approach to teaching, learning and assessment is set out in the *UCD Education Strategy 2015-20*. The aim of the Education Strategy is to 'provide an educational experience that is holistic, one that instils in students a desire to learn and create, to question and reason, to innovate and explore, and to contribute to society at all levels.' The Education Strategy set out six priorities for the 2015-2020 period:
- Priority 1 – Offer students a fully outcomes-based curriculum, and enhance modular flexibility and choice aligned with learning outcomes
 - Priority 2 – Provide students with opportunities to develop interpersonal,

intercultural and life skills within and outside the classroom

- Priority 3 – Ensure students have access to excellent academic advice and support throughout their time in university
 - Priority 4 – Enable students to proactively manage their health and well-being, and develop the attributes required to make the most of their wider university experience
 - Priority 5 – Foster an institutional culture that values teaching and research equally and embeds institutional mechanisms that facilitate, recognise and reward excellent teaching and supervision while providing effective and enabling structures that support educational enhancement
 - Priority 6 – Educate and develop graduate research students to the highest level; advancing their knowledge through engaging in original research, fostering independent thinking and developing advanced skills and attributes
- 4.105 Teaching, learning and assessment is led by the Deputy President, Registrar and Vice-President for Academic Affairs, who is supported by the university deans (Deans of Graduate Studies, Undergraduate Studies, and Students) and through vice-principals for teaching and learning in each college, and heads of teaching and learning in each school. The college vice-principal for teaching and learning was identified as a critical consulting role, with a remit to coordinate activity across the college and to encourage the sharing and adoption of good practice. Central support is delivered through the UCD Teaching and Learning team. The University Teaching and Learning Committee's purpose is to 'advise the Registrar on the development of teaching and learning projects and priorities within the University in the context of the University Strategy'. A sub-committee of UMT – UMT Education Group – 'provides high-level oversight and coordination of the development and implementation of the University's education strategy'.

- 4.106 UCD Teaching and Learning plays an important role in operationalising the strategy through an annual plan of works (e.g. setting out actions each year related to technology-enhanced learning, assessment, and scholarship), through the provision of professional development support to faculty, and through celebration of good practice. Faculty who met the review team, including postdoctoral fellows, were cognisant of the teaching and learning CPD available from UCD Teaching and Learning.
- 4.107 Faculty who met the review team reflected on the impact of the Education Strategy on frontline teaching, with a perception that the strategy was well articulated at institutional and college level, but that it did not have a significant influence on pedagogy and practice at school level.
- 4.108 UCD rigorously reviews the learning and teaching experience through the Student Feedback on Modules process. In 2018, a five-year qualitative analysis of over 10,000 comments from students was conducted which identified a number of themes for action, including faculty and staff support and the timeliness of feedback on assessment.
- 4.109 UCD launched a Curriculum Review and Enhancement (CRE) project in April 2015 aimed at embedding research in the undergraduate portfolio, a set of attributes and capability in taught progress, effective assessment, and expanding the use of technology. **The review team commends the university's commitment to defining educational excellence. Excellence in teaching and curriculum design is well supported across UCD governance and operational structures. The Curriculum Review and Enhancement Project has increased coherence in the module and programme delivery across the institution through well-articulated learning outcomes.**
- 4.110 The UCD Assessment Code of Practice sets guidelines for and expectations for the principles, responsibilities and standards for assessment at UCD, with assessment of programme outcomes also a focus of the CRE project. The Assessment Enhancement

Implementation Framework (AEIF) project, led by UCD Teaching and Learning, has been developed in response to a priority action in the UCD Education Strategy. The project aims to develop a framework to support faculty to review, plan, articulate and implement programme-level assessment and feedback strategies, and sets out four priority areas of focus:

- integrated and coherent programme assessment
- a variety of assessment methods across the programme
- effective assessment and creating space for deeper learning
- opportunities for feedback including technology enabled feedback

4.111 In line with UCD principles, there is a high level of delegation of authority to programme and module leaders to determine appropriate assessments. The CRE and AEIF projects outlined are one element of ensuring a degree of consistency. UCD has also published 'Programme Assessment and Feedback Principles', which emphasise that evaluation of assessment should be programme-wide, ensuring diversity across modules.

4.112 Students who met the review team commented on the variation they had experienced in practice in the application of grading scales and a lack of clarity in the calculation of grades. **The review team recommends that UCD continue its efforts to improve consistency in the assessment process.**

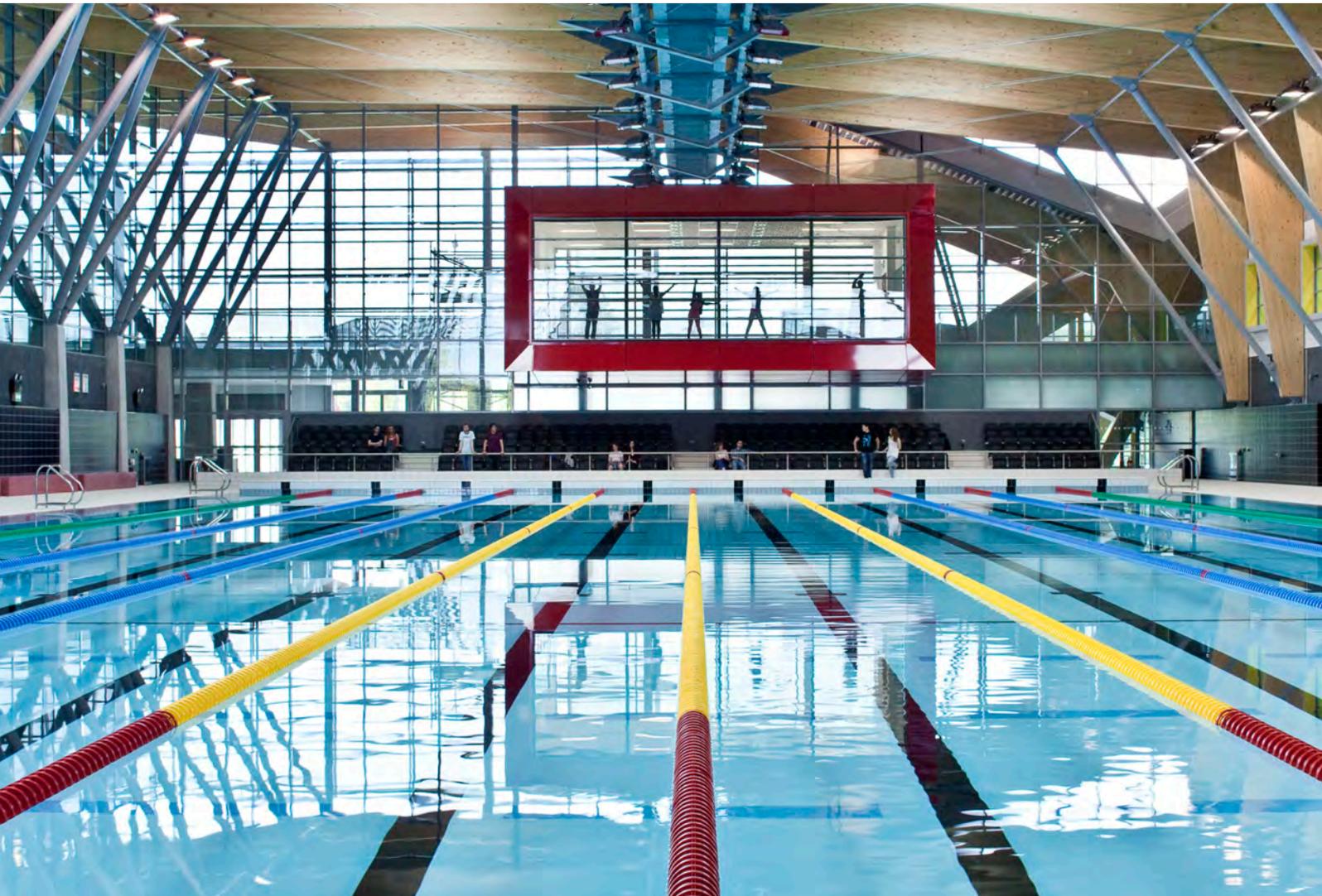
EFFECTIVENESS OF TRANSNATIONAL PROCESSES/COLLABORATION QA

4.113 UCD's Strategy identifies UCD as 'Ireland's Global University' and this designation envisages strong international student recruitment; an emphasis on recruiting talented faculty and staff globally; the facilitation of student, faculty and staff mobility; international research and industry collaboration; and the delivery of education transnationally.

