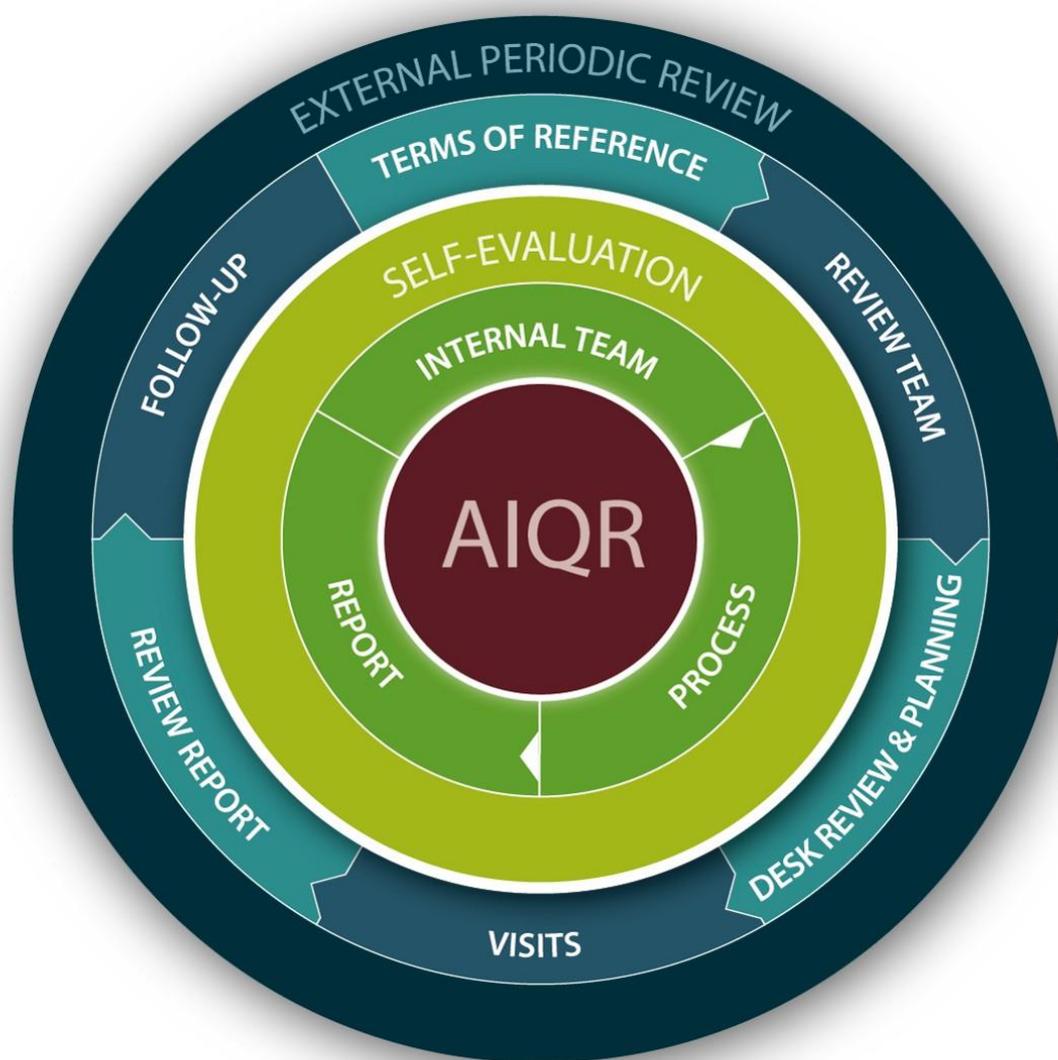


University of Limerick

Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report 2017

Based on the reporting period 1 September 2015 – 31 August 2016



The Cyclical Review Process

AIQR - PART 1

Please enter a brief synopsis of the overarching institution quality policy which sets out the links between QA policy and procedures and the strategy and strategic management of the institution.

The University of Limerick (UL) [strategic plan](#) (*Broadening Horizons*) articulates institutional mission, vision and strategic priorities. The plan is guided by six core values, the first of which is excellence, which explicitly commits the University to a quality improvement ethos. The overall strategic plan is supported by: (a) our [teaching, learning and assessment strategy](#) (*Engaged Learning*), which includes a specific commitment to quality in all our activities, and (b) our [research and innovation strategy](#) (*Excellence and Impact 2020*), the first objective of which commits us to maximising the quality of research outputs across all disciplines. These strategic documents each have associated implementation plans which are subject to regular monitoring and review.

UL's overarching institutional [quality policy](#) commits the University to enhancing the quality of its academic programmes, teaching, research and service to the community and to complying with statutory and regulatory requirements relating to quality assurance (QA) and quality improvement (QI). The university's [risk management policy](#) and associated processes also represents a core university system linking risk, quality and strategy.

UL institutional arrangements for developing, monitoring, reviewing, enhancing and managing the quality of our activities are multi-layered and multi-faceted. Cornerstone institutional-level QA processes are described in our annual [institutional profile](#).

Please enter a brief description of institution-level quality assurance decision-making fora.

The University's administrative and academic organisational structures are available [here](#).

Overall authority for the affairs of the University is vested in the [Governing Authority](#), whose functions include approving high-level strategy and policy, statutes and regulations. Amongst its subcommittees is the Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance Committee, whose terms of reference are available [here](#).

The University's [Executive Committee](#), which is accountable to the President, is the senior management committee with responsibility for developing strategic policies and procedures, monitoring corporate performance and ensuring that all aspects of the corporate function operate with optimal efficiency and effectiveness.

The University's [Academic Council](#) controls UL's academic affairs. It oversees academic awards, standards and regulations and approves all new programmes and changes to existing programmes. Chaired by the President, Academic Council comprises senior officers, deans of faculty, heads of academic departments, Students' Union officers, assistant deans of academic affairs and elected staff representatives.

The University comprises [four faculties and 23 academic departments and schools](#). Overall responsibility for the academic faculties resides with the faculty deans, who report to the President. Each dean is supported in his/her role by heads of academic departments, a faculty manager, an assistant dean of academic affairs an assistant dean of research and an assistant dean of internationalization. All academic members of a faculty, together with student representatives, comprise the faculty board, which meets regularly to discuss academic matters, such as proposals for new programmes.

All UL service (support) units report to a senior member of Executive Committee, as per the [administrative organisational chart](#). As with academic units, periodic [quality reviews](#) are undertaken for all support units. In the case of both academic and support units, quality review reports and the implementation of the associated quality improvement plans are monitored by Governing Authority's Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance subcommittee and by the [Vice President Academic & Registrar](#).

Do you have a Policy/Procedure for Programme Design and Approval?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Programme Design and Approval

In accordance with **ESG 1.2 (Design and approval of programmes)**, UL follows a well-established, rigorous, documented procedure for approving new programmes. All new programmes must align with the UL strategic plan, with justification included in approval documentation. New programmes are approved in five stages by these five groups: the host department, host faculty, Executive Committee, Academic Programme Review Committee (APRC) and Academic Council. Academic Council approves new programmes on the advice of its APRC subcommittee, which is chaired by the Vice President Academic & Registrar (VPA&R). Terms of reference can be seen on the [APRC web page](#). Joint or dual degrees are subject to the provisions of the university's joint and dual degree awards policy. Documented procedures for institution-wide programme design, approval and modification are published on UL's internal SharePoint portal.

In line with ESG 1.2), all programmes (and modules therein) have associated learning outcomes, and the programme qualification is clearly specified and articulated in the context of the [National Qualifications Framework](#) for higher education (and consequently, in the framework for qualifications of the European higher education area).

