

[Maynooth University]

2022

Annual Quality Report (Maynooth University)
Reporting Period 2020-2021

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PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM
Reporting Period 2020-2021

PREFACE

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 policies 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 Template¹

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](#)

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			1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review				
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			1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
9.0 - Details of Arrangements with Third Parties				
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

This is the AQR for Maynooth University for the reporting period **1 September 2020 - 31 August 2021**.

It is to be submitted by **Friday, 25 February 2022**.

The AQR has been approved by Professor Aidan Mulkeen, Vice-President Academic and Deputy President and is submitted by Dr Teresa Lee, Director of Quality

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. In 2020/2021, more than 14,300 students from over 90 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 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 as follows:

- Audit & Risk Assessment Committee;
- Finance, Human Resources and Development Committee;
- Remuneration Committee;

and the joint committees for Governing Authority and Academic Council comprising of the:

- Quality Committee;
- 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.

A number of Standing Committees report to Academic Council and support it in its work. In addition to the joint committees for Governing Authority and Academic Council listed above, the following are Standing Committees of Academic Council:

- Academic Discipline Board;
- Academic Programmes Committee;
- Campus Life Committee;
- Examination Appeals Board;
- Graduate Education Committee;

Honorary Degrees Committee;
International Education Committee;
Research Committee;
Teaching & Learning Committee.

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.

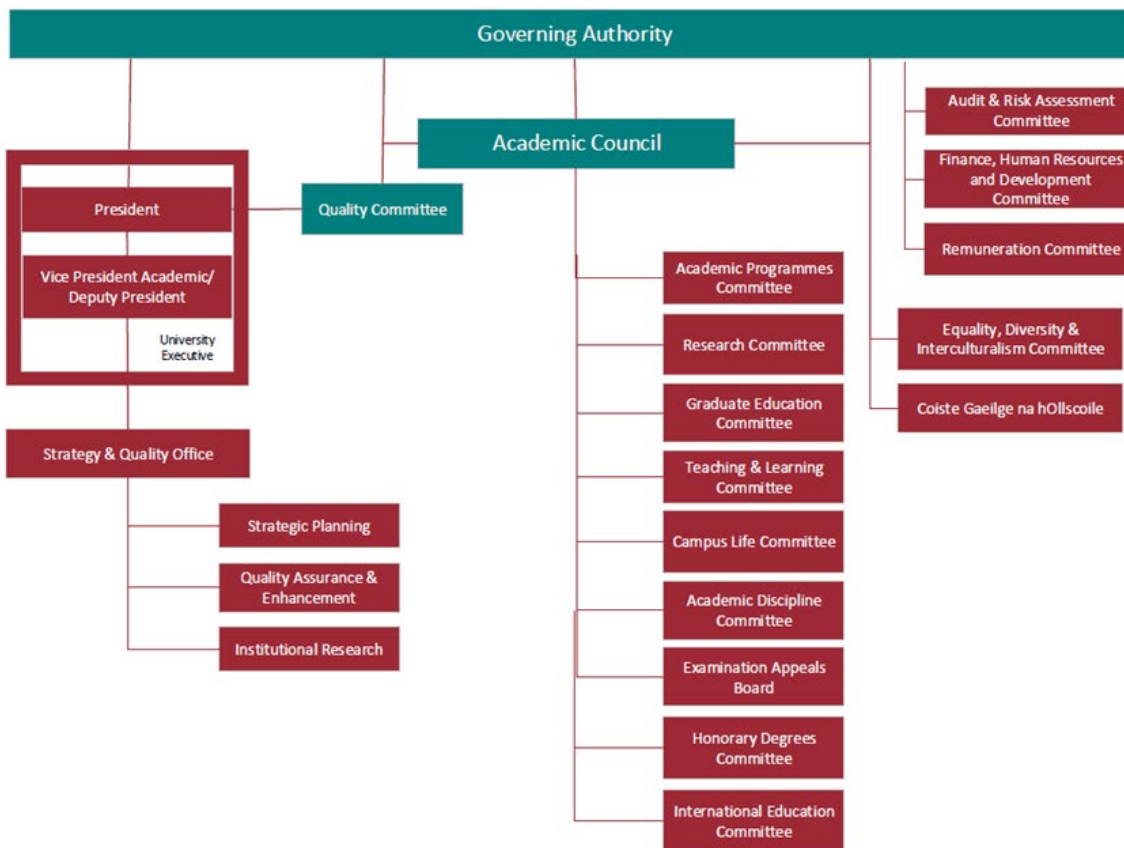


Figure 1: MU's Governance structure and Committees. The Strategy & Quality Office's reporting relationship to the Vice President Academic is also depicted.

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 CINTE 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 is 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 14,300 (2020/2021) 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. The 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 overarching 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](#), [Maynooth Works](#) 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	Subcommittee title	Learner Representation	External stakeholder representation
Governing Authority (GA)		4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 elected officers of Maynooth SU. 1 Postgraduate student. 	18 (Including Chair).
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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> President Maynooth SU. 	2 upwards. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum 2 (of 6 members drawn from GA). Plus, up to three external persons can be co-opted as members.
GA subcommittee	Remuneration Committee	Not applicable.	Not applicable.

Joint sub-committee of GA and AC	Equality, Diversity and Interculturalism Committee	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representatives of Maynooth SU. 	1 upwards. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum 1 (of 4 members drawn from GA). Plus, up to three external persons can be co-opted as members.
Joint sub-committee of GA and AC	Coiste Gaeilge na hOllscoile	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 of GA nominees can be external. Plus, up to three external persons could be co-opted as members.
Joint sub-committee of GA and AC	Quality Committee	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> President Maynooth SU (or their nominee). Postgraduate Student representative of GA. 	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> External member of GA.
Academic Council (AC)		4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Undergraduate students (MSU Officers). 1 postgraduate (taught) student. 1 doctoral student. 	Not applicable.
AC Standing Committee	Academic Discipline Board	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> President Maynooth SU. 	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 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 evaluations 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, making modifications to existing programmes, the approval of microcredential programmes, and of new elective streams. 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, Registry, Curriculum Office, (if applicable, Graduate Studies Office) and 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, Assistant Registrar-Academic Administration, Curriculum Officer 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; Assistant Registrar-Academic Administration; Curriculum Officer; 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.

Microcredentials and elective streams

All submissions use a standard template for submission to the Academic Programmes Committee. The Committee has the authority to approve microcredentials that are module sized, credit bearing and assessed and also has the authority to approve elective streams.

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

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 its 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 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, as well as career exhibitions on a national basis. Through these efforts the threshold for entry to Maynooth programmes has been maintained at a high level even though the numbers of new entrants to the University 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 web 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 Applicants

BTEC Applicants

HEAR (Higher Education Access Route) Applicants

International Applicants

EU 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 University continuously adapts its admissions procedures to cater for the expanding range of programmes on offer, as well as ensuring that there is a breadth of opportunities for diverse learners to access those programmes e.g. QQI and mature entry pathways.

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 a 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 MAP 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 with 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 students' levels of preparedness for various aspects of third level education including independent learning.

MU is actively engaged and is a national leader in addressing the higher education needs of the most marginalised communities. MU holds the lead partner role in the HEA funded *College Connect* programme across four HEI's in the MEND cluster region. 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).

Orientation: The My Maynooth Programme, Maynooth University's new student orientation programme which is managed by the Student Engagement Office, aims to provide a warm welcome to our new students and to support their academic, social and personal development as they begin their journey here in Maynooth.

At the heart of the My Maynooth programme is the endeavour to provide as many opportunities as possible for our students to connect with their fellow students in order to form the friendships and networks that helps create, develop and support a positive college experience here in Maynooth. In parallel to this drive to create these peer to peer connections, the university looks to promote and connect students to the wide range of support services available to them. These include personal supports such as the Student Health Centre, Counselling and Student Budgeting Advice as well as the academic supports such as the Academic Advisory Office and the Programme Advisory Office to name but a few.

The initial Orientation programme focuses on a number of areas:

Pre-arrival (from Leaving Certificate results right up to start of university – approximately 6 weeks):

- Preparing Students in advance of arriving to college, e.g. Registration, Accommodation, Commuting and Finances as well as the town of Maynooth.
- Subject Choices – many of our students are required to make subject choices as part of their degree programme. In order to aid the decision-making process, a schedule of subject talks is organised in advance of the registration process.
- **Parents, Guardians & Family Information Sessions:** These sessions were established in order to give family members an insight into the challenges facing students as well highlighting the various supports available to students.