- 4.114 In 2018-19, 3,984 students were enrolled on UCD programmes outside of Ireland. For the most part, UCD transnational education programmes are delivered in partnership with key institutions in China and South East Asia. This involves a range of models, including the Beijing Dublin International College (an entity owned and operated jointly by UCD & Beijing University of Technology), the RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus (jointly owned by UCD and RCSI), the delivery of UCD College of Business programmes in Singapore and Hong Kong with Kaplan, and in Sri Lanka with the National School of Business Management.
- 4.115 The UMT Global Engagement Group (UMT GEG) has responsibility for oversight of international partnerships. This group, which reports to UMT and is chaired by the VP for Global Engagement, oversees the development of new partnerships and is responsible for the ongoing monitoring of existing partnerships.

New partnership proposals typically originate within schools and are proposed through the PDARF process and endorsed by governing boards. Where a new partnership is approved by UMT, the UPB will consider associated programme proposals.

- 4.116 The review team welcomes UCD's robust approach to transnational QA and is pleased that transnational taught partnerships are subject to the same QA arrangements as taught programmes delivered at UCD's home campus in Dublin. This includes analysis of student progression, student evaluation of modules, student consultative forums, programme monitoring, and external examiner feedback. Given the different legal frameworks within which the transnational partnerships are delivered, the programme partnerships are typically subject to additional QA assessments in those countries in which the partnerships operate.



- 4.117 In recognition of the higher risk associated with programmes delivered in partnership and at a distance, major collaborative arrangements that deliver UCD taught programmes provide an annual report to the UCD Quality Office. These reports are reviewed by the Quality Office and a summary is created and reviewed by ACQEC annually. The reports identify required enhancements and seek to share good practice. **The review team endorses this approach and recommends that UCD consider opportunities to embed greater systematic benchmarking of the performance of transnational partnerships into the annual reporting process to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of quality and the protection of UCD’s reputation.**
- 4.118 Extensive, embedded experience of transnational education was evident both in the managing of complex partnerships and in the continuous enhancement of, and reflection on, partnerships at both school and individual level. It was clear that newer transnational partnerships had benefitted from colleagues’ experience of engagement in more established partnerships.
- 4.119 The review team identified a number of good practices in place that support the student learning experience in transnational partnerships, including training and support for intercultural awareness and mentoring. The review team encourages UCD to review the annual quality reporting process to ensure that good practice identified in international delivery can be adopted at the UCD campuses in Dublin.
- 4.120 The UCD transnational partnership staffing model is determined on a case-by-case basis for each individual partnership, and the review team was informed of a number of different models, including local delivery through a partner, a short-term ‘fly-in-faculty’ model, where UCD faculty are installed at the transnational campus, and long-term (e.g. three to four months) placement of UCD faculty at a transnational campus. There was evidence of inconsistency in the support and training provided to faculty prior to their engagement in transnational education, particularly in respect of intercultural learning. The review team also identified that, in a number of instances, fixed-term contract faculty was appointed to international campuses for extended durations with heavy teaching loads. While this met the requirements of teaching-delivery, it was considered that this could limit those academics’ opportunities to undertake effective research and professional development activities. **The review team recommends that UCD review the support structures for faculty and staff engaged in transnational education and, particularly, ensure that the Researcher Career Framework is equally and equitably implemented across the university to ensure that faculty on fixed-term contracts engaged in transnational education delivery have the opportunity to undertake appropriate career development.**

Objective 3 – Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION

- 4.121 The review team found that, overall, UCD processes for access, transfer and progression are in line with the *QQI Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training*.
- 4.122 UCD provides a range of entry pathways for students to access UCD learning opportunities. These pathways are promoted by the UCD Admissions and UCD Access and Lifelong Learning units, which support access courses, open learning opportunities, lifelong learning structures, and information on the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) and the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE). UCD Access and Lifelong Learning provides support and guidance to prospective students on application processes, financial support, and continued personal and academic support in learning and there was evidence of the effectiveness of this support.
- 4.123 In line with expectations of the policies outlined above, UCD has a Recognition of Prior Learning policy and supporting guide for applicants, which outlines the constructive approach UCD takes to enabling students to access higher education on the basis of prior accredited and experiential learning.
- 4.124 UCD's Transfer Policy outlines the institutional objective to 'support and maximise progression, wider participation and retention, allowing as much flexibility as possible to ensure students are in programmes that suit their academic strengths and offer them the best prospect of achieving their full potential' and set the scope for students transferring within undergraduate programmes or Irish/EU students transferring into undergraduate programmes from other HE institutions.

- 4.125 Academic progression is governed by UCD Academic Regulations, section 5 ('Programme Progression and Completion'), which outlines the commitment that 'the criteria for progression and the award of a degree must be transparent, clearly defined and fair to all students.' This section sets out appropriate regulations for student progression, which are in line with the *QQI Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training*.
- 4.126 As outlined in section 4.64, above, the public information that UCD provides to prospective students is extensive and the mechanisms in place to assure the quality and ensure the accuracy of public information appear to be appropriate and sufficient.

WIDENING PARTICIPATION

- 4.127 UCD oversees and monitors progress in respect of the institutional objective to widen participation and diversify the student population through the Widening Participation Committee, including extending the range of entry pathways for under-represented students. These pathways were developed by UCD Access and Lifelong Learning in collaboration with schools and UCD Admissions. The ISER identified that UCD aims to increase the diversity of its student population to ensure that 33% of its undergraduate students originate from a widening participation background³ by 2020. This would continue the trajectory initiated in 2015: the percentage of widening access students increased from 27.2% to 29.1% in the period from 2015 to 2018.

3 UCD define 'widening participation' as socio-economically disadvantaged, students with a disability, mature students, part-time or flexible learning, and students on QQI programmes.

4.128 In support of its ambition to widen participation further and to facilitate effective access, UCD has identified the requirement for greater analytical research. The review team noted that work has begun on developing enhanced access, progression, completion, and outcomes data for all under-represented student cohorts, which has identified patterns and trends and allowed for local and institutional action to address any issues arising.

4.129 The review team commends UCD for its institutional commitment to widening participation, the robust and appropriate mechanisms put in place to enable access, transfer and progression, and the growth in the widening access student population at UCD.



Objective 4 – Provision of Programmes to International Learners

- 4.130 The review team concluded that UCD meets the core provisions of the QCI *Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners*.
- 4.131 UCD has a large, and growing, population of international learners. In 2018-19, over 8,250 learners at the UCD campus in Dublin were from outside of Ireland. Internationalisation is a key element of the 2015-20 Strategic Plan, with a commitment by the university to 'provide an educational experience that defines international best practice.'
- 4.132 Alignment with the *Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners* is overseen by the VP for Global Engagement and key supports to this are the UMT Global Engagement Group and the professional services structures in UCD Global.
- 4.133 In January 2016 UCD Global undertook an initial mapping exercise in order to assess compliance with the code and an update-review was undertaken in late 2018.
- 4.134 Faculty and staff who met the review team reflected on the passionate commitment of faculty and staff from across the university to supporting internationalisation and on the value international students can bring to institutional diversity. **The review team commends the university's commitment to global engagement, to considering the intercultural learning experience, to valuing diversity in the curriculum, and to recognising and rising to the challenges of internationalisation.**
- 4.135 The review team met a representative group of international students and reviewed facilities for international student support, such as the UCD Global Lounge. **The review team commends the supports provided by UCD for student learning – particularly in the context of internationalisation – through the provision of the Applied Language Centre, Academic Writing Centre, and Maths Support Centre.**
- 4.136 There was considerable evidence of excellent practice in relation to international student experience across the institution. However, there was also evidence of considerable variability for example, across Erasmus or exchange, international PGR students, international PhD students and across the academic schools and programmes. The review team encourages UCD to consider this variability and the review team welcomed the creation of a new role in UCD Global with specific oversight of the international student experience.
- 4.137 During the main review visit, international students spoke of challenges in integrating with non-international students and UCD faculty and staff acknowledged this challenge. The university has attempted to support integration by running events on campus, providing social opportunities through Residence Life activity in halls of residence and trips. These activities are welcomed by students but have not made a significant impact on cross-cultural integration. It was encouraging to the review team that faculty and staff who met the team were committed to continuing efforts to improve this integration. There are opportunities to utilise extensive international partnerships – such as Universitas 21 – to continue this work.
- 4.138 While some examples of excellent academic practice were provided by faculty during the main review visit – for example lecturers offering additional or supplementary support to international students to provide greater cultural context or background to particular topics – faculty and staff also acknowledged the importance of continued efforts to further develop UCD faculty and staff's comfort and experience with cultural diversity. The review team welcomes the development of the Global Insight Seminar Series, the module on teaching and learning across cultures delivered by UCD Teaching and Learning, and organic peer mentoring reported across faculty colleagues, and would encourage UCD to formalise these aspects to increase impact.

