Annual Quality Report (Maynooth University)
Reporting Period 2019-2020

[Maynooth University]

2021

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PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM
Reporting Period 2019-2020

PREFACE

Note: QQI's provider portal, QHub, is currently under development and will be completed in November 2020. AQR 2021 will be submitted via QHub.

The **Annual Quality Report (AQR;** formerly AIQR) forms part of Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) quality assurance (QA) framework of engagement with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The AQR provides documentary evidence of the development and evolution of each institution's internal quality system. It provides QQI with assurance that internal QA procedures have been established and are being implemented consistent with regulatory requirements.

The AQR, particularly part A, should assist with **document management** in the institutional review process and will facilitate institutions in providing review teams with procedural QA documentation in preparation for the external review process. It is an important part of the evidence base considered by external **review teams** as part of QQI's CINNTE cycle of institutional reviews, demonstrating that the institution's internal QA system is aligned with QQI's Core and relevant Sector- and Topic-specific Statutory QA Guidelines, and with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015 (ESG). It enables the review team to satisfy itself of compliance with these requirements for the purpose of the institutional review process.

Each AQR is **published in full on QQI's website**, providing transparency on the HEIs' assurance and enhancement of quality to external stakeholders. (As such, institutions should ensure that their submissions do not contain any data that they consider to be commercially sensitive.) Collectively, the AQRs comprise a single national repository of quality assurance practice in Irish higher education institutions.

Each year, QQI produces a synthesis report of the key themes highlighted across the AQRs, primarily arising from Part B of the reports.

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Guidelines on Completing the Report

The AQR is aligned with QQI's Core, Sector and Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and with the ESG (2015). A mapping of the ESG to QQI Core QA Guidelines is included in Table 1 below; the structure of Part A of this report template aligns with the first column of the table. Additional guidance on completing this template and reference material is included in each section. Institutions should adhere to this guidance and have regard to QQI Core, Sector and Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. **The guide text within each section should be deleted before submission of the report.**

Submission Process and Timeline

The deadline for submission of the AQR each year is in February of the relevant year, with the call for submission sent to institutions in November of the preceding year. Once the call for submission has been made, QQI will provide access to QQI's provider portal, QHub, to the designated institution contact(s) to facilitate submission of the report. Through QHub, each institution will have access to an editable version of its AQR for the previous reporting period. This document can then be amended/updated to reflect any changes or developments that occurred during the current reporting period before submitting the final report to QQI.

Completing the AQR

- When completing the AQR template, all relevant colleagues in the institution should be consulted.
- Consider whether external audiences will be able to understand the terminology used (particularly local abbreviations and acronyms); it may be helpful to include a glossary.
- Aim to avoid duplication in the report – where information is relevant to more than one section, the first mention may be referenced in subsequent sections.
- Provide reflections on what worked well, but also what may have been tried but did not work.

Report Structure

Part A: Internal QA System

Part A of the AQR comprises a record of each institution's current QA policies and procedures and should provide links to those policies and procedures. Private HEIs may provide links to the policies and procedures approved by QQI during initial access to validation (IAV) or reengagement. It is the responsibility of each HEI to ensure before submission of the AQR that all links are correct and functional, and that the policies and procedures referred to are the most up-to-date versions available. Given that the AQR is submitted in respect of a discrete reporting period, it may be helpful for institutions to establish a SharePoint/OneDrive folder (or similar) for each reporting period that contains the current versions of their policies and procedures, and that hyperlinks to these versions of the documents be provided in the AQR

Part A is to be completed only if there have been **material** changes to QA policies and procedures during the reporting period. Such changes may include the approval and implementation of new polices or procedures, or significant amendments to existing ones.

Part B: Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE)

Part B of the AQR documents and captures QA activities, developments and enhancements undertaken by institutions **during the reporting period** and their **impact**. Insofar as is possible, institutions should demonstrate in Part B how plans set out in the previous AQR were progressed during the reporting period – these may be plans linked to strategic objectives, to reengagement advices, or to institutional review recommendations.

Case Studies

In each reporting period, QQI may request updates on specific thematic areas or may invite the institution to submit case studies in response to specific topics. Further, institutions may include case studies to share good practice on topics of their choosing, demonstrating QA and QE in action. In formulating case studies, institutions are encouraged to reflect on and highlight areas that may be of interest to other institutions and would benefit from wider dissemination. Further guidance is provided in Part B.

Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template[1]

Legislation

- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended)
- Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992 (as amended)
- Technological Universities Act 2018
- Universities Act 1997

QQI Documents

Statutory QA Guidelines (QAG)

- Core QAG
- Sector-specific QAG for Independent/Private Providers
- Sector-specific QAG for Designated Awarding Bodies
- Sector-specific QAG for Institutes of Technology
- Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes
- Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes
- Topic-specific QAG for Blended Learning

Other QQI Policy Documents

- QQI's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes, and Joint Awards, 2012
- QQI's Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners, 2015
- QQI Policy Restatement on Access, Transfer and Progression, 2015

Other National/International References

- European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)
- IHEQN Guidelines on Collaborative Provision
- National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland
- Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes, 2019
- HEA National Framework for Doctoral Education
- The Salzburg Principles
- The Salzburg II Recommendations
- SOLAS Code of Practice for Employers and Apprentices
- UN Sustainable Development Goals

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[1] These links will be updated as further guidance documents are published.

PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Table 1

Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)

AQR Part A Section	QQI QAG Core Sub-section No.	QAG Core Sub-section Title	ESG Standard No.	ESG Standard Title
1.0 - *Internal QA Framework*	2.1	Governance and Management of Quality	1.1	Policy for Quality Assurance
	2.2	Documented Approach to Quality Assurance		
2.0 - *Programme Development and Delivery*	2.3	Programmes of Education and Training	1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
4.0 - *QA of Research Activities and Programmes*				
8.0 - *Monitoring and Periodic Review*			1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
5.0 - *Staff Recruitment, Development and Support*	2.4	Staff Recruitment, Management and Development	1.5	Teaching Staff
2.3 - *Teaching, Learning and Assessment*	2.5	Teaching and Learning	1.3	Student-centred Teaching, Learning and Assessment
	2.6	Assessment of Learners		
3.0 - *Learner Resources and Supports*	2.7	Supports for learners	1.6	Learning Resources and Student Support
6.0 - *Information and Data Management*	2.8	Information and Data Management	1.7	Information Management
7.0 - *Public Information and Communication*	2.9	Public Information and Communication	1.8	Public Information
2.0 - *Programme Delivery and Development*	2.10	Other Parties Involved in Education and Training	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - *Monitoring and Periodic Review*				
9.0 - *Details of Arrangements with Third Parties*			1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
2.0 - *Programme Development and Delivery*	2.11	Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - *Monitoring and Periodic Review*			1.10	Cyclical External Quality Assurance
4.0 - *QA of Research Activities and Programmes*	QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes			

Introduction and Overview of Institution

Maynooth University is one of the four constituent universities of the National University of Ireland. Formally established as an autonomous university in 1997, but tracing its origins to the foundation of the Royal College of St. Patrick in 1795, Maynooth University draws on a heritage of over 200 years' commitment to education and scholarship. It is located in the University town of Maynooth, 25km from the centre of Dublin, Ireland's capital city.

The University is a modern institution - dynamic, research-led, engaged, and grounded in the traditions of liberal education. More than 14,300 students from over 95 countries are enrolled in a range of programmes at undergraduate, masters and PhD level. Maynooth is Ireland's fastest-growing university, yet it retains a collegial campus culture that is central to its ability to bring significant interdisciplinary expertise to bear in tackling some of the most fundamental challenges facing society today. MU has a distinctive disciplinary profile with research and teaching strengths in humanities and social sciences, science, electronic engineering, business, law and teacher education. The University has major research institutes and centres in the areas of humanities; social sciences; mathematics, computation and communication; human health; business and service innovation; climate change; and Geocomputation.

The *University Strategic Plan 2018-22* builds on the institution's strengths and accomplishments, concentrating energy and resources on further development in research and postgraduate education. The strategy focuses on:
- targeted investment in research capacity in a number of priority areas;
- extending the postgraduate portfolio and growing the postgraduate community;
- realising the full benefits of our innovative undergraduate curriculum;
- enhancing the student experience;
- comprehensive and ethical internationalisation;
- equality diversity inclusion and interculturalism as enablers of academic excellence

These strategic goals are underpinned by a commitment to invest, first and foremost in people and opportunities for their development and success, and also in the systems and infrastructure required to achieve scholarly and educational objectives.

The production of the AQR was undertaken by the Strategy & Quality Office drawing from a variety of resources and offices across the University.   The AQR is reviewed and approved prior to submission by the Vice-President Academic of the University.

1.0 Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

DECISION MAKING FORA

The Universities Act, 1997, underpins what the University does. It provides a foundation for all its activities, academic or otherwise, and establishes a framework within which these activities are undertaken and managed. The Act is supported by the University Statutes which give effect to its provisions.

The decision-making body in the University is Governing Authority. It has responsibility for the appointment of the President, the strategic direction of the University, the management and administration of its revenue and property and the general conduct of University affairs. Members of the Governing Authority are drawn from the staff, students, graduates and external organisations. The Governing Authority is chaired by an external chairperson or in his/her absence, the deputy chairperson. It receives reports from a range of Standing Committees including: Audit & Risk Assessment Committee, Finance, Human Resources and Development Committee and Remuneration Committee and the joint committees for Governing Authority and Academic Council comprising of: the Quality Committee; the Equality , Diversity & Interculturalism Committee; and Coiste Gaeilge na hOllscoile. Governing Authority adheres to the Code of Governance for Irish Universities 2019 as its primary code of practice. A Code of Conduct for members of Governing Authority applies to all members and to members of the Committees and sub- Committees established by the Governing Authority.

Academic Council, subject to review by the Governing Authority, controls the academic affairs of the University including the curriculum of, and instruction and education provided by, the University. It is chaired by the President and includes the Vice-Presidents, Registrar, Deans of Faculty, Heads of Schools and Departments, the Librarian, Directors of the Computer Centre and Centre for Irish Language and representatives of all grades of academic staff, and students. It is supported in its work by a committee structure and by Faculties.

The President, the Chief Officer of the University, oversees all operations from teaching and research to capital development and international initiatives. The President is responsible for setting the future direction and goals for the University, reporting to Governing Authority.

The University Executive, chaired by the President, is a team of academic and administrative leaders that assists the President in developing, implementing and reviewing the University Strategic Plan and in managing the academic, administrative, financial and other activities of the University.

There are three faculties, comprised of academic units (departments/schools and research institutes) which act as advisory bodies to Academic Council. In addition, Academic Council has formally delegated some of its powers to Faculties.   The established faculties are: Arts, Celtic Studies and Philosophy; Social Sciences; and Science and Engineering. The academic leadership for each Faculty is provided by a Dean who is also a member of University Executive and of Academic Council.

These fora, and in the case of Governing Authority and Academic Council their associated committees, provide an institutional wide means of ensuring the quality and driving the enhancement of the University's range of activities.

The various fora involved in providing for the Governance and oversight, strategic planning and development, ongoing management, and the quality assurance and enhancement of the University's activities are outlined below in figure 1.
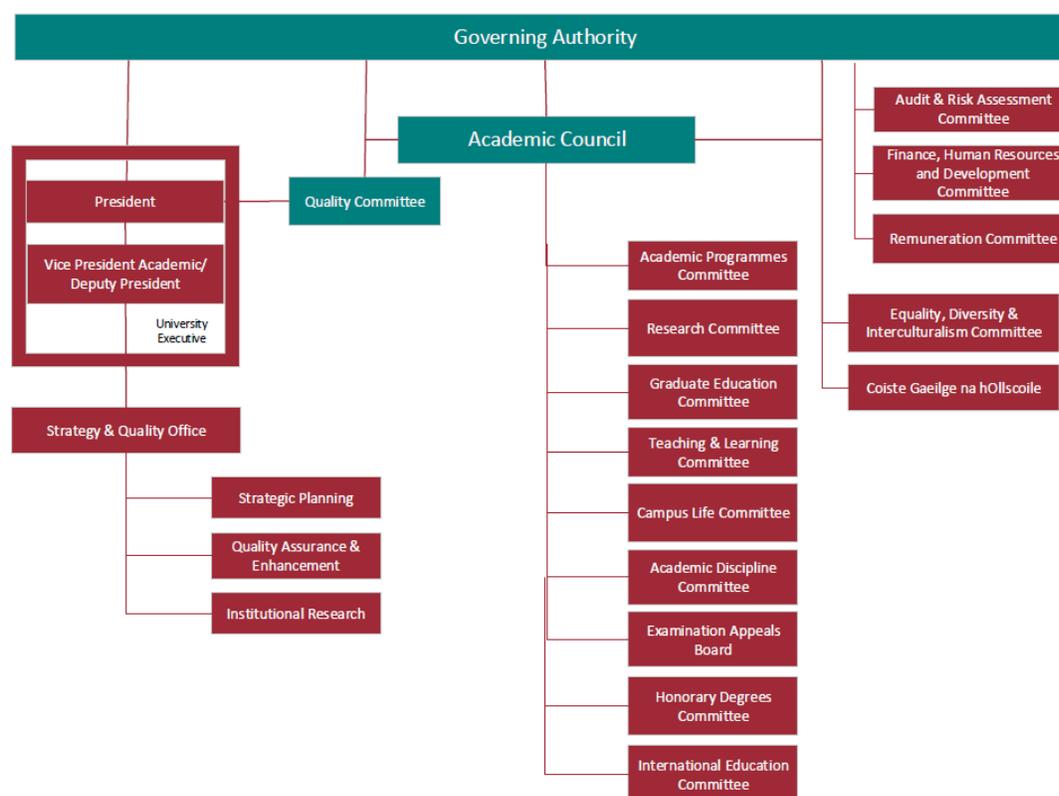
Figure 1: MU's Governance structure and Committees. The Strategy & Quality Office's reporting relationship to the Vice President Academic is also depicted.

GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT.

The President, as Chief Officer, has delegated overall responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement to the Vice-President Academic, Registrar and Deputy President. The Director of Quality, who reports directly to the Vice-President Academic, Registrar and Deputy President, coordinates the operational management of quality assurance reviews. The Director prepares a multiannual schedule of reviews for approval by the University Executive. Normally, each unit will be reviewed once every seven years.

Quality in the University is also supported by policies and actions applicable across the University, which are led by the relevant members of the University Executive with support from Heads / Directors of Units that report to the Executive members.

Governance and oversight of the quality assurance and enhancement function is provided by the University Quality Committee, established as a joint committee of the Governing Authority and Academic Council.