On-campus (Welcome Week, Start of lectures and beyond):

- Introduce students to the various support services (academic and personal supports) as well as directing students to the appropriate services.
- Introduce students to the various student life opportunities, e.g. clubs and societies, Students' union, volunteering, etc.
- Students complete their registration process.

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 through the student life cycle include support and advice for work placement during their studies and advice on career development and a wide range of experiential learning opportunities.

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.

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.

StudentSurvey.ie, conducted annually, 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 data from StudentSurvey.ie 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 data 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 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, supplemental or special purpose 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 CINTE 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](#)

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 and Breaches](#)

[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 CINTE 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. StudentSurvey.ie 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

Teaching and Learning

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](#) and [Lecture Recording 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 \(see section 2.4\)](#)

[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.

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.

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. It 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. A suite of diverse curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular experiential learning programmes have been advanced involving external engagement from industry and community partners, employers and alumni. This includes:

- **Project Live** is a collaboration between external stakeholders, academics and students and is concerned with the enhancement of teaching and learning using community engaged and work-related learning principles and practices to co-create solutions that will directly benefit the external stakeholder, while also supporting discipline focussed, credit bearing programmes and modules.
- **Research Live** is a curricular initiative that responds to external stakeholders' research needs whilst also providing students with the opportunity to complete a piece of participatory research that contributes to real-world practical actions and policies for innovation and social change.
- **Experiential learning professional development and employability modules** are delivered to second-year students as elective options involving several employers and MU Alumni from diverse sectors.
- **MU Alumni Mentoring** programme supports the development of student preparedness for work, life, and engaged citizenship through informed career insights and empowering students to achieve their career aims.
- **Enactus Maynooth** is a community of student, academic, professional and business leaders committed to using the power of entrepreneurial action to shape a better, more sustainable society and to see their work have tangible impacts through a series of sustainable development goal led projects.
- **MU Future Ready Forge**, a virtual employability, experience and insights platform that enables the development of real-world skills direct from world-leading organisations was introduced into the curriculum in 2020/21

Student Services

Student services in Maynooth University articulates its 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 defined 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](#)

CrecheStudent Helpdesk

Counselling: The Counselling Service is a confidential and professional service offering support to students on a wide range of psychological, academic, family, social and mental health issues. The service offers support on a one-to-one basis, along with a comprehensive range of targeted workshops to support students during their studies. Counselling also provides an excellent range of self-help resources, including a recently launched iCBT resource called Silvercloud and an anonymous reporting tool called Speak Out. Our Counselling Service increased their resources in January 2021, to include an additional 1.2FTE staff providing student with 1:1 counselling services and targeted workshops.

Health Centre: The Student Health Centre offers confidential, and approachable GP and nursing consultations to all registered students. This service is offered in conjunction with a student's own GP and will support students on matters such as sexual health, mental health, physical and emotional well-being, alcohol awareness and management of day-to-day illnesses. The team work closely with Departments and central units to support students achieve their potential during their time at university. A Mental Health Nurse post was introduced in February 2021, offering clinical support to students experiencing mental ill-health.

Chaplaincy: Our Chaplaincy Service is open to students of all faiths and none. Offering one-to-one supports as well as events including weekly Yoga and Meditation Classes, Retreats, Faith Discussion Group and a monthly Book club the Chaplaincy Service aims to support students to thrive during their time at Maynooth University.

Student Support Officer: The Student Support Officer is available for one-to-one student appointments to provide personal support and guidance on the challenges students encounter as they journey through university. The Student Support Officer will collaborate with Departments to support students in a holistic way.

Student Support Hub: *including the Homefinder Service:* The Student Support Hub acts as a central contact point for students availing of services from the wider Student services team. They support students with general help and guidance, and they administer the off-campus accommodation service called Homefinder.

Budgeting: The Student Budgeting Advice Service offers support and advice to students on managing their money for university. There are FAQ's available for students who have routine queries and the service can refer students experiencing financial difficulties for targeted funding supports. In response to the increased financial challenges faced by students as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic an additional Student Budgeting Advisor was introduced on a temporary basis in January 2021.

Creche: Maynooth University Crèche is available to children of both staff and students at Maynooth University and it provides childcare for children from the ages of 1, up to 5.5 years old. Both the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework Aistear and the Siolta Framework which is the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education are in place at Maynooth University Crèche.

Student Helpdesk: The Student Helpdesk was established as a virtual operation in 2020 in response to the Covid 19 pandemic. With a goal to provide an end-to-end resolution to student queries the team collaborated

with services and departments to ensure student queries were resolved while they were learning remotely. This service has now been introduced on a permanent basis, with the addition of an in-person desk offering support with general queries, as well as targeted supports such as a Laptop Loans Scheme. We introduced a long-term Laptop Loan scheme for students in Semester 1, 2020/2021. With the support of HEA funding this initiative has supported students who were without an ICT device, from Access target groups, to stay engaged in their studies.

International Office

The [Maynooth University International Office](#) (IO) supports incoming and outgoing international students throughout the international-student lifecycle. Specifically, the IO is responsible for international marketing and promotion, full-degree international student recruitment and admissions, the incoming and outgoing Erasmus and Study Abroad programmes, and a suite of Summer & Short-Term programmes. The IO has a commitment to high-quality service to applicants and students on campus, and provides information, guidance and support pre- and post-entry to the University. It collaborates with a range of external stakeholders across the globe, including partner universities, research institutes and industrial partners, as part of its work supporting the internationalisation of teaching, research and the student experience.

Some measures undertaken during the reporting period to take account of the impact of Covid-19 were the facilitation of outgoing MU students whose mobility period was delayed due to the pandemic: Registry, in close collaboration with the IO, enabled a 'flipped-year' option as a temporary measure, whereby students due to complete their year abroad in 2020/21 instead completed their final year in 2020/21 and were facilitated to study abroad in 2021/22. To support outgoing students, who were facing additional challenges wrought by the pandemic, the IO substantially revised its Outgoing Student Handbook and added a range of virtual information and Q&A sessions to support outgoing students as they prepared to study abroad. The sessions were very well attended, and they resulted in a substantial decrease in errors/delays for students' mobility paperwork and related administrative follow-up.

Maynooth University Library

The University [Library](#) is a key resource for supporting research, 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. It supports the delivery of information literacy skills and promotes information resources to a growing student body, through a blended technology approach. The Library has also been at the forefront of work to support research through the promotion of [Open Access and Open Scholarship](#) (OAOS) at Maynooth and since 2020 has provided a large range of avenues for researchers to publish open access, updated [MU's Open Access Policy](#) and identified a range of other measures to promote OA and OS.

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 than 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. In recent years, the Library has made particular progress in developing its unique and distinctive collections (UDCs) including the acquisition of archives and other primary sources. These collections support research and primary source use from undergraduate stage and above. 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. Users of the Library are guided by [Library Regulations](#) that are in place.

Other resources

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, and handover is expected in April 2022. Construction work has begun on a new Student Centre, which will be completed in late 2023. 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 are 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.

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 has completed its third cycle of internal quality reviews of all units in the University.

The Research Development Office 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. The system has been further updated to add postgraduate students, currently via a bi-annual input. With this update supervisors may ensure their postgraduates are linked to their RIS profiles. The update also enables postgraduate students to submit their

protocols directly for ethical approval. The ability to pull postgraduate students from ITS (the student administrative system) into RIS should be finalized before the end of the academic year 2022-23.

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. A further re-structure in October 2021 saw research funding for postgraduate students transferred to the Research Development Office. This change ensures a single point of entry approach for postgraduate students for all research funding across the full research proposal life-cycle and includes internal and external scholarships.

Illustrating its long-term commitment to its researchers, their work and their careers, MU applied for the European Commission 'HR Excellence in Research Award'. Following a rigorous process MU submitted its application in June 2020. The University received the award in October 2020 in recognition of the University's progress in aligning its HR policies to the principles of the 2005 European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers (commonly referred to as the Code and Charter). As part of the award application process, MU developed a Human Resources Strategy for Researchers that included a multi-year action plan to further progress the alignment of MU policies to the Code and Charter. The University is now focused on the implementation of its action plan.

The University's Commercialisation Office and the Business Incubation Center are now closely aligned appearing under the brand of MaynoothWorks. 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. The Research Development Office revised their internal funding schemes in 2021 to further enhance their effectiveness in the development of networking and dissemination activities for research. Original schemes included a publication fund, conference and travel fund and H2020 support fund. Following consultation two of the schemes were replaced by a network and collaboration support fund and an impact through dissemination support fund. These new schemes specifically aim to address activities related to the outward profile of research at Maynooth.