4.139 International students reported very positively on the pre-departure sessions led by UCD Global delivered in their country of origin, which helped prepare them for study at UCD. While considerable services were provided for international students post-arrival, students reflected that the array of services could be confusing and were variable across the university. International PhD students, in particular, reflected on the limitations of PhD student induction and the dependency on individual supervisors for the quality of the student pastoral support available.

4.140 To ensure continued alignment with Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners principle 3.4 (Supports and Services for International Learners), the review team recommends that UCD consider the consistency and clarity of pastoral and academic support available to all international student cohorts.



Section 5

Conclusions

Overall Findings and Conclusions

Summary of Commendations and Recommendations



Conclusions

Overall Findings and Conclusions

The review team met with a range of faculty, staff, students and stakeholders and reviewed extensive documentation in preparation for and during the review. The review team concluded that UCD shows due regard to the expectations of the QQI *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*, ESG 2015 and other relevant topic- and sector-specific QA guidelines, as well as the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012*.

The review team restates the following overarching statements regarding the QA arrangements at UCD.

Summary of Commendations and Recommendations

The review team approached the review in a constructive and supportive manner, with the intention of producing a report that is constructive and beneficial to UCD's continued excellence. The commendations and recommendations should be seen in this light.

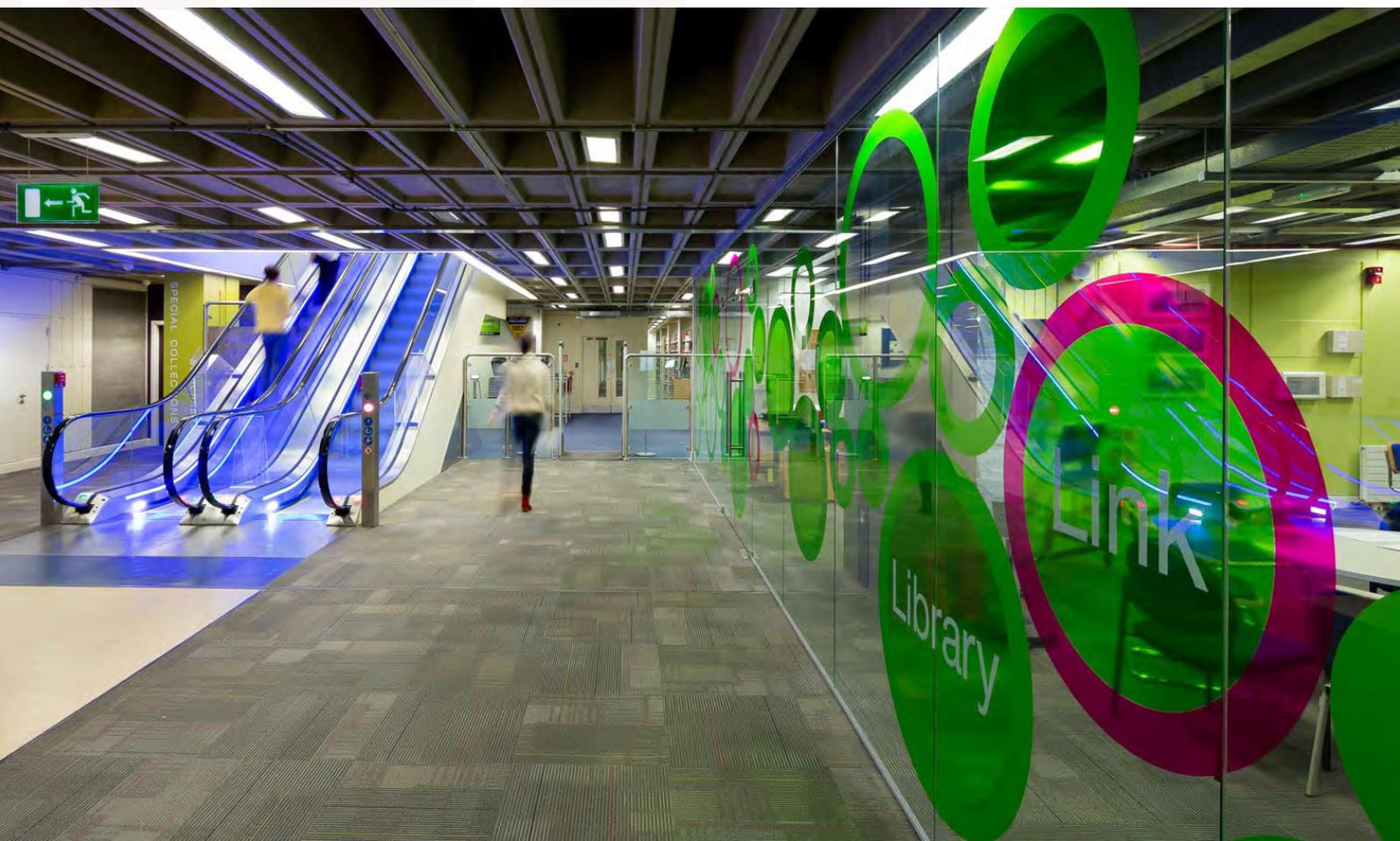
COMMENDATIONS

1. The review team commends UCD for the UCD Strategic Plan 2015-2020, which is well articulated and well understood across the university. The development of the new Strategic Plan 2020-2024 has involved an open, consultative process to evolve the new strategy, including engagement with business and industry to inform the future needs, and the review team welcomes the new strategic focus on challenges.
2. The review team commends the extensive engagement and efforts of the ISER drafting group and recognises the extensive process of information collation undertaken to produce the ISER, and the challenge in editing the vast amount of information collected into a manageable narrative of reasonable length.
3. The review team commends UCD's effective, systematic QA processes, which ensure the rigorous evaluation of learning and teaching and research, and the effective use of externality in review methods.
4. The review team commends UCD's effort to monitor and periodically review its programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society.
5. The review team commends UCD's robust governance structure, which supports the on-going management of its QA procedures and processes.
6. The review team commends UCD's engagement with UniForum (a benchmarking exercise in respect of administration services and support activities) in 2019/2020 to assist in the development and delivery of UCD's strategic objective to ensure professional services support is appropriate.
7. The review team commends UCD for its Performance for Growth process and the commitment to creating parity of esteem between learning and teaching, and research.
8. The review team commends the development, and implementation of, the UCD Researcher Career Framework, which seeks to improve support for researchers, to clarify and