The functions of the Quality Committee are, using best governance practice, to:
1. support the University in discharging its statutory responsibilities in relation to internal and external quality assurance and enhancement;
2. formulate a University policy statement and strategy for quality assurance and enhancement, in the context of the University Strategic Plan;
3. oversee the implementation of a multi-annual programme of internal quality reviews;
4. support the University participation in external institutional reviews;
5. review progress on the implementation of recommendations arising from internal quality reviews;
6. promote public awareness and confidence in the quality performance of the University;
7. consider reports relevant to national and international benchmarking of the University and identify and disseminate examples of good and best practice; and
8. prepare an annual report for the University Executive, the Governing Authority and the Academic Council.
9. The Committee may establish sub-committees to assist it in completing its work. A subcommittee may include a minority of members who are not members of the Committee. Subcommittees must be chaired by a member of the Committee and shall be appointed by the Committee. The Governing Authority must be informed promptly if a sub-committee of the Committee is established.
10. The Committee may establish topic specific working groups to assist it in completing its work. A working group may have a minority of members who are not members of the Committee. The Committee shall appoint members to any working group it establishes.

MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY FRAMEWORK FOR QUALITY

The Maynooth University Framework for Quality Assurance and Enhancement, adopted in 2016 and updated in 2018, reflects the reporting and governance arrangements for quality. Consultation on Maynooth University's QA procedures, as set out in the Framework, took place with QQI through the 2016 Annual Dialogue Meeting. In accordance with Section 29 of the QQI Act 2012, following the establishment of our QA procedures, the University published the Framework.

Many aspects of the University's quality assurance approach were endorsed by the external review team of the University's QQI CINNTE Institutional Review which took place in 2018/2019. Number one of five overarching commendations of the Review Team acknowledged the University's efforts '*for developing a strong culture of self-examination focused on continuous improvement and assuring quality in all of its programmes*'. The Review Team further commended '*Maynooth University's progress towards embedding a culture of quality evaluation and enhancement which includes coherent quality review strategies*' (commendation 2) and '*for developing and implementing a rigorous review procedure for programmes and units, and for following it through three cycles that have included quality improvement plans with monitoring following each review*' (commendation 5). In addition, the Review Team highlighted the University's '*systematic efforts to build a strong culture of self-evaluation with clear principles and objectives*' (commendation 18).

Introduction

Maynooth University places quality as a central concept in its vision to "*further advance its international standing as a leading research university, with a vibrant postgraduate community, a distinctive undergraduate provision, a comprehensive and ethical approach to internationalisation*…[and] *we will be recognized for our commitment to the public and civic mission of the University, as a national leader in equality and diversity, an excellent place to learn and work, an inclusive community where students and staff can flourish*" (Maynooth University Strategic Plan 2018-2022, p. 14) The connectedness between quality and reputation is such that the strategic goals and objectives of the University are firmly focused on:

> • Realising the full potential of the new Maynooth University Curriculum to deliver the best university education in Ireland;
> • The quality and impact of its research and scholarship, focused investment in research capacity, and commitment to both fundamental and engaged research;
> • Further developing quality, planning and financial management processes to support growth, development and innovation;
> • Ensuring that the quality of the student experience and engagement between staff and students are preserved and further enriched as the University grows;
> • Being an excellent place to work by providing for scholarly and professional development in a diverse and inclusive culture.

The University's commitment to quality and excellence in all activities undertaken requires sustained efforts to strive for the highest standards. It also requires on-going systematic self-monitoring, evaluation and organisational learning. Maynooth University has a long tradition of formal reviews of its approaches to supporting quality. It pioneered the introduction of departmental quality reviews in 1996, and again in 2009 it was the first university to undergo an institutional quality review under procedures devised by the Irish Universities Quality Board that had been established in 2006.

Building on its achievements to date, and guided by the first university policy statement on quality assurance and enhancement approved by the Academic Council in October 2009, and also cognisant of on-going national and international discourses, the purpose of this Framework is to set out the University's overall policy on internal quality assurance and enhancement. The complexity of quality assurance and enhancement in higher education in succinctly summarised in the following extract from an EUA on Quality Culture Guidelines "*Quality in higher education is a culturally sensitive, relative and contested concept that is shaped by the institutional and national context, and given expression as an internal dynamic process with the objective of constant improvement*" (EUA, Quality Culture Guidelines, Brussels, 2004; see also EUA Embedding Quality Culture in Higher Education, Brussels (2007); EUA, Examining Quality Culture: Part 1 – Quality Assurance Processes in Higher Education Institutions, Brussels, 2010). The Maynooth Framework for Quality emphasises a commitment to comprehensive, open and inclusive processes that are effective, fully aligned with the mission and strategic objectives of the University and which also enable the university to demonstrate compliance with both statutory based national objectives and European standards. Building on experience to date the emphasis in the next phase will be increasingly on quality enhancement.

Assurance mechanisms in relation to quality are required at two levels: for the community within the university and separately for external interest groups. The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030

states that "*it is essential (for Ireland's higher education) that its quality assurance structures and processes are trusted both nationally and internationally, and that confidence of students and prospective employers in the higher education system is maintained*" (p.93). The internal university community needs evidence to assure itself that quality procedures are applied systematically by all academic departments and other units and that the procedures are effective in enabling the university to achieve its objectives. Likewise, the university also needs to be able to engender and sustain public confidence in its quality procedures, and in its capacity to provide programmes that achieve national and international standards appropriate to the relevant level in the National Framework of Qualifications.

Maynooth University is a research-intensive university with scholarly strengths in humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, information and communications technology, teacher education, business and law. The University has approximately 13,000 students enrolled in programmes in the arts, humanities, social sciences including business and law and in science and engineering.

The approach to quality in the University supports and is embedded in the University's strategic planning, with the objective of impacting positively on the quality of research and scholarship, teaching, the student experience and external engagement over the coming years. The scope of the Maynooth University Framework for Quality comprehends the range of quality assurance and enhancement processes, which provide for quality assurance and continuous improvement of research and scholarship, teaching and learning and the related services provided by the University. The Framework acknowledges but does not attempt to catalogue the very wide array of other strategic initiatives, policy instruments, planning and improvement processes, institutional learning activities, and internal and external validation and audit processes, which support quality.

The Maynooth University Framework for Quality builds on the experience acquired and embedded over the past two decades to support the achievement of the vision and strategies that comprise the University Strategic Plan 2018-2022, and in particular the major initiatives planned for the coming years. It is also cognisant of, and responsive to, the national legal context and statutory guidelines, annual reporting requirements and international standards as expressed in the ESGs. Throughout the Framework, the term 'quality' is used to represent both quality assurance and quality enhancement, as two necessary and complementary dimensions.

The critical importance of quality for the University is confirmed by the governance structure with oversight and governance provided a joint committee of the Academic Council and the Governing Authority.

Purpose
The purpose of the Maynooth University Framework for Quality is to build on the progress achieved since the adoption in 2009 of the first policy on quality assurance, and to continue to enhance the effectiveness of its core activities of teaching, learning, research and scholarship and of all related support services, taking account of the goals of the University Strategic Plan.

Principles

The Maynooth University quality framework is guided by the following over-arching and operational principles:

OVER-ARCHING PRINCIPLES

- *Purpose*: the primary purpose of quality assurance and enhancement is to support the achievement of the strategic objectives of the University and to ensure the highest standards and continuous improvement in all of the activities of the University;
- *Culture*: a quality culture is achieved through the commitment of staff, students, the university leadership and management, and the governance bodies to continuous improvement;
- *Design and implementation*: the University quality assurance framework is designed and implemented having regard to international norms and standards and national statutory requirements and guidelines;
- *Scope*: the scope of the quality framework includes both periodic reviews of units and programmes, and also monitoring and review of policies and procedures that sustain and enhance quality on an on-going basis;
- *Inclusive and transparent*: quality evaluation procedures are inclusive of all stakeholders (students, staff, representatives of external interest groups), are transparent and consistent in application, support in-depth assessment, reflection and change and are performance-focused in relation to the mission and objectives of the University;
- *External Validation*: all quality reviews involve peer review groups that include peers from outside the university to provide objectivity and opportunities for assessing performance against international standards;
- *Students and stakeholders*: all quality reviews involve engagement with students and other stakeholders;
- *Public confidence*: public confidence in the effectiveness of the University quality procedures is achieved by the publication of quality review reports and the related quality implementation plan.

OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES

- The effectiveness of quality procedures applied across the university is evaluated on a periodic basis through the cyclical independent external review of our own internal quality assurance procedures conducted by QQI;
- The effectiveness of quality assurance procedures and the extent of quality enhancement initiatives in different units of the university are evaluated through reviews conducted by the University Quality Office on a cyclical basis;
- The unit under review can be an academic department/school, research institute, administrative unit, support unit or an amalgamation of units such as a Faculty. It may also be a programme (e.g., an omnibus degree programmes), a set of programmes (e.g., taught postgraduate programmes in a Faculty), a specific initiative (e.g., reform of the first year curriculum) or a theme (e.g., quality and impact of Maynooth University research). The University quality framework is not intended as a procedure for reviewing the performance of individuals;
- The scope of reviews of academic departments / schools is holistic in that they comprehend research and scholarship, education, public engagement, and interactions with internal support units. Particular emphasis is placed on the quality of the entire student educational experience with due regard to the

diversity of the student population; the quality and impact of research and scholarship; and the work environment and developmental opportunities for staff;

• The focus of quality reviews of administrative and support services is on the quality and effectiveness of the services provided, the processes and systems that support those services, the overall contribution to the strategic development and effective operation of the University, and the work environment and developmental opportunities for staff;

• All quality reviews are supported by key metrics aligned with the University Performance Framework and are appropriately benchmarked against comparable units in other universities;

• The main findings and recommendations from reviews are reviewed by the President, the University Executive, and any other relevant management and governance structures within the University;

• The university officer responsible for quality prepares an annual report for the Quality Committee, and following this, the report is presented to the Governing Authority and the Academic Council.

Objectives

The objectives of the Maynooth Framework for Quality are to enable the University:

• To demonstrate to the University staff, students and governance bodies and external stakeholders that quality procedures are in place for the purpose of establishing, ascertaining, maintaining and improving the quality of education, training and research and related services that it provides, and which have been established following consultation with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, Sections 28 (1) and 29 (a), (b));

• To maintain public confidence, especially that of external stakeholders, in the quality and standards achieved by the staff and students of the University;

• To confirm that the quality procedures are effective in enabling units of the University to achieve the level of quality and the objectives which the University aspires to under its vision and strategic plan;

• To foster and sustain a quality culture supported by on-going learning and innovation in all units of the University, and by providing feedback to all staff and students on ways and opportunities for continuous improvement;

• To facilitate quality enhancement based on recommendations arising from reviews and other initiatives, and by highlighting effective practices to be shared among internal audiences;

• To demonstrate alignment with the legislative provisions and compliance with relevant European Standards and Guidelines, and other applicable national and international guidelines;

• To publish reports on quality reviews in order to provide to external stakeholders and interests (including the QQI and the HEA, and to the wider public on the quality of the education, training, research and related services that it provides;

• To be prepared for periodic external institutional review of the University quality assurance procedures.

Implementation

The Maynooth University Framework for Quality is implemented via quality reviews of departments, units, programmes and thematic issues, and through the implementation of university wide policies and procedures.

QUALITY REVIEWS OF DEPARTMENTS / OTHER UNITS

The typical model used for all internal quality reviews includes five phases:

1. **Self-Assessment:** The department / unit under review prepares a Self-Assessment Report (SAR). Guidelines approved by the Quality Committee guide the process and assistance is provided by the Office of the Director of Strategic Planning and Quality.

2. **Peer Review Report:** A peer review group (PRG) is established which normally comprises two external members and two members from within the university – the size of the group may vary according to the scale and scope of the unit under review. The SAR is sent to the PRG. The group visits the university, typically for two days, to meet with staff and students of the unit under review, staff from other relevant units of the university, relevant members of the University leadership and management, and external stakeholders. Following the visit, the opportunity to propose corrections to any factual inaccuracies in the report and the report is then finalised and signed off by all members of the PRG. e group submits a PRG report to the Quality Office. The Head of Unit is provided with the opportunity to propose corrections to any factual inaccuracies in the report and the report is then finalised and signed off by all members of the PRG

3. **Quality Improvement Plan**: The unit considers the recommendations contained in the PRG report and prepares a draft Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for discussion with the President (or nominee) from which an agreed set of actions ensues. The University Executive is informed of the outcomes from the Review, its recommendations, and approves the Quality Improvement Plan which will be incorporated into the Strategic Plan for the unit;

4. **Publication of outcomes:** The review process is completed by publication on the Quality Office website of the Peer Review Group Report and the agreed Quality Improvement Plan. The Quality Committee, the Academic Council and Governing Authority are also informed of the outcomes from the review.

5. **Follow-up and On-Going Monitoring**: Following a set of reviews in a Faculty, the Director of Strategic Planning and Quality will prepare a synthesis report for the Dean to enable the identification of common themes, emerging issues and good practices. The Director of Quality meets with the head of unit on an annual basis to consider progress against the QIP. An annual update in writing is provided to the Director of Strategic Planning and Quality. The status of strategic recommendations at university level, is communicated to the President. An annual update on progress against unit-level Quality Improvement Plans is included in the annual report of the Director of Strategic Planning and Quality

LINKED PROVIDERS

Quality assurance procedures for linked providers will have regard to the internal university procedures presented above. Where a linked provider arrangement is entered into, the University, as the awarding body for such linked providers, will engage in a two-stage process involving (a) review of the quality assurance procedures of the linked provider, and, following approval of such procedures, (b) review of the effectiveness of the procedures. An independent appeals person will be appointed to consider any appeal that may arise if the university does not approve the quality assurance procedures of a linked provider.

PROFESSIONAL, REGULATORY AND STATUTORY BODIES (PRSB) ACCREDITATION

The University has many academic programmes accredited by Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PRSB); such accreditation is an important aspect of the overall assurance of professional standards and

quality. A PRSB usually accredits a programme for a specific time-period. The management of the process occurs at departmental level and the Quality Office engages annually with academic departments to maintain an up-to-date database of all PRSB accredited programmes in the University.

REPRESENTATION OF LEARNERS AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Maynooth University's strategic goal is to strengthen its engagement with all stakeholders through sustained partnerships with enterprises, communities, civil society and public bodies, to build support for the mission of the university, to serve the needs of society, and to open new opportunities for research and learning.

Students and external stakeholders are well represented across governance fora, committees and subcommittees within the University reflecting Maynooth's University's culture of ensuring input from a range of stakeholders to inform its governance and management. Table 1 indicates the representation of learners and of external stakeholders across Governing Authority and its sub-committees, and within a number of the subcommittees of Academic Council.

The Maynooth University Framework for Quality Assurance and Enhancement makes explicit provision for the involvement of internal and external stakeholders in the quality assurance and review processes. The over-arching principles in the Framework refer to inclusive and transparent procedures, engagement of students and other stakeholders, external validation, and publication of findings in support of building public confidence in the process.

In relation to the periodic quality review of all units of the University, the composition of the peer review group (PRG) typically includes two internal and two external members. This can be modified in specific instances, if the review requires additional members. All members of the PRG have an equal role in the conduct of the review and in the drafting of the PRG report. The PRG meets with students and with external stakeholders of the Unit under review; this is an important aspect of the PRG visit to the University. Surveying of PRG members on the overall quality and effectiveness of the periodic review process is carried out.

Views and inputs from learners are represented through integration into many ongoing University processes such as student feedback processes, staff student committees within academic units, or the engagement of students with quality review processes as referenced above where they are recognised as being one of the key stakeholders that quality review teams meet during their review site visits. Students are also represented via their student union representatives through involvement, as appropriate, in University initiatives informing ongoing work or included as members of working groups.

