

Maynooth University

2025

Annual Quality Report (Maynooth University)
Reporting Period 2023-2024

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PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Reporting Period 2023-2024

PREFACE

The **Annual Quality Report** 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 take account of 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 Q4 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.
- When providing reflections on quality enhancement it is interesting to share a broad range of examples including what worked or didn't work.

Report Structure

Part A: Internal QA System

Part A of the AQR should provide a succinct outline of the institution's internal quality assurance (IQA) system and include details of the governance and management structures and supports in place, and all policies and procedures underpinning quality across the organisation.

Links to current QA policies and procedures in operation in the institution should be included. Please ensure that all links are correct and functional. As the AQR is submitted in respect of a specific reporting period, it is recommended that the institution establish a unique SharePoint/OneDrive folder (or similar) for that reporting period to archive current versions of the policies and procedures and include relevant hyperlinks that are included in the AQR.

The information contained in Part A is carried from one reporting period to the next and should not require substantial update on an annual basis. However, institutions are asked to update and highlight any significant changes in the structures and published material that supports the internal IQA framework as they arise.

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

Part B of the AQR focuses specifically on the effectiveness and impact of the IQA framework on the QA activities and developments across the institution. Here, the institution is invited to document the quality enhancements adopted and implemented during the reporting period and describe concisely the impact of these across a selected range of QA activities. Part B should also be used to demonstrate how plans set out in the previous AQR were progressed during the reporting period. These plans may be linked to strategic objectives, to QQI reengagement recommendations, or to institutional review recommendations.

Case Studies

In each reporting period, QQI may request updates on thematic areas or may invite the institution to submit case studies in response to specific topics. The institution may also include case studies on topics of their choosing, demonstrating good practice in QA and QE in action. In formulating case studies, the institution is encouraged to reflect on and highlight areas that may be of interest to other HEIs 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
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review	2.10	Other Parties Involved in Education and Training	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
9.0 - Details of Arrangements with Third Parties			1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
2.0 - Programme Development and Delivery	2.11	Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review			1.10	Cyclical External Quality Assurance
4.0 - QA of Research Activities and Programmes	QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes			

Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for Maynooth University for the reporting period 1 September 2023 – 31 August 2024. It is to be submitted by Friday, 28 February 2025.

The AQR has been approved by Professor Ronan Farrell, Vice-President Academic and Registrar, 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 2023/2024, approximately 16,100 students from over 85 countries were enrolled in a range of programmes at undergraduate, masters and PhD level. 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 2023-2028](#), launched in October 2023, was produced following extensive consultation, internally with students and staff and externally with alumni, industrial partners, local and national stakeholders. The Plan builds on the institution's strengths and accomplishments. with a five-year focus on

- Research and Impact
- Students and Learning
- Internationalisation
- Engagement and Partnerships.

To underpin developments across these areas the University has identified enablers of

- People and Culture
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Infrastructure and Sustainability
- Governance, Quality and Operational Excellence
- Financial Strength.

The Strategy identifies quality as “a key foundation on which Maynooth University is built”, committing to “a culture of continuous improvement and quality enhancement” with an emphasis on embedding “assurance for quality enhancement in all of our activities”.

The production of the AQR was undertaken by the Quality Assurance & Enhancement 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 and Registrar 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.

Under the HEA Act 2022, the composition of governing authority of a university is set out to comprise of 19 members:

- The Chair (external to the university),
- The chief officer of the university,
- Three student union representatives,
- Five internal members (other than the chief officer),
- Nine external members.

The Governing Authority receives reports from a range of Standing Committees as follows:

- Audit & Risk Committee;
- Finance, Human Resources and Capital Development Committee;
- Remuneration Committee;
- Quality Committee;
- Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Interculturalism Committee; and
- Coiste Gaeilge na hOllscoile.

The last three are joint committees of Governing Authority and Academic Council.

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, Associate Faculty Deans, Heads of Schools and Departments, Directors of Research Institutes, the Assistant Registrar/Admissions Officer, the Librarian, up to four members of administrative and professional staff nominated by the President, and representatives of all grades of academic staff, and students. It is supported in its work by a committee/board 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 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 & Humanities (previously 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 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.

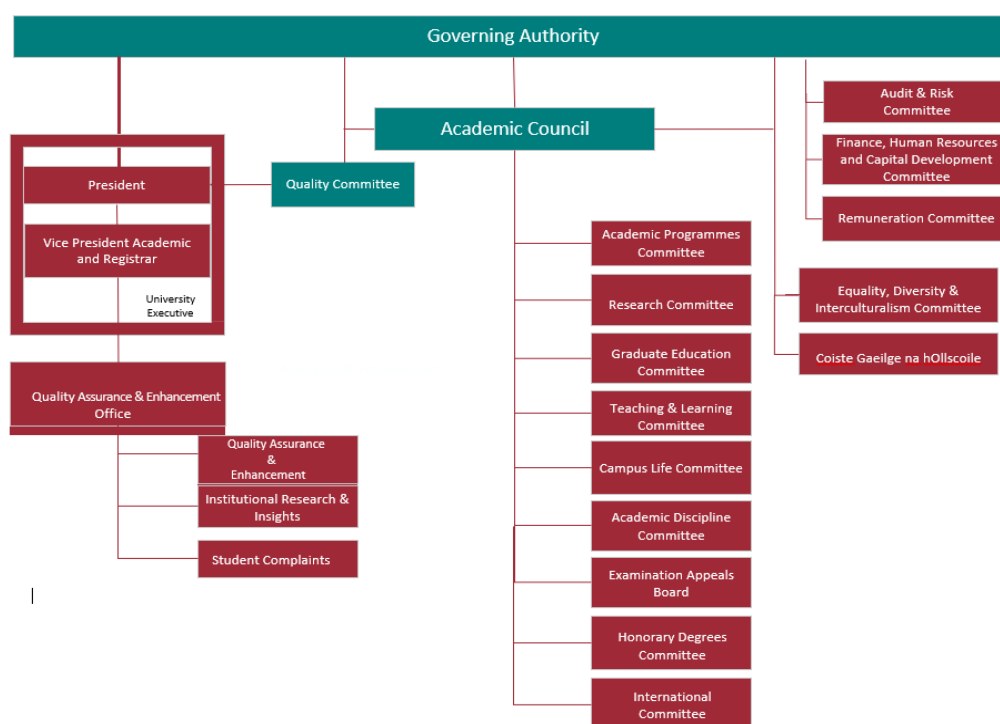


Figure 1: MU's Governance structure and committees. The Quality Assurance & Enhancement Office's reporting relationship to the Vice President Academic and Registrar is also depicted.