- streamline contractual elements, and to provide a structured training framework for career and professional development.
9. The review team commends the UCD Careers Network and the excellent support it provides to the student body, to postgraduate research students, and postdoctoral fellows.
 10. The review team commends the opportunities available for students to engage with university processes and commends the induction that UCD provides to its Students' Union representatives sitting on the GA, which enables student representatives to engage effectively as members of the GA.
 11. The review team commends UCD's commitment to delivering a high-quality student experience, as well as the existence of effective support structures, such as student advisors within colleges and the Residence Life office.
 12. The review team commends UCD for making available to the public its framework for QA and QE via its Quality Office Website. Quality review reports and quality improvement plans are also published on this website. The review team welcomed this openness and transparency.
 13. The review team commends UCD for its framework for collaborative provision, which is benchmarked against international best practice and comparator institutions, and complies with relevant policies and guidelines, such as the Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQN) *Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision*.
 14. The review team commends the university for its clear articulation of the institutional approach to risk management, as well as its effective governance and oversight of institutional risk through the GA.
 15. The review team commends the research performance support mechanisms, which functions both to support the institution and the individual academic researchers.
 16. The review team commends the university's commitment in defining educational excellence. Excellence in teaching and curriculum design is well supported across UCD governance and operational structures. The Curriculum Review and Enhancement Project has increased coherence in the module and programme delivery across the institution through well-articulated learning outcomes.
 17. The review team commends UCD for its institutional commitment to widening participation, the robust and appropriate mechanisms put in place to enable access, transfer and progression, and the growth in the widening access student population at UCD.
 18. The review team commends the university's commitment to global engagement, to considering the intercultural learning experience, to valuing diversity in the curriculum, and to recognising and rising to the challenges of internationalisation.
 19. The review team commends the supports provided by UCD for student learning – particularly in the context of internationalisation – through the provision of the Advanced Language Centre, Academic Writing Centre, and Maths Support Centre.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The review team recommends that UCD publish the ISER and IP to ensure that the institution benefits from the volume of work involved in creating these documents.
2. While the review team recognised that UCD identified a small number 'challenges' through the ISER the review considered that there was opportunity for the ISER to have provided an enhanced narrative, presenting a more analytical review of the period since the last institutional review (2011 to 2019). The review team recommends that UCD adopt a more effective, analytical approach to self-evaluation to enable continued development and excellence.
3. The review team recommends that UCD review its QA processes and consider consolidating processes to ensure that schools have the capacity, and are enabled, to effectively self-evaluate, reflect and implement quality improvements.
4. The review team recommends that UCD review its QA processes to ensure that these processes adequately assess the consistency of undergraduate and postgraduate student experience and that, where evidence of inconsistency is found, robust actions be taken to enhance consistency.
5. The review team recommends that UCD reflect on the reasonableness of expectations placed on faculty and staff in key leadership roles such as heads of school. UCD must ensure that schools and professional service units are adequately resourced to ensure that faculty can deliver a high-quality learning and research experience.
6. The review team recommends that UCD review the implementation of the Researcher Career Framework to ensure that it is equally and equitably implemented across the university so that faculty and staff on fixed-term contracts (e.g. postdoctoral fellows, faculty and staff appointed to international campuses) have the opportunity to undertake appropriate career development.



7. The review team recommends that a university-wide induction/orientation of fixed-term research faculty be implemented, and that a series of baseline commitments to fixed-term faculty be set to improve the consistency of the fixed-term research staff experience.
8. The review team recommends that UCD review the partnership approach it aims to take in engaging with students, ensuring Students' Union representative structures are utilised, creativity and innovation in feedback is encouraged, and that training provided is adequate to enable students at all levels (from class representatives to sabbatical officers) to engage effectively.
9. The review team recommends that the university capitalise on the extent of quantitative data and external benchmarking available to derive greater analytical value from this data to inform decision-making.
10. The review team recommends that UCD review the operational risk management process to reduce inconsistency and increase the robustness of risk management across the university.
11. The review team recommends that, as a globally-competitive research-intensive institution, UCD review its quality processes with a view to securing a more effective balance between learning and teaching, and research and to demonstrating robust institution-level research quality (recognising the lack of ESG framework for research quality and the infancy of research quality expectations).
12. The review team recommends that UCD introduce a requirement for all PhD supervisors, including existing and experienced supervisors, to undertake training to establish the baseline commitments to PGR students and significantly raise expectations of supervisors.
13. The review team recommends that UCD review its approach to postgraduate induction to ensure consistent quality with undergraduate induction, given UCD's strategic priority to grow the graduate community.
14. ESG 2015 and QQI's *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* incorporate expectations in respect of the engagement of external stakeholders during programme design and development and the review team recommends that UCD strengthen AC and committees by engaging external experts and stakeholders as members.
15. The review team recommends that UCD continue its efforts to improve consistency in the assessment process.
16. The review team recommends that UCD consider opportunities to embed greater systematic benchmarking of the performance of transnational partnerships into the annual reporting process to ensure maintenance and enhancement of quality and protection of UCD's reputation.
17. The review team recommends that UCD review the support structures for faculty and staff engaged in transnational education and, particularly, ensure that the Researcher Career Framework is equally and equitably implemented across the university to ensure that faculty on fixed-term contracts engaged in transnational education delivery have the opportunity to undertake appropriate career development.
18. To ensure continued alignment with the *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners*, principle 3.4 (Supports and Services for International Learners), the review team recommends that UCD consider the consistency and clarity of pastoral and academic support available to all international student cohorts.



Section 6

Institutional Response



Institutional Response



UCD INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO QQI CINNTE REVIEW GROUP REPORT

University College Dublin (UCD) welcomed the opportunity to engage with the QQI CINNTE external independent Review Team to evaluate the effectiveness of institutional arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement.

We are pleased, therefore, that the Review Team confirmed that UCD has a robust and integrated quality assurance framework which supports effective and systematic quality assurance processes and ensures the rigorous evaluation of teaching, learning and research. It is also gratifying that the Review Team commended UCD for our openness and transparency, by making available to the public, via our website, our framework for quality assurance and enhancement and our quality review reports and quality improvement plans. We have also published the Institutional Profile and case studies.

This process has provided us with the opportunity to reflect on our current approach to quality review and enhancement. The Review Team acknowledged the extensive engagement process across the University that led to the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report. Through the process we have demonstrated confidence in sharing external and internal challenges but more importantly the consultative approach adopted during the QQI CINNTE review will inform new approaches in appraising our current processes of quality review and enhancement. Engaging in an institution-wide consultation process will enable us to address the areas identified by the Review Team that require further consideration. This consultative approach will also allow us to support schools in self-evaluation, reflection and implementation of the necessary quality improvements and enhancements. It will provide us with the opportunity to consider the expectations on some key leadership roles (which we acknowledge have been demanding) due to severe cuts in the sector and explore how supports can be appropriately targeted. Furthermore, it will provide us with the opportunity to explore new approaches to the operational risk management process across the University. This consultative process will also allow us to focus on the consistency of undergraduate and postgraduate experience and ensure that we are using the most appropriate benchmarks to measure and support our students' experience and will facilitate the alignment of our quality assurance processes with our strategic priorities under our new strategic plan *Rising to the Future 2020-2024*.

The Review Team also confirmed our position as a leading research university. Research is a core activity in UCD, and our research quality assurance processes demonstrate appropriate due regard for the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and QQI topic-specific QA Guidelines. The Review Team commended UCD's research performance support mechanisms, which function both to support the institution and individual academic researchers. The Review Team also acknowledged that UCD has a comprehensive approach to monitoring research and reviewing internationally benchmarked performance. We have begun to develop processes that will further demonstrate robust institution-level research quality and we will link this to our strategic priorities under our own strategic plan and to the analytical value of our data that will inform decision-making in this area. We acknowledge the challenges faced by our fixed-term faculty caused by external regulation and funding constraints and we are totally committed to ensuring that they have a positive and career-enhancing experience while they are part of our UCD community, whether they are based here in UCD or are engaged in transnational education delivery. We will continue to develop supports to ensure the consistency of experience for this cohort. We will continue to enhance and develop the researcher career framework to support the academic and professional development of the postdoctoral community.

UCD's commitment to delivering a high-quality student experience, as well as effective support structures, was also acknowledged by the Review Team. As Ireland's largest university, we are proud of our students' achievements and of our efforts to support a diverse student body. We will review our current partnership approach and provide the appropriate supports to ensure that students at all levels can engage effectively with decision-making processes. We view this as an important element in their growth and development. The Review Team also acknowledged the work already in progress to review the governance of graduate studies, which we will extend to develop a framework to facilitate a much higher level of consistency of the post-graduate research student experience across the institution. As Ireland's Global University we are also pleased that the Review Team confirmed that UCD meets the core provisions of the statutory QQI Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners and recognised the supports that we currently provide for our international students. We will continue to review our pastoral and academic supports for international students in our efforts to develop an intercultural campus. In addition, we will strengthen the monitoring of the performance of our transnational partnerships and will include this data in our annual reporting processes.