Do you have a Policy/Procedure for Programme Delivery and Assessment?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Programme Delivery and Assessment

In line with **ESG 1.3 (Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment)**, active and collaborative learning forms a central element of the University's [teaching, learning and assessment strategy](#). Given the diversity of programmes on offer at UL, programmes are delivered in many ways. In accordance with **ESG 1.3**, the mode of delivery is defined for all programme modules in the (new or revised) programme submission documentation approved by APRC/Academic Council (see last section). Academic regulation 1.4.3 requires the academic staff member(s) to provide details to the students of the learning outcomes of the module, indicative grade descriptors corresponding to each grade, the criteria on which assessment is to be based, the minimum performance standard, the weighting allocated to each assessment instrument associated with the module and repeat assessment instrument(s) associated with the module. Programme assessment policy and procedures are clearly articulated in the University's [Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures](#) (in particular chapter 2, Marks and Standards). Assessment is also externally reviewed through the [external examiner](#) system, which is considered to be part of programme reviews.

There is systematic student involvement in programme delivery and assessment-related activity. Programme boards include student representation (with students absenting themselves when exam results are discussed), as do associated QA oversight fora, including Faculty Board, Academic Council and Governing Authority. Institutional-level student feedback is collected systematically through the annual student [exit survey](#) and the [module satisfaction survey](#), as well as a range of other survey activities including but not limited to Irish Survey of Student Engagement, UL postgraduate research experience survey and surveys of international students. Survey findings are considered, as appropriate, at local level (by individual academic staff, programme boards, heads of department) and at institutional level (by deans, Executive Committee, Academic Council), and summary reports are made publicly available (accessible [here](#) and [here](#)).

Individual programmes are subject to annual monitoring and periodic review activities, in line with formal university processes.

Do you have a Policy/Procedure for Research Quality?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Research Quality

Overall research strategy and policy is articulated by the University's: (a) [strategic plan](#); (b) [research strategy](#), which is informed by the overall strategic plan; and (c) [quality policy](#). Procedures relating to the quality of research are many and varied according to purpose. Regulations pertaining to postgraduate research students are included in the University's [Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures](#) (in particular chapters 2 and 5). Both the [Graduate School](#) and [Research Office](#), under the management of the Vice President Research, develop and oversee the implementation of a wide range of [policies, procedures and codes of practice](#) pertinent to research activity, incorporating postgraduate activity, research centres, research project management/lifecycle and intellectual property. These documents are published on the SharePoint portal.

The [Research Projects](#) section of the [Finance Department](#) oversees and reports on financial aspects of research activity. The quality of research is reviewed through the [quality review process for academic departments](#), and the range of research support services provided by support units, including but not limited to the Research Office and Graduate School, the Finance Office, HR, the Library and Information Services Division, the Information Technology Division and Buildings and Estates, is reviewed through the [quality review process for support units](#). Several of the above support units also regularly develop/deliver/coordinate delivery of various research-related professional development courses, widely advertised throughout the institution via global email. The assessment of research quality also forms the basis of periodic research quality initiatives undertaken by the Research Office and through the annual UL research report prepared by the Research Office, which is considered by Executive Committee.

UL operates recruitment policies and procedures for [research scholars](#), [research staff](#) and [academic staff](#).

Do you have a Policy/Procedure in place for Student Lifecycle?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Student Lifecycle

Policies and procedures for student enrolment, registration, assessment, grading, performance standards, progression and academic awards are all incorporated into the University's [Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures](#). In line with **ESG 1.4 (Student admission, progression, recognition and certification)**, UL operates policies and procedures relating to access, recognition of prior learning, admission processes and criteria. Admissions procedures for undergraduate entry is operationalised in the main by the [Admissions](#) section of the [Academic Registry Division](#), with the majority of undergraduate students entering through the national Central Applications Office (CAO) system. In support of UL's [access policy](#), the [Access Office](#) promotes and supports the participation of students from groups that have been under-represented in higher education.

As specified in the University's [Recognition of Prior Learning \(RPL\) policy](#), RPL is used at UL to enable applicants to gain entry to a programme, to award credits for part of a programme and to award exemptions for some programme requirements. Non-EU student applicants apply directly to the [International Education Division](#) while postgraduate taught and research applicants apply to the [Graduate School](#), which is part of the [Research Office](#). Entry requirements for all UL programmes are articulated in appropriate, published, annually updated course documentation ([undergraduate](#) and [postgraduate](#)). QA/QE mechanisms employed by these offices in support of their admissions and related processes form part of each unit's quality management system, which is periodically reviewed as part of the [quality review process for support units](#). Students undergoing work placement involving activities relating to children or vulnerable adults are subject to the provisions of the UL [student vetting policy](#).

Also in line with **ESG 1.4**, UL operates student induction processes through [Student Affairs orientation programmes](#), the [Centre for Teaching and Learning's first seven weeks programme](#) and the [International Education Division's 7-day orientation/welcome programme](#) for new international students. UL collects, monitors and acts upon information regarding student progression and maintains graduation and student records in a number of ways. Under governance of the Steering Group, the [Academic Registry Division](#) maintains, controls and develops the University's student records, including all personal information, grant records, student registrations, module grade entry, performance reports and student results, the issuing of all graduate parchments and the publication of all class and examination schedules. Student progression information is considered at a number of fora, most notably the faculty exam boards, the Academic Council Grading Committee and the University Exam Board. Student progression is also considered during the annual programmatic review process, at which course boards propose quality enhancements on the basis of (in part) annual programme performance metrics.

Do you have a Policy/Procedure in place for Teaching Staff?

Yes

In line with **ESG 1.5 (Teaching staff)**, the University of Limerick:

- **Pursues clear, transparent and fair processes for staff recruitment:** Relevant policies and procedures are published on the [Human Resources](#) website, including recruitment and appointment procedures and packs for academic (as well as research and support) staff.
- **Operates conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching:** [Academic role profiles](#) for all academic grades clearly articulate the importance of teaching. Teaching portfolios form a core element of academic staff [promotion](#) and [progression](#) policy. Teaching activity forms a prominent element of the [academic workload allocation policy](#) and automatically forms a core element of UL's Performance and Development Review System ([PDRS](#)) as applied to academic staff. Moreover, the importance of teaching is articulated and emphasised in [strategic institutional publications](#), including the strategic plan (Broadening Horizons); the teaching, learning and assessment strategy (Engaged Learning); and the UL quality policy. Teaching-related activities form a core determinant of resource allocation to academic units. The University invests very significant resources in its [Centre for Teaching and Learning](#) and runs annual teaching excellence awards.
- **Offers opportunities for and promotes the professional development of teaching staff:** The [Centre for Teaching and Learning](#) offers and promotes certificate and graduate diploma courses in teaching, learning and scholarship as well as a myriad of additional professional development opportunities for teaching staff. The [PDRS](#) facilities opportunities for teacher professional development. The HR [Learning, Development and Equal Opportunities](#) section promotes and coordinates training courses, including teaching-related courses, and a university-wide academic mentoring programme.
- **Encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research:** Aim 1.1 of our [strategic plan](#) commits us to fostering a research-led educational ethos at all levels of the curriculum, and Activity 1.1.2 of our [teaching, learning and assessment strategy](#) commits us aligning teaching with research. Progress in both instances is monitored through implementation reviews and programmatic reviews.
- **Encourages innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies:** Aim 1.1.5 of our strategic plan commits us to further embedding technology-enhanced learning across the curricula, while Activity 1.3.1 of our teaching, learning and assessment strategy commits us to further developing a technology-enhanced pedagogy. UL established the Technology Enhanced Learning Unit ([TELU](#)) to realise these strategic commitments.

Do you have a Policy/Procedure in place for Teaching and Learning?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning activity and direction is informed by the University of Limerick's [strategic plan](#), [teaching, learning and assessment strategy](#) and overarching [quality policy](#). Implementation of the strategic plan is regularly monitored at various institutional fora, most notably Executive Committee and Governing Authority. Implementation of the teaching, learning and assessment strategy is monitored by the Vice President Academic & Registrar. As part of the annual programme report, course review boards are requested to outline how the programme complies with UL policy and procedures, including the teaching, learning and assessment strategy.