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 and Registrar. The Director of Quality, who reports directly to the Vice-President Academic and Registrar coordinates the operational management of quality assurance reviews. The Director is responsible for preparing 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, updated in 2018 and 2022, 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's vision *"to be a university of excellence, opportunity and impact"* as articulated in its Strategic plan 2023-2028, recognises that the achievement of this vision is underscored by ensuring high quality standards in all that it does. Such a commitment to quality and excellence requires sustained effort-and 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 going forward 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 had approximately 16,100 (2023/2024) 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 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 almost three decades and is supportive of the achievement of the vision and strategies that comprise the University Strategic Plan 2023-2028. 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 by 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 Assurance & Enhancement 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 that includes a report on the Quality Committee activities, and following this, the report is presented to the Governing Authority and the Academic Council as the Annual Quality Report of the Quality Committee.

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 Ireland²;
- 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;

² Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, Sections 28 (1) and 29 (a), (b)

- 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 Strategy & Quality Office-
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 group submits a PRG report to the Quality Assurance & Enhancement 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), Vice-President Academic, the Dean of Faculty or the Head of Administrative Area, other University Executive member(s) as required, and the Director of Quality, from which an agreed set of actions ensues. The University Executive is notified of receipt of the final Peer Review Group report, and of the final Quality Improvement Plan.
4. **Publication of outcomes:** The review process is completed by publication on the Quality Assurance & Enhancement 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 Quality will prepare a synthesis report for the Dean to enable the identification of common themes, emerging issues and good practices. Twelve months following completion of a unit's Quality Improvement Plan, the Unit submits a follow-up report to the Director of Quality outlining progress made against the Plan. The Quality Committee, the Academic Council, and the Governing Authority are notified. The annual progress against unit-level Quality Improvement Plans is included in the annual report of the Director of 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 with the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Office engaging 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 continually strengthens its engagement with all stakeholders through sustained partnerships with enterprises, communities, civil society and public bodies, building support for the mission of the university, serving the needs of society, and opening 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.

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 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 such as the [Access Office](#), the [Careers and Employability Service](#), [Maynooth Works](#) and the [Office of External Relations](#). 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 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 3 elected officers of Maynooth SU.	(Including Chair).
GA subcommittee	Audit & Risk Committee	Not applicable.	Maximum 5 members, all external to MU
GA subcommittee	Finance, Human Resources and Capital Development Committee	1 President Maynooth SU.	A majority of members must be external (of 7 members drawn from GA) The Committee may propose the co-option of additional members of the Committee
GA subcommittee	Remuneration Committee	Not applicable.	Chair of GA plus 2 other external members of GA..
Joint sub-committee of GA and AC	Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Interculturalism Committee	3 Representatives of Maynooth SU.	1 upwards. - Minimum 1 (of 4 members drawn from GA). - Plus, up to 3 external persons can be co-opted as members.

Joint sub-committee of GA and AC	Coiste Gaeilge na hOllscoile	3 • President Maynooth SU (or their nominee). • Student nominated by President Maynooth SU. • Student nominated by President Maynooth University.	No minimum number specified. Maximum possible is 4. • 1 of GA nominees can be external. • Plus, up to 3 external persons could be co-opted as members.
Joint sub-committee of GA and AC	Quality Committee	2 • President Maynooth SU (or their nominee). • Postgraduate Student representative of GA.	2 • External members of GA.
Academic Council (AC)		4 • 2 Undergraduate students (MSU Officers). • 1 postgraduate (taught) student. • 1 doctoral student.	Not applicable.
AC Standing Committee	Academic Discipline Board	1 • President Maynooth SU.	1 • Lay member.
AC Standing Committee	Academic Programmes Committee	1 • Vice President Academic Affairs Maynooth SU.	Not applicable.
AC Standing Committee	Campus Life Committee	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 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.

Maynooth University also works with the National College of Ireland (NCI) in the co-delivery and the co-supervision of students enrolled for PhD or Research Master's programmes. Students enrolled on these programmes are registered students of MU and NCI. Graduates receive their award from MU with the NCI logo also appearing on the award parchment.

MU and the Institute of Art, Design & Technology Dún Laoghaire (IADT) have established a collaborative arrangement for the co-supervision of research degrees (PhD, MLitt, and MSc Research) across a number of areas that align to disciplines within MU's Arts & Humanities Faculty, and the Faculty of Science & Engineering. Students register with MU and receive an MU award on successful completion of their studies. The first cohort of students register in the academic year 2024/2025.

MU has also commenced working with Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) to establish an MU-DkIT Regional Graduate Academy (RGA) offering structured PhD programmes across a number of aligned disciplines. Doctoral students will be supervised by DkIT staff, will register with both institutions and will receive their awards from MU.

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.

Maynooth University is a member of the ARQUS Alliance joining Granada, Graz, Leipzig, Lyon 1, , Minho, Padua, Vilnius and Wroclaw universities. This is providing opportunities for MU to work with other research-intensive universities in areas of common and developing research and teaching interests together with providing pathways for both students and staff to engage in collaborative and development initiatives. Going forward it is expected that MU will develop collaborative programme offerings within the Alliance in addition to the opportunities available to students to participate in Erasmus+.

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:

Stage 1) A review of the initial proposal submitted by the Department/School is undertaken 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. Where relevant-the Committee seeks written comments from the Vice-President International, the Placement Officer, the Director of Quality or other applicable disciplines/units;

Stage 2) A review of the full proposal (including full module descriptors with details of assessment and learning outcomes) is undertaken by external reviewers and the full Faculty. This is followed by a final review by the Academic Programmes Committee who consider feedback from the external reviewers and the faculties. It will either recommend the programme to Academic Council for approval or refer it back to the Department/School for amendment.

Minor 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 the title of a programme, its structure, duration, credit weightings, NFQ level, or to changes to entry criteria or progression paths.

Microcredentials and elective streams

The Maynooth University Framework for Micro-credentials outlines the academic structures and qualifications underpinning the development of micro-credential courses at Maynooth. This framework is in line with the characteristics of micro-credentials as agreed by the seven (as was at the time) Irish IUA Universities. Proposals for micro-credential courses use a standard template for submission to the Academic Programmes Committee. The Committee has the authority to approve micro-credentials that are module sized, credit bearing and assessed bringing these non-formal awards within the framework of MU's quality assurance processes. Elective streams introduced as additional module offerings to students, whether this be to particular targeted groups or offered more widely, are also considered and are approved by the Academic Programmes Committee.

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 (2022) 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 met and interviewed a range of stakeholders including unit and university staff, students and external stakeholders, the Peer Review Group submits 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 processes also form part of the quality review process.

The Peer Review group report and the QIP (both published on the [Quality Assurance & Enhancement 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 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

As articulated in its Student Charter, 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”. This is further supported by the appointment of a Vice-President (Students & Learning) in May 2024. 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 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 comprehensive procedures in place to ensure quality assurance throughout the entire student life cycle, starting with student recruitment and admissions (undergraduate, postgraduate, EU and non-EU). The Admissions and Student Recruitment Office at Maynooth University plays a central role in engaging with a wide range of prospective applicants at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. For undergraduate recruitment, the Office works closely with second-level schools, colleges of further education, and mature student networks—including school principals, guidance counsellors, subject teachers, parents/guardians, and students—to ensure that potential applicants are fully informed about programme offerings, entry requirements, and the unique features of the Maynooth curriculum.