External stakeholder input into University matters takes place in many guises outside of such structures as Governing Authority or Academic Council and their sub-committees. The University engages with an extensive range of stakeholders and interest groups through formal structures which meet regularly, for example, the Regional Skills Forum, the North Kildare Chamber of Commerce. A number of other external bodies are engaged with regularly also such as the HEA, QQI and Kildare and Meath County Councils. A number of university offices lead systematic engagement with specific groups of external stakeholders: these include the Access Office, the Placement Office, the Commercialisation Office and the Office of the Director of External

Relations, which includes the Alumni Relations Office and the Communications and Marketing Office. The University consults widely with external stakeholders on the envisioning and implementation of major strategic projects; examples include the Maynooth Curriculum when the new curriculum was being developed and input is sought into and for activities related to the Campus Master Plan.

Table 1: Representation of learners and external stakeholders in the governance and management of quality in Maynooth University.

Committee		Learner Representation	External stakeholder representation
Governing Authority (GA)		4 • 3 elected officers of Maynooth SU • 1 Postgraduate student representative.	21 (including Chair, 3 graduates, 3 St Patricks College),
GA subcommittee	Audit & Risk Assessment Committee	Not applicable	3 minimum (Number of externals must form majority of committee)
GA subcommittee	Finance, Human Resources and Development Committee	1 • President Maynooth SU	2 upwards • Minimum 2 (maximum of 6) members of GA • Plus, up to three external persons can be co-opted as full members.
GA subcommittee	Renumeration Committee	Not applicable	Not applicable
Joint sub-committee of GA and AC	Equality, Diversity and Interculturalism Committee	3 • Representatives of Maynooth SU.	1 upwards • Minimum 1 (maximum of 3) members of GA • Plus, up to three external persons can be co-opted as full members.
Joint sub-committee of GA and AC	Coiste Gaelige na hOllscoile	3 • President Maynooth SU (or their nominee) • Student nominated by President Maynooth SU • Student nominated by President Maynooth University	No minimum number specified. • Maximum possible is 4.
Joint sub-committee of GA and AC	Quality Committee	2 • President Maynooth SU (or their nominee) • Postgraduate Student representative of GA	1 • External member of GA

Academic Council (AC)		4 • 2 Undergraduate students (MSU Officers) • 1 postgraduate (taught) student • 1 doctoral student	Not applicable
AC Standing Committee	Academic Discipline Board	1 • President Maynooth SU	1 • Lay member
AC Standing Committee	Academic Programmes Committee	1 • Vice President Education Maynooth SU	Not applicable
AC Standing Committee	Campus Life Committee	2 • 2 representatives of Maynooth SU	Not applicable
AC Standing Committee	Examination Appeals Board	Not applicable	1 • External member
AC Standing Committee	Graduate Education Committee	1 • Representative of Maynooth SU.	1 • Member from the Postgraduate Employer Advisory Network
AC Standing Committee	Honorary Degrees Committee	Not applicable	1 • Chair of GA – that is external to MU
AC Standing Committee	International Education Committee	1 • Representative of Maynooth SU	Not applicable
AC Standing Committee	Research Committee	Not applicable	Not applicable
AC Standing Committee	Teaching & Learning Committee	2 • Representatives of Maynooth SU	Not applicable

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

The Maynooth University Framework for Quality Assurance and Enhancement has made provision for the quality reviews of linked providers should these be put in place. The quality assurance procedures outlined for linked providers in place has regard to the internal university quality procedures. For a linked provider arrangement entered into by the University as the awarding body for the linked provider, a two-stage process will be engaged in involving (a) a review of the quality assurance procedures of the linked provider, and following approval of such procedures, (b) a review of the effectiveness of the procedures. An independent appeals person will be appointed to consider any appeal that may arise if the university does not approve the quality assurance procedures of a collaborative provision partner.

Maynooth University provides a number of programmes on a collaborative basis, whereby we engage with another provider for the purpose of providing a programme of higher education and training. Collaborative provision therefore spans a wide range of educational offerings. The quality assurance of programmes provided on a collaborative basis is through the University procedures for unit level review of academic departments and through programme approval and the appointment of external examiners by the University. Collaborative provision with key strategic partners nationally and internationally involves the negotiation of memoranda of understanding, setting out *inter alia* the regime for collaboration, treatment of learners and quality assurance. The University currently has collaborative provisions such as with the Military College where it teaches a number of academic programmes. These programmes are taught and examined as MU degrees, but are taught to military personnel at the Military College. The management of these programmes is overseen by the Joint Defence Studies Academic Board (JDSAB), with members from MU and the Defence Forces.

For joint programmes provided by the 3U Partnership involving Maynooth University, DCU and RCSI a protocol, for the academic leadership, management and governance of all joint academic programmes, was approved by the Academic Councils of each partner institution. Section 10 of the Protocol specifies the Quality Assurance Arrangements. The protocol has been amended to cater for joint programmes and awards provided by the four higher education institutions (MU, DCU, AIT and DkIT) in the MEND regional cluster.

Maynooth International Engineering College (MIEC) is a joint international partnership between Maynooth University and Fuzhou University (FZU), Fuzhou, China. MIEC offers four undergraduate programmes of study and graduates receive both Maynooth University and Fuzhou University Degrees. As such the programmes fall under the policies, standards and regulations of each University. Oversight of MIEC rests with both University's and a joint Board/Committee comprising representatives from each University provides oversight on ongoing governance and management and in relation to quality assurance issues.

2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

2.1 Programme Development and Approval

Academic Council controls the academic affairs of the University including the curriculum of, and instruction and education provided by, the University.

Of the various subcommittees of Academic Council, the Academic Programmes Committee and the Graduate Education Committee, play a key part in supporting Academic Council in its role relating to programme development and their ongoing provision.

The function of the Academic Programmes Committee is to oversee on behalf of Academic Council the portfolio of programmes of the University, undergraduate and postgraduate, to ensure that they remain appropriate, relevant and of the highest possible standards. The Academic Programmes Committee brings recommendations to Academic Council regarding the overall structure of the portfolio, the approval of new programmes, changes to programmes, the withdrawal of programmes and the academic regulations governing programmes. The Academic Programmes Committee seeks the prior approval of the University Executive before making any recommendation to Academic Council that has significant resource implications.

The role of the Academic Council Graduate Education Committee is to make recommendations to Academic Council on matters of strategy and policy in relation to postgraduate programmes (taught and research) and to oversee on behalf of Academic Council the growth and development of postgraduate programmes across the university.

Quality assurance and enhancement of academic programmes is underpinned by a range of key processes and procedures as detailed below and as depicted in figure 2.   Other activities that serve a vital role in informing developments and enhancements that are not detailed below include but are not limited to such practices as student surveys that take place on an ongoing basis at institutional, programme and module level; feedback from students provided via academic unit student:staff committees; the monitoring of performance, progression and completion rates; input provided by external stakeholders, ongoing review and monitoring activities undertaken at department/school level, etc. Outcomes and findings from these various activities inform, as appropriate, the key QA processes outlined below.

Programme design and approval and modifications to existing programmes.
Maynooth University has a clearly defined process for approving new programmes and/or making modifications to existing programmes. All proposals are submitted in accordance with standard templates to the Academic Council Office for consideration by the Academic Programmes Committee, and where applicable by the Graduate Education Committee. A guide for the development of programmes and modules ensures programmes are designed in line with University standards in relation to such matters as ECTS credits; qualifications and programmes, and the alignment of awards to the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

Programme design and approval.

The programme design and approval process is a two-stage review, comprising:

    a) A review of the initial proposal (if available, including module descriptors with details of assessment and learning outcomes) by the Faculty Dean, Faculty Executive, Faculty Teaching & Learning Committee, Finance Office, the Academic Programmes Committee; and

    b) A review of the full proposal (including full module descriptors with details of assessment and learning outcomes), by external reviewers and Faculty.

Stage I of the process involves:

a) *Proposal Preparation in the Department/School.* Course proposal prepared within the relevant academic department/school. The proposal is reviewed by the department/school and signed by the Head of Department/School. The department's/school's review considers: the fit with the departmental priorities; the relationship to other programmes offered in the department/school; the capacity to teach the course. If available, full module descriptors with details of assessment and learning outcomes are submitted along with the proposal at this stage.

b) *Review by Faculty Dean, Faculty Executive, Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee, Head of Financial Planning and where applicable, the Director of Postgraduate Academic Programmes*. The proposal is reviewed by the Faculty Dean, Faculty Executive, and the Faculty Teaching & Learning Committee. This step is designed to ensure coordination between departments and schools within the Faculty. The Head of Financial Planning reviews all new programme proposals. Postgraduate programme proposals are also reviewed by the Director of Postgraduate Academic Programmes.

c) *Academic Programmes Committee*. The Committee considers comments received from the Dean of Faculty the Faculty Executive, the Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee, the Head of Financial Planning; and where applicable, the Director of Postgraduate Academic Programmes.

The Committee discusses the proposal in light of responses received. It may (i) decline the proposed course, (ii) refer it for revision or clarification, or (iii) recommend that it proceed to the next stage.

If recommended to the next stage, the Committee selects external reviewers considering gender balance and international/national expertise.

If applicable, the Committee seeks written comments from the Director of Internationalisation, the Placement Officer, the Director of Quality and other applicable disciplines.

Stage II of the process involves:

a) *Full proposal prepared and submitted to the Academic Programmes Committee*. The full proposal is the proposal form used in step 1 (modified if requested), plus the full module descriptions with details of assessment and learning outcomes. It is submitted to the Academic Programmes Committee.

b) *Faculty and External Review.* The Committee sends the documentation to two selected external reviewers and for Faculty review.

c) *Final review by the Academic Programmes Committee.* The Committee reviews the proposal in the context of the comments of external reviewers and from the Faculties. It will either recommend the programme to Academic Council or refer it for amendment.

d) *Approval by Academic Council.* The programme is referred to Academic Council for final approval.

Modifications to existing programmes

Proposals are submitted in accordance with a standard template for consideration by the Academic Programmes Committee. Following a successful review by the Committee the proposals are submitted for approval to Academic Council. Modifications proposed can include but are not limited to modifications to existing modules or the inclusion of new, or the discontinuation of existing, modules though to changes to programme structure and credit weightings or to the creation of alternative exit awards at earlier points within an existing programme.

Programme Accreditation- Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PRSBs).

The University has many academic programmes accredited by PRSBs; such accreditation is an important aspect of the overall assurance of professional standards and quality of MU offerings. A PRSB usually accredits a programme for a specific time period. The management of the process occurs at departmental level and the Quality Office engages annually with academic departments to maintain an up-to-date database of all PRSB accredited programmes in the University.

External Examiners

Academic standards are monitored and validated by External Examiners appointed, according to University policy, to programmes and subjects in major awards. The reports of External Examiners are reviewed by the relevant departments, the Deans and by the Vice-President Academic. A synoptic report is prepared and is submitted to the VPA and to the relevant Faculty Dean. Observations and comments made by External Examiner are used, as deemed appropriate, to inform programme/module development or modifications.

Unit level Quality Reviews

The MU Framework for Quality Assurance and Enhancement (2016) sets out the University's overall policy on internal quality assurance and enhancement. Within its scope is provision for the periodic reviews of units--in the case of academic units this includes a focus on research and scholarship, education, public engagement, and interactions with internal support units.   In this context, an evaluation of programme offerings within an academic unit are considered as part of the broader activities of the unit. Specific consideration is given to the quality assurance and enhancement processes, procedures and policies that underpin all activities.

In preparation for a quality review, a unit prepares a self-assessment report (SAR) outlining and reflecting on its activities including, in the case of academic units, consideration of its academic programme offering. The SAR is provided to an appointed peer review group, of which two of its members are external to the University and are from a cognate discipline/area. Following a site visit to the unit under review and having meet and interviewed a range of stakeholders including unit and university staff, students and external stakeholders, the Peer Review Group submit a report that includes commendations on practice and a series of recommendations for change and enhancement for the Unit. The Unit under review is then required to prepare a quality improvement plan (QIP) outlining what measures it will take to address the various recommendations made. This plan is then incorporated as part of the planning process for the unit. Follow on reporting and monitoring process also form part of the quality review process.

The Peer Review group report and the QIP (both published on the Quality Office webpage) are submitted to the Quality Committee and to University Executive. Academic Council and Governing Authority are notified of reviews and of the reports produced as they are completed.

The outcomes of unit reviews are used to inform change in practices and, in the nature of the activities the academic unit engages in.   In the case of academic programmes, this may include changes to programme curricula or may result in changes to the suite of programmes on offer. Any changes made are submitted through the standard University process for new programme approvals or programme modifications as outlined previously.

2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

The student life cycle at Maynooth University encompasses a wide range of activities, policies and procedures, spanning from the time before prospective students commence their third level studies, the transition to university life, through to graduation, employment and life beyond the university. The University has a strong tradition in the support of students throughout this entire life cycle.

The University has many procedures in place to provide quality assurance throughout the student life cycle. Commencing with recruitment and admission the university Admissions Office works very closely with school principals and guidance counsellors to ensure that prospective students are well informed of the range of programmes provided, entry requirements, and special features of the Maynooth curriculum. Further information and advice are provided via the web, social media and especially via Open Days. Through these efforts the threshold for entry to Maynooth programmes has been maintained at a high level even though the numbers of new entrants have increased substantially.

Potential applicants for Maynooth University's undergraduate programmes are provided guidance from the outset of their initial engagement with the University with dedicated resources and information pages in place. The application pathways for the wide variety of student cohorts/types are signposted clearly. Students are offered to access information according to their needs under the following categories.

- Leaving Certificate Student Applicants
- DARE (Disability Access Route to Education) Applicants
- Deferral Applicants
- EU, EFTA & UK Applicants
- QQI/FETAC/HETAC Applicants
- BTEC Applicants
- HEAR (Higher Education Access Route) Applicants
- International Applicants
- Mature Student Applicants
- Occasional Student Applicants
- Transfer Applicants
- Restricted Courses

There are documented procedures for deciding on applications from students who may have commenced in another university and later wish to transfer to Maynooth. There are also documented procedures for deciding on exemptions that may be applicable to students with relevant prior learning. Students, already registered in the University and depending on their initial programme of study, are provided a range of options to transfer internally from their first year programme. This provides students with greater choice in determining the final pathway of their studies.

The Maynooth University Access Programme (MAP) encourages under-represented groups to enter third level and provides these groups with support through their time at Maynooth. These groups include under-represented school leavers, mature students, students with disabilities and members of the travelling community. The University is a national leader in both attracting and retaining school leavers from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds, mature students and students with disabilities. From a national perspective, MAP has taken a leadership role in developing national policy in the area of widening participation. From an institutional perspective, MAP has developed number of models of academic support that support transition to higher education of underrepresented groups and are acknowledged as innovative models of outstanding good practice.