We welcome the acknowledgement of the Review Team that our approach to learning outcomes is comprehensive, that our new academic regulations offer a consistent and comprehensive approach to setting and assessing academic standards. We are especially pleased that the Review Team commended our commitment to defining educational excellence. We will continue our efforts to ensure that teaching and learning practices are aligned and are supported by our new education strategy and that our approach to assessment will be consistent while giving students the opportunity to engage with different assessment experiences.

The Review Team also commended UCD for our quality assurance framework for collaborative provision, which is benchmarked against international best practice and comparator institutions and complies with relevant national policies and guidelines. Engagement with our external collaborators is important to us in UCD and we have many fine examples of this across the institution. The recent Human Capital Initiative Call has facilitated discussions with our collaborators with reference to engagement in the design and delivery of programmes. As we continue to develop these relationships, we will explore different approaches to including our external collaborators more fully in programme design and delivery. We welcome, therefore, the Review Team's acknowledgement that UCD effectively uses externality in its review methods.

UCD is deeply committed to widening access and participation and has demonstrated strong progress in this area. We are very pleased that the Review Team confirmed that we were compliant with the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, the European Standards and Guidelines for Higher Education (2015), the QQI Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression, and other relevant topic-specific Quality Guidelines. We welcome the fact that the Review Team acknowledged the robust and appropriate mechanisms that are in place to enable access, transfer and progression.

The Review Team has produced a report that is constructive and supportive, and which will be beneficial in further enhancing UCD's continued excellence.

Over the coming months, UCD will develop an implementation plan to address the review report recommendations for enhancement. We would like to thank the members of the Higher Education Reviews Unit in QQI for their support and guidance throughout the institutional review process, and we are particularly appreciative of the Review Team's suggestions for improvement which will help us to further focus our efforts.

Professor Andrew J Deeks

UCD President



APPENDICES

Appendices

- A: Terms of Reference
- B: Main Review Visit Schedule
- C: UCD Organisational Structure
- D: ISER Steering Group

Appendix A

Terms of Reference (Terms of Reference for the Review of Universities and other Designated Awarding Bodies)

SECTION 1 Background and Context for the Review

1.1 Context and Legislative Underpinning

These are the Terms of Reference for the Review of a Designated Awarding Body (DAB). The concept of a Designated Awarding Body is derived from the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012 (The 2012 Act) and is defined as '*a previously established university, the National University of Ireland, an educational institution established as a university under Section 9 of the Act of 1997, the Dublin Institute of Technology and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland*'. The following institutions are Designated Awarding Bodies:

- Dublin City University
- Technological University Dublin
- University College Cork
- University College Dublin
- University of Limerick
- National University of Ireland, Galway
- Maynooth University
- The National University of Ireland
- The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
- Trinity College Dublin

In 2016, QQI adopted a policy on cyclical review in higher education which sets out in greater detail the scope, purposes, criteria, model and procedures for review. These are represented in the Terms of Reference and the Handbook for the Review of Designated Awarding Bodies. QQI has introduced an annual reporting process for institutions whereby institutions are required to submit an Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR). The aim of the AIQR is to provide a contemporary account of quality assurance (QA) within an institution. Information is provided through an online template and it is published. Collated annual reports are provided to periodical

Review Teams. Annual reporting allows institutions and QQI to engage on a regular basis. Published annual reports assist with documentation management for institutions in reviews and lessen the burden on institutions in the lead-up to a review.

This review cycle is being conducted in a very changed context for higher education. The landscape for higher education has been significantly reshaped since the last cycle of reviews commenced. Smaller colleges have been merged with universities and many institutes of technology are reorganising and preparing mergers as part of the Technological University process. New alliances and clusters, envisaged by [Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape](#) have commenced. A new approach to public funding has been introduced and operated by the Higher Education Authority (HEA). Initiatives for enhancement such as the *Irish Survey of Student Engagement* (ISSE) and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (NFETL) have been formalised at a national level. These developments mean that there are new sources of information and external benchmarks available to institutions that can be used to inform self-evaluation in this review cycle. Key measurements such as entry profiles, student retention, graduate profiles and staff and student satisfaction rates can provide some quantitative evidence of the quality of an institution's offer.

The 2012 Act states that QQI shall consult with the HEA in carrying out the review. QQI has agreed with HEA that this will take the form of engagement with QQI on the Terms of Reference and confirmation of the status of the institution within the higher education system, sharing individual institutional profiles and data with the Team. Further details of the agreement can be accessed [here](#).

This is the third review round of Designated Awarding Bodies. Previous rounds took place in 2004-2005 and 2009-2012.

The 2018-2023 Review Cycle Schedule is:

INSTITUTION	COMPLETION DATES			
	ISER	Planning Visit	Main Review Visit	Report
Dublin City University	Q2 2018	Q3 2018	Q4 2018	Q1 2019
Maynooth University	Q2 2018	Q3 2018	Q4 2018	Q1 2019
National University of Ireland, Galway	Q4 2018	Q1 2019	Q2 2019	Q3 2019
University College Dublin	Q2 2019	Q3 2019	Q4 2019	Q1 2020
University of Limerick	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020
Technological University Dublin	Q3 2020	Q4 2020	Q1 2021	Q2 2021
Trinity College Dublin	Q4 2020	Q1 2021	Q2 2021	Q3 2021
University College Cork	Q2 2021	Q3 2021	Q4 2021	Q1 2022
National University of Ireland	Q2 2022	Q3 2022	Q4 2022	Q1 2023
Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland	Q2 2022	Q3 2022	Q4 2022	Q1 2023

1.2 Purposes

The Policy for the Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions highlights 4 purposes for individual institutional reviews. These are set out in the table below.

PURPOSE	ACHIEVED AND MEASURED THROUGH:
<p>1. To encourage a QA culture and the enhancement of the student learning environment and experience within institutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - emphasising the student and the student learning experience in reviews - providing a source of evidence of areas for improvement and areas for revision of policy and change and basing follow-up upon them - exploring innovative and effective practices and procedures - exploring quality as well as quality assurance within the institution
<p>2. To provide feedback to institutions about institution-wide quality and the impact of mission, strategy, governance and management on quality and the overall effectiveness of their quality assurance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - emphasising the ownership of quality and quality assurance at the level of the institution - pitching the review at a comprehensive institution-wide level - evaluating compliance with legislation, policy and standards - evaluating how the institution has identified and measured itself against its own benchmarks and metrics to support quality assurance governance and procedures - emphasising the improvement of quality assurance procedures
<p>3. To contribute to public confidence in the quality of institutions by promoting transparency and public awareness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - adhering to purposes, criteria and outcomes that are clear and transparent - publishing the reports and outcomes of reviews in accessible locations and formats for different audiences - evaluating, as part of the review, institutional reporting on quality and quality assurance, to ensure that it is transparent and accessible
<p>4. To encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - using the expertise of international, national and student peer reviewers who are independent of the institution - ensuring that findings are based on stated evidence - facilitating institutions to identify measurement, comparison and analytic techniques, based on quantitative data relevant to their own mission and context, to support quality assurance - promoting the identification and dissemination of examples of good practice and innovation

SECTION 2

Objectives and Criteria

2.1 Review Objectives

OBJECTIVE 1

To review the effectiveness and implementation of the QA procedures of the institution through consideration of the procedures set out, primarily, in the AIQR. Where necessary, the information provided by the AIQR is supplemented by additional information provided through documentation requests and interviews. The scope of this includes the procedures for reporting, governance and publication. This also incorporates an analysis of the ways in which the institution applies evidence-based approaches to support QA processes, including quantitative analysis, evidence gathering and comparison. Progress on the development of QA since the previous review of the institution will be evaluated. Consideration will also be given to the effectiveness of the AIQR and ISER procedures within the institution.

The scope of this objective also extends to the overarching procedures of the institution for assuring itself of the quality of its research degree programmes and research activities.

This objective also encompasses the effectiveness of the procedures established by the institution for the assurance of the quality of collaborations, partnerships and overseas provision, including the procedures for the approval and review of linked providers, joint awarding arrangements, joint provision and other collaborative arrangements such as clusters and mergers.