Teaching and learning-related QA policy and procedures (**ESG 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6**) are described in these sections of this report: (a) Student Lifecycle; (b) Teaching Staff; and (c) Resources and Support. In summary, the [Centre for Teaching and Learning](#) takes a primary institutional lead on promoting teaching and learning, and cornerstone institutional QA mechanisms for monitoring teaching-related activity include:

- Ongoing cyclical [quality review](#) of all academic units
- The [external examiner](#) system
- Programme reviews (annually by the relevant course review board and periodically (usually every five years) by an external panel)
- The [Student Evaluation of Teaching](#) (SET) process
- The [Module Satisfaction Survey](#) (MSS)
- The [student exit survey](#)
- Maintenance, periodic review and update of a comprehensive framework of academic practices and regulations, as articulated in the [Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures](#)

Do you have a Policy/Procedure in place for Resources and Support?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Resources and Support

In line with **ESG 1.6 (Learning resources and student support)**, UL invests (and regularly reviews) appropriate levels of funding for learning and teaching activities and ensures that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided. The University utilises a specific resource allocation model, which ultimately allocates resources to academic and support units based on budget available, the units' needs and alignment with the strategic plan. This model is regularly reviewed for fitness for purpose by the Finance Department and Executive Committee.

Most student supports are provided by specific support units or offices, including the Centre for Teaching and Learning, Cooperative Education and Careers, Library and Information Services Division, Buildings and Estates, Student Affairs, the Information Technology Division, the International Education Division, Graduate Studies, the Registry, and Continuing and Professional Education, as well as the Student Engagement and Success Unit. All support (and academic) units are subject to periodic quality reviews, the reports from which are published on the [QSU website](#). Support units ensure the effectiveness of their services through their [quality management systems](#) (QMSs), and an internal auditing process is used to verify the effectiveness of each QMS.

The self-assessment reports produced by academic departments as part of their periodic quality reviews include sections on facilities and learning resources and student guidance and support. The evaluation of these aspects of teaching and learning as they relate to individual departments often raise issues that need to be addressed and improved. Such quality improvement action items invariably form part of the departments' quality improvement plans, either in the context of being able to improve the issue themselves or in liaison with the service provider in question.

Student surveys, most notably the annual [student exit survey](#) and [module satisfaction survey](#), include questions on the effectiveness of the University's learner support services and resources. Survey reports are subsequently distributed for consideration, both locally at unit and programme level and to relevant institutional-level fora (e.g. Executive Committee and Academic Council). Summary reports are published on the [QSU website](#).

All supports are accessible. Students are informed about the services available to them in a variety of ways, including [orientation week](#) and the [first seven weeks programme](#) for first-year students, student advisor system referrals and the [student gateway portal](#) on the UL homepage. In addition, individual support (and academic) units provide relevant information on their own web pages.

ESG 1.6 recognises that the role of support and administrative staff is crucial in delivering support services and that such staff need to be qualified and given opportunities to develop their competences. In this context, UL implements published procedures for the [recruitment and appointment of support staff](#) and a [competency framework](#). Generic induction, training and development opportunities are also provided, most notable by HR's [Learning, Development and Equal Opportunities](#) section. Tailored training and development requirements for individual support staff are considered as part of their annual [PDRS](#) (Performance and Development Review System) activities.

Do you have a Policy/Procedure for Information Management?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Information Management

Responsibility for policy and procedural development relating to information management is devolved across appropriate individual university units and offices, including the office of the president and the Information Technology Division. The effectiveness of such information management policies and procedures is assessed via individual unit quality reviews. In line with **ESG 1.7 (Information management)**, UL collects, analyses and uses relevant information for managing effectively their programmes and other activities. Some primary procedures include:

- **At a strategic institutional level**, the strategic plan, the teaching, learning and assessment strategy and the research and innovation strategy all articulate specific aims and objectives, each with accompanying outcomes and targets. Internal procedures are in place to routinely monitor, document and report progress to key decision-making individuals or committees, including Executive Committee, Management Council, Academic Council and Governing Authority. For example, the implementation, monitoring and review of the [strategic plan](#) is described on page 68 of that document.
- **Profiles of the student population as well as student progression, success and drop-out rates** are gathered, reported and analysed in a number of ways. Under governance of the Steering Group, the [Academic Registry Division](#) maintains, controls and develops UL's student records through its student information system, from which various officers and offices can extract and tailor data to generate reports for appropriate internal stakeholders at institutional level (e.g. Academic Council and Executive Committee), at local level (e.g. course review boards) and for external stakeholders (e.g. HEA, DES). A recent initiative is the establishment of UL's Student Engagement & Success Unit ([SESU](#)), which, amongst other responsibilities, undertakes research and data-analytics relating to student engagement.

The student voice: Information relating to students' levels of satisfaction with their programmes is gathered in a number of ways. Cornerstone institutional-level student surveys include [student evaluation of teaching surveys](#), [module satisfaction surveys](#) and [student exit surveys](#), for which survey reports are delivered to relevant internal stakeholders for consideration and follow up (e.g. Academic Council, Executive Committee, heads of department, course directors, course boards and individual academics). The UL institutional survey register recorded an additional 35 surveys, which, in the main, targeted one or more specific cohorts of students (first-year students, international students, etc.).

Institutional processes provide a framework for individual students or student groups to avail of various local mechanisms to receive immediate feedback on modules and programmes of study during delivery, with a view to local consideration and response. These mechanisms include direct contact with a lecturer, head of department, academic advisor or student representative. Student feedback and dialogue is also facilitated by student representation on various committees and boards, both at institutional level (e.g. Governing Authority, Academic Council and faculty boards) and local level (e.g. course review boards). In addition:

- **External examiner reports** are considered by relevant programme review boards, and the outcome of programme reviews are considered at departmental and faculty level and by the Academic Programme Review Committee in accordance with UL procedures.
- The **quality review process** for [academic units](#) and [support units](#) requires input from students, customers and stakeholders. The quality review reports, which address all aspects of units' operations, are considered by Executive Committee, the relevant dean and the Vice President Academic & Registrar.
- A comprehensive range of **learning resources and support services** are provided by UL to facilitate student learning. The programme approval process incorporates a detailed analysis of the resources required by each programme, including student supports. Academic and support department quality reviews include an evaluation of the provision of learner resources and supports by the department under review.
- **Career paths of graduates** : UL's [Cooperative Education and Careers Division](#) provides comprehensive career advice and support to students and organises work placements for students. The division conducts an annual First Destinations Survey of graduates, which helps inform relevant strategic planning activity as well as local and institutional decision making.
- **The Research Office** uses a research information system (ULRIS) for tracking research output and publications and has numerous internal processes for recording, monitoring and reporting upon research activity.
- **The office of marketing and Communications** is responsible for gathering and disseminating a wide range of information to both internal and external university audiences

Do you have a Policy/Procedure for Self-evaluation and Monitoring?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Self-evaluation and Monitoring

A diverse range of procedures are enacted at institutional, local and, indeed, personal level with a view to monitoring, self-evaluating and enhancing the quality of our activities.

Institutional-level self-evaluation activities incorporate, but are not limited to:

- Self-evaluation activities (and associated authorship of a self-evaluation report) as part of both [academic](#) and [support](#) unit quality reviews. Review reports are made [publicly available](#), and the review recommendations form the basis of a subsequent quality improvement plan. The implementation of the plan is monitored by the Quality Support Unit, the Vice President Academic & Registrar, the relevant dean and the Governing Authority Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance subcommittee.
- An external examination process for both [taught](#) and research programmes, with feedback of external examiner reports at local unit and individual level. External examiners are requested to contact the Office of the VPA&R directly if they have particular concerns.
- Annual self-evaluation (and periodic external evaluation) of individual programmes by course review boards, informing programmatic enhancement activities. The review outcomes are considered at departmental and faculty level and by Academic Council's Academic Programme Review Committee (APRC).
- Student feedback by means of the [module satisfaction survey](#) and [student exit survey](#), with detailed and/or aggregate reports being considered by individual academics, heads of department, course boards, deans, Executive Committee and Academic Council.