Specific assistance is provided by the University Access Office to assess and support students entering via the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) and Disability Access to Education Route (DARE). In addition, all new entrants are provided an extended induction programme-Launchpad, which was developed and evolved as part of the new curriculum initiative. During the initial induction week, the new entrants complete a survey which provides information on many matters including self-assessments by the students of their levels of preparedness for various aspects of third level education including independent learning. This information is shared with the providers of academic support services.

MU is actively engaged and is a national leader in addressing the higher education needs of the most marginalised communities, such as Travellers. Recently for instance, it took the lead partner role in the HEA funded *CollegeConnect* programme. The Review Team in the University's 2018/2019 CINNTE Institutional Review highlighted MU's work in this area with one of five of the key commendations made by the Team referring specifically to MU's approach commending the University on '*its national leadership and strategic approach to Access, Transfer and Progression at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, with recruitment, transition and post-entry strategies established to ensure the success of its diverse student cohort'* (key commendation 5 and commendation 22).

The Critical Skills subjects (optional for first year students) aim to provide a foundation for skills that the University regards as critical for a university education and that every university graduate should have and are also valued by employers. Such skills are dealing with complex arguments, evaluating evidence and making balanced judgments, communicating ideas clearly both verbally and in writing. Because these skills are so important, both in university and beyond, the University offers a specially designed subject for first-year students in critical skills to aid the transition to third level while at the same time complementing and supporting disciplinary learning.

Within the Office of the Dean of Teaching and Learning, the Programme Advisory Office is available to assist and advise undergraduate students, including incoming first year students, with programme related decisions before and after the registration period. The Programme Advisory Office is a guide for students as they navigate their own way through their programme options. The Office briefs incoming first year students during Welcome Week about Programme Choices students make during their academic journey at the University. Continuing second year students may also avail of the service, where they are unsure about programme options e.g., flexible degree pathways (major or major w/minor options) or whether or not to choose to take an Elective. Other key supports for students as they move though the student life cycle include support and advice for work placement during their studies and advice on career development.

Maynooth University is committed to offering students "an outstanding university education, the best available in Ireland, an education which challenges and supports all students to achieve their full potential, and prepares students for life, work and citizenship, and for complexity, diversity and change". Maynooth University's Graduate Attributes adopted a part of the evolution of the new curriculum, emphasises a holistic understanding of education, encompassing academic excellence, opportunities for self-development and an emphasis on social, cultural and environmental awareness.

The University is also committed to providing an outstanding learning environment for our students, through its teaching, research and scholarship, and student supports. Maynooth University aims to offer a curriculum and an intellectual, cultural and social environment that provide students with opportunities to make meaningful and positive contributions to the development of the community and society. In return it expects a high level of engagement from students. The expectations and commitments from both the University and the students are codified within the Maynooth Student Charter.

The university Institutional Research Office systematically and consistently monitors retention, progression and completion rates. Trends over time are kept under review by the University Executive, including Faculty Deans.

The academic grades achieved by students are monitored and reviewed each year with particular attention to the grades of final year students which are benchmarked against comparable data for other universities in Ireland, and against standards in universities outside Ireland via the External Examiners.

The career tracking of graduates is limited to early career stages via the national First Destinations Survey taken nine months after graduation. The survey facilitates benchmarking against other universities in Ireland.

The Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) provides data on what changes occur in different aspects of the student experience as they progress from first to final year undergraduate and also the changes that occur for those that continue as taught postgraduates. The Maynooth ISSE database is analysed by the Institutional Research Officer to provide insights into sources of variability in the quality of the student experience which may relate to field of study, mode of study (full-time vs parttime), and age and / or gender of the student. The ISSE also supports benchmarking against all universities in Ireland and to a limited extent against universities in other countries. Reports of the main findings from the StudentSurvey.ie ISSE survey are provided to students, University Executive, Faculties, the Teaching and Learning Committee and Academic Council.

2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

The programme development and approval process as laid out in section 2.1 requires that programme submissions are aligned to an award level on the NFQ and must identify whether the award granted will be a major, minor or supplemental award. As part of the programme approval process each submission is required to provide the module descriptors for the programme and a list of programme objectives. Programme proposals are assessed by the Academic Programmes Committee and are referred for an evaluation by appointed external examiners. Together, these two quality assurance processes are designed to provide a means of ensuring that the programme structure and content will enable learners to achieve the programme objectives.   Learning outcomes associated with each module are in place together with the assessment methodology that serves to determine that the learner has achieved the necessary knowledge, skills or competences required to be awarded the credit allocated to the module.

As detailed below (section 2.4) the University clearly outlines in its Marks and Standards documentation the criteria and standards that apply to students for successful progression through their studies.   Details of progression pathways, prerequisites, etc., are provided to students in resources such as programme handbooks and on the University webpages.

2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Maynooth University commenced a major reform of its undergraduate curriculum in 2012, with full implementation of reforms and innovations from 2016. Students may now choose different levels of specialisation in accordance with the progression flexibility provided via options for major, minor or double subject programme combination. The reformed Maynooth curriculum is a significant commitment by the University to providing a curriculum that meets the needs of students and society in the 21st century. The new undergraduate curriculum received particular mention by the External Review Panel of MU's CINNTE Institutional Review 2018/19 which, together with the PhD structured doctoral programme, was one of five primary overarching commendations made by the Team. The University was commended *'for an innovative new undergraduate curriculum, with a robust evaluation plan, as well as an innovative structured PhD programme'*. The undergraduate curriculum was also commended for being '*based on international research, societal needs and students' demands for flexibility'* (commendation 11).

The current curriculum helps students to shape their own education, allowing students to specialise either immediately or over time. Key components include:

• Innovative teaching and assessment that challenges students to analyse, reflect, think critically, communicate clearly and work in teams
• A unique first year subject, Critical Skills, that combines lectures with small group learning to support students' transition to university
• Fewer and simpler entry CAO entry routes, making choices easier and allowing students to specialise either immediately or over time

- Greater flexibility and choice, with the ability to take major and minor options within most degrees
- New and interesting subject combinations, including more opportunities to combine subjects across the arts and sciences
- Ability to pursue a modern language alongside any degree
- Elective options outside a student's core discipline
- Extensive opportunities to learn outside the classroom through accredited co-curricular activities such as work placement, volunteering, or study abroad.

The delivery of programmes in Maynooth University can take many formats varying from intensive small group sessions to large lectures supplemented by tutorials or laboratory sessions. Increasingly staff use a variety of approaches to teaching with greater use of virtual learning environments (Moodle in Maynooth), interactive approaches to pedagogy, and more frequent use of assignments that are aimed at fostering active learning among the students. Opportunities are provided by the Centre for Teaching and Learning to staff who may wish to develop their teaching skills and their understanding of learning processes. Students are supported in the transition to university with opportunities to develop their critical skills and to overcome specific weaknesses in areas such as quantitative reasoning, academic writing and information literacy.

The Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies is an administrative centre that supports undergraduate interdisciplinary and interdepartmental proposals under the umbrella of the Office of the Dean of Teaching and Learning. This Centre provides administrative support for any interdisciplinary Critical Skills and Electives as well as other relevant interdisciplinary courses.

University principles and policies that guide teaching and learning and supporting students in their learning are in place as are principles that apply to interdepartmental teaching. University guidance documents in relation to University Academic Systems and procedures are also in place.

Maynooth University's Academic Policies and Procedures set out rules relevant to programme delivery and assessment/progression rules, including information on credits, modules, programmes, workload and regulations for assessment, much of which is contained in the Marks and Standards:

>	Marks and Standards
>	University Assessment: An Introduction to Marks and Standards, a guide for students
>	Changes to Marks and Standards - A Guide for Current Students

The University uses the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Marks and Standards operate in conjunction with Module Information, Programme Specification and Departmental Handbooks which provide details of specific requirements of modules, entry criteria for modules with restricted entry, and deadlines and penalties. For each module learning outcomes and also the delivery and assessment methods are specified in advance and communicated to the students.

Criteria and methods of assessment are developed as appropriate for each discipline. The core information on methods of assessment for each module are published and communicated to the students. A broad set of criteria aligned to academic grades (e.g., first class honours, second honours, pass, fail) are used by examiners to ensure consistency in standards. The assessment process for each discipline makes provision for taking

account of documented mitigating circumstances which have been notified in advance to the relevant department.

The University's regulations regarding examinations comprise rules governing plagiarism, examination procedures, accommodations, appeals and procedures for various student cohorts.

> Examination Regulations and Procedures
> Plagiarism
> Procedures for Discussion Checking and Appeal of Exam Results
> Reasonable Accommodations
> Procedure on examination arrangements for visiting international students
> Policy on use of dictionary in examination hall
> Examination Regulations for Mature and Restricted Tests

Policies and practices in relation to academic integrity for staff and students are dealt with in Part B, Section 2.1 of this report.

Academic standards are monitored and validated by External Examiners appointed for the programmes provided by each department. The reports of External Examiners are reviewed by the relevant departments and by the Vice-President Academic, and a synthesis report is prepared for Deans. An updated external examiner policy was approved by Academic Council in 2017. Maynooth University External Examiners for Taught Programmes . Recognition of the effectiveness of the MU External Examiner system was provided as part of the MU CINNTE Institutional Review 2018/19 with the Review Team commending the *'effective use of external examiners to raise quality oversight of student learning and also to benchmark its own assessment processes and standards against wider norms'* (commendation 13).

Feedback from students is collated at the academic unit level by a variety of means such as surveys at module and programme level or staff:student committees.   The National Student Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) provides useful information on the overall student experience across a range of indicator areas.

Students are represented in all fora that have inputs into the delivery of programmes, the review of academic standards and assessment procedures, and also into procedures for obtaining feedback on the learning experience and engagement of students.

3.0 Learner Resources and Support

Maynooth University aims to offer its students an exceptional educational experience that enables them to reach their full potential as students and as individuals. The University places emphasis on critical skills, flexibility, unique subject combinations, electives, and experiential learning. A key strength of our University is its strong community that fosters an open, supportive, and flexible learning environment. Personal interaction and active citizenship lie at the heart of the Maynooth University experience. Students are encouraged to co-create their educational pathway and choice is central to this personalised experience. The Maynooth University Teaching and Learning Guidelines were developed, in that spirit, to provide guidelines, rather than rigid prescriptive approaches, for teaching and learning at the University.

Using a wide range of mutually reinforcing actions, the University aims through the Maynooth curriculum to provide its graduates with a unique set of graduate attributes.

The University Academic Council has established a Teaching and Learning Committee, chaired by the Dean of Teaching and Learning. It has a very broadly based membership that includes academic staff from each Faculty, staff from academic support units and representatives from Maynooth University Students' Union. The role of the Teaching and Learning Committee is "to make recommendations to Academic Council on matters of strategy and policy in relation to Teaching and Learning in order to enhance teaching, learning and assessment at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and to oversee, on behalf of Academic Council, the development, implementation and review of the education strategy for the university, within the overall framework of the University Strategic Plan". The Academic Council Teaching and Learning Committee is supported by a Teaching and Learning Committee in each of the three Faculties (Arts, Philosophy and Celtic Studies; Social Sciences; and Science and Engineering).

Within the broad remit summarised above, the Teaching and Learning Committee has specific responsibility to "oversee the development and implementation of systems to evaluate the quality of programmes, including mechanisms for student feedback and evaluation of student engagement and the student experience" and also to "oversee the standards of student achievement, relative to local and international standards, and the consistency and pattern of results".

The Dean of Teaching and Learning provides leadership for the University in the key areas of the development of teaching and learning and the supports for all students in learning. This includes overseeing the development of a co-ordinated suite of critical skills subjects for first year students, a range of elective courses for undergraduate students, advisory, guidance and peer mentoring supports for students, and experiential learning and co-curricular activities including service learning and work placements. Supports and services are available to all students, including international students. The Office of the Dean of Teaching and Learning supports teaching and learning across the university, assuming direct responsibility for certain interdisciplinary courses and coordinating the work of the following functions (links provide details of these functions and additional detail provided below):

        Centre for Teaching and Learning
        Career Development Centre
        Work Placement

Experiential Learning
Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies
Programme Advisory Office
Student Engagement Office

The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) aims to enhance teaching and learning in the University through the support and development of good practice and innovation in this regard, through a range of initiatives for staff and students. Amongst its activities, it provides accredited courses in teaching and learning to staff (outlined in more detail in section 5.0). These were comprehensively reviewed and redesigned in order to fully align them with the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education's Professional Development Framework for all Staff who Teach in Higher Education (PD Framework); and to incorporate stakeholder feedback. The CTL also offers Evaluation of Teaching processes, through peer review or student group evaluations, supports teaching fellowships, and provides training, supports and facilities for technology enhanced teaching and learning. In addition, it coordinates the provision of Critical Skills modules for the Maynooth undergraduate curriculum.

A Programme Advisory Officer is in place to assist and guide all students with their programme choices in the context of the new curriculum; funding for additional tutors was put in place for the Mathematics Support Centre, while other well-developed services such as Academic Writing and targeted services for Access students continue to be developed. Furthermore, since 2017 resources have been provided to support an Experiential Learning Office.

The Programme Advisory Office was established in August 2016 and is situated within the Office of the Dean of Teaching and Learning as a dedicated advisory service to assist students with programme choice related decisions. The Office consists of a full-time Programme Advisor, who is supported by a team of PG students during peak times. The Programme Advisory Office has a number of functions: (i) to provide advice to individual undergraduate students with programme related choices they may be unsure about; (ii) to promote the key components of the new Curriculum to current students including increased subject choice, Electives, Critical Skills, and experiential learning opportunities; (iii) to produce guidance documents for students mapping out their programme choices as well as establishing a significant online presence for the Office; (iv) to support undergraduate students as they transition into Maynooth University and as they transition between academic years (in collaboration with many other offices).

The Experiential Learning Office was established in 2016 within the Office of the Dean of Teaching and Learning. Its aims to support the enhancement of student opportunities for professional development, undergraduate research, service learning and community engagement, as informed by the University Strategic Plan. The office works closely with academic staff, employers and community partners to develop quality experiential learning opportunities within the new curriculum and co-curriculum.

Student services in Maynooth University articulates it's provision of services in its mission statement which outlines that "Student Services is an integral part of the University community enabling the promotion and development of its educational mission. Using a holistic approach, we offer a range of clearly defines services to support and empower students to achieve their personal and academic potential and so enhance their life's

journey. We strive to create a community which is open and caring and where diversity is expected and respected". The range of services available to students through Student Services includes

> Counselling
> Health Centre
> Chaplaincy
> Student Support Officer
> Student Support Hub   including details of the Homefinder service in place.
> Budgeting
> Sport
> Creche (available to students and staff)

The International Office in Maynooth University supports international students and facilitates their applications to study in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in the University. It also supports several hundred visiting students from North America and across the European Union. It is the first point of contact for all incoming international students providing information in relation to such matters as visas, immigration, campus services, etc. The Office also supports Maynooth students to study or undertake a placement abroad as part of their degree. It collaborates with universities, research institutes and industrial partners across the globe as part of its work supporting the internationalisation of teaching, research, and enabling student and academic mobility.