OBJECTIVE 2

To review the enhancement of quality by the institution through governance, policy, and procedures.

To review the congruency of QA procedures and enhancements with the institution's own mission and goals or targets for quality.

To identify innovative and effective practices for quality enhancement.

OBJECTIVE 3

To review the effectiveness and implementation of procedures for access, transfer and progression.

OBJECTIVE 4

Following the introduction of a statutory international education QA scheme, to determine compliance with the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners.

2.2 Review Criteria

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 1

The Review Report will include a specific qualitative statement on the effectiveness of the QA procedures of the institution and the extent of their implementation. The report will also include a specific statement about the extent to which the QA procedures can be considered compliant with the ESG and as having regard to QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (QAG). These statements will be highlighted in the report of the review.

The statements may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements, recommendations and possibly recommendations for directions in reference to this objective.

The criteria to be used by the Team in reaching conclusions for this objective are:

- ESG
- QQI *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (Core)*
- QQI *Sector Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Universities and Other Designated Awarding Bodies*
- QQI *Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Research Degree Programmes*
- Section 28 of the 2012 Act
- The institution's own objectives and goals for quality assurance

Where appropriate and actioned by the institution, additional QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines will be incorporated.

The QQI *Sector Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Independent/Private Providers* may be an appropriate reference document if they have been adopted as their linked provider(s).

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 2

The Review Report will include a specific qualitative statement on the enhancement of quality by the institution through governance, policy, and procedures.

The statements may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements and recommendations in reference to this objective. If identified, innovative and effective practices for quality enhancement will be highlighted in the report.

The criteria to be used by the Team in reaching conclusions for this objective are:

- The institution's own mission and vision
- The goals or targets for quality identified by the institution
- Additional sources of reference identified by the institution

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 3

The report will include a qualitative statement on the extent to which the procedures are in keeping with QQI policy for Access, Transfer and Progression.

This statement may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements and recommendations and possibly recommendations for conditions in reference to this objective.

The criterion to be used by the Team in reaching conclusions for this objective are:

QQI Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression



CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 4

When the statutory international education quality assurance scheme is in place, the report will include a qualitative statement on the extent to which the procedures are compliant with the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners.

This statement may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements and recommendations and possibly recommendations for conditions in reference to this objective.

The criterion to be used by the Team in reaching conclusions for this objective is the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners

Key questions to be addressed by the review for each objective

- How have QA procedures and reviews been implemented within the institution?
- How effective are the internal QA procedures and reviews of the institution?
- Are the QA procedures in keeping with European Standards and Guidelines?
- Are the QA procedures in keeping with QQI policy and guidelines, or their equivalent?
- Who takes responsibility for quality and QA across the institution?
- How transparent, accessible and comprehensive is reporting on quality and QA?
- How is quality promoted and enhanced?
- Are there effective innovations in QA and quality enhancement?
- Is the student experience in keeping with the institution's own stated mission and strategy?
- Are achievements in QA and quality in keeping with the institution's own stated mission and strategy?
- How do achievements in QA and quality measure up against the institution's own goals or targets for quality?

SECTION 3 The Review Process

3.1 Process

The primary basis for the review process is this handbook.

3.2 Review Team Profile

QQI will appoint the Review Team to conduct the institutional review. Review Teams are composed of peer reviewers who are students and senior institutional leaders and staff from comparable institutions as well as external representatives. The size of the Team and the duration of their visit will depend on the size and complexity of the institution but in general the Review Team for a Designated Awarding Body will consist of 6 persons. Each Review Team includes a Chairperson and Coordinating Reviewer, and may be supported by a rapporteur, who is not a member of the Team, to take and collate notes of meetings. A single Team may undertake the review of two different institutions.

Reviewers are not QQI employees, but rather peers of the institution. The institution will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed composition of their Review Team to ensure there are no conflicts of interest, and QQI will ensure an appropriate and entirely independent Team of reviewers is selected for the institution. QQI has final approval over the composition of each Review Team.

There will be appropriate gender representation on the Review Team. The Team will consist of carefully selected and trained and briefed reviewers who have appropriate skills and are competent to perform their tasks. The Team will operate under the leadership of the Review Chairperson.

The Review Team will be appointed in keeping with the following profile:

1. A Review Chairperson

The role of the Chairperson is to act as leader of the Review Team. This is an international reviewer who is a (serving or recently former) senior third-level institution leader – usually a head of institution or deputy head of institution or a senior policy advisor who:

- » possesses a wide range of higher education experience;
- » demonstrates a deep understanding of the complexities of the higher education system;
- » understands often unique QA governance arrangements;
- » has proven experience in the management of innovation and change.

2. A Coordinating Reviewer

The role of the Coordinating Reviewer is to act as secretary to the Team as well as to be a full Review Team member. This is usually a person with expertise in the higher education system and prior experience in participating in external reviews. As the coordinating reviewer is responsible for drafting the report, he or she will possess proven excellent writing abilities.

3. A Student Reviewer

The role of the student reviewer is to represent the student voice in the Review Team. The student reviewer will be typically a PhD student with significant experience of higher education or an undergraduate student who has completed a specific programme preparing them for the role or who has previously had a key role in other institutional reviews.

4. An External Representative

The role of the external representative is to bring a ‘third mission’ perspective to the Review Team. In addition to the specific roles above, the full Team complement will include a range of experts with the following knowledge and experience:

- » International reviewer experience
- » EQF and Bologna expertise
- » Experience of higher education QA processes
- » Experience of managing research within or across institutions
- » Experience in governance
- » Experience and proven ability in the advancement of teaching and learning

Details of Review Team roles and responsibilities can be found in Appendix B.

3.3 Procedure and timelines

The outline set out in the policy (below) will be elaborated further and timelines will be set out to accompany it, through discussion and consultation.

STEP	ACTION	DATES	OUTCOME
Terms of Reference (ToR)	Completion of an institutional information profile by QQI Confirmation of ToR with institution and HEA	9 months before the Main Review Visit (MRV)	Published Terms of Reference
Preparation	Appointment of an expert Review Team Consultation with the institution on any possible conflicts of interest	6-9 months before the MRV	Review Team appointed
Self-evaluation	Forwarding to QQI of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)	12 weeks before the MRV	Published ISER (optional)
Desk Review	Desk review of the ISER by the Team	Before the initial meeting	ISER initial response provided
Initial Meeting	An initial meeting of the Review Team, including reviewer training and briefing	5 weeks after the ISER, 7 weeks before the MRV	Team training and briefing is complete. Team identify key themes and additional documents required
Planning Visit	A visit to the institution by the Chair and Coordinating Reviewer to receive information about the ISER process, discuss the schedule for the Main Review Visit and discuss additional documentation requests	5 weeks after the ISER, 7 weeks before the MRV	An agreed note of the Planning Visit
Main Review Visit	To receive and consider evidence on the ways in which the institution has performed in respect of the objectives and criteria set out in the Terms of Reference	12 weeks after the receipt of ISER	A short preliminary oral report to the institution

STEP	ACTION	DATES	OUTCOME	
Report	Preparation of a draft report by the Team	6-8 weeks after the MRV		
	Draft report sent to the institution for a check of factual accuracy	12 weeks after the MRV		
	Institution responds with any factual accuracy corrections	2 weeks after receipt of draft report		
	Preparation of a final report	2 weeks after factual accuracy response		QQI Review Report
	Preparation of an institutional response	2 weeks after final report		Institutional response
Outcomes	Consideration of the Review Report and findings by QQI together with the institutional response and the plan for implementation	Next available meeting of QQI committee	Formal decision about the effectiveness of QA procedures <i>In some cases, directions to the institution and a schedule for their implementation</i>	
	Preparation of QQI quality profile	2 weeks after decision	Quality profile published	
Follow-up	The form of follow-up will be determined by whether 'directions' are issued to the institution. In general, where directions are issued the follow-up period will be sooner and more specific actions may be required as part of the direction			
	Preparation of an institutional implementation plan	1 month after decision	Publication of the implementation plan by the institution	
	One-year follow-up report to QQI for noting. This and subsequent follow-up may be integrated into annual reports to QQI	1 year after the MRV	Publication of the follow-up report by QQI and the institution	
	Continuous reporting and dialogue on follow-up through the annual institutional reporting and dialogue process	Continuous	Annual Institutional Quality Report Dialogue Meeting notes	
Note: The total period from start to finish is approximately 15 months but will depend on QQI committee meeting dates.				