Systematic and ongoing risk assessment exercises (feeding into risk registers) are undertaken by academic and support units in line with UL's [risk management policy](#), the implementation and monitoring of which is undertaken by Executive Committee and Governing Authority's Risk Management Committee.

Do you have a Policy/Procedure for Stakeholder Engagement?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Stakeholder Engagement

A diverse range of procedures and activities are enacted at institutional and local level with a view to ensuring stakeholder engagement.

Activities incorporate, but are not limited to:

- The systematic inclusion of student representation in all aspects of University governance and quality assurance activity (e.g. student representation on Governing Authority, Academic Council, faculty boards, course review boards and review panels of academic units).
- As part of the quality review process for both academic and support units, individual units identify their customers and stakeholders and reflect upon levels of engagement with a view to identifying opportunities for enhancing quality. The quality reviewers meet with key stakeholders as part of review site visits, and key stakeholders (e.g. student and employer representatives) form part of the quality review team.
As part of their quality management system ([QMS](#)), individual support units identify and seek feedback from their core customers and stakeholders.
- Engagement with employer and related stakeholders is largely facilitated by the [Research Office](#) (research, intellectual property and technology transfer), the [Cooperative Education and Careers Division](#) (managing a network of over 2,000 employers in the context of student placements) and the [Continuing and Professional Education](#) unit. These networks and linkages are routinely used to identify employer and related stakeholders for participation in QA activities (such as the external examining process, unit quality reviews and periodic programmatic reviews).

Do you have a Policy/Procedure for Engagement with other Bodies?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Engagement with other Bodies

Engagement with professional, statutory and other regulatory bodies is managed directly by the relevant academic or support unit.

Unit-level QA oversight of how these interactions are managed and enhanced falls under the auspices of each unit's QMS activities (support units) and quality review processes (academic and support units).

For example, the Office of the President's [QMS](#) encompasses a range of documents (quality policy and manual, customer charter and key business processes), which, collectively, record the Office's engagement activities with relevant statutory, regulatory and other bodies. The QMS also incorporates a quality improvement plan to drive continual improvement. The effectiveness of each unit's QMS and operational excellence is assessed by periodic [quality review](#).

UL maintains (and updates annually) a central institutional repository (database) of programmes accredited by external/professional bodies.

In instances where engagement between a professional, regulatory or statutory body (PRSB) and an academic or support unit raises issues outside of the scope of the unit concerned, the unit liaises with the appropriate UL committee, unit or management group.

Do you have a Policy/Procedure for Provision and use of Public Information?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Provision and use of Public Information

In line with **ESG 1.8 (Public information)**, UL regularly updates its [website](#) so that the University's wide range of stakeholders can easily source information of relevance to them. UL adheres to the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, 2014, which informs institutional practice in this area. Section 8 of the Act requires FOI bodies to prepare and publish as much information as possible in an open and accessible manner on a routine basis, having regard to the principles of openness, transparency and accountability as set out in Sections 8(5) and 11(3) of the Act. Links to each section of UL's FOI Publication Scheme are maintained by the [FOI section](#) of the Corporate Secretary's Office. Links include:

- [General Information about the University of Limerick Information on](#)
- [Functions & Services Provided](#)
- [Information on Decision-Making Procedures](#)
- [Financial Information](#)
- [Procurement Information](#)
- [Other Routinely Published Information / FOI Disclosure Log](#)

The office of marketing and Communications is responsible for gathering and disseminating a wide range of information to both internal and external university audiences. Each academic and support unit also maintains, reviews and updates its own website, and all sites are accessible from the UL [homepage](#).

Do you have a Policy/Procedure for Linked Providers?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Linked Providers (DABs only)

The University of Limerick considers partnership agreements with both public and private bodies to develop and accredit programmes of study that align with the University's aims and goals as described in the strategic plan. UL pursues a defined framework (documented on an internal SharePoint site) to establish, following discussion with the external partner, the terms of reference of any accreditation arrangement. The accreditation process involves a review of the academic programmes of study and the capacity of the external partner to deliver the programmes in a manner consistent with UL's quality assurance processes. The process entails establishing an accreditation committee tasked with reviewing external partner documentation and facilities and reporting recommendations to the appropriate institutional committee.

Quality assurance procedures for engaging with linked providers are governed by memoranda of understanding (MoUs) between UL and individual linked providers. The MoUs, and hence the exact profile and scope of the resultant QA oversight, are tailored to best suit individual institutional contexts and are approved ultimately by Academic Council and Executive Committee. The QQI sector-specific QA guidelines informs evolving institutional procedures underpinning the approval, monitoring, review and potential for withdrawal of approval and appeal for linked providers.

Do you have a Policy/Procedure for Collaborative Provision?

Yes

Links for Policy/Procedure relating to Collaborative Provision

The Office of the VPA&R follows internal guidelines when responding to requests for accreditation from external bodies. These guidelines, which are retained on an internal SharePoint site, have been informed by the [IHEQN guidelines on collaborative provision](#).

PRSBs

24

Awarding Bodies

0

QA Bodies

1

Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

First Set of Records

Type of Arrangement

PRSB

Name of the Body

EFMD (<http://www.efmd.org/>) – EPAS accreditation

Programme Titles and Links to Publications

Bachelor of Business Studies (BBS)

Date of last review or accreditation

30-06-2015

Next review year

2020

Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Second Set of Records

Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	The Teaching Council; http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	B.Sc. Education
Date of last review or accreditation	20-04-2014
Next review year	2017
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Third Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists; http://www.iscp.ie/
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	B.Sc. Physiotherapy
Date of last review or accreditation	30-06-2015
Next review year	2020
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Fourth Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	BSc Nursing
Date of last review or accreditation	30-11-2015
Next review year	2020
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Fifth Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Engineers Ireland
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	BEng Electronic and Computer Engineering
Date of last review or accreditation	29-05-2015
Next review year	2019

Joint research degrees	3
Joint/double/multiple awards	3
Collaborative programmes	5
Franchise programmes	2
Linked providers (DABs only)	3
Section: Collaborative Provision	First Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Linked providers (DABs only)
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Full list of programmes available at www.mic.ie .
Date of last review	30-11-2016
Next review year	2023
Section: Collaborative Provision	Second Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Linked providers (DABs only)
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Garda College Templemore
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p>BA Applied Policing</p> <p>Postgraduate Diploma in Serious Crime Investigation</p>
Date of last review	17-11-2014
Next review year	2019
Section: Collaborative Provision	Third Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Linked providers (DABs only)
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Limerick Institute of Technology
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Level 10 research awards
Date of last review	15-06-2016
Next review year	2021
Section: Collaborative Provision	Fourth Set of Records

Type of arrangement:	Joint/double/multiple awards
Name of the Body (Bodies)	KEDGE Business school, Marseille France.
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	BA, international Business International Bachelor Business Administration
Date of last review	01-08-2016
Next review year	2017
Section: Collaborative Provision	Fifth Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Joint/double/multiple awards
Name of the Body (Bodies)	National University of Ireland, Galway
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	MSc Sustainable Resource Management: Policy and Practice MSc Finance and Information Systems
Date of last review	02-09-2013
Next review year	2017
Section: Collaborative Provision	Sixth Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Joint/double/multiple awards
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Mary Immaculate College
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Joint Bachelor of Arts
Date of last review	15-02-2017
Next review year	2018
Section: Collaborative Provision	Seventh Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Collaborative programmes
Name of the Body (Bodies)	The Revenue Commissioners
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	BA (Hons) Applied Taxation Diploma in Applied Taxation
Date of last review	14-02-2014