The University Library is a key resource for supporting teaching and learning in the University, its mission being to foster communities of learning and scholarship through excellent resources, services and people. The Library is actively engaged in supporting the Maynooth University Curriculum with its emphasis on critical skills, that are explicitly linked to information literacy. The Library supports the delivery of information literacy skills and promotes information resources to a growing student body, through a blended technology approach. With an extension of 6,200 sqm completed in 2013, the Library saw an increase in its space to 10,000 sqm with an increase of over 200% in its seating capacity, a 130% increase in its book capacity and more that 280% increase in computer availability. The development saw the inclusion of a range of study spaces, a special collections facility and a dedicated postgraduate and researcher's room together with a purpose-built exhibitions area. The Library provides students and staff access to over 450,000 books/ebooks and more than 42,000 electronic journals. It also provides a range of information and training courses to enable users to access information quickly and efficiently.

The University's facilities and buildings for teaching and learning has seen significant investments; including the major extension to the University library referenced above, with the addition of 21,700 m2 to the building stock of the University at a cost of €62.4m, this including the EOLAS building and the School of Education. Construction of a new academic building commenced in August 2019, planning consent for the redevelopment of the existing Arts building was secured in early 2019 and planning consent was also secured in late 2019 for the construction of a new Student Centre.   A campus master plan guides the capital development of the University over the coming decade.

Moodle is the VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) in use at the University providing an online environment where students and staff interact and in which learning resources for programmes and modules ae delivered.

Students and staff are all provided access to Office 365, including email, calendar and OneDrive for personal storage. Teams is available to both students and staff for group work and collaboration exercises. An academic-type Microsoft Teams is available that is set up to align with each course in Moodle which facilitates the seamless integration of the two resources and enables the use of Teams as a teaching and learning tool for classes.

The Centre for Teaching and Learning provides a range of supports to teaching and support staff for the design and development of blended learning and online modules and programmes and in the use of learning technologies. Technology enhanced learning is a critical component of teaching and learning in the University and a range of training and online supports are available to support staff in making use of technological tools. Some of the tools in use include Turnitin, a tool integrated with Moodle, that helps with managing online submission of assignments and coursework and helps to check submitted material for plagiarism; Panopto, also Moodle integrated, that facilitates the capturing and recording of lectures electronically for sharing with students; Screencast-O-Matic, that enables users to capture screen activity to aid in online provision of lectures; and online feedback tools such as TurningPoint that enables polling of students whether in a face to face or in a blended learning situation.

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

Maynooth University is a research-intensive institution with a strategic goal to be recognised as playing a leading international role in a number of thematic areas of research that address some of the major societal challenges of the 21st century. In pursuit of this goal, the University is committed to (a) building its capacity for research and scholarship to the highest international standards, (b) enhancing the postgraduate and postdoctoral experience, (c) supporting individual scholars and (d) further enhancing our national and international profile. The University research strategy builds upon strengths in Maynooth, which are structured to align with national and international research priorities. The University's approach as articulated in the University Strategic Plan 2018-2022 was deemed by the Review Team for the University's CINNTE Institutional Review (2018/19) as being a '*realistic proposal…to build research capacity--with quality assurance plans--in line with actual University expertise and potential as well as national need' (*commendation 20).

Maynooth University's Research Institutes and Designated Research Centres are an important element of the University's strategic plan to build research capacity and a research culture of international quality and outlook. The Review Team of the 2018/19 CINNTE Institutional Review recognised the importance of the Institutes and Research Centres for the University and commended '*the effective use of research institutes to cultivate an inclusive research culture and research initiatives across departmental lines, capable of attracting large-scale EU funding'* (commendation 21).

The quality of research outputs at the level of the University is monitored via citation analyses, especially the field weighted citation indices. The University performance framework includes a time series of such metrics, which are benchmarked on an annual basis against other universities in Ireland. Additional proxy measures of

the quality of Maynooth research are successes in competitive bidding for national and international research funds, and especially successes for highly prestigious international awards such as European Research Council grants.

The primary process for reviewing the quality of research undertaken within units of the University is via the reviews of academic departments and research institutes. This includes narrative accounts of research quality and impact, appropriate to the discipline. The University is currently carrying out its third cycle of internal quality reviews of all units in the University.

While being mindful of the QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines on Research Degree Programmes, the Maynooth University Academic Policies and Procedures include a set of regulations for a range of postgraduate degrees, including research Masters and PhD. In addition, the University has an extensive array of policies, to ensure the highest standards are attained in the training and supervision of doctoral students. These include policies on:

> Roles and Responsibilities of Students and Supervisors,
> Route of Progression for research masters students;
> Code of practice for the Viva Voce

A wide range of procedures, covering all aspects of the postgraduate student life cycle is managed by the Graduate Studies Office. In an effort to ensure a feedback platform is available to postgraduate students a Postgraduate Feedback Council is in place composed of postgraduate representatives (taught and research) as well as members of the Graduate Studies Office and Faculty Deans. When an issue is raised at the Council, the Dean can bring this forward to a Graduate sub-committee of Academic Council on behalf of the students. The Postgraduate Feedback Council received particular mention during the 2018/19 MU CINNTE Institutional Review with the Review Team commending '*the work of the Postgraduate Feedback Council as an area of effective student engagement pertaining to the needs of postgraduate students'* (commendation 16)

In addition to postgraduate regulations and policies, there are policies that apply to all researchers, covering staff and students. These include:

> Research Integrity Policy
> Research Ethics Policy
> Policy on Open Access to Research
> Charter on Postdoctoral Research
> Conflict of Interest Policy
> Intellectual Property Management & Exploitation Policy
> Research Incentivisation Policy

The Research Skills Development Programme was launched in 2017 and offers an extensive range of training and development programmes to researchers in the University. It is a joint training programme offered by the Graduate Studies and Research Development Office with inputs from faculties, departments and professional units within the University. It is offered to all postgraduate, postdoctoral and other early-stage researchers and combines on-line, blending learning and credited modules.

All doctoral students are registered for structured PhD programmes, which along with the preparation of a research thesis comprises mandatory modules on <u>generic skills and specialised modules</u> in the research field. Indeed, the '*development, implementation and continuous assessment of the structured doctorate degree'* was commended by the Review Team during MU's 2018/2019 CINNTE Institutional Review (commendation 8 and Overarching Institutional commendation number 3).

The decision to award a doctoral degree is based solely on the quality of the research, which is examined by an internal and external examiner.

The <u>Research Development Office</u> provides a range of services and funding supports to raise the quality of research applications to all funding agencies, and also to enhance the profile of Maynooth research outputs; these services are underpinned by a developed suite of procedures and processes. The '*development of the Research Development Office as a single point of contact to support all aspects of research from identifying funding streams through to post award'* was noted for commendation as part of MU's CINNTE Institutional Review 2018/19 (commendation 19).

The Research Development Office has implemented a Research Information System (RIS) which hosts academic profile, proposal tracking, ethics and reporting modules. Further developmental plans include expanding the system with a view to bringing postgraduate students into the system via a link with the student ITS system. The Office underwent a major restructure in 2015-16 to incorporate research finance so that oversight of research grants from preparation through to close out all fall within the one team.

The University's Commercialisation Office and the Business Incubation Center are now closely aligned appearing under the brand of <u>MaynoothWorks</u>. Together, they deliver an integral approach to knowledge transfer, enterprise partnership and entrepreneurship innovation.

Funding is provided by the University to facilitate staff in attending international conferences, and to avail of sabbatical periods of either six months or twelve months to progress their research. The Research Development Office runs a series of internal funding schemes aiming to increase the University's research profile and assist staff in securing European funding.

5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

A key consideration for the University is planning, developing and valuing its staff to support the growth and development of the University. The University's Human Resources Office coordinates strategic aims in this regard. An annual review of staffing, focused on the allocation of appropriate resources at faculty and departmental level, is carried out to plan for growth in student numbers. The Human Resources Department is closely linking its strategy over the next 5 years to quality improvement and enhancement, through a range of initiatives aimed at the development and advancement of all staff.

Teaching informed by research is a core function of the University and is critical to ensuring a high-quality student experience and to enabling the acquisition of knowledge, competence and skills. Maynooth University has well developed recruitment and appointment procedures for all academic staff that are aligned to international best practices.

The primary focus of the Human Resources Office is to ensure the University continues to be an excellent place to work, known for a collegial ethos, which empowers all staff to contribute fully. A suite of human resources policies governs policy on teaching staff.

All academic posts are filled following a publicly advertised competition. Prior to advertisement, a detailed job description is prepared with a clear identification of essential and desirable attributes. Applications are assessed against criteria based on the requirements specified in the job description. Members of Assessment Boards are trained in advance to ensure consistency, fairness, and avoidance of any discrimination and /or unconscious bias.

For all academic posts, candidates are required to provide details of their teaching experience, and during the interview they may be questioned on their understanding of pedagogy at third level. It is standard practice that candidates are required to make a short presentation as part of the interview.

Maynooth University Recruitment and Selection Process

In efforts to support staff development in teaching and learning a number of CPD initiatives are in place:

MU Teaching Evaluation process, Centre for Teaching and Learning
- The Centre offers a process for staff to undertake their own peer to peer evaluations of teaching or to have an independent observation from a member of the Centre.
- The independent observation includes a pre consultation and post consultation meeting with the staff member as well as their observation. This consultation offers observation as well as guidance on classroom (face to face or online) teaching and approaches to student engagement.
- The process was reviewed for the online teaching space and was able to continue during the move to online. An additional option is to have a review of recorded online teaching where the staff member can also review and observe their own teaching.

- Staff members have continued to request observations despite the move to online for a variety of reasons including promotion, inclusion in teaching portfolios, to enhance their online teaching, to gain confidence and awareness.

Professional Certificate in Teaching and Learning for Tutors and Demonstrators (CTL1)
- This 5-credit professional certificate is offered as an elective module as part of the MU structured PhD programme across all departments and faculty.
- During 2019/2020 this module was delivered as a flipped classroom approach and students learned through recorded screencasts and peer activities with a critical friend they paired up with between online classes. Online classes were used to reinforce and apply learning and to make connections with students.
- The certificate is a popular module and always oversubscribed and as such is run in each semester. 45 students successfully completed in 2019/2020.
- Department feedback indicates the programme has an impact on student engagement and tutors and demonstrators indicate through their feedback they are more confident and prepared for teaching and supporting students and particularly in engaging students. They also indicate they found the critical friend interactions helpful for both learning of the module and making cross disciplinary connections with other researchers in the university.

Following widespread consultation, the **Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education Teaching, Learning & Assessment** was redesigned and launched in 2019.
- MU introduced a new, flexible, programme for MU teaching staff in place of a diploma that ran some years previously, with the aim to enhance quality of teaching and learning in the University and create opportunity for staff to obtain a higher education teaching qualification.
- The new design was aligned to the work of the *National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* and in particular, *The National Professional Development Framework for All Staff Who Teach in Higher Education*.
- Key aspects of the new design are an exit with a 30 ECTS Certificate, a mix of blended, online and practice modules, and potential for stand-alone CPD modules for staff not registered to the programme, initially a Digital Technologies 10 ECTS module.
- The programme offered three modules (certificate) in the first year (2019/2020) with all remaining modules to come online in the academic year 2020/2021.

Evidence of Impact
- 13 staff members commenced the programme in 2019. 1 exited with the Certificate and 12 are continuing modules to complete the programme. There are 20 places offered each academic year and the flexibility allows participants to complete the Diploma within 4 years.
- Impact from the programme is already evident through feedback from participants, participant engagement with National Forum funded PD projects in Teaching and Learning, participants receiving Fellowships and award nominations. Further evidence of impact of participant learning on students has emerged through the reflections and assessment submission of the programme.
- There was an increase in numbers applying for the programme in the current year, despite the move to online and the additional work completing a programme would bring.

In September 2020, a new video recording solution for live streaming and recording lectures was introduced. This, in addition to existing platforms, supported the delivery of teaching remotely, or when using a flipped classroom method, and greatly enhanced Maynooth University's ability to continue its teaching mission amid the challenges caused by the Covid 19 pandemic.

A large range of webinars for staff to support them in upskilling in the area of technology enhanced T&L during the Summer of 2020 was offered (June, July, August 2020). Examples of webinars on offer were:

> Moodle Users Meeting: Reflections & Plans for 2020-21
> Blended Learning: Using TurningPoint In-class & Online
> Using Moodle Forums to Support Engagement
> IUA EDTL Approach: Planning for Remote Teaching
> Flipped Classroom Approaches
> Groupwork in Moodle
> Sharing Practice: Using Podcasting in Online Teaching
> Introduction to the European Framework for Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu)
> Creating Interactive Activities with H5P
> Screencasts Using Screencast-o-matic
> Sharing Practice: Inquiry-Based Distance Learning
> Making Accessible Presentations
> Moodle Course Page Design
> Moodle Quizzes
> Setting up Moodle Gradebook
> Supporting Engagement in Live Online Classes
> Writing to Learn in Online Environments: Low Stakes Strategies

University Teaching Fellowships are awarded on a competitive basis, while innovations in teaching practice across all departments are showcased at an annual event organised by the Centre for Teaching and Learning. Staff Teaching and Learning Support. The University also recognises excellence in teaching and doctoral supervision via the Maynooth University Teaching and Supervision Awards.

The potential of new technologies to support teaching and learning are kept under review and also actively promoted by the Centre for Teaching and Learning. The Quality Assurance and review of blended learning approaches at Maynooth are developed to enhance these specific programmes, while also being guided by the relevant QQI statutory guidelines. The Centre provides support to academic staff in the design and development of blended and online modules and programmes and in the innovative use of learning technologies. This is through a range of individual supports, CPD activities, workshops, department-based projects, as well as national and sectoral collaborative projects.

MU's approach to improving the quality of teaching was commented on as part of its recent CINNTE Institutional Review with the '*University's 'progress in improving the quality of teaching and its plans to make additional progress in this area'* commended by the external Review Team (commendation 9).

The links between teaching and research are vital at all levels. Departments are encouraged to ensure that their best researchers have opportunities to teach undergraduates in order to foster a sense of passion and enthusiasm for research. To further develop this connection, the University has introduced an enhanced Summer Undergraduate Research Programme (SPUR) to provide students with an opportunity to work closely with faculty mentors on research projects across a range of disciplines and the chance to learn more about the postgraduate experience.

The University academic promotion schemes place equal weightings on evaluation criteria linked to both teaching and research in order to ensure that teaching is not in any sense of lesser importance.

Maynooth University considers Sabbatical Leave for the purpose of research and study to be of fundamental importance to academic life and as an integral part of the employment relationship between the University and its permanent academic staff. Such leave contributes to ongoing staff development by providing individuals uninterrupted periods for research and for updating their theoretical knowledge and methodological expertise, while also facilitating the achievement of the objectives of the University's Research and Teaching Strategies. It also supports the University mission to have an international reputation for teaching and research, and its commitment to collaboration and engagement with other higher education institutions, industry and civil society.

Maynooth University is committed to being a University community that promotes and advances equality, respects and values diversity, and develops a collegiate environment of excellence with equality, in which the human rights, the responsibilities and diversity of all students and staff are recognised and respected. The University values the enrichment that comes from a diverse community of students and staff and seeks to promote equality and prevent discrimination in the access, experience, progression and achievement of all students and staff through developing and implementing clear policies, processes, practices providing effective support to help realise equality in student experience and in employment. A University Equality and Diversity Policy has been developed therefore, to realise the University's core values of equality, inclusiveness, social justice, dignity and respect. Equality, diversity, inclusion and interculturalism have also been identified as key strategic goals in the University's Strategic Plan (2018-2022).