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](#)

[Open Access- A guide for Researchers](#)

[Policy on Open Access to Research](#)

[Charter on Postdoctoral Research](#)

[Conflict of Interest Policy](#)

[Intellectual Property Management & Exploitation Policy](#)

[Research Incentivisation Policy](#)

[External Activities Policy](#)

[Policy on system of Research Institutes & Designated Research Centres](#)

Policies and procedures relating to the safeguarding and protection of children apply to research related activities in addition to their application to other activities of the University.

[Child Protection Policy](#)

[Child Safeguarding statement](#)

[Child Protection Procedures](#)

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 [generic skills and specialised modules](#) 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.

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.

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 staff.

In terms of future development, the ongoing review of procedures and principles will enable the delivery of the objective to 'provide an environment where all staff can flourish, develop, advance and further contribute to the University and the success of its students and scholarship', as stated in Section 9.1 of the University Strategic Plan (2018-2022).

Since the re-establishment of the Learning & Development function of the Human Resource Office in 2019, a framework to support all employees to meet the objectives of their role, while preserving and enhancing our workplace culture of congeniality, engagement, inclusion, professionalism and operational excellence, has been designed and implemented on a phased basis.

This framework consists of a wide range of e-learning and facilitated professional skills courses, workshops and information sessions focusing on the development of key competencies. Mentoring for early career academics and female leaders to support career development was also introduced.

Tailored Leadership and Management development support for Heads of Departments (admin, support, professional and academic) are offered on an annual basis to support Senior Leaders in their current role and in advancing to new leadership roles. These cover areas such as;

- Change Management
- Project Management
- Dealing with Conflict
- Working in MU
- Finance, HR and EDI seminars
- People Support and Management

Maynooth University's Recruitment & Selection Guidelines, interpreted and applied in conjunction with the University Statutes, are designed to support objective, transparent and merit-based recruitment and selection processes. The emphasis is on implementing good practice to ensure that suitable staff are recruited and selected on the basis of their demonstrable competencies, and, that selection decisions are made following a fair, consistent and equitable process which reflects the University's values and satisfies all applicable

legislative requirements. General principles of good practice in recruitment and appointment of staff apply including a commitment to equality diversity and inclusion (EDI) with all job advertisements containing a statement underlining the University's commitment in this area.

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.

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

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.

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 2020/2021 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. 43 students successfully completed in 2020/2021.
- 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*.
- This flexible programme is offered to MU teaching staff as a blended, programme with a 30 ECTS certificate option. Staff can complete the 60 ECTS across four years. There are currently 30 staff registered to the programme. As part of the programme, staff also complete nationally recognised micro-credential awards and badges.
- A 10 ECTS digital module is also offered as a CPD standalone module for all teaching staff in the University. It was designed as part of the *Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning (EDTL)* Irish Universities Association project, funded through the HEA's Innovation and Transformation Programme. The 5 ECTS Equality and Diversity module will be offered out to all staff in academic year 2023.

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. There are currently 30 staff registered on the programme.
- 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.

Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Staff CPD Workshops/Webinars are offered to all staff across a range of TEL topics. Staff are further supported by TEL CPD resources available through a staff accessible Moodle course. In 2020–21 there were 50 events offered.

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.

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.

The EDI Committee is a joint standing committee of the Governing Authority and Academic Council. The EDI Committee shall keep under review the policy framework within which the University meets its equality responsibilities as set out in legislation and in the University's own Equality Policy document. The Office of the Vice-President for Equality and Diversity was set up in July 2019 and has worked very closely with the Maynooth Students' Union (MSU) and colleagues across the University, to ensure that the principles of EDI are embedded in all aspects of the University's strategy, policy, processes, systems, and functions. This includes delivering training on EDI and coordinating a number of networks, forums, working groups and steering groups to progress EDI initiatives. These are coordinated by the Equality Officer, the Equality Projects Officer, and the Director of Access. The University Equality and Diversity Policy was introduced 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 is implementing its Gender Equality Action Plan 2018-2022.

Other policies have been developed to address the needs of particular groups e.g. the Gender Identity and Expression Policy and associated guidelines. Gender neutral bathrooms were designated throughout the campus and all new buildings will include them as standard – Maynooth met its target of 50 gender neutral bathrooms by the end of 2020.

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 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, now Student Survey.ie.

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:

[Freedom of Information](#)

[Data Protection Office](#)

[Routine Access to Personal Information](#)

[Contact with Third Parties](#)

[Data Protection Policy](#)

[Staff Data Privacy Notice](#)

[Student Data Privacy Notice](#)

[Personal data security incident management procedure](#)

[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](#)

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 has undergone a seismic shift in its approach to providing public information and to its overall communications agenda in recent years, following an external organizational design assessment in 2019 and subsequent investment in the staff capacity needed to deliver upon University objectives. The Office of External Relations, led by the Director of Development and External Relations, manages and advances the reputation of Maynooth University nationally and internationally by engaging with the public, its graduates, and its colleagues to support the objectives of the *University Strategic Plan 2018-22*. The office strives to use new and creative ways to tell the stories of Maynooth University—our academic excellence and world-class research to meet societal challenges, our diversity and inclusivity, and our inspiring students and alumni. The Office oversees the University's external and internal communications activities, as presented below.

Media and Public Relations. The Communications Team within the External Relations Office (ERO) manages and drives the University's communications strategy and activities, working closely with the media and with internal and external stakeholders to promote MU's news, research strengths and educational innovations, as well as overseeing internal communications. The office works actively to pitch and place stories on the University's research, educational innovations, widening participation agenda and more in various broadcast and print media outlets. It also fields an array of media requests and advises on matters that rise to the public

fore in regard to the community, public affairs and the University's reputation writ large. The office offers media training and communications guidance to academics, assists with communications around various university events, and leads a series of staff-wide town halls throughout the year.

Marketing Campaigns and Brand Identity. The Marketing Team within the ERO offers strategic marketing advice and support to admissions, graduate studies office, international office as well as academic departments, research institutes and other support units on their marketing campaigns, with a focus on leading the student recruitment campaigns. It manages and protects the University's brand identity, including its development, brand guidelines and positioning, maintaining continuity across the University's landscape and allowing for a strategic approach for the University's brand identity. For example, the [MU Brand Identity Guidelines](#) recently were updated, along with new applications produced.

The Marketing Team is the go-to service within the university for the creation of marketing collateral, is the lead liaison for our external graphic design providers, market research and media buying, so it supports units in developing strategies and executing / marketing their events and initiatives to realise their specific objectives. It provides guidance on events needs across the university and manages events run by the ERO. It maintains a close relationship with Oifig na Gaeilge, to help promote the proper use of the Irish language on marketing collateral.

Digital Presence (including the University website and its social media channels). The Digital Team within the ERO leads the development of user experience, digital content and digital social interactions of the University's corporate identity. It manages the Maynooth University website and primary social media channels, advising departments on best practice in the use of digital and web assets. It provides services, resources and guidance to colleagues across the University on the website, social media, photography and videography. The University's website and social media channels today serve as the primary vehicles (the "shop window") for engagement between the University and outside world.

The Team, in conjunction with IT Services and led by the Project Lego Steering Committee, completed the scoping exercise of Project Lego, a sizable project to re-platform the MU website, and is proceeding with the creation of a project specification document to go to tender for an agency partner. This project is a necessary endeavour to avoid the end-of-life of its current platform and better enable all MU stakeholders to access information in line with modern needs and technologies, and pursue compliance with new accessibility standards.

Alumni Relations, Fundraising and Development. The Development and Alumni Relations Office serves as a hub for activity and engagement with alumni and philanthropic supporters of Maynooth University. The office is responsible for connecting with and serving our 95,000+ alumni around the world through any number of events, programmes, publications and social media channels, and for raising philanthropic funds to support the Maynooth University Foundation.

Through the services provided by the Development and Alumni Relations Office, we invite our graduates to retain a close relationship with Maynooth for the benefit of all - for alumni, for the University and for future generations of undergraduates.