Next review year	2019
Section: Collaborative Provision	Eighth Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Franchise programmes
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Independent College of Science and Technology (IST), Athens, Greece
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	BSc Psychology MSc Psychological Science
Date of last review	20-10-2014
Next review year	2018
Section: Collaborative Provision	Ninth Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Joint research degrees
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	PhD
Date of last review	20-02-2015
Next review year	2016
Section: Collaborative Provision	Tenth Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Joint research degrees
Name of the Body (Bodies)	University of Milano, Italy
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	PhD
Date of last review	25-09-2015
Next review year	2017
Articulation Agreements	0
Section: Internal Review Schedule	First Set of Records
Year	2015-2016
Areas/Units	Department of Psychology; International Education Division; Research Office; UL Sports Division; Plassey Campus Centre
Number	5

Link(s) to Publication(s)	http://www.ul.ie/quality/content/reviews-date ; http://www.ul.ie/quality/support-departments/QRG-reports
Section: Internal Review Schedule	Second Set of Records
Year	2014-2015
Areas/Units	Department of Politics and Public Administration; Department of Electronic and Computer Engineering; Graduate Entry Medical School; Student Affairs; Human Resources; Information Technology Division; Finance Department
Number	7
Link(s) to Publication(s)	http://www.ul.ie/quality/content/reviews-date ; http://www.ul.ie/quality/support-departments/QRG-reports
Section: Internal Review Schedule	Third Set of Records
Year	2013-2014
Areas/Units	Department of Physical Education and Sport Sciences; Department of Economics; School of Architecture; Library & Information Services Division; Buildings and Estates
Number	5
Link(s) to Publication(s)	http://www.ul.ie/quality/content/reviews-date ; http://www.ul.ie/quality/support-departments/QRG-reports
Section: Internal Review Schedule	Fourth Set of Records
Year	2012-2013
Areas/Units	Department of Mechanical, Aeronautical & Biomedical Engineering; Department of Personnel and Employment Relations; Department of History; Department of Mathematics and Statistics; Department of Sociology; Cooperative Education and Careers Division
Number	6
Link(s) to Publication(s)	http://www.ul.ie/quality/content/reviews-date ; http://www.ul.ie/quality/support-departments/QRG-reports
Section: Internal Review Schedule	Fifth Set of Records
Year	2011-2012
Areas/Units	Department of Civil Engineering and Materials Science; Department of Accounting and Finance; Irish World Academy of Music and Dance; Department of Management and Marketing
Number	4
Link(s) to Publication(s)	http://www.ul.ie/quality/content/reviews-date ; http://www.ul.ie/quality/support-departments/QRG-reports

Section: Internal Review Schedule	Sixth Set of Records
Year	2010-2011
Areas/Units	Department of Computer Science and Information Systems; Department of Physics and Energy; School of Law
Number	3
Link(s) to Publication(s)	http://www.ul.ie/quality/content/reviews-date ; http://www.ul.ie/quality/support-departments/QRG-reports
Section: Internal Review Schedule	Seventh Set of Records
Year	2009-2010
Areas/Units	Department of Manufacturing and Operations Engineering; Department of Chemical and Environmental Sciences; Department of Education and Professional Studies; Department of Life Sciences
Number	4
Link(s) to Publication(s)	http://www.ul.ie/quality/content/reviews-date ; http://www.ul.ie/quality/support-departments/QRG-reports
Section: Internal Review Schedule	Eighth Set of Records
Year	2008-2009
Areas/Units	Department of Physiotherapy; Department of Occupational Therapy; Department of Speech and Language Therapy; Department of Nursing and Midwifery
Number	4
Link(s) to Publication(s)	http://www.ul.ie/quality/content/reviews-date ; http://www.ul.ie/quality/support-departments/QRG-reports
Section: Internal Review Schedule	Ninth Set of Records
Year	2007-2008
Areas/Units	Finance Department; Student Affairs Division; Plassey Campus Centre; Sports Department; Research Office
Number	5
Link(s) to Publication(s)	http://www.ul.ie/quality/content/reviews-date ; http://www.ul.ie/quality/support-departments/QRG-reports
Section: Internal Review Schedule	Tenth Set of Records
Year	2006-2007

Areas/Units	Cooperative Education & Careers Division; Buildings and Estates; Information Technology Division; Human Resources Division
Number	4
Link(s) to Publication(s)	http://www.ul.ie/quality/content/reviews-date ; http://www.ul.ie/quality/support-departments/QRG-reports
Submission	Final Submission

**PART 2 - Section 1:
Institution-led QA - Annual**

A piece in relation to the evolution of quality assurance and enhancement systems to support strategic objectives in the reporting period.

Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Developments

- Introduction of a **Devolved Planning System** to Academic and Support Units: With the launch of the University's Strategic Plan [Broadening Horizons](#), a devolved planning system has been introduced whereby shared responsibility for the outcomes has been decentralised to the key academic and support units. This devolved planning system will drive measurable improvements and will facilitate the evaluation of performance against implementation of objectives across the institution.
- In February 2016 the UL Governing Authority formally approved the University's [Risk Management Policy](#). The purpose of this Policy is to provide a framework for management to identify, assess and rate risks, and to develop strategies to deal with risks so as to provide reasonable assurance that the University's strategic objectives will be achieved.
- Upon notification of a new or revised quality requirement, the university's Quality Support Unit (QSU) will coordinate an exercise that assesses the extent to which the university complies with the requirement. The first such exercise was conducted with our International Education Division to ensure compliance with the "Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners". The [published report](#) provides an evidence-based overview of how UL complies with the Code.
- To strengthen ESG compliance, a revised annual programme monitoring and periodic programme review process was piloted. As part of this pilot across the four faculties, 14 programmes were reviewed. The pilot programme was approved by Academic Council and forms part of our institutional commitment with the HEA through the compact agreement.
- To ensure compliance with National Vetting Bureau (Children & Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012, Academic Council approved the [UL Student Vetting Policy](#) (May 2016). The associated operational procedure is now being updated.

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

- In February 2016, a restructuring of the Student Affairs Division was undertaken to best align with the University's evolving business needs and its managerial and governance structures. The realignment concentrates academic administration and processing, on the one hand ([Academic Registry](#)) and student support ([Student Affairs](#)), on the other, in entities dedicated to those functions to create conditions for enhanced clarity of mission.
- Following feedback from external quality reviewers, the quality review process and guidelines for both Academic and Support Units were reviewed. Revised guidelines were approved by Executive and Governing Authority and published on the [QSU website](#).
- A 'Joint and Dual Degree Awards Policy' was approved in June 2016 by Academic Council.
- 'Professional Doctorate Regulations' were approved by Academic Council in June 2016. These regulations will provide greater clarity and guidance to course teams developing professional doctorate programmes.
- Following a review of the Knowledge Transfer Strategy, the [Intellectual Property Policy](#) was updated and approved by Governing Authority in September 2015.

The schedule of QA governance meetings for the period should be inserted here.

Governing Authority

(GA) Meetings:

25 September 2015

30 October 2015

27 November 2015

28 January 2016

25 February 2016

31 March 2016

28 April 2016

26 May 2016

30 June 2016

Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance Committee (GA sub-committee)

9 September 2015

9 November 2015

26 January 2016

31 March 2016

Audit & Risk Management Committee (GA sub-committee)

24 September 2015

19 November 2015

9 February 2016

12 April 2016

3 May 2016

15 June 2016

Access & Student Affairs Committee (GA sub-committee)

30 October 2015

27 November 2015

26 May 2016

Finance Committee (GA sub-committee)

16 September 2015

4 March 2016

7 April 2016

28 June 2016

Human Resources Committee (GA sub-committee)

11 September 2015

15 February 2016

19 April 2016

22 September 2016

Academic Council (AC) Meetings

7 October 2015

9 December 2015

2 March 2016

18 May 2016

15 June 2016

Academic Council Grading Committee

2 September 2015
28 September 2015
3 December 2015
15 January 2016
9 May 2016
1 June 2016
15 June 2016
1 July 2016
31 August 2016

Academic Programme Review Committee (APRC; an AC sub-committee)