Maynooth University Equality and Diversity Policy

6.0 Information and Data Management

In order to support the rapid growth and increasing complexity of the University, new central systems across IT, Finance, HR and Registry have been deployed and management structures have been scaled to respond and to enable the University to transition to its next stage of development.

Maynooth University has a highly developed approach to information management. Through the University Performance Framework, data are collated on an annual basis using documented definitions, census dates and sign off procedures to compile a suite of key performance indicators and secondary indicators.

The indicators cover the following topics: profile of the student population, numbers of undergraduates and postgraduates, full-time and part-time students, age, socio-economic background, domicile, study outside Ireland, CAO entry points, non-progression rates, completion rates, academic grades and first destinations. The research metrics include funding inputs by source of funding, and normalised output metrics such as numbers of publications, citation rates, and PhD graduates. The KPI framework also provides indicators on income and expenditure, with particular reference to expenditure on core academic functions. The data on staff enable monitoring of staff/student ratios and staff qualifications. Net academic space per student is also monitored on an annual basis. Many of these internal indicators are benchmarked against comparable data for other universities published by the HEA. In addition to the data used for the compilation of performance metrics, data are also collated systematically on an annual basis of numbers of students that avail of each of the academic support services and learning resources provided for students.

Robust and reliable data and performance indicators are essential to support strategic decision making and resource allocation. The University has prioritised the alignment of Strategy and Quality, through the establishment of a joint office in this regard. The Institutional Research function of the Office of the Director of Strategy and Quality is central to the collation and analysis of university data that informs key decision-making, planning and underpins the measurement and assessment of quality. Key and Secondary Performance Indicators across a wide range of the University's activities such as student numbers, research, human resources, finance, and campus infrastructure are regularly monitored and reported on to the University Executive, the Governing Authority and Academic Council.

Data from surveys are analysed by the Institutional Research Officer and reports are provided to all the internal stakeholders.

The Institutional Research Office undertakes an annual survey of first year undergraduate students registering in the University for the first time. The survey is conducted during student orientation week each year usually achieving a response rate in the region of 80-85%. The survey provides invaluable information to internal stakeholders on incoming students including why they choose to study in Maynooth University, how prepared they are for third level education, what their expectations are, information about their general living and working arrangements, and feedback on concerns or issues that they have.

The Office also administers the annual HEA Equal Access Survey which surveys incoming first year students asking them questions on their social, economic and cultural background.

Feedback from students is sought for modules and/or for programmes at the level of the academic unit (department or school) with a variety of materials provided to the departments/schools that they chose from to match their local needs. This micro level feedback is supplemented by higher level feedback obtained via the Maynooth component of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement.

Other means of gaining feedback on University activities are through participation in such initiatives as the International Student Barometer survey, and the biennial LibQual survey which evaluates student perception of library service quality.

The Maynooth University Freedom of Information and Data Protection Office is the central office for matters related to FOI, data protection and compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014 requires FOI bodies to prepare and publish as much information as possible in an open and accessible manner on a routine basis outside of FOI, having regard to the principles of openness, transparency and accountability as set out in Sections 8(5) and 11(3) of the Act. This allows for the publication or giving of records outside of FOI provided that such publication or giving of access is not prohibited by law. The scheme commits FOI bodies to make information available as part of their normal business activities in accordance with this scheme. A suite of University policies provide rules and procedures for data privacy, Freedom of Information and responsible computing:

> Routine Access to Personal Information
> Contact with Third Parties
> Data Protection Policy
> Staff Data Privacy Notice
> Student Data Privacy Notice
> HEA Student Data Collection Notice
> Records Management Policy
> Information & Data Security Policy
> Code of Conduct for users of Computing Facilities
> Responsible Computing Policy
> CCTV Policy
> Freedom of Information
> Data Protection Office

7.0 Public Information and Communication

University strategy and policies for the provision and use of public information relate to all levels of activity in the organisation and span all stages of the student life cycle. The University's approach on the provision of public information was commented on by the external Review Team of the 2018/2019, MU CINNTE Institutional Review. The Team commended the University '*for upgrading the quality of its public information and communications in print developed for current and prospective students and for embarking on a broader plan to improve external communications*' (commendation 17)

The University publishes a wide range of hard copy material for students, prospective students as well as internal and external stakeholders including information on admissions, programmes, student life and supports etc. Information for prospective and existing students spans all aspects of the student life cycle and is targeted at providing information appropriately for different student groups, such as Undergraduate, Access, Mature, Postgraduate and International students (see section 2.2).

At the level of University governance and management, information is easily accessible on legal status and decision-making structures; the University's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 is published and available in both English and Irish. MU policies and procedures are publicly available on dedicated webpages and/or integrated into the website of the associated unit as a means of facilitating ease of access for users.

The University Framework for Quality Assurance and the reports related to each of the completed quality reviews are published on the Quality Office webpage. Peer Review Group Reports and Quality Improvement Plans are published for completed reviews as well as results of surveys of stakeholders who have engaged in the peer review process. Reports arising from Institutional level quality reviews and follow up reports where applicable are published on the Quality Office webpages as are annual quality reports (AQRs) to QQI.

The University's Communications Office focuses on consolidating the national and international reputation of the University and has responsibility for PR and media relations, marketing to prospective students, internal communications, the University identity and web presence. As with most modern organisations, the University website is the go-to platform for accurate, comprehensive and accessible information. The Internet Publishing Policies and Standards are in place to make the University's content as effective as possible, ensuring that online visitors have the best possible experience, that obstacles to accessibility are minimised and that web content complies with all relevant legal provisions. The policy also covers the use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

Self-evaluation and monitoring occur at many levels within the University - module, programme, departmental, faculty and whole of institution.

At module, programme and department level, student feedback is solicited with a variety of survey templates provided for departments and schools to use locally as reflects their needs. Work continues at an institutional level on expanding the options that departments/schools can use to solicit feedback from students.

Programme approval and monitoring arrangements are outlined in section 2.1 and involves a range of structured processes including programme approval/update processes, ongoing monitoring of student performance, progression and completion, professional accreditation, external examiners (including the external examiners policy that outlines their selection and appointment) and the quality reviews of academic units.

Engagement with stakeholders as part of departmental or programme reviews and as part of programme approval processes is set out in the University's framework for Quality Assurance and Enhancement and is set out in this document under section 2.1 for programme approval and monitoring arrangements.

Self-evaluation is the central tenet of the University's approach to periodic quality review which has been professional support unit/departmental-school in its focus.. Synthesis of the outcomes of academic departmental quality reviews are produced at faculty level, to develop better enhancement approaches to cross-cutting issues and to share good practice developed and recognised at departmental/unit level. Annual monitoring of the implementation of quality improvement plans (QIPs) is carried out between the Director of Quality and the unit implementing the recommendations of periodic quality review.

The selection and engagement of external, independent, national and international experts as quality reviewers on peer review groups consists of nominations, from the unit under review, of an extended list of reviewers who are senior level experts/specialists in the area or the subject under review. This listing is evaluated by the President or their nominee and the reviewers are ranked. Reviewers are then invited, in rank order, to serve on review panels with usually two, but in cases, three external reviewers appointed.

The University is subject to periodic (normally every 7-8 years) institutional quality reviews. The last such review was the QQI CINNTE Institutional Review process commencing in 2018 and finishing in 2019 with an institutional quality report and the University's response as to how it proposed to address the recommendations of that report outlined in an Institutional implementation plan. A follow up report on progression on commitments made was produced one year later in August 2020. The CINNTE review process places a key focus on how higher educational institutions align to QQIs statutory guidelines and in particular the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016) and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015) and is a means of assuring that internal quality assurance processes and procedures are aligned to national and international standards and norms.

9.0   Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

9.1   Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	18
Awarding bodies	0
QA bodies	0

1. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Institute of Physics
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc Experimental Physics, BSc Physics with Astrophysics (accredited), BSc Science Education (recognized)
Date of accreditation or last review	Academic year 2019-2020
Date of next review	2023

2. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Honorable Society of King's Inns
Programme titles and links to publications	BCL Law and Criminology
Date of accreditation or last review	Academic year 2019-2020
Date of next review	No defined cycle

3. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Psychological Society of Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	MSc Psychology
Date of accreditation or last review	Academic year 2019-2020
Date of next review	2024

4. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Chartered Accountants (ACA)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA Accounting and Finance, BA Finance, BBS Business and Accounting, BCL Law and Accounting, Higher Diploma in Professional Accounting, MA in Accounting (1 year), MA in Accounting (2 years)
Date of accreditation or last review	Academic year 2019-2020
Date of next review	Academic year 2020-2021

5. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA Accounting and Finance, BA Finance, BBS Business and Accounting, BCL Law and Accounting, Higher Diploma in Professional Accounting, MA in Accounting (1 year), MA in Accounting (2 years)
Date of accreditation or last review	Academic year 2019-2020
Date of next review	Academic year 2020-2021

6. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA Accounting and Finance, BA Finance, BBS Business and Accounting, BCL Law and Accounting, Higher Diploma in Professional Accounting, MA in Accounting (1 year), MA in Accounting (2 years)
Date of accreditation or last review	Academic year 2019-2020
Date of next review	approval continues until next change of syllabus

7. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Institute of Management Consultants and Advisors (IMCA)
Programme titles and links to publications	MSc Marketing, MSc Strategic Marketing, MSc International Business, MSc Business Analytics
Date of accreditation or last review	Academic year 2019-2020
Date of next review	2022

8. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Chartered Financial Analyst University Affiliation Programme (CFA)
Programme titles and links to publications	MSc Finance
Date of accreditation or last review	Academic year 2019-2020
Date of next review	2021

9. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Global Association of Risk Professional Academic Partner (GARP)
Programme titles and links to publications	MSc Economic and Financial Risk Analysis
Date of accreditation or last review	Academic year 2019-2020
Date of next review	2022

9.2   Collaborative Provision

Type of arrangement	Total number
Joint research degrees	1
Joint/double/multiple awards	2
Collaborative programmes	7
Franchise programmes	0
Linked providers (DABs only)	0

9.3   Articulation Agreements

Articulation agreements - Total number	1

[Higher Education Institution]

2021

Annual Quality Report (Institution)
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2019-2020

PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Guidelines on Completing Part B

As outlined in the general guidelines for this template (p.5), **Part B** of the AQR documents and captures QA activities, developments and enhancements undertaken by institutions **during the reporting period** and their **impact**.

Insofar as is possible, institutions should demonstrate in Part B how plans set out in the previous AQR submission were progressed during the reporting period – these may be plans linked to strategic objectives, to reengagement advices, or to institutional review recommendations.

Part B of the AQR is an opportunity for self-reflection and critical evaluation of the effectiveness of QA activities over the reporting period. Institutions are encouraged to reflect both on what worked well and what did not work well, and to consider impact measures, using both quantitative and qualitative evidence (metrics, benchmarks and feedback/judgement) in how they led to specific QA improvements and enhancement.

Part B provides evidence of quality improvement and enhancement and impact[2] of QA activities within the totality of an institution's QA system.

Section 1 pertains to internal quality assurance implementation and developments since the previous reporting period.

Section 2 deals with institutional analysis of IQA enhancements and impacts including activities undertaken in respect of academic integrity, and the enhancements and impacts resulting from same.

Section 3 relates to IQA developments and plans for the next reporting period.

Section 4 provides an opportunity for institutions to illustrate IQA in action through case studies in relevant thematic areas.

Institutions are invited, if they wish to do so, to use case studies to demonstrate quality in action and to highlight areas of practice for dissemination at any point in this part of the report.

Case Studies

QQI recommends that written case studies should:
- Be between half a page and two pages in length;
- Relate to a specific time- and subject-bound issue;
- Include an introduction that sets out a brief overview of contextual matters;
- Include any relevant supporting data and data analysis;
- Include links to any sources cited;
- Include a clear concluding paragraph with overview of key outcomes/learning.

Although case studies will generally be in written form, institutions may also provide links to audio-visual/multimedia case studies. QQI does not prescribe a format for case studies.

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[2] The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education have considered impact and measures leading to development and improvement specifically in terms of teaching and learning. See: https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/wp-content/uploads/NF-2020-Insights-from-Practice-About-Impact-in-Teaching-and-Learning-web-ready.pdf.This is a very useful reference, though impact in the context of this report should be considered

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1   Strategic QA Updates

One of the key changes of the reporting period with an impact on quality assurance processes was the commencement of the Covid -19 pandemic. This saw a significant change in how University operations had to be conducted across all areas of the University with adaptations made quickly in order to ensure that the University could continue to operate whilst staff and students were effectively off site from mid-March to the end of the academic year.   The University continued to function with activities moving online across the broad range of activities engaged in, from teaching and learning to training and development activities for staff.

Plans were put in place to provide for a contingency option to undertake quality review visits online. The contingency format saw what was a 2.5-day visit transform into five consecutive, extended, half day's sessions. Additional briefing sessions for peer review groups with the Strategy & Quality Office staff were incorporated into the format so, one a week before the scheduled virtual visit commenced, another at the outset of the visit and several more threaded through the visit. Scheduled, Team only briefing sessions were incorporated at the start and end of each day of the visit to compensate for time normally spent during an onsite visit talking over lunch and during the evening when reviewers remain together. Additional time was also incorporated into the schedule for the Peer Review Group to spend drafting the oral report they are required to give at the end of the visit. To compensate for the lack of being on campus, plans to provide the review teams with video materials to enable them to get a sense of the University campus and facilities were put in place.

For departments and schools preparing their self-assessment reports (SARs) one key difficulty arose in conducting SWOT exercises. These are normally undertaken with all staff members gathering in a live setting to work dynamically and creatively in a brainstorming session with the purpose of identifying what they see as the unit's strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities it may have and the key threats that exist.   This is an important part of the SAR development process and is also a key means of getting all staff input and engagement into preparing for their quality review.   As live sessions were no longer possible, the Strategy & Quality Office put in place a SWOT approach that incorporated pre-SWOT exercises to garner input from all staff members in advance. The outcomes of the pre- SWOT exercise could then be used to inform the deliberations of a shorter, snapper online SWOT session making maximum use of the time spent during deliberations.   In this way, it was possible to ensure that the valuable findings and outcomes from a SWOT exercise were still captured and all-staff engagement was enabled. A variety of approaches were developed to accommodate local needs with academic units working closely with the Director of Quality to develop individualised approaches to suit situations and needs.