Information and guidance are delivered through multiple channels, including the University website, social media platforms, the School Visits programme, local and national careers exhibitions, and Open Days. The Office also contributes to external career guidance resources such as Qualifax, Careers Portal, Careers News, and the Institute of Guidance Counsellors' daily ezine, ensuring wide dissemination of accurate and up-to-date information. These outreach efforts have helped maintain high entry standards for Maynooth programmes despite increased demand and growing student numbers.

Clear, accessible application pathways are provided through the MU Apply system (Postgraduate and non-EU applicants) and the CAO for undergraduate applicants (EU), with tailored information available on the MU website to guide prospective students (UG, PG, EU and non-EU) through the process. Application routes are clearly signposted according to applicant type, including:

- Leaving Certificate Student Applicants
- Mature Student Applicants
- DARE (Disability Access Route to Education) Applicants
- HEAR (Higher Education Access Route) Applicants
- QQI Applicants
- BTEC Applicants
- Deferral Applicants
- EU, EFTA & UK Applicants
- International Applicants

- Transfer Applicants [Transfer Applicants | Maynooth University](#) (Please see note below regarding internal transfer (MU) and above managed by Curriculum Office)
- EU Occasional Student Applicants
- Restricted Courses

Documented procedures are in place for assessing applications from students seeking to transfer from other higher education institutions, and for awarding exemptions to both undergraduate and postgraduate students based on relevant prior certified or experiential learning. The University recognises and supports [Recognition of Prior Learning \(RPL\)](#), particularly at the postgraduate level, where it is most commonly utilised.

Maynooth also facilitates internal transfers for students wishing to move between programmes within the University, particularly after their first year. This internal flexibility allows students to tailor their academic journey and choose a pathway best suited to their evolving interests and goals. The internal transfer process (Year 2 and above) is managed by the Curriculum Office [Internal Transfers | Maynooth University](#)

The University continues to adapt its admissions and recruitment strategies to accommodate a growing and increasingly diverse student population. This includes ensuring access through routes such as QQI, mature entry, postgraduate admissions, and in due course for the new BSc Nursing degree programme.

Postgraduate recruitment is also managed by the Admissions and Student Recruitment Office. This is a new development since 2024 entry, with the amalgamation of the Admissions Office (formerly just CAO) and the Graduate Studies Office, under the guidance of the Assistant Registrar and Director of Admissions. The PG and non-EU Admissions team work closely with the PG Student Recruitment team and colleagues in the International office, who both are responsible for promoting postgraduate study opportunities, providing application guidance via MU Apply, and supporting prospective and current students through one-on-one engagements, information sessions, and Open Days. Taught postgraduate students receive support through structured induction sessions, while research postgraduates are supported by the newly established Graduate Research Academy (GRA). The GRA offers unified support throughout the research lifecycle, including training, development, and mentorship opportunities.

In all aspects, the Admissions and Student Recruitment Office ensures that students—undergraduate and postgraduate alike—are well supported from their first point of contact through to registration and beyond.

Led by the Maynooth Access Office and delivered in collaboration with colleagues across the University and external partners, the [Maynooth Access Programme \(MAP\)](#) includes initiatives that increase access, enhance student success, and foster an inclusive campus culture. The programme includes targeted outreach, tailored pre-entry and post-entry supports, and a comprehensive student advisory service for individuals who face social, financial, educational, or disability-related barriers. In line with national policy priorities, including the [National Access Plan 2022 -2028](#), MAP supports a wide range of students, including those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, mature students, further education award holders, lone parents, refugees and protection applicants, care-experienced students, students with disabilities, and members of the Traveller and Roma communities.

The *MU Strategic Plan 2023–2028* seeks to build on our reputation for authentic, strengths-based education, supporting all students, regardless of background, through improved student success data analytics and research-informed practice, thereby enabling access to and success in higher education for diverse groups of students. There is a focus on meeting the needs of a diverse student population using a data-informed approach, utilising Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, and a Practice Partner Model to support the embedding of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) across all academic departments, with tailored supports for students with complex needs.

To achieve these objectives, Maynooth University (MU) has embedded access and inclusion as a core institutional priority, aligning National Access Plan goals with its strategic framework and governance. Senior leadership roles, Vice-President for EDI, Director of Access, and Head of Access Operations, ensure inclusion is considered in all decision-making. A major strategic development is the proposed establishment of the MU Centre for Inclusive Higher Education, supporting national and institutional inclusion efforts.

MU Outreach

MU has developed a broad range of targeted outreach initiatives to raise aspirations and provide guidance to support potential students to access higher education including:

- Whidden Workshops: an award winning initiative that links people from Traveller and Roma communities with peers from their own communities to help increase access to university.
- Story Exchange: a collaboration between; Gaisce – The President’s Award, Mountjoy Prison Progression Unit and Maynooth Access Programme.
- Changemakers : a six-week participatory mentoring programme designed to raise educational aspirations and deepen understanding of higher education. In January 2024, 27 students from 10 International Protection Accommodation Services centres across the Midlands, East and North Dublin completed the Changemakers Mentoring Programme in Maynooth University.
- STEM Passport for Inclusion: a joint initiative by Maynooth University, Microsoft Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland, and the Department of Education that addresses inequalities with access to STEM careers among secondary school students in socially disadvantaged communities. Over 5,000 students from disadvantaged backgrounds have engaged with the STEM Passport programme with 76% of participants now considering careers in STEM fields.

MU Entry Routes and Pathways

Key developments include greater flexibility in entry requirements, recognition of prior learning, and enhanced foundation programmes to ensure equity in admissions. A flagship initiative is the MU Turn to Teaching (PATH 1) initiative developed to enhance diversity in the teaching profession. In 2023–24, this foundation programme supported 76 students (from disadvantaged areas, mature, students with disabilities, Irish Travellers) into initial teacher education. Places in Froebel’s Bachelor and Master of Education programmes have also increased.

MU has also strengthened entry routes for school leavers experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage and school leavers with disabilities through the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) and the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) entry pathways, and through the mature entry route. In 2023–24, 26% of full-time

undergraduate entrants came via these alternative routes, with 18.5% of full-time undergraduate entrants progressing from DEIS schools.

MU Student Support

MU is committed to supporting the student experience, retention, and progression of all students and has developed post entry supports designed to enhance student success and foster an inclusive campus culture. In line with the MU Strategic plan, there are tailored supports for students with complex needs including:

- Early engagement initiatives designed to support students to successfully transition to higher education and MAP My Way, a weekly programme of social support designed to create a positive first year experience.
- MAP Student Advisory Service which provides academic, financial, personal, social and technological supports.
- Specific support for students with disabilities including assistive technology, note takers, personal assistants, and sign language interpreters. Student Central is a dedicated programme to support students who require additional academic and/or wellness support.
- Study Skills Workshops and the Milo study skills platform.
- A dedicated Budgeting and Finance Advice Service, laptop loans and dedicated financial supports including the Student Assistance Fund; the KickStart scholarship; the 1916 Bursary; undergraduate disability scholarships; and other funding opportunities.
- Personal supports including a MAP Student Ambassador Programme and Wellness Workshops to help students navigate challenges and enhance their personal well-being.
- MAP Academic Advisor who ensures that students are supported with their academic course-related queries and concerns.