11 September 2015
9 October 2015
6 November 2015
4 December 2015
8 January 2016
12 February 2016
11 March 2016
22 April 2016
19 May 2016
1 July 2016 (APRC sub-committee)

Academic Regulations Committee (ARC: an AC sub-committee)

9 September 2015
20 October 2015
24 November 2015
12 January 2016
16 February 2016
29 March 2016
26 April 2016
31 May 2016

Faculty Boards (*KBS = Kemmy Business School; EHS = Education & Health Science; AHSS = Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*) 23 September 2015 – KBS

30 September 2015 – EHS
21 October 2015 – AHSS and S&E
11 November 2015 – KBS
18 November 2015 – EHS
2 December 2015 – AHSS and S&E
10 February 2016 –KBS
24 February 2016 – EHS
6 April 2016 – AHSS, EHS, KBS and S&E
6 May - AHSS

Executive Committee

Weekly meetings from beginning of September 2015 to end of June 2016

Research Ethics and Governance Committee

29 September 2015
24 November 2015
2 February 2016
3 May 2016

University Teacher Education Board

13 November 2015
28 April 2016

PART 2 - Section 2: Institution-led QA - Annual	Reviews in the Reporting Period
Area/Unit and links to relevant publications	Psychology (November 2015) http://www.ul.ie/quality/sites/default/files/docs/Psychology%20PRG%20Report%20%28fi
Links to published internal reviews	Second Set of Records
Area/Unit and links to relevant publications	International Education Division (September 2015) http://www.ul.ie/quality/sites/default/files/docs/IED%20QRG%20Report%20%28final%29
Links to published internal reviews	Third Set of Records
Area/Unit and links to relevant publications	Office of Research (January 2016) http://www.ul.ie/quality/sites/default/files/docs/Research%20QRG%20Report%20%28Re
Links to published internal reviews	Fourth Set of Records
Area/Unit and links to relevant publications	UL Sport (April 2016) http://www.ul.ie/quality/sites/default/files/docs/UL%20Sport%20QRG%20Report%20Fin
Links to published internal reviews	Fifth Set of Records
Area/Unit and links to relevant publications	Plassey Campus Centre (June 2016) http://www.ul.ie/quality/sites/default/files/docs/PCC%20QRG%20Report%20.pdf
Number of internal approval/evaluations and reviews completed in respect of Validation/Programme Approval	112
Number of internal approval/evaluations and reviews completed in respect of Research Accreditation/Validation.	5
Number of internal approval/evaluations and reviews completed in respect of Programme Review.	14
Number of internal approval/evaluations and reviews completed in respect of Research Review.	1
Number of internal approval/evaluations and reviews completed in respect of School/Department/Faculty Review.	1

Number of internal approval/evaluations and reviews completed in respect of Service Unit Review.	4
Number of internal approval/evaluations and reviews completed in respect of Review of arrangements with a partner organisation.	3
Composition of Panels: % Internal	12
Composition of Panels: % National	30
Composition of Panels: % UK	32
Composition of Panels: % EU	7
Composition of Panels: % Student	15
Composition of Panels: % Other	3
Chair Profile: % Internal	0
Chair Profile: % Similar institution	80
Chair Profile: % Different institution	20
Chair Profile: % International	80
PART 2 - Section 3: Update on Institutional QA Overview	Other Implementation Factors

This institution can use this section to set out the ways in which data is used to support quality assurance and the management of the student learning experience.

Module Satisfaction Survey (MSS)

In March 2016, MSS requests were distributed to UL students who were undertaking one or more modules that semester. This represented some 51,442 individual requests to almost 13,000 students taking one or more of approximately 1,170 current modules on offer. Some 17,500 responses were received, which represents an overall response rate of 34%.

Reporting structure:

- Individual module reports made available to module lecturer
- Reports detailing all departmental modules sent to heads of department (copied to faculty dean)
- Report summarising departmental and faculty-level aggregate data sent to Executive Committee
- Summary intuition report made [publically available](#) (with notification to all staff and students).

Student Exit Survey

The **2016 student exit survey** was launched in March 2016. The online survey was distributed to final-year students of all UL taught programmes, and the response rate was 32%.

Reporting structure:

- Individual programme reports to programme team
- Departmental report to head of department
- Institutional-level report to Executive Committee and Academic Council
- Support unit reports to support units
- Summary intuition report made [publically available](#) (with notification to all staff & students).

Student Evaluation of Teaching

UL's Centre for Teaching and Learning provides a structured approach to getting feedback from students about individual approaches to teaching – [Student Evaluation of Teaching](#) (SET). This process is voluntary and confidential and is designed to provide useful information to individual lecturers on their students' experiences of the modules they teach. In the academic year 2015/16, 363 SET surveys were completed.

Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE): ISSE is a national survey that is distributed to first year, final year and postgraduate students across the country every year. It covers a range of aspects of student life and the results can be useful in informing local and national strategies. The ISSE was open to University of Limerick students from 30th January to 19th February. Several initiatives were undertaken across campus in an effort to increase the response rate this year. The response rate was 13.4%

Postgraduate Research Experience: This survey is run annually and asks participants about their experiences as a postgraduate research student at the University of Limerick. The responses inform the Graduate School and University about the experience of postgraduate researchers, helping to improve future support. They are also used to advise policy and improve the postgraduate research experience. The number of respondents over the three year period 2013-15 inclusive, ranged from 33-37 and the response rates varied from 24% -37% with a mix of gender, award level and mode of attendance.

In addition to the above, additional annual survey activity would include the following:

- First Seven Weeks Survey (first-year students)
- International Students – Tell us what you think survey
- First Destinations of Graduates
- Post Cooperative Education Survey
- First Year Orientation Week Survey
- Eurostudent Survey 2016.

External examiner reports for all taught programmes and for degree awards by research are collected and made available to course boards and research supervisors, respectively.

Annual **research postgraduate progression** reports are considered by research review panels, with progression decisions considered by Academic Council.

Institutional-level **progression, retention and completion data** is generated annually. In addition to presentation to the HEA, this is also considered by a number of committees, most notably the Executive Committee, and informs appropriate policy and initiative development. One such initiative is the establishment of the [Student Engagement and Success Unit](#) which was established to help students transition to third level.

The institution may choose to highlight in this section information relating to factors that have impacted on quality and quality assurance in the reporting period. These may be factors relating to national developments or initiatives, such as clusters/alliances/mergers, other external factors or intra-institutional factors.

- **Regionally Coordinated Approach to Transfer and Progression Pathways:** MIC, UL and LIT have agreed that a federated Limerick Graduate School should be created in order to facilitate closer integration, resource-sharing, and jointly-delivered services for students of each institution's individual Graduate Schools. This will have the effect of increasing the shared critical mass for attraction of high calibre graduate students to the region, research innovation, and funding. The Limerick Graduate School will also enable students and supervisors to enjoy higher levels of synergy and cross-fertilisation of ideas and will provide a vehicle for vertical progression of students between institutions. Building on the very robust foundations created by the Shannon Consortium partners during SIF 1-2, the Mid West Cluster will integrate access and retention mechanisms through a shared platform. This will enable joint planning, target-setting and outreach, as well as coordinated reporting. It is planned to hold the first meeting in the October 2016.
- **Sept 2015: Science without Borders** - The University of Limerick (UL) welcomes applications from prospective students from Brazil as part of the Science without Borders programme which aims to place 100,000 Brazilians in overseas higher education institutions over the next four years, to study Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects as part of a major Brazilian government initiative.
- **University of Limerick / University of Massachusetts Collaboration:** In support of the UL/UMass collaboration, the following collaborative ventures were announced in November 2015: 1) Civic Engagement; 2) New Collaboration in Nanoplasmonics; 3) eWOM, Altruism and Online Social Context and 4) Irish & Irish-American Literature and Culture: Imaging Place and People.
- **Shandong University of Technology (China) and University of Limerick:** Collaboration on programmes in Computer Science and Machine Design and Manufacturing.
- **Hennan Polytechnical University (China) and University of Limerick:** Collaborative programme in Computer Science and Civil Engineering.
- The franchise agreement between University of Limerick and the IST College Athens was extended to include the Master of Science in Psychological Science.
- **June 2016:** Approval granted by Academic Council to Limerick Institute of Technology for the purpose of delivering UL Doctor of Philosophy Awards.
- The Kemmy Business School (KBS) at UL signed a dual degree agreement in August 2016 with KEDGE Business School in France. The agreement involves the BA in International Business (BAIB) degree offered by the KBS and the International Bachelor of Business Administration (IBBA) offered by KEDGE. Under the agreement, BAIB students from the KBS will spend their first two years studying at the University of Limerick and their last two years studying at KEDGE's campus in Marseille, France, while KEDGE students will spend their first two years studying in France and their final two years at the University of Limerick. Upon successful completion of their four years of study, students will receive both UL's BAIB degree and KEDGE's IBBA degree.
- The establishment and approval of a joint Bachelor of Arts Programme between UL and Mary Immaculate College Limerick, is a significant achievement which delivers both in terms of reduced CAO entry and on UL's commitment to HEA under the compact agreement.