More specifically, the office runs a series of events annually for alumni (and often supporters and the public more broadly), including an alumni reunion, Arts and Minds cultural evening, academic lectures, alumni networking get-togethers, Carol Service alumni reception and more. It works with departments to identify and contact graduates, and reconnect them with the University through initiatives like the Alumni Mentoring Programme, guest lectures or advisory boards like the School of Business Industry Advisory Council. The team also works with colleagues to craft case of support and fundraising strategies for priority projects, such as the MU School of Business and the Student Emergency Fund. It engages in directly fundraising and facilitates philanthropic activity by university staff in line with best practice.

By transitioning to a digitally-driven approach to communications, and delivering a series of strategic initiatives to improve its communications, marketing, alumni relations and fundraising activities, MU has better defined its brand, engaged more robustly with stakeholders and alumni, and brought its light out from under a bushel. The University are now viewed by its peers as “punching above our weight” in terms of media coverage, particularly in bringing researchers’ voices to the public fore; MU is seen as an exemplar in student recruitment marketing due to its highly creative integrated marketing campaigns; and the University is viewed as a dynamic and progressive one of which its alumni can be proud.

Maynooth University made these and other steps by increasing professional capacity in the external relations function, by transitioning to a digital approach to story-telling and then leveraging its small team to maximize content distribution and message saturation, and by building relationships externally and internally.

A new Office of External Relations website that reflects the new structure and provides a plethora of new resources and signposting to both internal staff and external audiences is near completion and will be launched in the second quarter of 2022.

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	20
Awarding bodies	0
QA bodies	0

1. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	CORU
Programme titles and links to publications	MSocSc Social Work; PG Dip in Social Work
Date of accreditation or last review	01/02/2021
Date of next review	

2. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	All-Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work (AIEB)
Programme titles and links to publications	MSocSc Community & Youth Work; BSocSc Community & Youth Work
Date of accreditation or last review	30/06/2021
Date of next review	

3. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC)
Programme titles and links to publications	PG Dip in Educational Guidance Counselling
Date of accreditation or last review	01/01/2021
Date of next review	

4. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Department of Education and Skills (DES)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA Early Childhood Education
Date of accreditation or last review	31/08/2020
Date of next review	

5. Type of arrangement	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	31/08/2020
Date of next review	

6. Type of arrangement	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	31/08/2020
Date of next review	

7. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Certified Public Accountants (CPA)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA Accounting and Finance; BA Finance; BBS Business and Accounting; BCL Law and Accounting; HDip Higher Diploma in Professional Accounting; MA in Accounting (1 year); MA in Accounting (2 years).
Date of accreditation or last review	31/08/2020
Date of next review	

8. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Irish Tax Institute (ITI)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA Accounting and Finance; BA Finance; BBS Business and Accounting; BCL Law and Accounting; HDip Higher Diploma in Professional Accounting; MA in Accounting (1 year); MA in Accounting (2 years).
Date of accreditation or last review	31/08/2020
Date of next review	

9. Type of arrangement	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	31/08/2020
Date of next review	

9.2 Collaborative Provision

Type of arrangement	Total Number
Joint research degrees	1
Joint/double/multiple awards	7
Collaborative programmes	4
Franchise programmes	0
Linked providers (DABs only)	0

9.3 Articulation Agreements

Articulation agreements - Total number	1
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[Maynooth University]

2022

Annual Quality Report (Maynooth University)
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2020-2021

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 impact² 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.

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

In line with the University's strategic objectives that it 'will provide an environment where all staff can flourish, develop, advance and further contribute to the University and the success of its students and scholarship' (Strategic Plan 2018-2022 [SP], item 9.1) and that it 'will focus on empowering support staff to develop as professionals and to adapt to the changing needs of the University' (SP, item 9.2) 2020/2021 saw an expansion of the University's offerings in terms of the development and the support of its staff including specific provisions for the development of management and leadership skills for staff, early career academic mentoring and the development of a policy and an exam leave policy for staff for supporting their education. A renewed focus on wellbeing and support for staff was also in evidence with a variety of supports and programmes put in place. More details of these and other initiatives are provided in section 2.0, Part B of this report under the heading of '*Employee learning and development*'.

One of the University's strategic goals is to "Build on our achievements to date and become a model university for equality, diversity, inclusion and inter-culturalism, where social justice, addressing inequality and empowering people are central to our mission". Advances in achieving that goal are evident including the awarding of Athena Swan Bronze awards for three University departments, the participation of female employees in the Aurora leadership development programmes, the recognition of the University as a University of Sanctuary, and the featuring of Maynooth University in the Times Higher Education Impact ranking (with performance assessed against the UN sustainable development goals). These, and a range of other activities and provisions for staff EDI training and development are outlined in section 2.0, Part B under '*Equality, diversity and inclusion*'.

A number of initiatives were successfully provided online to support Maynooth Access Programme (MAP) supported entrants such as the *LaunchPad Orientation* programme -this is run annually to support MAP entrants as they journey into university life but was provided online in 2020/2021. Also, an online *Technology Transition Programme* was put in place with the purpose of introducing the MAP student group to online learning (see section 2.0, Part B, under '*supports and resources for learners*' for more details). Other initiatives were established to work across the student body such as a project established during 2020 as a collaboration between student services, academic units and other service units to identify any students who were potentially disengaging. The purpose being to reengage these students with the student helpdesk phoning students with a view of providing support and assistance if this was required by the student. These types of initiatives serve to support the University's strategic objectives of continuing "to work on the transition to university education, setting clear and high expectations for our students, and providing them with the resources and supports to achieve the highest possible standards" (SP, item 3.1.2) and operate in the spirit of SP, item 4.1 that states "we will ensure that the quality of the student experience is enhanced and the richness of engagement between staff and students is maintained as the University expands" with a focus on ensuring engagement between staff and students during a period when students were off campus and online for an extended period.

Another area that saw development aligns to strategic objective 7.1.4 of the University strategic plan which commits the University to “further develop and refine our approach to gathering student feedback and information on the effectiveness of teaching, informed by the best available evidence, with the goal of better supporting departments in enhancing teaching and learning”. Section 2.0, Part B, under ‘*student feedback*’ provides details of how the student feedback process for modules and programmes was redeveloped and integrated into academic unit operations.

Increased the focus on academic integrity -with NAIN, and changed the assessment rules to allow supplementary examination.

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	Develop a reporting structure that enables enhanced thematic analysis of quality review reports.	Reporting structure established by Strategy & Quality Office comprising of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A-Thematic faculty level report produced following completion of the reviews of all academic units in an individual faculty. All quality review reports analysed with themes in common identified. • B-Comparative analysis of faculty level reports with common issues arising across faculties identified. • C-Comparative analysis of Institutional level recommendations made across department/school quality review reports with themes in common identified. • D-Correlation of themes arising in B) and C) to the University Strategic Plan, to recommendations made in the MU CINNTE report and to the CINNTE QIP follow up report.
2	Build capacity for student focused institutional research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject/Department level reporting of StudentSurvey.ie piloted in 2020/2021. Enhanced response rates required to provide reliable data for use at this level. Further work will be undertaken to increase response rates in 2021/2022. [Strategy & Quality Office] • Work is ongoing in documenting data sources from across the University that may have potential to be used in informing decision making related to student success and engagement. [Relevant University Units and Strategy & Quality Office]
3	Evaluate need for a Quality Review QIP template.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Committee working subgroup established and a draft QIP template was produced. Internal consultation on draft took place and feedback is being used to update the template before it is finalised. [Quality Committee subgroup, and Strategy & Quality Office]

4	<p>Revise template for collation of data on Professional Regulatory and Statutory Bodies</p> <p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRSB collection template established. [Strategy & Quality Office]
5	<p>Review Virtual Review Visit process</p> <p>Build on experiences of quality reviews undertaken in April 2021 to enhance the contingency process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual Review Visit format updated slightly. Remaining quality review visits undertaken successfully in a virtual format. [Strategy & Quality Office].

1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Governing Authority	24 September 2020 12 November 2020 16 December 2020 11 February 2021 25 March 2021 3 June 2021
Academic Council	14 September 2020 2 November 2020 8 December 2020 1 February 2021 15 March 2021 24 May 2021

Quality Committee	15 September 2020 30 November 2020 15 February 2021 26 April 2021 31 May 2021
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1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

The Governing Authority commenced the recruitment process to appoint the new President of Maynooth University in October 2020, with a view to identifying the new President in Spring 2021.

Structural Changes During the Covid-19 Pandemic:

During the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, under the stewardship of the President, the following governance and committee structure was established:

- MU Covid Oversight Group;
- MU Covid Policy Group;
- MU Covid Academic Planning Group;
- MU Covid Operational Group.