MU Evidence Driven Approach:

Recognising our existing research, expertise, and good practice in widening participation in higher education, MU is establishing a Centre for Inclusive Higher Education to facilitate learning among institutions, to lead research-informed practice and to support the institutional implementation of national policy on widening participation and EDI. Bringing together expertise from across the University and nationally, the Centre will advance knowledge, innovation and practice in inclusion, diversity, equality and access and use evidence and data to promote equality outcomes in education, employment, research and wider engagement in higher education

MU is building on a strong bank of research in widening participation and access:

- Working with the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO), MU has developed ESRI-based platforms to map the impact of our widening participation initiatives. A dedicated EDI Data Analyst supports evidence-informed decision-making and policy development across the institution.
- MU Turn to Teaching programme has developed an evidence base highlighting challenges and opportunities in developing diversity and inclusion in teacher education.
- MU through PATH 3 College Connect has developed an innovative methodology and evidence base which has relevance for how HEIs can prioritise the voice of priority group students in decision-making on access, participation and student success policies, programmes, and initiatives. To date,

College Connect has published three Community Needs Analyses addressing barriers to higher education experienced by priority groups: (i) A CNA with the Pathways Centre for Prisoners and Former Prisoners: A Pilot Study as part of College Connect, (ii) A CNA with Refugees and People Seeking Asylum: Exploring Access & Barriers to Higher Education in Ireland and (iii) A CNA with Further Education Students: Thoughts Around Progression from Further Education and Training to Higher Education.

- MU through College Connect also conducted an evaluation of the PATH 2 1916 Bursary Fund: Evaluation of the 1916 Bursary Fund for the Midlands East North-Dublin (MEND) Region.

Orientation: The My Maynooth Programme, Maynooth University's new year-long orientation programme, managed by the Student Skills and Success team, aims to support new students in their transition to university life. It helps them lay the foundations for their success during their time in Maynooth and begins the process of creating a lifelong connection with our campus community.

The Orientation Programme Goals are as follows:

- Provide a warm welcome to our students
- Create the conditions that help develop a sense of belonging
- Introduce students to the wide range of extra-curricular and co-curricular opportunities available to them
- Promote a Safe Campus, Healthy Living & Wellbeing
- Familiarise students with the campus and their new surrounding
- Provide structured opportunities for new students to meet and connect with staff and other students
- Introduce students to the support services (personal, social, financial, technological and academic) available to them
- Promote student success in line with the University's Student Success Strategy.

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 peers, fostering friendships and networks that contribute to a positive college experience here in Maynooth. Alongside this effort to cultivate peer-to-peer connections, the university aims to promote and link students to the wide range of support services available while informing them of the key pathways on their academic journey through academic and programme advisory services.

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):

- **Preparation for University Life:** Useful guidance on registration, accommodation, commuting, finances, and relocating to Maynooth.
- **Subject Choice Sessions:** Many students need to select subjects as part of their degree programme. To assist their decision-making, a series of subject talks is offered to help students decide before registration.
- **Programme Choice Guidance:** Dedicated programme and career advisory services support students by providing advice and guidance with programme-related decisions.

- **Parents, Guardians, and Family Information Sessions:** Host relevant sessions to familiarise parents, guardians, and supporters with the student experience and the resources available to support.

My Maynooth On Moodle

A My Maynooth on Moodle platform aims to provide essential orientation information to students in an engaging manner throughout the entire first-year experience by partnering with students to create relatable and engaging content across various media. It provides essential transition information to students before on-campus orientation and offers asynchronous, self-paced, and modular content on Moodle, MU's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to support students' personal, professional, and academic development.

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

- Provides a warm welcome and opportunities for students to connect with peers and staff.
- Introduce students to various support services, including academic and personal support, and direct them to the appropriate services.
- Introduce students to the diverse opportunities within student life, such as clubs, societies, Students' Union, volunteering, etc.
- Students complete their registration process.

Within the **Student Skills and Success Unit** the **Programme Advisory Office** is available to support and advise undergraduate students, including incoming first year students, on programme related decisions before and after the registration period. The Office helps students navigate their options within their programme. Continuing second-year students can also access this service, especially if they are unsure about programme options, such as flexible degree pathways (major or major with minor options) or whether to take an Elective.

The **Critical Skills** subject(optional for first year students) aims 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 include analysing and developing complex arguments, evaluating evidence and making balanced judgments, and communicating ideas clearly both verbally and in writing. Offered as small seminars, Critical Skills offers a unique first-year experience that facilitates peer group formation and faculty interaction. Critical Skills supports the transition to third level while complementing and supporting disciplinary learning.

The university **Institutional Research and Data Insights 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 Graduate Outcomes Survey taken nine months after graduation. The survey facilitates benchmarking against other universities in Ireland.

StudentSurvey.ie, which is normally 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 provides information as to the experience of taught postgraduate students. 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 part-time), 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 StudentSurvey.ie are provided to students, University Executive, Faculties, the Teaching and Learning Committee and to 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.

Maynooth University, as a designated awarding body with authority in law to make its own awards, continues to apply the *Joint-Sectoral Protocol between Designated Awarding Bodies and Quality and Qualifications Ireland for the Inclusion of Qualifications within the National Framework of Qualifications* that was endorsed by the University in June 2022. The Protocol provides for the formal inclusion of the University's awards within the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

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 to engage with the theory, concepts, and contemporary discourse of learning, teaching, and assessment in higher education. 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 [Vice President for Students & Learning](#). This Centre provides administrative support for any interdisciplinary Critical Skills and Electives as well as other relevant interdisciplinary courses, particularly with those shared with St Patrick's Pontifical University.

[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 & academic integrity, examination procedures, accommodations, appeals and procedures for various student cohorts.

Examination Regulations and Procedures and Breaches

Academic Misconduct and Academic Integrity

Procedures for Discussion Checking and Appeal of Exam Results

Reasonable Accommodations

Medical accommodations in University Exam halls

Students on work placement or year abroad

Procedure on examination arrangements for visiting international students

Attendance: Students formally representing University in sporting & cultural events.