Any other implementation issues of interest can be noted here.

PART 3

A commentary about the effectiveness of QA policies and procedures in the reporting period may be inserted here.

Effectiveness and Impact

- In order to conform with increasing statutory and related quality requirements, the QSU published an Assessment of Compliance policy and procedures document outlining how compliance with statutory requirements are integrated into the University of Limerick's quality assurance policies and procedures. This procedure was used to assess the University of Limerick's compliance with the (Irish) Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners. The [published document](#) provides an evidence-based overview of: (a) How compliance with the Code is integrated into the University of Limerick's quality assurance policies and procedures, and (b) How the University of Limerick complies with each of the specific criteria included in the Code.
- To further encourage student engagement with quality-related activity, the QSU has initiated annual meetings with incoming Student Sabbatical Officers. The objective of these meetings is to encourage open dialogue between the QSU and student representatives and to facilitate enhanced participation in quality-related activity.
- A Quality Management System (QMS) [Audit Process](#) is in place for UL support units. This is a process whereby auditors from another support unit will conduct QMS audits for a unit in preparation for their quality review. Training is given to new auditors who participate. During the report period a total of 28 staff were trained as QMS auditors. Three units undertook audits with a total of 32 processes being audited.
- During the reporting period, eight units presented their initial response and proposed actions to the quality review recommendations (QRG Reports) to Governing Authority. These included three academic units (Electronic & Computer Engineering; Politics & Public Administration and the Graduate Entry Medical School) and five support units (Human Resources, Student Affairs, Information Technology Division, Finance and the International Education Division).
- Six units met with the VPA&R to report on the final outcome of their Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) action implementation. These included four academic units (Physical Education and Sports Science, Economics, Architecture and Electronic and Computer Engineering) and two support units (Human Resources Division and Information Technology Division).

An evaluation of the impact of QA policies and procedures through their implementation in the reporting period should be inserted here.

- **Student Engagement and Success Unit** With student attrition recognised as an issue in higher education, it is vital that institutions support a sense of belonging, promote student well-being and provide holistic supports to help improve engagement and retention. In this context, the University of Limerick formed a [Student Engagement and Success Unit](#) in 2015 to provide targeted support for new entrants. UL appointed three positions including a First Year Experience and Retention Co-ordinator, a Librarian for First Year Student Engagement and Success, and an Educational Developer. The remit of these roles is to develop initiatives to support student engagement, information and digital literacy, and critical thinking in a supported academic and social environment. This support is aligned to the institutional policies of the university as well as graduate attributes which facilitates students to be knowledgeable, proactive, creative, responsible, collaborative and articulate.
- In response to feedback from external quality reviewers (QRG) and internal quality team members, the quality review process and guidelines for [academic](#) and [support](#) units were revised. Particular emphasis was placed on the follow-on phase of the quality review process – implementation of recommendations from the QRG report. Recommendations are now given at level 1 and level 2. For each level 1 recommendation, a brief justification must be given by reviewers. A revised template for the QIP implementation was devised which ensures that the follow-on phase of the review process is project managed by the unit under review, outlining proposed actions, responsibilities and target completion dates. Level 1 recommendations are reported back to Governing Authority approximately 4-6 months after the review, with a subsequent report and review meeting with VPA&R of all recommendations approximately 15 months after the site visit.
- In response to feedback from quality team leaders, the [Quality Management System Framework](#) for support units was revised. The original framework was aligned with ISO9001:2000. The revised framework is aligned with the ISO9001:2015 seven principles of quality management.
- In response to recommendations arising from quality reviews, a 'Data Working Group' was established in April to investigate solutions to capture measure and track performance of metrics at a faculty or division level, in addition to the reporting capability required at the Institution level. Currently the University has a range of different reporting capabilities and skills, in federated silos around the organisation. The group will initially design and develop a 'Proof of Concept solution to address the major business intelligence and reporting requirements of the University.
- A continuation of the review of survey activity at a University-level was conducted over the academic year 2015-16. This encompassed recruiting a number of students who broadly represent the general student body and asking them to forward all survey requests over the 12 month period to the QSU. This included surveys at both programme and unit level. The feedback facilitated an analysis of the level and breadth of survey requests which confirmed that a wide range of surveys are being conducted within the University throughout the academic year. Trends suggest that surveys conducted at a programme level are getting higher response rates than the UL unit survey response rate. Questions now arise as to whether there needs to be a more streamlined approach to managing surveys, as so many requests are being sent by various units and individuals that survey fatigue is quite evident. A full survey report will be presented to the VPA&R management group.
- A centralised database of UL programmes accredited by external/professional bodies is now maintained by the Quality Support Unit.

This section should highlight an analysis of the key themes arising within the implementation of QA policies and procedures, primarily through a thematic analysis of key recommendations, commendations and conditions for the reporting period.

Thematic analysis exercises have been undertaken by the QSU in the context of commendations and recommendations arising from quality reviews of both Support and Academic units. The most common themes identified are as follows:

- **Support Unit Commendations:** Total number = 83: (a) Process & Procedure (24 commendations – 29% of total); (b) Customer Focus (20 commendations – 24% of total); (c) Staff (18 commendations – 22% of total); (d) Continual Improvement (11 commendations – 13% of total); and (e) Commitment to Quality (10 commendations – 12% of total).
- **Support Unit Recommendations:** Total number = 100: (a) **Strategic Development** (35 recommendations – 35% of total); (b) **Process & Procedures** (23 recommendations – 23% of total); (c) **Systems Development** (19 recommendations – 19% of total); (d) **Customer Focus** (17 recommendations – 17% of total); (e) **KPIs** (6 recommendations – 6% of total);
- **Academic Unit Commendations:** Total number = 27. (a) Staff (10 commendations – 37% of total); (b) Curriculum Development (4 commendations – 15% of total); (c) Research (3 commendations – 11% of total); (d) Strategy (3 commendations – 11% of total); (e) Strategy (3 commendations – 11% of total); (f) Teaching & Learning (2 commendations – 7.5% of total) and (g) Resources (2 commendations – 7.5% of total);
- **Academic Unit Recommendations:** Total number = 26. (a) **Policy/ Programme Development** (6 recommendations – 23% of total); (b) **Strategic Planning** (5 recommendations – 19% of total); (c) **Student Experience** (5 recommendations – 19% of total); (d) **Research** (5 recommendations – 19% of total); (e) **Resources** (3 recommendation – 12% of total); (f) **Teaching & Learning** (1 recommendation – 4% of total); (g) **Accreditation** (1 recommendation – 4% of total).

Note: Only one academic review took place in the reporting period, therefore trends pertain to that unit only.

PART 4

Quality Enhancement

A description of improvements or enhancements, impacting on quality or quality assurance, that took place in the reporting period, identifying the reasons for the improvements (for example an evaluation of effectiveness and impact from the previous period or objectives set out in strategic compacts).