1.2   Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR) Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Update on Status Provide brief update on status, whether completed or in progress. If an action was planned in the previous AQR, but not completed, provide reasons/short reflections for the delay/non-completion.
1	**MU CINNTE Institutional Review** Report to QQI on progress with the implementation of the plan. Continue to work on implementing changes and initiating enhancements in response to the various recommendations made in the Review Report.	Report to QQI submitted in August 2020 with significant progress documented in addressing the recommendations made in the CINNTE report. Many action items were already completed with work well progressed in other areas. Work continues into 2020/2021 for a number of areas as would be expected where practice is developed, embedded and enhanced over a period of time.
2	**Continuation of Cycle 3 periodic quality reviews** Prepare for the quality reviews of eight academic units of the Faculty of Arts, Celtic studies and Philosophy to conclude in the autumn of 2020.	With the onset of Covid -19 in March 2020, contingency procedures to conduct quality reviews as virtual events were put in place. All preparations now provide for the possibility of a peer review group visit taking place onsite or as a virtual event.
3	**Establish a Framework for Programmatic Review** Continue to work on establishing a framework for review of large multi-disciplinary programmes. Reviews of more specialised programmes will continue to be undertaken within the periodic reviews of the departments/schools providing the programmes.	This did not progress as planned. Discussions as to the format or structure for a framework for review of large multi-disciplinary programmes will be needed in due course.
4	**Review of the University approach to surveying of modules** The current survey used in the University to illicit student feedback on modules entitled SELE (Student Evaluation of Learning Experience) will be reviewed with potential explored on providing academic units greater flexibility in how they survey their modules.	A new Department-led approach to module and programme evaluation was introduced in the academic year 2019-20. Additional work is planned for subsequent years.
5	**Professional Regulatory and Statutory Bodies** The University has many academic programmes accredited by Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PRSB). The Quality Office will continue to maintain an up-to-date database of all PRSB accredited programmes in the University.	This was successfully completed.

1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Governing Authority	19 September 2019 14 November 2019 18 December 2019 6 February 2020 26 March 2020 4 June 2020
Academic Council	23 September 2019 4 November 2019 10 December 2019 3 February 2020 30 March 2020 25 May 2020.
Quality Committee	Did not meet during the reporting period.

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

Appointments

Vice President for Equality & Diversity

Director of Quality.

Structural Change

The area of Accounting moved into the School of Business from the Department of Economics.

1.4   Internal Monitoring and Review

1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

Unit of review for which report has been published during reporting period	Date of completion/reason for conducting review (if not planned) or non-completion (if planned but not conducted)	Links to relevant publications
Ancient Classics Department	Postponed due to impact of Covid-19. Rescheduled for November 2021	
English Department	Postponed due to impact of Covid-19. Rescheduled for November 2021	
History Department	Postponed due to impact of Covid-19. Rescheduled for April 2021	
Media Studies Department	Postponed due to impact of Covid-19. Rescheduled for November 2021	
Music Department	Postponed due to impact of Covid-19. Rescheduled for April 2021	
Philosophy Department	Postponed due to impact of Covid-19. Rescheduled for October 2021	
School of Celtic Studies	Postponed due to impact of Covid-19. Rescheduled for October 2021	
School of Modern Languages Literatures and Cultures	Postponed due to impact of Covid-19. Rescheduled for November 2021	

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels[3] involved in IQA

(i) Expert Review Team/Panel Size and Related Processes

	Total	Academic Schools/ Department	Professional Services/Support Unit	Approval/Review of Linked Provider	Programme Approval	Programme Review	Other
Number of review/ evaluation processes		0	0	0	15	24 (modifications to existing programmes)	0
of those:							
On-site processes					15	24	
Desk reviews							
Virtual processes							
Average panel size for each process type*					Panels not in use-External reviewer(s) appointed to review new proposals		

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

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[3] QQI acknowledges that the terminology used to describe the groups of individuals that conduct peer review/evaluation varies from institution to institution.

(ii) Composition of Expert Review Teams/Panels involved in IQA

Note: No Quality reviews took place during the reporting period. For programme approval processes external experts are appointed to review proposals but not as part of a panel/team structure.

	Total	Gender			Internal	National	International			Institution Type	
Type of Expert/ Role on Panel		*Male*	*Female*	*Other, or unspecified*			*UK, incl. NI*	*Other European*	*Outside of Europe*	*Similar*	*Different*
Chair											
Secretary											
Academic/Discipline Specific											
Student Representative											
QA											
Teaching & Learning											
External Industry /Third Mission											

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

Over the period of 2019/2020 the University developed and enhanced practices across a number of areas to the benefit of both staff and students.

Student Feedback

This academic year saw a refocus on the means of seeking student feedback on modules and programmes. The previous system was no longer seen as fit for purpose so plans to put in place an alternative were initiated. In the reporting year a department led approach to module and programme evaluation was introduced and plans were set in motion for the development of alternative department focused approaches to student feedback. SATLE (Strategic Alignment Teaching and Learning Enhancement) project funding was secured and work began on reviewing existing good practices and consulting with key stakeholders with a view to informing developments (students, staff and other key stakeholders). This all laid the foundation for the piloting of a range of options for collecting student feedback and the development of support materials for staff.

Staff development and training

Additional resourcing of the staff development function in Human Resources with the appointment of a number of staff dedicated to staff learning and development and an increased focus within the University in general on increasing and enhancing staff development saw a substantial increase in activity in staff development over the reporting period. A solid foundation was laid for embedding staff development as a core function of the University.

An annual staff induction programme and the provision of dedicated online resources for new staff are now in place as is an extended training programme for new heads of unit. Offerings are reviewed, updated and expanded as needed from year to year. Guides and templates have been put in place for new staff and heads of unit. A wide range of training programmes have been put in place with a large number open to all staff and others developed for specific staff levels and cohorts. Programmes range from the development of skills in computer applications, to project and work management, people management and leadership skills through to programmes in wellbeing and health.

Dedicated web pages, the availability of a University wide directory of learning and development opportunities and an online booking system has ensured that staff have ready access to information on upcoming training provisions and can readily book for courses. Periodic all staff emails highlight what is available on a regular basis. Targeting of specific cohorts of staff for dedicated training also takes place. By these means it is ensured that as wide an audience are aware of options available whilst at the same time allowing for streamlining of training for specific groups. Many training and development provisions moved successfully to an online format with the onset of Covid-19 in March 2020

Training and development for teaching staff has also changed with the reintroduction of the postgraduate diploma in teaching and learning in a revised format with a more flexible model offered for undertaking the programme with staff enabled to complete the programme over a number of years ranging from 2-4 years. The revised programme was developed in the reporting period and offered in the following academic year. A range of short training course were also provided to teaching staff on an ongoing basis with guidance and

support materials available on dedicated webpages with updated materials added as needed. The development of a suite of materials and guidance document together with links to national and international resources for teaching, learning and assessment in a remote environment took place rapidly in March 2020. Staff were also provided opportunities to participate in training sessions and workshops to develop practical skills in teaching online including the use of a variety of electronic teaching tools /applications.

Information Systems

The University's introduction of enhanced reporting capacity as part of its financial platform JD Edwards system greatly facilitated user's capacity to track and report on budgets from year to year.   An expansion of training provisions for staff that work with the system also took place and each head of unit is now assigned a dedicated member of the Bursars Office staff as a contact for budgeting and planning queries with annual financial planning meetings taking place and more available on request.

The student information system (ITS) was also upgraded during this period with enhanced reporting tools put in place. Work in transitioning existing report templates to the new reporting tool took place with options to improve on reporting capacity explored. Staff training on the new upgraded system and its reporting tools is expected to enable users to work more fully with their data and to present the data more readily and in a more reader friendly format.

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

The university has a number of policies or guidelines in place that deal with Academic Integrity. The General rules of the university for students outline how plagiarism during exams is dealt with as part of the discipline process, the Teaching and Learning Guidelines discuss expectations that we have of our students in the area of academic integrity. The Maynooth University Policy on Plagiarism deals with the broader aspect of plagiarism, including collusion and processes on how to deal with it. The MU Library also has a dedicated site for Academic Integrity: https://nuim.libguides.com/AcademicIntegrity, highlighting plagiarism, referencing, copyright, freedom of information, data protection, and fake news. A University Research Integrity Policy is also in place. Short guides are also provided for students such as our *Information for students on assessments* which deals with academic integrity, emphasising our use of Turnitin software to identify certain kinds of plagiarism, and the potential for students to be called to an interview following submission of assessments or examinations.

As the remote learning situation that commenced in March 2019 continued and, in light of rapidly evolving new potential directions for blended or online teaching and learning in the future, we saw the need to increase staff and student awareness of, and engagement with, academic integrity – particularly in an online environment. T**he Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning (EDTL) project** provided a particularly effective vehicle through which we could explore this.

The platform was set for a number of initiatives to run over the following academic year, with some set to continue as ongoing offerings into future years. Examples of practice included:

- **September 2020 - Present:** A module entitled, *Digital Technologies in Higher Education Teaching and Learning* (10 ECTS) was introduced as part of Maynooth University's Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Assessment. In semesters 1 and 2 of the 2020/21 academic year this module was also available as a stand-alone offering. Participants are staff with a teaching role in Maynooth University. The module aims to give participants an understanding of the contemporary landscape with respect to digital technologies and higher education teaching and learning. Participants also have practical opportunities to design, implement, and reflect on the use of digital technologies-for learning, assessment and feedback in their own teaching contexts. As part of this module, participants explore issues relating to best practice in digital assessment design, including mitigating against plagiarism and promoting academic integrity.

- **October 2020:** As part of European Academic Integrity week 2020, Maynooth University Student interns contributed the IUA EDTL Academic Integrity Instagram Campaign.

- **October 2020 – Present:** Our Maynooth EDTL Interns developed various social media resources aimed at promoting and supporting academic integrity, including resources on: The Newsguard platform for evaluating the credibility of news sources; The RADAR approach for evaluating Internet resources; and 'Act with Integrity at Maynooth'.
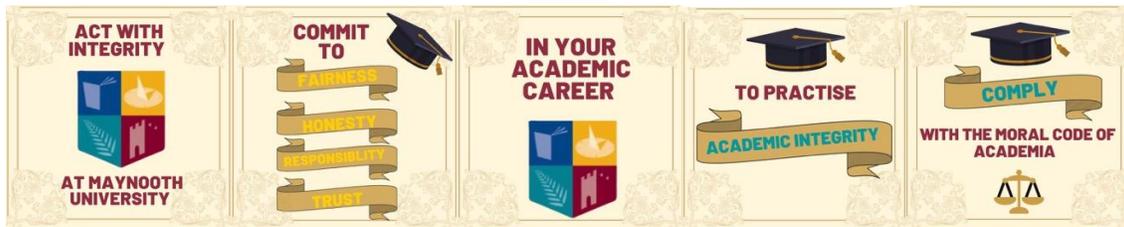
NewsGuard Social Media Resources

RADAR Social Media Resources

*Act with Integrity at Maynooth Social Media Resources*

- **December 2020:** Our Maynooth EDTL Student Interns ran a 'Takeover' of our Maynooth Students' Union Instagram account, and as part of this event shared and discussed some of the resources they had created in respect of academic integrity.

- **December 2020:** Over 3 weeks, our Maynooth School of Business EDTL Intern ran an Instagram and Facebook campaign specifically for Business students, and as part of this campaign the intern shared and discussed our academic integrity resources.

- **February 2021:** As part of the EDTL project at Maynooth, a student and staff working group was established. As part of their 2021 programme of work, the group are exploring how best to engage students and staff at Maynooth in developing a shared culture of commitment to promoting academic integrity.

- **March 2021**: EDTL Team members from Maynooth University and DCU commenced a collaboration in respect of Academic Integrity. This work is focused around sharing resources and ideas; development of a shared database of good practice in assessment across the disciplines; and planning for a shared event during Academic integrity week 2021.

- **April 2021:** The MU EDTL Team ran a 'Train the Trainer' workshop for student representatives from across Maynooth University programmes of study, aimed at raising awareness of issues relating to plagiarism and contract cheating. Alongside this they developed a resource pack for the student representatives to use in their own contexts.
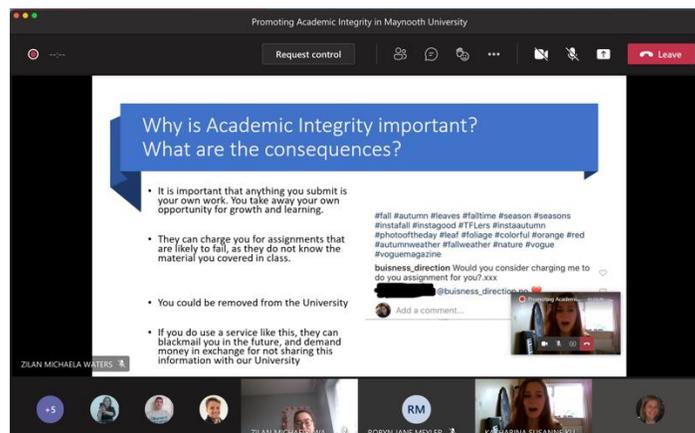
3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

3.1   QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

No.	Relevant objectives Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Planned actions and indicators *Note: Include details of unit responsible, and how planned action will address the relevant strategic priority and/or reengagement advice/CINNTE recommendation.* *If the institution is preparing for cyclical review, include how the planned actions will address the relevant review objective(s).*
1	**Develop a reporting structure that enables enhanced thematic analysis of quality review reports.**	Building on the existing practice of producing a thematic analytical faculty level report following completion of the reviews of all academic units in a faculty develop greater capacity to enhance and enable cross faculty analysis and institutional level reporting on themes arising from unit level quality reviews. Enable alignment with key planning documentation, such as the strategic plan. Develop a suite of reports that enable enhanced analysis of quality review reports
2	**Build capacity for student focused institutional research.**	Explore potential for enhancing reporting capacity of StudentSurvey.ie at subject/department level with a view to enabling academic units to identify areas for enhancement within their own unit and providing greater capacity for units to close the feedback loop with their own students. [Strategy & Quality Office} Engaging with other units across the University, develop capacity for using data from various university sources to inform decision making related to student success and engagement. [Relevant University Units and Strategy & Quality Office}
3	**Evaluate need for a Quality Review QIP template.** Evaluate need to a model template and develop model as needed.	Working group established to evaluate current templates and practices for QIPs as part of MU quality reviews together with a review of good practices elsewhere. If recommended, develop a model template for units to use in the future as the basis for the development of their Quality Improvement Plan [Quality Committee subgroup, and Strategy & Quality Office]
4	**Revise template for collation of data on Professional Regulatory and Statutory Bodies**	Review and update the collection template with input from departmental/school users.

	The University has many academic programmes accredited by Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PRSB). The Quality Office maintains an up-to-date database of all PRSB accredited programmes in the University with an update undertaken on an annual basis. The template to collect returns from departments/schools requires updating to facilitate ease of completion for users and to enable greater detail to be captured as to the benefits for graduates of such programmes.	Provide for the identification of benefits for graduates who complete an accredited programme (eligibility to practice, exemption from professional examinations, professional membership, etc.). [Strategy & Quality Office}
5	**Review Virtual Review Visit process** Build on experiences of quality reviews undertaken in April 2021 to enhance the contingency process.	Consult with and get feedback from Reviewers, department staff and other stakeholders on experiences of virtual visit format and identify areas for enhancement of procedure. Update process as required. [Strategy & Quality Office]

3.2   Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

3.2.1   Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
History Department	April 2021	Mar 2010
Music Department	April 2021	Feb 2010

3.2.2   Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

Unit for review	Date of review
School of Celtic Studies	12th -15th October 2021
Philosophy Department	19th -21st October 2021
Media Studies Department	2nd -4th November 2021
English Department	9th -11th November 2021
School of Modern Languages Literatures & Cultures	16th -19th November 2021
Ancient Classics Department	30thNovember-2nd December 2021

4.0   Additional Themes and Case Studies

CASE STUDY 1

Leveraging Social Media to support Students in the Transition to Remote Learning at Maynooth University.