Policy on use of dictionary in examination hall

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](#), now chaired by the Vice-President Students & Learning. It has a very broadly based membership that includes academic staff from each Faculty, staff from professional 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 & Humanities; 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 [Vice-President Students & Learning](#) provides leadership for the University in the key areas of the development of teaching and learning, student success including the supports for all students in learning, wider student experience, and the relationship with the Students' Union. This involves overseeing the development of a coordinated suite of critical skills subjects for first year students, a range of elective courses for undergraduate students and the formation of a new Student Success and Skills unit which coordinates orientation, advisory and guidance supports for students, and experiential learning and employability activities including careers advisory services, work related and community engaged learning experiences in addition to work placements. Supports and services are available to all students, including international students. The Office for Students & Learning (ODTL) supports teaching and learning across the university, assuming direct responsibility for certain interdisciplinary courses and coordinating the work of the new Student Skills and

Success unit established in June 2022. Links providing details of these functions and additional detail are provided below:

[Centre for Teaching and Learning](#)
[Careers and Employability Service](#)
[Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies \(see section 2.4\)](#)
[Academic Advisory Office](#)
[Programme Advisory Office](#)
[Student Engagement Office](#)

Student Skills and Success plays a central role in empowering Maynooth University students to fulfil their potential. The team works in partnership with students to understand their experiences and perspectives, helping them navigate the complexities of university life, develop their sense of belonging, embrace the full range of opportunities MU has to offer, and ultimately thrive as they make the most of their time here and imagine and create a better future. The unit brings together key areas that support the student journey. These include Student Success and Engagement, including Orientation, Academic and Programme Advisory, along with Academic Skills Development and the Careers and Employability Service.

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 services and initiatives for staff and students. Amongst its activities, it provides accredited programmes in teaching and learning to staff (outlined in more detail in section 5.0). These were comprehensively reviewed and redesigned 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 on request, through peer review or student group evaluations, supports scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) opportunities through teaching fellowships and small-scale teaching innovation Spark awards.

The CTL leads the management of the virtual learning environment, Moodle, and the associated Moodle Support Service for staff and students. It 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 and integration of learning technologies in teaching, learning and assessment. Technology enhanced learning (TEL) is a critical component of teaching and learning in the University and a range of continuous professional development (CPD) workshops and online supports are available to support staff in integrating use of technological tools. Educational technologies in use include: Turnitin, a tool integrated with Moodle, that helps with managing online submission of assignments and coursework, and provides similarity checking reports to promote academic integrity and deter 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 engagement and feedback tools such as Vevox that enables live polling of students whether in a face-to-face or in a blended learning situation; and Padlet, which supports collaborative learning and student feedback approaches.

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. Student Services has been brought into the Office for Students & Learning to enhance coordination between all academic, professional and personal student supports. 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](#)

[Healthy Campus](#)

[Pastoral Care Advisory](#)

[Student Support Officer](#)

[Student Advisor](#)

[Student Support Hub](#)

[MaynoothStudentPad](#)

[Budgeting Advice Service](#)

[Creche](#)

[Student 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 iCBT resource called [Silvercloud](#) and an anonymous reporting tool called [Speak Out](#). A new support was introduced in October 2022, when the Counselling Service partnered with Togetherall to provide an online Peer to Peer Support resource for students. Togetherall is a digital mental health support service which is available 24/7, is completely anonymous, and is moderated by professionally trained clinicians to ensure the safety and anonymity of all members. In addition to Togetherall's online peer community, access to a range of self-help courses and resources is also available on the platform. Another online resource, Text MU to 50808, provides access to a free crisis text line support service for students.

Since 2021 the University’s commitment to its students in supporting their counselling needs is evidenced by an increase in core staff to 5.0 FTEs from a level of 3.8 FTEs in 2020. This is in addition to a 1.0 temporary counsellor position in place up to July 2024.

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 works 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, permanent since May 2023, offering clinical support to students

experiencing mental ill-health. In January 2022 a Clinical Director/ GP role was introduced to lead the Student Health team.

Healthy Campus: Healthy Campus promotes health and wellbeing for all students/staff adopting a holistic understanding of health that focuses on the whole person and recognises the many determinants of health. Building on existing initiatives the focus is on making Maynooth University a healthier, happier place to study and work; creating a safe, supportive culture where healthy choices are available and accessible for everyone, and where individuals have the opportunity to improve their health and wellbeing knowledge, skills and health status. Partnership and a whole campus approach is a key part of the Healthy Campus concept.

In addition to the Healthy Campus Team, a Healthy Campus Steering Committee is in the process of being set up together with six Framework Implementation Groups (FIGs). Each FIG will be made up of students, staff and external experts who will be charged with working together to create action plans, mobilise resources and promote events, activities and campaigns related to six key areas: Mental Health & Wellbeing, Physical Activity, Healthy Eating, Sexual Health, Healthy Physical Environments and Substances & Addictive Behaviours. The *Physical Activity FIG* and the *Mental Health & Wellbeing FIG* are in place and meet on a monthly basis. The *Sexual Health FIG*, is in the process of being formed. Formation of the three remaining FIGS will be actioned in the academic year 2024/2025.

A Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Manager, in place on a permanent basis, is responsible for leading the implementation of the *Framework for Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive: Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions* and the *Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Higher Education Institutions Implementation Plan*.

Pastoral Care Advisory: Our Pastoral Care Advisory Service is open to students of all faiths and none. Offering one-to-one supports as well as regular events to encourage connection and build community. The 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 Advisor: The Student Advisor supports students in a practical way by providing advice and guidance on academic, personal, and financial support that may be available to them. The Advisor aims to help students navigate their time at university. In addition to offering one-to-one support, they provide educational clinics covering a range of topics such as 'study skills'.

Student Support Hub: 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. The Student Support Hub provides administrative support to Pastoral Care Advisory, Student Budgeting Advice Service, and the Office of the Director of Student Services.

MaynoothStudentpad: Off-campus accommodation is listed on a dedicated platform available only to students of Maynooth University and St. Patrick's Pontifical University. In addition, those with a confirmed offer of an academic place for a forthcoming term are permitted to access this database.

The team liaise with property owners in Maynooth and ensure there is a supply of accommodation available for students. In addition to providing guidance on how to use the database, the team offer educational sessions to both students and to accommodation providers to guide a range of topics such as how a successful tenancy, how to have a positive accommodation search, and how to explore the various options available.

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. One-to-one services are provided along with drop-in clinics, funding application support, and educational workshops where students are guided in managing finances.

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 Síolta 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. The Helpdesk service is now an integrated part of Student Services' portfolio of offerings with two on-campus helpdesks in place together with a virtual desk where students can submit queries by live chat or email.

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, the incoming and outgoing Erasmus and non-EU exchange programmes, the incoming Study Abroad programme, 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.

To further enhance some of the supports for outgoing students which were initiated at the height of the pandemic, the IO further increased the number of virtual information and Q&A sessions to facilitate preparation for outbound mobility. The sessions continued to be very well attended and resulted in a further decrease in errors/delays for students' mobility paperwork and related administrative follow-up.

The primary focus of the IO during the reporting period was on stabilisation and rebuilding after the pandemic, whilst also preparing for substantial change, both internally (new strategic plan and proposed new IO structure) and externally (e.g., International Education Mark). The IO is building towards further quality enhancements at all touch points.