1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review

1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

Reviews still in progress in the reporting period of 2020/2021.

- Department of History
- Department of Music

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels³ 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					12		
<i>of those:</i>							
On-site processes					12		
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

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

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

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

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

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 previous 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. The resources developed are designed to assist staff in gathering information from students on their experiences of teaching and learning. They also provide guidance about how you can apply teaching evaluation methods to ‘validate’ student feedback and assist staff in enhancing your teaching.

Resources include:

- A Literature Review on Student Feedback in Higher Education;
- Guides for staff with tips and ideas for gathering feedback from students on their experiences of teaching and learning;
- Case studies from the Departments of Chemistry, Applied Social Studies, and Music, which outline pilot feedback and evaluation activities undertaken in their disciplinary contexts;
- Guide to Validating Student Feedback;
- Resources for Students including
 - Infographic for Students – Feedback Matters
 - Student Feedback Matters – How and Why Student Feedback Works Guide for Students.

For more information about the initiative and to view the resources, please visit the [Student Feedback and Teaching Evaluation initiative web page](#).

Supports and resources for learners

A number of widening participation initiatives to support learners and potential entrants especially focused on cohorts from diverse backgrounds were run over the 2020-21 academic year, with most due to continue as ongoing offerings into future years. Examples of practice included:

The annual MAP [Launchpad Orientation Programme](#) that eases the transition to third level for MAP-supported entrants was moved online and delivered by 100 MAP Ambassadors in an online remote delivery format. To achieve this, current student volunteers called MAP Ambassadors undertook selection and training to become

proficient online peer mentors to deliver a range of information workshops, digital hangouts and ongoing support to over 500 new entrants supported by MAP. MAP Ambassadors also facilitated the [Technology Transition Programme](#), which introduced MAP-supported students to online learning using the latest educational technology. The quantitative and qualitative evaluations provided invaluable insights into the online modality for learners that informed much of the ongoing practice of student engagement within MAP. Weekly webinars designed and delivered by the [Student Central](#) team of assistant psychologists provided information and guidance on a range of skills that can support student success. The ongoing engagement with MAP students and ambassadors continued through the year with regular online touchpoints called MAP My Way, where information talks, social contact activities and training were offered throughout the year.

The [Student Assistance Fund \(SAF\)](#) comprising over €1,000,000, which is managed by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) on behalf of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and administered by the Maynooth University Access Programme (MAP) in collaboration with the Maynooth University Student Budgeting Advice Service, is provided to address the financial concerns of students who struggle to meet the costs of college. The purpose of the SAF is to support students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds who are under-represented in higher education and who have temporary or ongoing needs for financial support and to provide emergency financial assistance for other students experiencing exceptional financial difficulties.

A Laptop Loan Scheme was launched for all full and part time Maynooth University students who demonstrate a need for technology and are a member of one of the priority groups identified in the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2021 are eligible to apply for an ICT device.

The [Inclusive Learning Project](#) was approved as an 12 month initiative by the HEA Students with Disabilities (FSD) Strategic Initiatives Fund. The goal of the Inclusive Learning Project is to enhance the learning opportunities and experience of all students supported by MAP through a partnership with the National Learning Network, MU Student Services, MU IT Services, the Office for the Dean of Teaching and Learning, the Centre for Teaching and Learning and the MU Library. The project proposes to develop a model of tiered student support, underpinned by enhanced online resources and training, to support improved mental health and wellbeing and digital literacy skills and technical competency for a broader range of students, and to embed accessibility into the online learning environment at MU.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

In May 2021 Maynooth University launched an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education (EDI in HE) eLearning programme. This is a successor programme to LEAD (Living Equality and Diversity), which was developed by the IUA Equality Network in 2012. This updated EDI programme involves a blended approach to generating staff conversation and engagement with EDI and human rights issues in all our higher education institutions. The purpose of the EDI in HE eLearning programme is: (1) to raise awareness of how equality, diversity, inclusion and human rights issues permeate organisational culture, and; (2) to understand what third level education staff responsibilities are under Irish equality and human rights legislation.

EDI training for Heads of Department

During 2020/21 Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Interculturalism (EDI) training was provided for Heads of Department which focused on; Legal Framework: Overview; University Policies; Complaints Framework; Bias awareness; Gender equality, identity and expression (LGBTQIA+); Disability in the Workplace; Race Equality; Bystander Intervention.

Integration of UN sustainable development goals (SDG) Maynooth University Social Justice Week was held between 8th and 12th March 2021. [Maynooth University featured in the Times Higher Education Impact Ranking](#). This ranking assesses the performance of universities against the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Maynooth University (MU) has been ranked as Ireland's leading university and in the top 5% of universities globally (at number 32 out of 669 institutions) for its research on social inequalities, policies on discrimination and commitment to recruiting staff and students from under-represented groups (SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities). In Gender Equality (SDG 5), MU is ranked 60th out of 776 Institutions (overall score of 67.7%), 2nd in Ireland. Recognising MU's commitment to progressing gender equality and our research on the study of gender equality, policies on gender equality and commitment to recruiting and promoting women. MU is joint first in Ireland for Quality Education (SDG 4) and ranked #101-200 globally for our contribution to early years and lifelong learning, pedagogy research and our commitment to inclusive education.

The three MU Teaching and Learning Committees of the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Faculty of Science and Engineering, and the Faculty of Arts, Celtic Studies and Philosophy, prepared an [inaugural report on Maynooth University teaching & learning's engagement with sustainability and the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), arising from an online questionnaire issued in May 2021.

Information and Data Management

[Data collection](#) from staff and students is key to informing the work of the University in the areas of Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Interculturalism (EDI). Maynooth University values the enrichment that comes from a diverse community of staff and students and seeks to have a better picture of that diversity so that we can identify areas where further focus or work is needed. The Maynooth University Equality & Diversity Staff Census 2020 was circulated to staff in December 2020.

Gender Equality

Three MU Departments were officially awarded their [Athena SWAN](#) Bronze awards in November 2020 including the Department of [Biology](#), Department of [Geography](#), and the Department of [Law](#). In 2020 MU participated in the [30% Club Scholarship Executive Education Scholarship scheme](#), providing one scholarship on a part-time Masters programme, the MU MSc in Strategy and Innovation. Maynooth sponsored the participation of six female employees for the Aurora leadership development programme 2020/21.

Third-mission activities, societal and community engagement

Cultural Diversity – Race & Ethnicity (including Travellers)

Maynooth University has been active in supporting cultural diversity through a number of targeted initiatives including [InSPIREurope](#), [University of Sanctuary](#), and [Race Equality Forums](#) for students and staff. Maynooth University is officially designated as a University of Sanctuary in recognition of its initiatives to promote a culture

of welcome for refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants into the community. In 2020/21, three students were awarded University of Sanctuary Scholarships.

Quality Assurance of Research Activities and Programmes

In 2020 a case was made by the HEI sector to the Department of Further and Higher Education Research, Innovation and Science (DFEHRIS) via the Irish University's Association (IUA) to create a once off fund for researchers whose projects had been disrupted due to the pandemic. The proposal was to seek support for contract researchers and research students who were at serious risk of not completing their contract or study.

Subsequently the Department of Further, Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), allocated €47.7m to the HEA to assist in the provision of costed extensions to research activities that were at risk because of delays incurred as a result of COVID-19. The budget was allocated across the HEIs pro-rata based on postgraduate and postdoctoral numbers. The HEA costed extension budget provided funding for additional payments (salary / stipend) to be made in exceptional cases to researchers who were impacted by the pandemic for the provision of costed research extensions to compensate for research interruptions. The money was provided Maynooth under a specific set of terms and conditions including the requirement to set up an award application and review process internally.

The Research Development Office subsequently set up a full review programme with four funding calls over the period of Nov 20 to Sept 21. Mu terms and conditions, application forms, a review process, and website were put in place by the Research Development Office in collaboration with Graduate Studies, Human Resources, and Registry. The programme was managed by the Director of Research Development of the Research Development Office, in conjunction with the Graduate Studies Officer (Graduate Studies), and the Head of the Research Development Office's Finance Unit.

The programme successful supported 188 postgraduate students and 38 research staff across both individual fellowships and research projects for extensions of 4 to 6 months. In addition to the stipend funding for postgraduate students the University provided a one semester fee waiver without which they would not have been in a position to complete. The programme provided researchers time to continue their studies to completion and for research projects to progress. Many of these students undertaking laboratory-based research lost a full 3 months of bench time in spring 2020, followed by restricted access in 2021 due to covid safety measures (e.g. limited numbers permitted at any given time). In addition, many students in the social sciences and arts and humanities didn't have access to external participants (e.g. with schools) and archives therefore the additional funding gave them the extra time to convert their interactions to various on-line platforms or access to digitised documents.