Appendix B

Main Review Visit Schedule

Day 1: Monday 14 October

TIME	MEETING WITH	INDICATIVE PURPOSE
09.00-09.30	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator.
09.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
10.00-10.30	President	Private Meeting with President
10.30-11.30	University Management Team	To discuss institutional mission, strategic plan, roles and responsibilities for QA and Enhancement.
11.30-12.00	Private Review Team Meeting and tea/coffee	
12.00-12.30	Review Team Transfer	
12.30-14.00	Student Representatives (UG and PG – taught and research) Working lunch, World Café format @ The Red Room, Student Centre	Discussions with students about the student experience, with representation from a range of Schools/Colleges and different years/disciplines.
14.00-14.45	Review Team transfer to Harty Boardroom and Private Review Team Meeting	
14.45-15.45	Representatives of Chairs of Governing Boards, including associated directors of academic offices	Discussion on programme governance, including the roles and responsibilities for quality assurance and the interface between the centre, Colleges and Schools, e.g. approval of new programmes; changes to modules/ programmes; Academic Regulations; PSRB accreditation.
15.45-16.15	Private Review Team Meeting and tea/coffee	
16.15-17.00	Students' Union Officers	To discuss student engagement and the student role in UCD in relation to e.g. Strategic Planning and decision-making processes, and QA.
17.00-17.30	Private Review Team Meeting	
17.30-18.15	Campus tour	To provide an opportunity to obtain first-hand experience of the campus, the facilities and current developments.

Day 2: Tuesday 15 October

TIME	MEETING WITH	INDICATIVE PURPOSE
09.00-09.10	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator to clarify issues from previous day and review today.
09.10-09.30	Vice-President for Research, Innovation and Impact	Discussion on institutional support for research.
9.30-10.15	University Units supporting teaching, learning and research, including related QA processes	Discussion on institutional support for teaching, learning and research, including the review of Schools and Service Units, and other related QA processes.
10.15-10.45	Private Review Team Meeting 10.15: Demonstration of Research Student Tracker	
10.45- 11.45	Representatives from Academic Council sub-committees, University Management Team Global Engagement Group (UMT GEG), University Secretariat, UCD Quality Office	To discuss the role of committees in the governance of academic processes and related QA processes, and how the outcomes of QA processes are monitored
11.45-12.00	Private Review Team Meeting	



TIME	MEETING WITH	INDICATIVE PURPOSE
12.00-13.00	Heads of School	To discuss the range of Quality Assurance Processes implemented within Schools and how effective these are: e.g. School Review; Assessment; Extern Examiners; Module/ Programme Approval; Student Feedback on Modules; Staff Student Committees; PSRB accreditation; continuing professional development; research quality.
13.00-14.15	Private Review Team Meeting and lunch (Harty Boardroom) 13.00: Demonstration of Integrated Assistance Network (IAN) system	
14.15-15.00	Staff from central Student Support Services	To discuss how quality of processes is monitored and enhanced: e.g. Periodic Unit Review; Annual Review; Student Feedback; examples of Service Enhancements based on outcomes of monitoring processes
15.00-15.30	Private Review Team Meeting	
15.30-16.15	Vice-Principals for Teaching and Learning (VPTL) and faculty/teaching staff representatives from Schools	To discuss engagement with School and University QA processes: e.g. Student feedback; module feedback by students; curriculum review; School review; assessment; continuing professional development; support for research.
16.15-16.45	Private Review Team Meeting	
16.45-17.30	External Stakeholders	Discuss the involvement of external stakeholders in, for example, strategy development, PSRB accreditation, programme development and review, industry forums, and other QA processes (e.g. School Review)
17.30-18.00	Private Review Team Meeting	

Day 3: Wednesday 16 October

TIME	MEETING WITH	INDICATIVE PURPOSE
09.00-09.30	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator to clarify issues from previous day and review today
09.30-10.00	UCD Human Resources representatives	To discuss HR initiatives, including supports for School/Unit Quality Review; CPD; policies and procedures for staff promotion, diversity, recruitment and appraisal.
10.00-10.15	Private Review Team Meeting	
10.15-11.00	Postdoctoral Research Fellows representatives	Discussion of research management supports and supervision, the relationship between teaching, research and innovation, and resources.
11.00-11.30	Private Review Team Meeting and tea/coffee	
11.30-12.15	Professional and administrative staff representatives	To discuss how their roles support teaching, learning, research and the student experience; including School/Unit Quality Review, and other QA processes; and legal, safety and equality, diversity and inclusion aspects.
12.15-12.45	Private Review Team Meeting	
12.45-13.45	International Students Working Lunch, World Café format @ the Global Lounge	Discuss what supports are available to international students, their student experience and why choose UCD?
13.45-14.15	Review Team return to Harty Boardroom and Private Review Team Meeting	
14.15-15.00	Directors of Research Institutes, Vice-Principals Research, Innovation and Impact, and University Management Team Research, Innovation and Impact Group representatives	To discuss how the quality of research output is supported and monitored, e.g. the role of committees in the governance of Research Quality and the supports that are available at School, College and University levels.
15.00-15.30	Private Review Team Meeting and tea/coffee	
15.30-16.30	Staff involved in Internationalisation and Collaborative Provision – Monitoring and Review	To discuss arrangements for ensuring the quality of provision for staff and students for programmes delivered with collaborative partners: e.g. how a new collaborative programme or International College is approved; monitoring of collaborative provision; international student recruitment and support.
16.30-16.45	Private Review Team Meeting	
16.45-17.45	Staff from UCD partners, UCD Linked & Recognised Colleges	To discuss partner engagement with UCD's QA framework, the supports provided and examples of QA processes in action.
17.45-18.15	Private Review Team Meeting	

Day 4: Thursday 17 October

TIME	MEETING WITH	INDICATIVE PURPOSE
09.00-09.30	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator to clarify issues from previous day and review today.
09.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
10.00-11.00	Teaching staff who teach on transnational campuses (who are on campus this trimester)	To discuss engagement with University QA processes: e.g. Student feedback; module feedback by students; curriculum review; School review; assessment; continuing professional development; support for research.
11.00-11.30	Private Review Team Meeting and tea/coffee	
11.30-12.30	University Deans	Discussion on ongoing quality enhancement projects in the areas of undergraduate and postgraduate study and student experience and how these are identified, implemented and monitored for effectiveness.
12.30-13.00	Private Review Team Meeting	
13.00-14.30	Private Review Team Lunch and begin drafting report	
14.30-15.00	Review Team transfer	
15.00-16.00	UCD Governing Authority Representatives*	To discuss the roles of GA; the Audit and Risk Management Committee; and the Finance Remuneration and Asset Management Committee; and the mechanisms employed by the GA for monitoring QA and Enhancement.
16.00-16.15	Tea and coffee	
16.15-19.00	Review Team continue drafting report	