Maynooth University Library

The University Library is a key resource for supporting teaching and learning in the University, its mission being to foster communities of learning and scholarship through excellent resources, services and people. The Library is actively engaged in supporting teaching, learning and research with its emphasis on critical skills, that are explicitly linked to information literacy. The Library supports the delivery of information literacy skills and promotes information resources to a growing student body, through a blended technology approach.

With an extension of 6,200 sqm completed in 2013, the library saw an increase in its space to 10,000 sqm with an increase of over 200% in its seating capacity, a 130% increase in its book capacity and more 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. The Library provides students and staff access to over 1,000,000 books/ebooks and more than 42,000 electronic journals. Some of the library's special collections include the papers of significant authors (e.g. Deevy, Hutchinson etc.) and historic items e.g. an original 1916 proclamation. It also provides a range of information and training courses to enable users to access information quickly and efficiently. The Library hosts the Maths Support Centre which provides essential support to students studying maths or related disciplines and is regularly the venue for a raft of campus engagement activity ranging from Africa Day to Green Week. Finally, the Library has a range of innovative spaces, services and supports including a makerspace (3D printing, laser cutting, virtual reality and more) and energy (sleep) pods to help students to realise their potential.

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 the new 10,500m² TSI academic building was completed in the Summer of 2022. 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. Microsoft Teams is available to both students and staff for group work and collaboration exercises. A Microsoft Teams class site is available for each course/module 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.

Student Complaints

An update to the University's procedure for student complaints was approved in January 2023 with a student complaints officer appointed shortly after. The procedure clearly delineates student complaints from other established university processes and procedures where students can raise issues, such as for instance complaints about academic issues. It also places an emphasis on resolving student issues informally and at a local level if possible before a student considers bringing a complaint at the University level.

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

Maynooth University is a higher education institution with the strategic goal to be a globally recognised leader in research excellence, by leveraging and building on our expertise to address current and future global challenges. In order to achieve this, the University will invest in interdisciplinary research focus areas, build capacity for research and scholarship through attracting, retaining and developing our researchers, and enhancing the postgraduate and postdoctoral experience, further enhancing our national and international profile through collaboration and partnerships, and developing frameworks that capture, evaluate and enhance research excellence and impact. The University's approach is articulated in the University Strategic Plan 2023–2028 and has been actioned via a research implementation plan.

Committee Structure

The Academic Council Research Committee plays a central role in the oversight, promotion and development of research and scholarship in the University and is charged, as per its terms of reference “to make recommendations to Academic Council on matters of strategy and policy in relation to research, scholarship, innovation and knowledge transfer and to oversee, on behalf of Academic Council, the development, implementation and review of the research strategy for the university, within the overall framework of the University Strategic Plan”.

The University Ethics Committee, a sub-committee of the Academic Council Research Committee, ensures that the highest of ethical standards are maintained in all research activities. The committee's role, supported by a dedicated full-time secretariat, is to assess and approve, as appropriate, proposed projects in addition to providing guidance and support to researchers on ethical matters. Two sub-committees support the work of the Ethics Committee providing relevant expertise and supporting the needs of the different types of research: the Biomedical & Life Science Research Ethics Subcommittee; and the Social Research Ethics Subcommittee.

Maynooth University evaluates research proposals as part of a 3-tier process: Tier 1 which allows for a rapid review of non-contentious applications; Tier 2 which is used to review proposals that may have been approved elsewhere; and Tier 3 which is classified as a standard review requiring greater scrutiny. An Animal Welfare Body is also in place providing for the University's alignment with national requirements.

The Graduate Education Committee is a sub-committee of Academic Council and is the body and is responsible for all Graduate Education matters. Specifically, “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.

The Research and Innovation Risk and Compliance Committee examines and monitors the risks of MU's research activities and provides an important control for ensuring compliance with internal and external regulatory and legislative requirements. An Aerial and Drone Oversight Committee is also in place to ensure we comply with national requirements.

Research Units

All units relevant to research are overseen by the Vice President for Research and Innovation. These comprise an integrated research ecosystem and include:

- The Office of the Vice President Research and Innovation
- The Research Development Office
- Maynooth Works
- The Graduate Research Academy
- The Maynooth University Library
- The Irish Research e-Library (a national consortium based at Maynooth University)
- Maynooth University Research Institutes, and Designated Research Centres

The Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation.

The Vice President is legal signatory on behalf of the university for all research matters, including all contracts and agreements. The office manages and documents the legal authorisations and decisions required, liaising with the various research units to ensure due diligence has been completed before approvals are sought. The office also manages the strategic research funds available to the Vice President to support strategic research activities.

The Research Development Office.

The Research Development Office (RDO) is led by the Director of Research Development and 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 CINTE Institutional Review 2018/19 (commendation 19).

The RDO manages and develops a Research Information System (RIS) which hosts academic profiles, 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. A further upgrade of the RIS platform to from V3.6 to V4.0 was implemented and the database was moved to cloud storage for increased security. The new platform is more user friendly with additional functionality for example, ability to add ‘Co-Pi’s’ to awards and report on it and streamlined ORCHID integration. A new Export Control module has been developed in RIS to ensure a robust system is in place for research compliance related to export control regulations. The platform will replace the current manual process. The module will be utilised to record and automate the evaluation of research projects that could potentially be subject to export control regulations, and to ensure that a central repository of all required documentation, queries, decisions and license approvals are held for record and audit purposes.

Maynooth Works

Maynooth Works incorporates the University’s Commercialisation Office and Business Incubation Center. Together, they deliver an integrated approach to knowledge transfer, enterprise partnership and

entrepreneurship innovation. This includes education and training supports, and the Office has key transversal links into the Research Development Office to ensure a truly integrated approach. A Maynooth Works Management Board is in place to manage the tenancies within the Business Innovation Centre and to ensure compliance with commercialisation policies.

The Graduate Research Academy

All procedures, relevant to postgraduate research students, are managed by the Graduate Research Academy, in collaboration with the Research Development Office, Maynooth Works, Professional Services Units (including the Examinations, Student Records, Registry Policy Offices), and Faculty Deans and Associate Deans.

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;

Postgraduate Research Regulations;

Code of practice for the Viva Voce Examination.

An effective feedback platform is available to postgraduate students through a Postgraduate Feedback Council which is composed of postgraduate representatives (taught and research) as well as members of relevant offices including the Graduate Research Academy and Faculty Associate Deans. When an issue is raised at the Council, the Director of Graduate Research 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 CINTE 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, Maynooth University's Postgraduate Feedback Council was included as an example of good practice in the NSTEP (2024) report, Postgraduate Research Student Engagement in Ireland: A Report on Current Practice.

All PhD 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 CINTE Institutional Review (commendation 8 and Overarching Institutional commendation number 3). The MU Research Skills Development Programme is informed by the National Framework for Doctoral Education and supports MU postgraduate researchers in acquiring the skills and experience necessary to become independent academic researchers and to develop their careers in multiple settings including beyond academia.

The decision to award a doctoral degree is based solely on the quality of the research and contribution to knowledge, which is examined by an internal and external examiner or in some cases two external examiners.