- The UL **HEA Strategic Dialogue** process is driving a number of improvement/enhancement initiatives. Examples of those progressed during the reporting period include:
 - Digital capacity building programme entitled “Take one Step” delivered across the Shannon Consortium.
 - Regional technology transfer shared service in association with Institute of Technology Tralee and Limerick Institute of Technology.
 - A pilot teacher-led writing initiative in the faculties, launched by the Regional Writing Centre as part of the development of a Communication-Enriched Curriculum (CEC) initiative;
 - Reconfiguration of the student advisor system to maximise student engagement and support with a focus on active mentoring during the student’s first year;
 - The establishment of UL’s learner support units strategic planning board;
 - The publication by Academic Council of revised grade descriptors which include meta-level grade descriptors for all academic grades;
 - The development of an internationalisation module as a core module for Specialist Diploma in Teaching and Learning.

- Launch of ['Broadening Horizons': The University's new Strategic Plan for 2015 to 2019](#). The new strategy commits to establishing new international research networks and doubling research income from EU funding sources over the next five years. The Strategy is built around three distinct aims, 'building on achievements', 'accentuating distinctiveness' and 'raising international profile' that will guide the University of Limerick in achieving ambitious five year targets.
- To support the internationalisation strategic objective, **Assistant Deans International** (ADIs) were appointed for each Faculty. The ADIs assist the Executive Dean in the strategic management of the faculty by providing leadership in the development and effective implementation of policies, procedures, practices and targets in relation to international engagement of all kinds and by assuming appropriate cross-faculty management responsibilities. The ADIs deputise, as required, for the Executive Dean and undertake representative roles on behalf of the faculty within and outside the University, including participating on university-wide committees and contributing to national structures concerned with international education. The ADIs promote the provision and interests of the faculty regionally, nationally and internationally.
- **UL Engage** was established in September 2015, in accordance with the University of Limerick's Strategic Plan. The aim of UL Engage is to integrate civic engagement into the University's core missions in research, teaching and internationalisation. UL Engage supports university/community collaborations in all shapes and sizes through a variety of new and existing UL programmes and projects. It serves as the hub for civic engagement activities across campus and works with staff in all faculties to amplify, incubate and co-ordinate the various ways that students, faculty and staff can work to make a difference.
- **The Technology-Enhanced Learning Unit (TELU)**, approved by UL's Executive Committee in September 2015, is proposed as a one-stop shop for faculty wishing to engage with and explore the potential of technology enhanced pedagogy in their teaching. As a joint venture between the Information Technology Division (ITD), the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and the Library and Information Services Division (LISD), the TEL Unit takes a strategic approach around specific teaching enhancement objectives and timelines. The TELU implementation directly delivers on commitments made around TEL on UL's HEA Institutional Compact (2014) and Engaged Learning (Aim 1.3.1) to have an institution-wide learning technology infrastructure that will enable a coherent approach and support framework for TEL; and on Aim 1.1.5 of Broadening Horizons – UL Strategic Plan 2015-2019.
- The launch of [Excellence & Impact 2020, the University's research and innovation strategy](#). The new strategy incorporates four goals (Research Excellence, Research Impact, Investing in People and International Reach) with associated objectives and a clear implementation strategy. Combined, they will drive UL's reputation as an internationally-recognised research-led institution delivering excellent research with impact.
- Several **IT projects** were undertaken during the reporting period:
 - To enhance system performance, Sulis (the University's Learning Management System) was upgraded in June 2016. In preparation for the upgrade, a selection of new features available in Sulis 10 were piloted by 14 faculties for the second semester 2015/16.
 - To optimise the availability of IT systems across campus, a project was initiated (June 2016) to install 3 new standby generators. The generators were operational in August 2016.
 - To ensure overall stability the UL's Student Management System (SITS), a project was initiated in June 2016 which incorporated several infrastructural changes including the migration of database servers to a virtual environment; an upgrade of the database server operating system and upgrades to both Oracle database and application which enhanced overall stability of the system and enhanced functionality.

An analysis of quality enhancement activities that were initiated by the institution. This could also include reference to any national or international quality assurance developments in which the institution is engaged. The institution is encouraged to highlight areas that may be of interest to other institutions and would benefit from wider dissemination.

- The University of Limerick completed a successful **Quality Improvement Program (QUIP)** review to maintain its recognition for being in substantial conformity with the *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad*. UL first earned QUIP recognition in 2008 and was due for renewal in 2016. The Forum's [Quality Improvement Program](#) for Education Abroad is a rigorous process of self-study and peer review that recognizes institutions and organizations for meeting the *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad* while offering suggestions and recommendations for quality improvement. As part of the renewal process, a group of peer reviewers conducted a site visit to the UL campus (May, 2016), and met with IED staff, faculty and support services. The peer reviewers commented that *UL maintains a commitment and dedication both to offering high quality programs in educator abroad at a level of excellence acceptable to the larger academic community*. UL will maintain the QUIP award until the next renewal in 2023.

PART 5

Objectives for the Coming Year

A piece in relation to strategic objectives in the coming period and plans for quality assurance and enhancement.

- Develop an enhanced business planning process for the Quality Support Unit.
- Develop an over-arching institutional quality policy and framework document which adheres to QQI Guidelines and to the Standards & Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG, 2015). Coordinate institutional-wide consultation and policy approval.
- Compile a schedule for Cycle 3 quality reviews and document associated procedural guidelines.
- Complete a gap analysis of the implementation of recommendations arising from UL Institutional Review 2012.
- Present a 'Student Survey Report' to the Management Group outlining an overview of survey activity at University level.
- Research and document UL's compliance with Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines; ESG 2015; Code of Practice (International Learners) – postgraduate level and European Guidelines for Validating Non-formal and Informal Learning.
- Develop, document and coordinate a process for approving linked providers QA processes.
- [UL Engage](#) (a unit established to integrate civic engagement into the University's core missions in research, teaching and internationalisation) plan to develop a website which will be a quality driven platform to host exemplars of best practice on engaged research and learning. The platform will also host information and resources for students, staff and wider community groups/individuals who would like to know more about getting involved in community engaged learning and research. UL Engage is also developing tools and resources to support quality driven community engaged learning and research.
- Launch of the new Personal Academic Support System (PASS) to develop a network of concerned lecturers with adequate resources to deal with the inevitable difficulties of students. To remain focused and provide relevant support, PASS will have a theme-based approach over 3 semesters, each relating to important issues students typically encounter as they move through their learning experience.
- A 'Common Entry Project' will be initiated to evaluate, develop and implement a sustainable Student Records System (SRS) solution that supports the successful operational development of UL's 9 Common Entry Programmes (CEPs) for the 2017/18 academic year.
- Continue the development of the Federated Limerick Graduate School, including website, social media, email, branding and marketing related to points of contact, market research, business analysis and project development.
- Develop an access admission scheme specifically focused on socio-economically disadvantaged students in the cluster's hinterland.
- Establish an Education Assistive Technology Centre (EATC) to increase the utilisation of assistive technology supports by students with disabilities in their education. Furthermore, it will help to increase the awareness of assistive technology supports to educational professionals (schools, teachers, educational psychologists, etc.) and the student support network (family members etc.).
- To approve the concept of the creation of dual awards, the Academic Regulations Committee are looking at setting up a regulatory infrastructure for same.

Review Plans: Area/Unit and Number

The following quality reviews are planned for the period 2016-2017.

o **Academic Units**

- o Nursing & Midwifery (November 2016)
- o Clinical Therapies (January 2017)
- o Culture and Communications (March 2017)
- o Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics (April 2017)

o **Support Units**

- o Office of the President (September 2016), which will incorporate the Quality Support Unit.
 - o Review Module Satisfaction Survey policy and procedures, incorporating institution-wide consultation.
- o Conduct an Institutional review of Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, our largest linked provider.

Any further information with respect to plans for the coming period.