Public Information and Communications

While a number of specific enhancements to the External Relations Office function (ERO) were in train prior to the onset of the pandemic, the role and remit of the ERO took on an even more vital role when public health restrictions shifted the way we communicate both internally and externally.

PR/Communications:

- Significant continued exposure of MU research in the news media, on the MU website, and across its social media platforms. Increase in number of RTÉ Brainstorm articles produced by MU academics to between 40-50 per year, with significant focus on the University's contributions to Covid-19.
- Internal newsletter produced during the onset of the pandemic to connect university staff with one another and to highlight university activities after the sudden move to remote work. Remote university staff updates introduced to connect the President with staff during the pandemic.

Marketing/Student Recruitment:

- Open Days: Produced a series of customised Virtual Open Days, housed on the MU website, with highly engaging and innovative content and fuelled by a creative integrated marketing campaign that produced record levels of engagement with prospective students across Ireland and was widely heralded by our peer institutions.
- Enhanced use of new social media channels, chat tools such as Pubble, and the creation of more than 50 digital videos (in-house) to support units across the University in the course marketing, research profiling and other objectives. One example was a long-form video capturing and celebrating the University's contributions to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Alumni Engagement and Fundraising:

- Alumni Engagement: Held a series of virtual alumni events during the pandemic to maintain connections between MU and its alumni. Partnered with the Experiential Learning Office on the creation of an Alumni Mentoring Programme, which now has 60 students and alumni involved. Produced new digitally interactive version of The Bridge, which is MU's alumni magazine but also serves a wider external audience.
- MU Foundation was reconstituted with a new foundation Board and developed cases for support to pursue external funding for university priority projects to engage alumni and prospective donors.

Digital Communications:

- Produced a student communications campaign (#PlayingMyPart) around the Return to Campus during the pandemic that included digital videos on safety protocols produced in collaboration with the Students Union, posters and screen messages around campus, and email messaging.
- Created and maintained a comprehensive Covid-19 hub on the University's website that served as the go-to trusted resource for official information on the university's state of operations, and frequent changes, during the pandemic. The website was aimed at all stakeholders, including the public, students, staff and the local community.
- Became a go-to resource for advice and execution of digital events.
- Progressed Project Lego website re-platforming scoping exercise as outlined in Section A.

In conclusion, the External Relations Office was able to rapidly adapt in a creative and vital way when the pandemic hit, provided innovative responses that enabled the University to continue its core functions in

2019-20 and beyond. This was only possible because of the increase in skilled staff capacity that immediately preceded it.

Employee Learning and Development

Over the last two years, a number of tailored programmes and development initiatives have been put in place to support colleagues in their role, whilst reflecting the values of the institution. A list of programmes available to staff are detailed on a dedicated Learning & Development Directory within the HR website. The focus for 2020/2021 was on the implementation of upskilling supports on Microsoft 365, Leadership and Management Development modules, Technical Officer Supports, Early Career Academic Mentoring and developing a policy for staff wishing to pursue further education.

IT Skills training on Microsoft 365 products was a key focus with over 220 staff completing training on MS Excel, Word, PowerPoint, Planner and Outlook.

A number of targeted Management Development and Leadership supports have been rolled out to support Managers and Leaders across all staff categories and include:

- Management Programmes and Masterclasses developed for different levels of experience – Proficient, Skilled and Expert
- Leadership seminars for new Heads of Departments
- Preparing for Academic Advancement for female academics
- Career Development programmes and mentoring
- Blended Working Supports for Leaders and People Managers

A Technical Training Network and information sharing forum was established to support the specific development requirements of Technical Officers in the University. This has provided development in areas such as IT Skills, green laboratory's, video production, online labs (during Covid-19), access in labs and apps for teaching.

An [Education Support Policy](#) and Study and [Exam Leave Policy](#) were developed to encourage and support employees to expand their skillsets to meet the changing demands of roles. These policies are available on the HR Website .

There was an attendance of almost 1,000 people at leadership, management, and professional skills courses over the 2020/2021 period.

Employee Wellbeing and Organisational Culture

The University is committed to providing a healthy working environment and improving the quality of working lives for all employees. There has been a renewed emphasis on employee wellbeing over the 2020/2021 period, including a need for additional supports due to the impact of Covid-19.

This includes providing an opportunity for employees to provide feedback and contribute to the design and deployment of workplace wellbeing initiatives. This process is facilitated through a number of forums across the University.

Information from different sources informs the supports provided by the University, such as,

- High level feedback from the Employee Assistance Programme on topics people attend counselling for, which can inform the types of initiatives and activities that are planned.
- Feedback from employee groups and networks across the University for example, the Parent and Carers and Enable networks.
- Regular consultation with Heads of Department, line managers, employees, and occasional staff across the University.
- Reviewing the supports other Higher Education Institutions provide in this area that may be suitable for Maynooth University.

A new [Employee Wellbeing](#) section on the HR Website outlines a number of supports available to employees including:

- Employee Assistance Programme -Inspire
- Employee Wellbeing Statement
- Regular employee wellbeing seminars on a variety of health topics both live and online options
- National Supports and Guides
- Annual Employee Wellbeing Month
- See Change Workplace Pledge

With the majority of employees working remotely, in the main, since March 2020 it has become even more important to ensure the culture and spirit of campus life is kept alive for employees, ensuring a connection with the workplace while being remote. To support this emphasis on collegiality and connection the following were rolled out:

- Employee Recognition Awards
- Networking events for New Employees

In the 2020/2021 period over 290 employee attended wellbeing seminars.

The emphasis for 2021/2022 is the continued provision of mentoring streams, the building of a suite of leadership and management supports, the expansion of wellbeing initiatives and the development of pathways for different cohorts of employees (researchers, technical officers etc.), all aligned to the undertakings set down in the University's Strategic Plan.

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. **The 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.

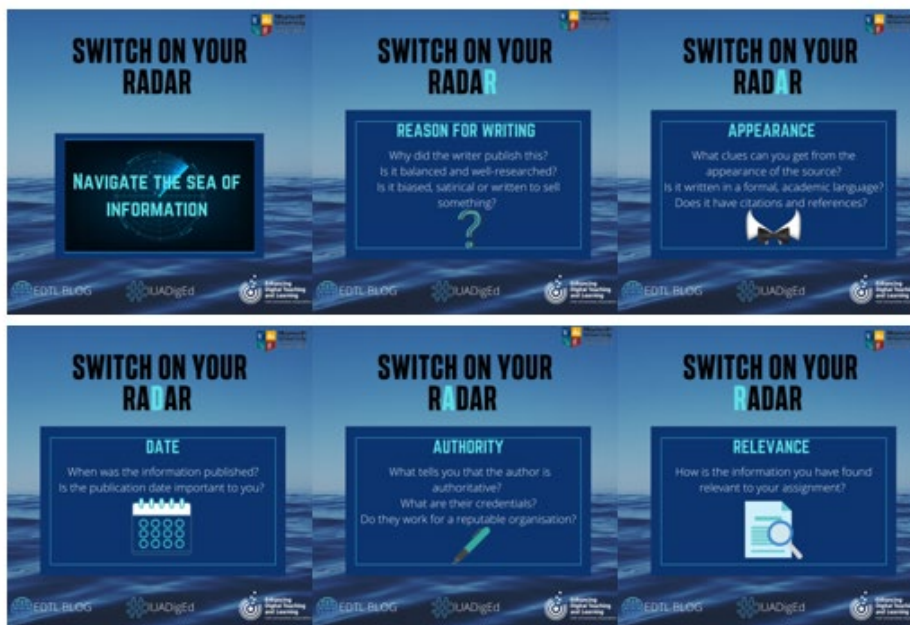


- **October 2020 – Present:** Our Maynooth EDTL Interns developed various social media resources aimed at promoting and supporting academic integrity, including resources on: The Newsguard platform for evaluating the credibility of news sources; The RADAR approach for evaluating Internet resources; and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

NewsGuard Social Media Resources



RADAR Social Media Resources



Act with Integrity at Maynooth Social Media Resources



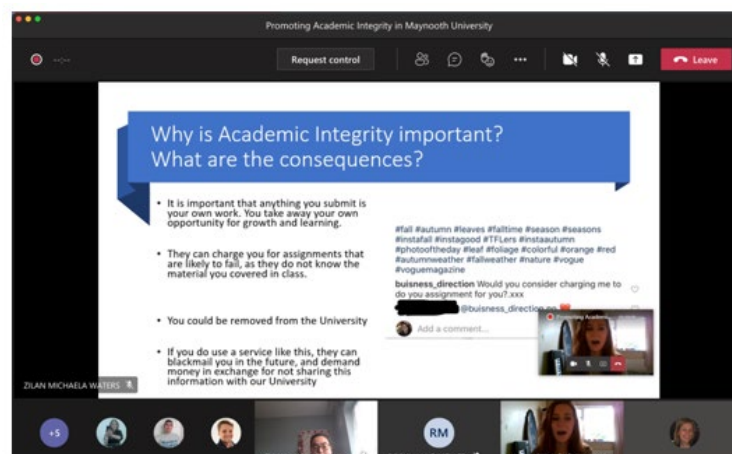
- December 2020:** Our Maynooth EDTL Student Interns ran a 'Takeover' of our Maynooth Students' Union Instagram account, and as part of this event shared and discussed some of the resources they had created in respect of academic integrity.