Maynooth University Library

Notwithstanding the resources described in section 3.0 which support student learning, the library is also an important resource for research, providing databases, supports for conservation, archiving and collections, events and exhibitions. The librarian is a member of the Academic Council Research Committee, and a research support librarian provides extensive research training and support to staff and students alike.

Research Institutes and Centres

The Maynooth University ecosystem further builds capacity and supports research activity via its system of research institutes and centres. The management of these structures is governed by the MU Policy on the System of Research Institutes and Designated Research Centres at Maynooth University. The policy defines the approval, governance processes and management of these entities. Specifically, each entity is managed by a Director, who reports to the Vice President Research and is a member of the Academic Council Research Committee. The aim of these entities is to build critical mass and enhance research excellence in line with the Maynooth University Strategy.

Research Policies

Whilst the Maynooth University Strategy defines our overarching goals and our core values, our Research Policies provide the framework for operationalizing these and ensuring our compliance with the external regulatory environment. Such policies are in a continual review and revise cycle to ensure they remain aligned with evolving regulatory requirements, institutional priorities and best practice in research. These include:

- Maynooth University Research Ethics Policy and Committee
- MU Research Integrity Policy
- MU Research and Commercialisation Conflict of Interest: Policy and Guidelines
- MU Former Staff General Research Accounts Policy
- MU Intellectual Property Management Policy
- MU Internal Compliance Policy (ICP)
- MU International Visitor Programme
- MU Policy on External Remunerated Professional Activity by Members of Staff of Maynooth University
- MU Policy on Financial Incentivisation of Externally Funded Research Projects
- MU Policy on Open Access to Research
- MU Policy on the System of Research Institutes and Designated Research Centres at Maynooth University
- MU Policy on the Use of Maynooth University Affiliation in Academic Work
- MU Research Data Management Policy

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](#)

Processes and supports.

Processes and supports for capacity building are often delivered collaboratively. Whilst the RDO usually leads out, other units (in addition to those already mentioned here) include the Equality and Diversity Office, the Engagement Office and the University Foundation, as well as Faculties and Academic Departments, with the new role of Faculty Associate Dean Research being a new development.

- The Research Skills Development Programme was launched in 2017 and offers an extensive range of training and development programmes to researchers in the University including postgraduate researchers. The programme is now run by the Graduate Research Academy with inputs from faculties, departments and professional units within the University. It is offered to all postgraduate, postdoctoral and other early-stage researchers and includes on-line, blending learning and credited modules as well as a wide suite of workshops, and networking and wellbeing supports.
- 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. One of the goals already achieved is the adoption of an MU Researcher Career Framework that aligns with the national framework on Researcher Careers.
- 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. From time to time, the University runs seed funding schemes with foci depending on specific needs at the time. In addition, the Graduate Research Academy and the research institutes provided conference and travel funding scheme that postgraduate research students may apply for.
- In order to increase the profile of research at MU, the RDO runs numerous events, including an Annual Research Week. Research Week coincides with the publication of an annual University Research and Innovation Report, the annual research awards, and numerous (c.40) events, which provide development and training, and turn the communities focus to research over a period of 5-days. In addition, the Graduate Research Academy promotes postgraduate research through research awards and participation in national schemes (e.g. Thesis in 3).

Reporting.

In order to monitor research and research outputs, Academic Departments and Research Centres and Institutes submit annual reports to the RDO, abridged versions of which are combined into the Annual Maynooth University Research and Innovation Report. This report is published on the University Website and is shared with key partners and stakeholders. In addition, research reporting includes external annual submissions to the Higher Education Authority on research targets contained in the Performance Compact, the submission of research impact case studies, with regular external audits conducted on all research activities. Finally, the Vice President Research and Innovation is required to submit reports the Maynooth University Governing Authority on a regular basis.

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 Department 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 implementation plan over the next 5 years to quality improvement and enhancement, through a range of initiatives aimed at the recruitment, development and advancement of all staff.

The primary focus of the Human Resources Department 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.

Under our strategic plan we have highlighted a commitment to a people-first culture as fundamental to its implementation. To enable the achievement of this, and our vision of excellence, opportunity and impact we identified the need to transform our HR function, moving from a traditional transactional model to one focused on strategic HR, effective business partnering and internal customer service excellence.

In line with this a new HR Model was approved by University Executive in January 2024. The key changes were as follows:

- Establishment of an Employee Resourcing Function focused on all HR activity from the identification of the need for a resource through to contracting.
- Establishment of a Partnering Function with two key elements, HR Partnering and HR Customer Service
- Strengthening Strategic HR capability:
 - The People Development function will focus primarily on how we help individuals across the University to achieve their potential.
 - The Organisational Development function will focus primarily on how we understand and proactively manage change across the University.

Both these functions will build on strong existing services by addressing gaps (career planning, change management, workforce planning, organisation design, culture and behaviours)

The People Development function in Human Resources provides 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.-This framework consists of a wide range of e-learning and facilitated professional skills courses, workshops, information sessions, mentoring and coaching, focusing on the development of key competencies.

A leadership programme entitled *Leadership for Excellence and Achievement through Development* (LEAD) was designed to support senior leaders in their roles.-This programme is aimed at all Associate Deans, Heads and Deputy Heads of academic and administrative departments. The focus is on providing an opportunity to grow and develop personally and professionally while drawing on the knowledge and experience of participating

colleagues. LEAD integrates inclusive leadership principles and working effectively with deep-level diversity which includes differences that include psychological characteristics, personality, attitudes, and values (Harrison et al., 2002).

Tailored operational supports are offered on an annual basis to support Senior Leaders in their current role and in advancing to new leadership roles. These cover topics 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 Procedures, 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 skills and competencies, and, that selection decisions are made following a transparent, 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.

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 qualifications, experience and 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.

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.

Moving forward, the Maynooth University Strategic Plan (2023-2028) highlights a commitment to a people-first culture as fundamental to its implementation. To enable the achievement of this, and our vision of excellence, opportunity and impact we will be transforming our HR function to provide a greater focus on strategic HR, effective business partnering and internal customer service excellence.

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 (CTL)

- CTL 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.
- A staff resource hub on Student Feedback and Teaching Evaluation has been developed to support staff in these processes, including a guide on evaluating student feedback. It was designed as part of the SATLE 2020 funded initiative, Student Feedback and Teaching Evaluation.

Professional Certificate in Teaching and Learning for Tutors and Demonstrators (CTL1)

- This five-credit professional certificate is offered as an elective module as part of the MU structured PhD programme across all departments and faculty.
- During 2021/2022 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.
- 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.
- A 10 ECTS digital module is also currently offered as a standalone CPD module, and is open to all teaching staff in the University. It was initially designed as part of the *Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning (EDTL)* Irish Universities Association project, funded through the HEA's Innovation and Transformation Programme.

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

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 just-in-time help resources available through staff accessible Moodle pages.