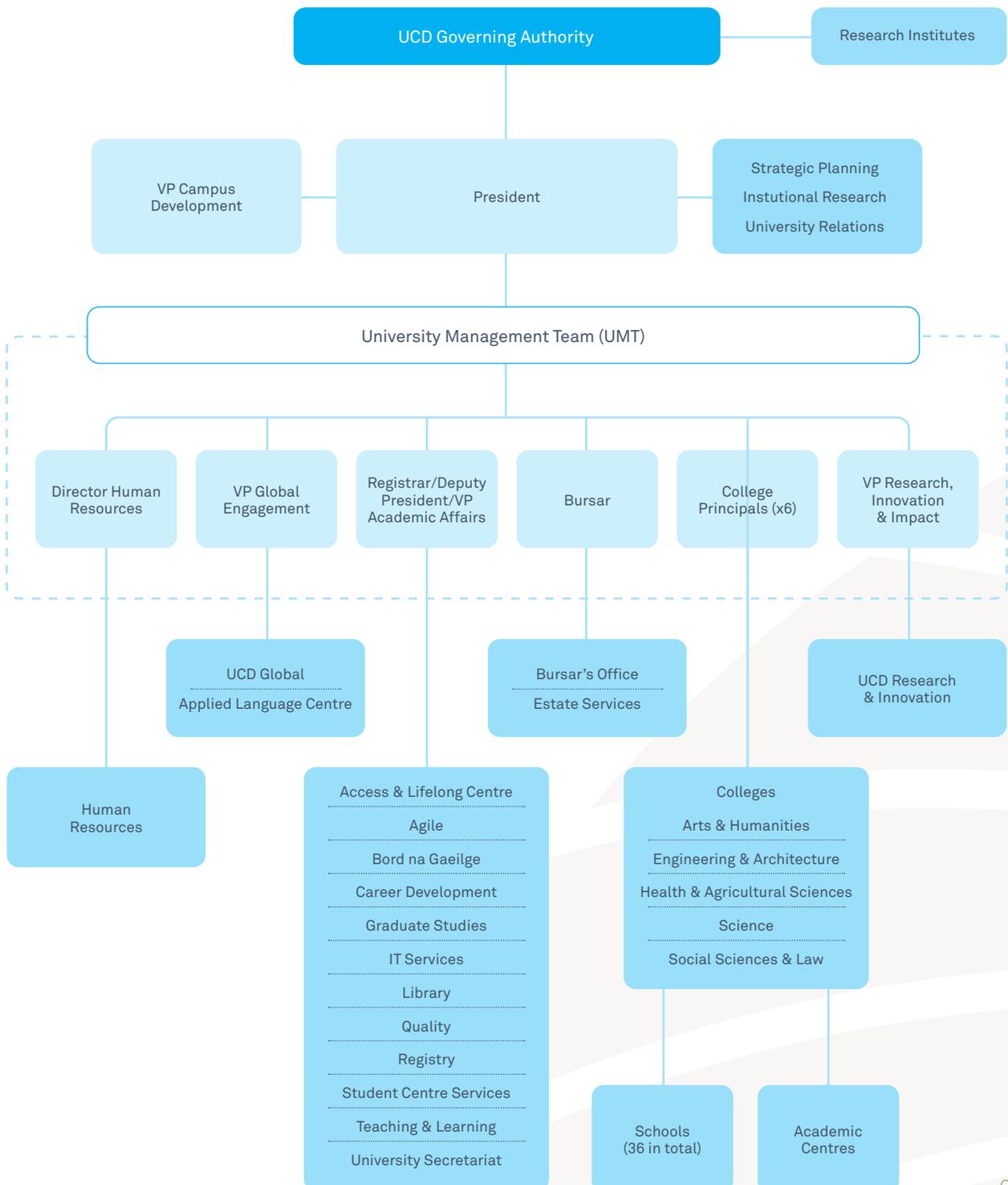
Day 5: Friday 18 October

TIME	MEETING WITH	INDICATIVE PURPOSE
09.00-09.30	Institutional Coordinator	Meeting with Institutional Coordinator to clarify issues from previous day and review today.
09.30-11.00	Review Team continue drafting their report – meeting with QQI representatives	
11.00-11.20	Review Team and QQI representatives	
11.20-11.30	Review Team and QQI representatives return to the Cedar Suite	
11.30-11.50	UCD President, UCD Registrar and Deputy President, Institutional Coordinator and QQI representatives	Initial indication of findings and main recommendations
12.00-12.30	Briefing by Review Team	Review Team oral report on initial findings and main recommendations to institutional representatives



Appendix C

UCD Organisational Structure



Appendix D

ISER Steering Group

Professor Mark Rogers, Registrar/Deputy President/Vice-President for Academic Affairs (Chair)

Associate Professor Aoife Ahern, Head of School, UCD School of Civil Engineering

Mr Shane Comer, Student Representative

Dr Sinéad Critchley, Director of University Governance, Head of Support Unit – University Secretariat

Associate Professor Fionnuala Dillane, UCD School of English, Drama and Film

Dr Roy Ferguson, Director of Quality Assurance, Head of Support Unit - Quality

Professor Cecily Kelleher, College Principal, UCD College of Health and Agricultural Sciences;
Chair of ACQEC (up to 2019/20)

Ms Maura McGinn, Director of Institutional Research

Dr Jimmy Muldoon, Senior Technical Officer, UCD School of Chemistry

Mr Barry Murphy, President, UCD Students' Union

Dr Douglas Proctor, Director, UCD Global

ISER DRAFTING GROUP

Associate Professor Aoife Ahern, Head of School, UCD School of Civil Engineering (Chair)

Ms Orla Barry, Office Manager, University Secretariat

Mr Tony Carey, Director of Strategic Planning, Head of Support Unit
– Director of Strategic Planning Professor

Professor Marie Clarke, Dean of Undergraduate Studies

Mr Liam Cleere, Senior Manager, UCD Research Analytics and Impact

Professor Barbara Dooley, Dean of Graduate Studies and Deputy Registrar

Dr Roy Ferguson, Director of Quality Assurance, Head of Support Unit – Quality

Mrs Kate Griffin, Head of IT Administration, UCD IT Services

Ms Chantelle Guilfoyle, Director, HR Partners

Professor Jason Last, Dean of Students

Mr Andy Myler, Director of Administrative Services, UCD Registry

Dr Douglas Proctor, Director, UCD Global

Glossary

Glossary of terms, acronyms and abbreviations from this report

Term	Definition/Explanation
2012 Act	Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
AC	Academic Council
ACQEC	Academic Council Quality Enhancement Committee
AEIF	Assessment Enhancement Implementation Framework
AIQR	Annual Institutional Quality Report
Athena SWAN	Charter recognising advancement of gender equality
BDIC	Beijing-Dublin International College
CINNTE	The name given to QQI's first cyclical review period
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CRE	Curriculum Review and Enhancement
DAB	Designated Awarding Body
DARE	Disability Access Route to Education
DPO	Data Protection Officer
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESG (2015)	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
FTE	Full-time equivalent
GA	Governing Authority
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GEG	Global Engagement Group
GradsConnect	Welcome event for all new UCD graduate students
GSB	Graduate School Board
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEAR	Higher Education Access Route
HR	Human Resources

IAN	Integrated Assistance Network (student engagement dashboard)
ISER	Institutional Self-Evaluation Report
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IHEQN	Irish Higher Education Quality Network
InfoHub	UCD's integrated data portal
IoB	Institute of Banking (a linked provider)
IPs	Institutional Profile
IRIU	Institutional Review of Irish Universities
ISSE	Irish Survey of Student Engagement
ISER	Institutional Self-Evaluation Report
IT	Information Technology
IUA	Irish Universities Association
IUPAC	International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry
MRV	Main Review Visit
NCAD	National College of Art and Design (UCD Recognised College)
NexusUCD	UCD's Industry Partnership Centre
NFETL	National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NovaUCD	UCD's Centre for New Ventures and Entrepreneurs
NSBM	National School of Business Management, Sri Lanka
NUI	National University of Ireland
OBRSS	An output-based research support scheme
PB	Programme Board
PDARF	Programme Development, Approval and Review Framework
PG	Postgraduate
PGR	Postgraduate Research
PhD	Postgraduate Doctoral Degree: Doctor of Philosophy
QA	Quality Assurance
QAG	(QQI's Statutory) Quality Assurance Guidelines (e.g. Core)
QE	Quality Enhancement
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RCSI	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
RIIG	Research, Innovation and Impact Group
SASR	Student and Academic Services Review

SciVal	A web-based analytics software providing access to the research performance
SDIC	South China-Dublin International College
SEG	Student Experience Group
Teagasc	Agriculture and Food Development Authority (a Collaborative Partner of UC)
ToR	Terms of Reference
UCD	University College Dublin
UCD Global	Steers and guides the global strategies of the university
UCDSU	UCD Students' Union
UG	Undergraduate
Uniforum	A benchmarking exercise in respect of administration services and support activities
UPB	University Programme Board
UMT	University Management Team
Universitas 21	Network of research-intensive universities bringing collaboration across borders and nurturing international knowledge exchange
VP	Vice-President
VPI	Vice-Principal for Internationalisation
VPRII	Vice-Principal for Research, Innovation and Impact