- **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. <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/dean-teaching-learning/edtl/academic-integrity-week-developing-shared-culture-commitment-academic-integrity-maynooth-university>
- **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 <i>Note: Include details of unit responsible, and how planned action will address the relevant strategic priority and/or reengagement advice/CINNTE recommendation.</i> <i>If the institution is preparing for cyclical review, include how the planned actions will address the relevant review objective(s).</i>
1	Enhanced reporting of student feedback	A refocusing exercise, together with the development of alternative means for securing feedback from students on modules and programmes, in now completed within the University (for details, see under section 2.0, Part B of this report). The means of evaluating the ongoing effectiveness of the new student evaluation processes is now being explored with reporting options under discussion for implementation in the next academic year.
2	Clarify the structures and standards for non- major awards	Maynooth University Registry is currently working in conjunction with an IUA working group that aims to ensure that structures and standards are in place for non-major awards in each University with consistency in practice and quality in standards maintained across the sector. Such work supports initiatives such as the IUA led project, MicroCred, a 5-year initiative funded through the Irish Government's Human Capital Initiative, Pillar 3 (Innovation and Agility), that seeks to establish a framework, a model of enterprise engagement, a range of offerings across the sector, and a digital platform of accredited micro-credentials offered by sectoral partners. A project officer, based in the Graduate Studies Office, includes, as part of their brief, a focus on the alignment and integration of micro-credential programme activities and outcomes within the University- they work closely with Registry in this area.

3	Refine and highlight the Recognition of Prior Learning process.	The University is currently involved in a sectoral wide initiative that is focusing on recognition of prior learning (RPL). This is a collaborative piece of work being undertaken between the seven IUA universities, the Institutes of Technology and the Technological Universities. The initiative is funded under the Irish Government's Human Capital Initiative, Pillar 3 (Innovation and Agility) and seeks to develop a sectoral wide, consistent approach across the HE sector for the recognition of prior learning and also seeks to increase awareness about RPL amongst external stakeholders . A dedicated project officer is in place in MU: they are based in the Graduate Studies Office and work closely with sectoral partners. The are expected to inform the further development of RPL in the University whilst ensuring that any such developments are in line with the recommendations and outcomes from the sectoral wide initiative.
4	Review the self-evaluation report format for quality reviews with the purpose of enhancing the evaluation of quality processes.	Looking to enhance the evaluation of quality processes as part of the self-evaluation process undertaken in advance of a quality review. Work plans include: an evaluation of the format for the self-evaluation report; a review of guidance materials in place to support the self-evaluation process; and an exploration of ongoing processes that could facilitate the self-evaluation process.

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
School of Celtic Studies	11 th -15 th October 2021	March 2010
Philosophy Department	18 th -22 nd October 2021	February 2011
Media Studies Department	1 st -5 th November 2021	March 2011
English Department	8 th -12 th November 2021	March 2010
School of Modern Languages Literatures & Cultures	15 th -19 th November 2021	Individual modern language departments reviewed over the periods of 2009/2020 & 2010/2011
Ancient Classics Department	29 th November-3 rd December 2021	2009

3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

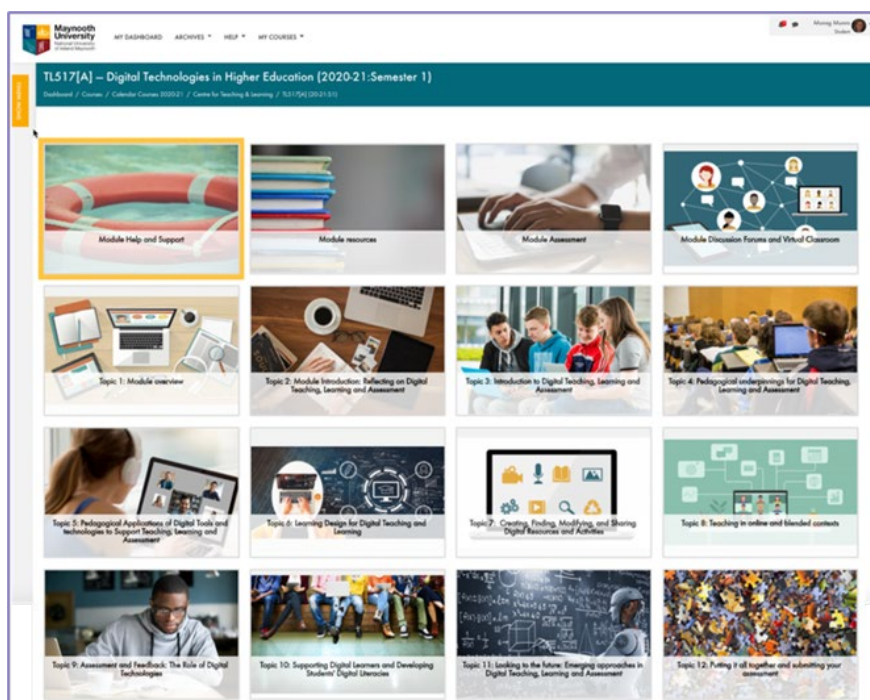
Schedule for cycle 4 is being finalised and will be available on the [Strategy & Quality Office website](#) when approved.

4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning

DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY OF AN ACCREDITED MODULE IN DIGITAL TEACHING AND LEARNING.

Maynooth University's Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma in Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Assessment (PDHETL) offers those who teach in Higher Education (HE) the opportunity to engage with the theory, concepts and contemporary discourse of learning, teaching and assessment in HE, and supports them to consider how these impact on their practice. In line with the increasing policy emphasis on the importance of the pedagogically-informed application of digital technologies to support and enhance teaching, learning, assessment and feedback in HE (European Commission, 2021), a key outcome of a recent review of the programme was the development of a new 10 ECTS module: *Digital Technologies in Higher Education Teaching and Learning*. The module aims to give teaching staff an understanding of the contemporary landscape with respect to digital technologies and HE teaching and learning. Participants have practical opportunities to design, implement, and reflect on the use of digital technologies for learning, assessment, and feedback in their own teaching contexts. Through their engagement with the module, participants develop skills and competencies in line with the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu).



Homepage for the Digital Technologies in Higher Education Module

The module was offered for the first time in the 2020/21 academic year, with iterations running in Semesters 1 and 2. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the module was also made available as a stand-alone offering, enabling staff who were not enrolled on the PDHETL to rapidly upskill in the context of the pivot to remote teaching. The course was originally intended to be delivered as a blended module; however, due to the pandemic it was delivered entirely online. Engagement with the core module content and activities is mainly self-paced; this is complemented by live webinars where participants engage in collaborative activities. The module is assessed through a range of formative and summative approaches that foreground *Assessment AS Learning* ([National Forum, 2017](#)).

At the end of the module participants reflected on their learning. Many referred to the value of the pedagogy-first philosophy underpinning the module, with several referencing that, in addition to developing their digital skills and competencies, they welcomed the opportunity to reflect on their teaching more generally. Several mentioned that the module enabled them to challenge previously-held assumptions and preconceptions about digital technologies and teaching and learning. Many of those taking the module as a stand-alone option referred to the opportunity to expand their understanding of pedagogical theories as being particularly beneficial; for some, this was the first time that they had engaged with theories of learning. A small number of those in the first iteration of the module felt that there was too much emphasis on pedagogy and theories of learning however, and said that they would have preferred the primary focus of the module to have been on the practical 'how to' of various technologies; this is perhaps reflective of their primary motivation at that time, understandably, being the need to rapidly upskill their technical abilities in the context of the rapid transition to remote teaching due to the pandemic.