CONTEXT

On 12 March 2020 the physical campuses of Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) were suddenly forced to close due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although educational technologies such as Virtual Learning Environments (VLES) were at that time widely used to support blended learning opportunities at Maynooth, for many students the move to completely remote learning was a new and challenging experience (Cullinan *et al.*, 2020; USI, 2020; AHEAD, 2020). The use of Social Media platforms is commonplace across the 'Generation Z' demographic in Ireland, with 95% of 16 to 24 year olds using Facebook, and 91% using Instagram (B&A, 2020). In order to support our students to navigate the rapid transition to remote learning, Maynooth University Students' Union (MSU) and Maynooth University representatives from the IUA's Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning (EDTL) project developed a range of social media resources to support our students. A defining tenet of the EDTL project is 'Students as partners'. In line with this, all of the resources were designed and developed in partnership with our students.

THE INITIATIVE

In March 2020, shortly after the closure of Irish HEIs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, representatives from the Maynooth Students Union (MSU), members of the MSU student senate, and the Maynooth University EDTL project lead collaborated to develop a series of 'Top 10 Online Learning Hints and Tips' (Figure 1). These tips, based on the experiences and perspectives of students, were designed to support students in making the transition to remote learning, and were disseminated via the MSU Instagram and Facebook accounts.

Figure 1: Top 10 Online Learning Hints & Tips

Building on this work, in May 2020, with almost all assessments and exams moving online, the MSU and Maynooth EDTL Team again collaborated to create a series of student-focused Instagram and Facebook posts giving tips on preparing for, and participating in, online exams and assessments (Figure 2).
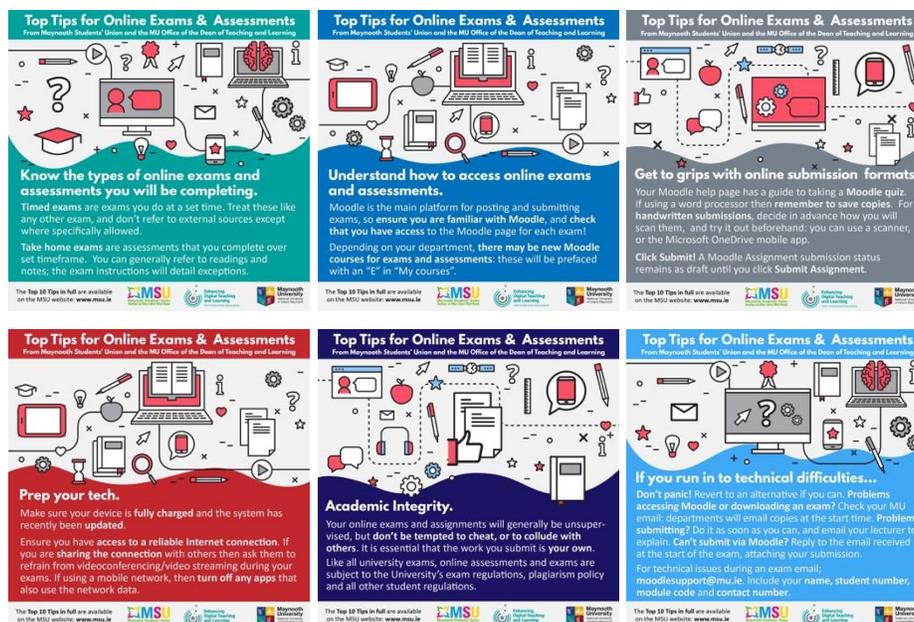

Figure 2: 'Top tips for Online Exams and Assessments' resources

In August 2020, as part of the EDTL project, Maynooth University appointed three Student Interns. Building on the work that had already been implemented, the EDTL Interns designed and created various social media resources aimed at developing students' digital literacies and promoting academic integrity, including resources on the *NewsGuard* platform for evaluating the credibility of news sources, and the *RADAR* approach for evaluating Internet resources. These resources were again shared by our MSU via Facebook and Instagram.

Figure 3: NewsGuard Resources

Figure 4: RADAR Resources

Our EDTL Student Interns have also run two highly successful 'Takeovers' of the MSU Instagram account, with 1,115 viewers accessing the first takeover, and 2,794 accessing the second. During the takeovers our Interns shared tips and resources relating to remote and digital learning and engaged with students via polls and open-ended questions, the responses to which have provided us with valuable insights into our students' perspectives on, and experiences of remote learning (Figure 5).
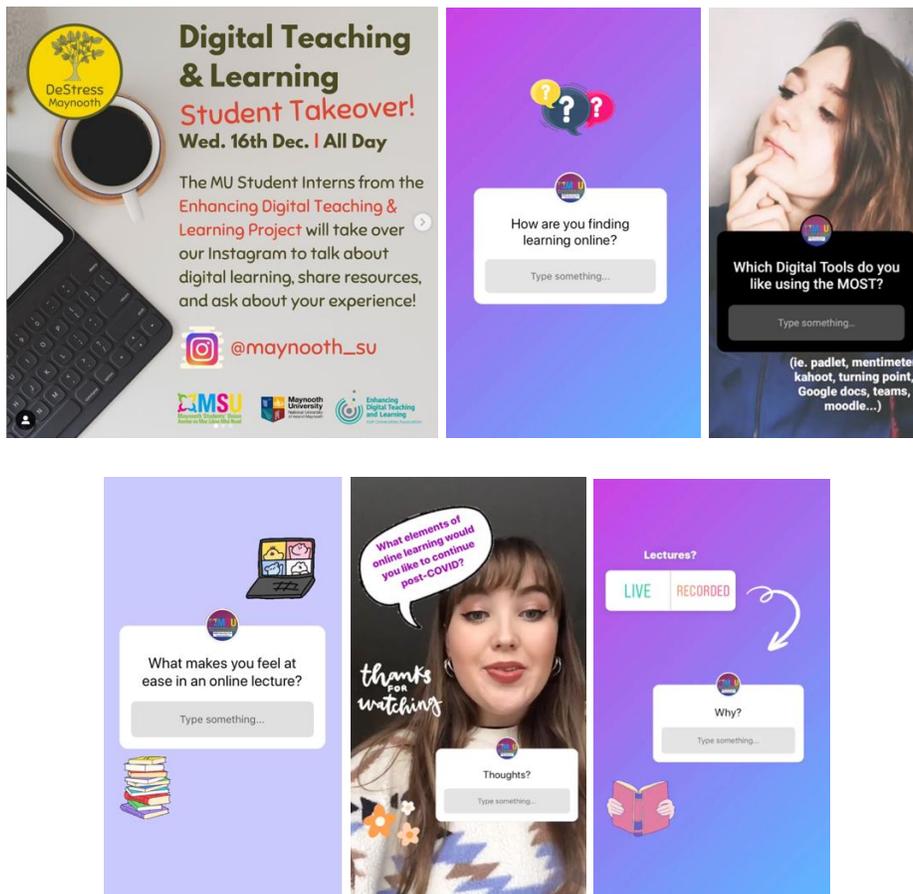

Figure 5: Instagram takeover

KEY OUTCOMES AND LEARNING

- Involving students in the design and development of student support resources brings the student voice to the fore, and can help to ensure that resources and supports are relevant to the student demographic.
- Student-facing social media channels have been an effective way for us to share student-focused resources related to digital and remote learning, and to gather feedback on our students' perspectives and experiences.

REFERENCES

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CASE STUDY 2

Employability and experiential learning
(technological solutions for upskilling remotely)

Context:

Since its inception in 2016, the Maynooth University Experiential Learning Office (ELO) aims to enrich the educational experience, by facilitating MU students directly or indirectly to experience more from their degree programme by developing and enabling high-impact learning experiences, both inside and outside the classroom, where students learn by doing and reflecting. The ELO has a key role in the cultivation, expansion and promotion of experiential learning, presenting a portfolio of opportunities that develop MU student's skills and competencies for work, life and engaged citizenship, as set out in the MU Strategic Plan 18-22.

The team are also involved in a HEA Funded Innovation and Transformation Project, MU Future Ready which aims to enhance the employability of graduates, and equality of employment outcomes, through a series of measures to enhance student employment readiness. These included the addition of work-related learning and community engaged learning opportunities, together with the expanded provision of employability electives, increasing accessibility through blended learning.

In March 2020, as the pandemic hit, we urgently needed to seek virtual alternatives for several key employability components in our suite of programmes to enable our student cohorts to upskill remotely. Three technological tools were sourced and implemented. These included a Maynooth University customised simulated interview platform produced by shortlist.me; CareerSet, an AI CV review tool, and Forage, a virtual work insights platform. These employability resources were hosted in MU FutureConnect, Maynooth University's online careers and employability portal which is managed by the Career Development Centre and the Experiential Learning Office.

Technological solutions:

Maynooth University Online Simulated Interview Platform hosted by Shortlist.me

The Maynooth University Online Simulated Interview Platform provides a diverse range of practice interviews (25 in total including 8 organisation specific practice interviews) from a wide array of sectors give the student endless practice opportunities at their convenience. Upon completion of their practice interview, students can preview their answers alongside best practice guidance that includes speech rate and filler word AI. The feedback link provided enables the student to compare each simulated interview they have completed and see the progression made. Students have the option to request personal feedback which can be tailored, together with a pre-designed matrix. A particularly useful feature is to enable self-review when creating an interview. This facilitates students retrying each question with insight and knowledge into what a perfect answer would include until they are satisfied with their response.

Since embedding this Online Simulated Interview Platform into our respective programmes, there have been 596 interview registrations and 462 completed interview responses with the platform to date. Student feedback suggests that they do struggle to communicate effectively in these virtual interview scenarios, finding it uncomfortable to speak to camera but greatly appreciate the self-review and playback options that this platform provides to upskill in this area.

CareerSet- An AI CV review tool

CareerSet is an online CV review tool that enables students to enhance their CVs virtually and independently. Powered by AI, it delivers individualized, actionable feedback to guide students through steps to optimise their CVs and to tailor them to specific job descriptions. The platform offers two functions for students to engage with. These include Score My CV and Target My CV. The Score My CV tool scores a CV in real-time based on key criteria that employers require. Students have the option to upload and enhance their CV as many times as they like to improve their score iteratively. The Target My Cv option encourages students to tailor their CV to specific job descriptions, based on the keywords and the relevant skills identified.

To date, there have been 2373 CV uploads from 505 students. Therefore, on average the students engaging with this tool are uploading and enhancing their CVs with 4 plus iterations. Student feedback suggests that they have benefitted from the real-time personalised suggestions that the platform offered and appreciated that they could access it at their convenience.

Forage- A Virtual Experience and Insights Platform

Forage offers Maynooth University students experience without boundaries through Virtual Experience Programmes, designed by many global organisations to build real-world skills and give students an insight into diverse career sectors. The MU Future Ready Forage landing page can be accessed here and offers 36 insight programmes that contain real industry tasks that develop transferable skills and career readiness. Programmes are open access, free and self-paced where students can get an insight into a particular sector in 5-6 hours and receive certification as they build their knowledge, skills, and professionalism.

637 MU students have engaged with the Forage platform to date and feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

CASE STUDY 3

Podcasting in Critical Skills

Before Ireland's lockdown, Critical Skills students were working in teams to produce a White Paper — a professional, research-driven proposal intended for an audience of experts — connected to a social issue currently relevant to Irish society. They'd already done most of the challenging research, but now they had to pull everything together without the benefit of meeting one another in person.

Carrying this forward, the podcast project that Dr. Bret Zawilski, Lecturer in Critical Skills at Maynooth University, designed in response to the switch to online learning asked students to build upon their previous research and complete the following:

- Create a podcast on the topic of the White Paper
- Situate the podcast for a non-expert audience
- Build a simple website for the podcast using wix.com or Adobe Spark Pages

One of the most important elements was the translation for a new audience. Students had to consider their new audience and create an audio text that appealed to that group. They had to ensure they were providing enough context, like explanations of the terminology surrounding their topic. And they had to do this all without seeing one another in a physical space.

Teamwork

Podcasting is a complex and engaging medium, with a lot of moving pieces that work well distributed among a team. Especially when asking students to work in an unfamiliar medium, having groups of collaborators can ease some of the stress of a large project, and reducing the stress on students in the middle of the pandemic was a huge priority.

Dr. Zawilski also had to consider what technology students had at their disposal. There wasn't a guarantee that students had access to a personal computer at home or a reliable internet connection. Many were left with only a smartphone and patchy cellular data.

This meant we had to get creative at times with how individuals would contribute to their teams, all while balancing the anxiety of Covid-19 looming in the background. Again, the structure of podcasting was a strength in this new online mode. Everyone had a set of roles they could choose to fulfill. This separation of the work also eased much of the anxiety students brought with them regarding the podcast itself — the stages of the project provided a scaffolding for them to develop their skills over time.

Tips and Tricks

If nothing else, teaching in a pandemic reminds us that pedagogy needs to be flexible and adaptive to the students we're working with. No two classes are ever identical, which means that assignments grow and evolve alongside us.

That said, here are the things that Dr. Zawilski recommends when teaching podcasting.

Build Your Own Library

You don't need to reinvent the wheel, nor do you need to be the de facto expert on podcasting to effectively use podcasts within your classroom. Gather your own set of materials over time, using tutorials from YouTube and other online resources. When working in an online setting, it's important to position yourself as part of the learning community.

Demonstrate the Process

If possible, it's incredibly helpful to demonstrate the process of making a podcast. In addition to video tutorials, Dr. Zawilski created a sample podcast to demonstrate the capabilities of freely available software and provided a copy of the script to emphasize the crucial role that writing plays in making a polished audio text.

Don't Teach to a Specific Tool

Rather than focus on specific software, teach design principles instead. Students can then apply design principles as they learn and experiment with different applications.

Together While Apart

Overall, the podcast project was an enormous success in the midst of an otherwise difficult period. Students frequently cited the collaborative element as a benefit during the lockdown and signaled that they were excited to be able to compose a project that felt like something they might be called upon to do in the future. By developing their functional, critical, and rhetorical literacies surrounding the workflow of creating a podcast, students were able to take their academic research and circulate it in a way that otherwise would not have appeared available to them. The collaborative podcast highlights the relevance and the vitality of research while also providing a space that brought individuals together while they were forced to remain physically apart.

In the end, Critical Skills finished the semester without meeting as a class, but the podcasts allowed student voices to intermingle with one another and provided the space for a meaningful learning community while we grappled with remote learning. We hope that the story of our journey through the pandemic is helpful and that, in the upcoming months, you might consider trying out a podcasting assignment in your own classrooms. For help developing a podcast assignment please visit the Critical Skills Podcast Resource Page: https://criticalskills.ie/index.php/critpodcast/