Participants found DigCompEdu to be a useful framework for intentionally and systematically identifying short-, medium-, and long-term goals for enhancing their digital skills and competencies, and as a means for providing strategies for developing these abilities. Those participants who had engaged with the framework as part of the introductory module on the PDHETL programme referred to the utility of returning to the framework and tracking the development of their digital skills and competencies with respect to DigCompEdu over a longer timeframe.

Many participants referred to the value of being 'pushed out of their comfort zone' to try out new teaching approaches and technologies. Some referred to previously being apprehensive or sceptical about the use of technologies in their teaching and stated that participation in the module allowed them to experiment with digital technologies in a supportive environment. For others, engaging with the module highlighted how much they were already doing in the context of digital learning and teaching, and this realisation provided them with confidence to develop their expertise further.

Several participants referred to the value of 'being a student again', particularly in the online context, and reflected that this experience helped them to better identify with their own students. The module intentionally covers and utilises a range of technologies and teaching approaches, so that participants are exposed to a diversity of learning experiences, and also to ensure applicability across subject disciplines and teaching contexts. While some participants referred to the benefits of this breadth of coverage, a small number said that it was overwhelming at times, but also noted that in this context the opportunity to discuss and debate the pros and cons of the different technologies and approaches utilised in the module was valuable.

Many participants noted that engaging with the module in a self-directed format allowed them to fit the module into their busy schedules. For others, however, learning online was an isolating experience, and some participants noted that they would prefer a more ‘traditional’ approach, with more focus on synchronous contact time as a means for content delivery, and less emphasis on self-directed learning. In order to mitigate against feelings of isolation, and to encourage sustained engagement with the module, in the second iteration of the module a ‘Peer Buddy’ system was implemented, with participants asked to regularly meet with a partner to discuss assigned reflection and discussion prompts. Many participants in the second iteration referred to the Peer Buddy system as being highly beneficial, although for some pairings finding the time to meet regularly was referred to as a challenge, as was the need to ensure an appropriate ‘match’ – for example with regards to previous level of expertise – in each pairing.

Participants identified a range of specific goals for developing their digital learning and teaching practice in the future. Many mentioned that they felt empowered to make changes to future iterations of the modules that they teach. In particular, several noted an intention to move towards a blended or flipped classroom teaching model. Others referred to their intention to explore new ways of assessing their students; plans to enhance the accessibility of module resources and activities; and intentions to integrate strategies for enhancing their students’ digital skills and competencies.

EMBEDDING DIGITAL COMPETENCIES INTO AND INTRODUCTORY POSTGRADUATE MODULE IN TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION.

Maynooth University’s Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma in Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Assessment (PDHETL) offers those who teach in Higher Education (HE) the opportunity to engage with the theory, concepts and contemporary discourse of learning, teaching and assessment in HE, and supports them to consider how these impact on their practice. In line with the increasing policy emphasis on the importance of pedagogically-informed application of digital technologies to support and enhance teaching, learning, assessment and feedback in HE (European Commission, 2021) the development of participants’ digital competencies was a key focus of a recent review and redesign of the programme.

Our new *Introduction to Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Higher Education* was offered for the first time in the 2019/2020 academic year, and serves as the foundation for the PDHETL, and introduces participants to the theory, principles and strategies of teaching, learning and assessment in HE covered across the programme, including an introduction to the use of digital technologies for learning, engagement, assessment and feedback. Participants are introduced to the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu), which outlines 22 educator-specific digital competences across 6 areas. Participants are supported to use the framework as a focus for reflecting on their current digital skills and competencies, and for planning their future goals. Participants are also supported to plan and develop a digital teaching and learning artifact, which they created using HTML5 Package (H5P). Through their engagement with the digital technologies element of the introductory module, and following successful completion of this element of the module assessment, module participants were eligible to be awarded the Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning (EDTL) Getting Started with Personal and Professional Digital Capacity microcredential.

At the end of the module participants engage in a reflection on their learning from the digital technologies element of the module. Many participants indicated that engaging with the DigCompEdu framework served to highlight their existing digital skills and competencies, thus building confidence in their abilities and encouraging them to further develop their digital capacity. They also found DigCompEdu to be a useful framework for intentionally and systematically identifying short-, medium-, and long-term goals for enhancing their digital skills and competencies, and as a means for providing strategies for developing these abilities. For some participants, engaging with the DigCompEdu framework and associated DigCompEdu Check-In tool revealed new areas for professional development that they had not theretofore considered. Several participants signaled an intention to periodically return to the framework in order to track their digital skills development.

Participants noted the value of systematically planning the creation of their digital learning resource and explicitly considering the pedagogical rationale for its development. Some participants stated that H5P was a tool that they would never have considered using previously, and reflected that engaging with this technology pushed them out of their comfort zone and encouraged them to further develop their skills and competencies.

Others said that they had previously lacked confidence in their digital capacity, or were skeptical about the use of technology for teaching in their context, and reflected that engaging with H5P was a rewarding experience that allowed them to rapidly develop professional-looking and pedagogically-informed interactive resources. Participants indicated that this fostered confidence in their digital capabilities and encouraged them to further develop their digital learning and teaching practice.

STUDENT AND STAFF PARTNERSHIP IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LECTURE RECORDING GUIDELINES

With the move to emergency remote teaching due to COVID-19 pandemic, a diversity of approaches to online lecture recording and dissemination emerged at Maynooth University. In this context, order to promote a consistent approach to lecture recording and to support accessibility and flexibility for all students, staff and students collaborated to develop a set of lecture recording guidelines, informed by the perspectives of students and staff.

Student-staff partnerships are increasingly encouraged as a student engagement practice in Higher Education (HE). By working in partnership, students and staff can benefit from each other's experiences, insights, and expertise, generating benefits for all involved. Through partnership initiatives, students are invited to share in the responsibility for shaping their learning and teaching environment, to contribute in meaningful ways to improvement, and to participate in shared decision-making. Working alongside students provides staff with an insight into what it is like to be a student, and encourages staff to challenge assumptions that they make about the student experience. Treating students as authentic partners in their learning is also central to developing students who are critical thinkers and active citizens ([Cooke-Sather & Luz, 2014](#); [USI 2018](#); [NStEP, 2021](#)).

Following the rapid pivot to remote teaching due to the pandemic, students had raised concerns about variability in practice across the university regarding the recording of live online lectures. In addition, there was a lack of guidance for staff in this context, and staff had also raised a number of concerns about lecture recording,

including issues surrounding intellectual property of recorded materials, the potential for the inappropriate sharing of recordings beyond the context originally intended, and decreased student attendance at live lectures.

As part of the [Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning \(EDTL\) in Irish Universities project](#) at Maynooth a student-staff partnership group has been established in order to ensure that decisions relating to digital teaching and Learning are authentically informed by the student voice. Following preliminary discussions around staff and student concerns about lecture recording practices, the partnership group collaboratively authored a set of draft lecture recording guidelines. In order to incorporate perspectives of students beyond the partnership group, the Maynooth Students' Union Vice President for Education worked with individual class representatives (170 in total) to conduct consultations with every class, so that all students had the opportunity to contribute to the discussion. The draft guidelines were further refined in consultation with a range of university offices and staff/student committees.

Engaging in dialog around issues relating to lecture recording allowed staff to better understand the perspectives of students, and vice versa, and by working in partnership we were able to incorporate these perspectives into the guidelines. After approval and implementation of [the guidelines](#) in 2021-22, further feedback will be sought as to next steps.

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OER) GUIDE

Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching and learning resources that reside in the public domain, or that have been released under an open license that permits their access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions, and at no-cost ([UNESCO, 2015](#)). While OER have significant potential to support remote and digitally-supported delivery of learning and teaching, knowledge of how to source and use OER is low among staff who teach in Irish Higher Education ([Risquez et al, 2020](#)).

Our local experiences mirrored those described in the literature: there was a general lack of awareness of OER, as well as a lack of clarity around what is allowable in terms of reuse. In response to this, as staff from the Library and Office of the Dean of Teaching and Learning developed the [Maynooth University Open Educational Resources Guide](#) to provide an introduction to the benefits and challenges associated with finding, using and sharing OERs in Teaching, Learning and Assessment.