The CTL awards University Teaching Fellowships on a competitive basis, and fellowship projects are showcased annually. CTL also awards Spark awards on a competitive basis since 2020. The Spark initiative aims to support individual staff in implementing small-scale teaching and learning projects aligned to a specific theme. 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 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. This commitment continues with equality, diversity and inclusion remaining as a core element of Maynooth University's Strategic Plan 2023-2028. Maynooth University is implementing its Gender Equality Action Plan. This new action plan was introduced as part of the renewal of Maynooth University's Athena Swan Ireland Bronze Award. Through the Gender Equality Action Plan the University will build on this progress and continue to advance gender equality at Maynooth University and other equality grounds enshrined in Irish employment legislation.

Other policies have been developed to address the needs of particular groups e.g. the Gender Identity and Expression Policy, the Policy for the Employment of People with Disabilities and their 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. The Policy for the Employment of People with Disabilities was launched in December 2022 and gives a framework for staff who require adjustments due to a disability.

6.0 Information and Data Management

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 enables 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 Institutional Research & Data Insights Office of the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Office 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 & Data Insights Office undertakes an annual survey of first year undergraduate students registering in the University for the first time. The survey is conducted in the first weeks of term each year. It 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 gathering information on disability, ethnicity, lone parenthood status and commute time of students.

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 choose from to match their local needs. This micro level feedback is supplemented by higher level feedback obtained via the Maynooth component of 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. This commits FOI bodies to make information available as part of their normal business activities.

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](#)

[Acceptable use of IT Resources 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 CINTE 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 2023-2028 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 Assurance & Enhancement Office webpage. Peer Review Group Reports and Quality Improvement Plans are also published for completed reviews. Reports arising from Institutional level quality reviews and follow-up reports where applicable are published on the Quality Assurance & Enhancement 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 and marketing strategy in recent years, following an external organizational design assessment in 2019 and subsequent investment in the staff capacity needed to deliver upon University objectives at the time. In 2022 the University appointed its first Vice-President External Affairs (VPEA) and in 2023 appointed a new Director of Strategic Communications and Marketing. Following a subsequent in-depth internal and external consultation process to inform the development of the University's Strategic Plan 2023-28 the University embarked on a further transformative approach to deliver on the goals of that strategy with a series of quality enhancements, structural changes, and project initiation.

The Strategic Plan 2023-28 includes "Engagement & Partnerships" as one of its four key pillars. This called for specific initiatives to further grow the University's capacity to capture and more broadly communicate the impact of its research and scholarship, its graduates, and as an economic, social and cultural anchor of our region. Specifically, it called for "enhancing communications capabilities," and "building our national and international reputation through coordinated internal and external communications strategies." Also relevant is the inclusion of a new focus on events and public outreach, the creation of a new Partnership Office, and increased connection with alumni and donors. To support this in 2022-23 the University Executive Team approved a four-pillar structure under the VPEA: the existing Office of External Relation and Development and

Alumni Office will be accompanied by two new offices: a central university events function and a new Partnerships Office.

In 2024-25, the University will commence a new website redesign project, hire an Internal Communications Manager, launch an internal staff newsletter and a tender process for an internal communications platform, and begin a shift toward a new more integrated approach to marketing and communications with a keen focus on the University's research profile, particularly in its designated "beacon" areas. Several new staff positions were approved to be hired to deliver on further work regarding public outreach, recruitment and programme awareness, and public engagement. The University completed its first engagement mapping exercise and opened a new Events Office, thereby strengthening the quality of its internal and external-facing events. It also held several alumni events and programmatic offerings aimed at connecting MU graduates with current students to support their career readiness.

Under the direction of the Vice-President External Affairs, the External Relations Office (ERO) manages and advances the reputation of Maynooth University nationally and internationally by engaging with the public, our graduates, our partners, and our colleagues to support the objectives of the *University Strategic Plan 2023-28*. 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:

- internal and external communications
- media and public relations
- marketing campaigns
- brand identity
- digital presence (including the University website and its social media channels)
- alumni relations
- fundraising and development activities through the Maynooth University Foundation
- events
- external engagement and partnerships

Media and Public Relations. The Communications Team within the 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 digital 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](#).

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 Team (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 a-Website Steering Committee, are preparing to launch the redesign project in 2025, appointing an agency to partner to support the project which will re-platform the MU website. 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 100,000+ 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, cultural events, international alumni event, academic lectures during Science Week and beyond, 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 STEM Passport for Inclusion, Maynooth Access Programme, and various departmental scholarships. It engages in directly fundraising and facilitates philanthropic activity by

university staff in line with best practice and under the oversight of the Maynooth University Foundation Board.

By transitioning to 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.

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. 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 a member of the University Executive 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	19
Awarding bodies	0
QA bodies	0

1. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Chartered Accountants (ACA)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA Accounting and Finance BA Finance BBS Business and Accounting BCL Law and Accounting Hdip Higher Diploma in Professional Accounting MA Masters in Accounting (1 year) MA Masters in Accounting (2 years)
Date of accreditation or last review	July 2024
Date of next review	July 2025

2. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Assoc 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 Hdip Higher Diploma in Professional Accounting MA Masters in Accounting (1 year) MA Masters in Accounting (2 years)
Date of accreditation or last review	July 2024
Date of next review	July 2025

3. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Irish Tax Institute (ITI)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA Finance BBS Business and Accounting BCL Law and Accounting Hdip Higher Diploma in Professional Accounting MA Masters in Accounting (1 year) MA Masters in Accounting (2 years)
Date of accreditation or last review	July 2024
Date of next review	July 2025

4. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Chartered Financial Analyst University Affiliation Programme (CFA)
Programme titles and links to publications	MSc MSc Finance
Date of accreditation or last review	July 2024
Date of next review	July 2025

5. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Department of Education and Skills (DES)
Programme titles and links to publications	Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Guidance Counselling BA Early Childhood Education full time
Date of accreditation or last review	August 2024 November 2023
Date of next review	TBC TBC

6. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Engineers Ireland (Institute of Engineers Ireland)
Programme titles and links to publications	Other Bachelor of Engineering in Electronic Engineering Other Bachelor of Engineering in Electronic Engineering with Computers Other Bachelor of Engineering in Electronic Engineering with Communications Other Master of Engineering in Electronic Engineering BSc Robotics and Intelligent Devices
Date of accreditation or last review	November 2023
Date of next review	November 2028

7. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Institute of Physics
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc Experimental Physics BSc Physics with Astrophysics BSc Science Education (recognised degree rather than accredited)
Date of accreditation or last review	March 2024
Date of next review	TBC

9.2 Collaborative Provision

Type of arrangement	Total Number
Joint research degrees	1
Joint/double/multiple awards	6
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

2025

Annual Quality Report (Maynooth University)
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2023-2024

PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Guidelines on Completing Part B

As outlined in the general guidelines for this template (p.6), **Part B** of the AQR focuses specifically on the effectiveness and impact of the IQA framework on the QA activities and developments across the institution during the reporting period.

Here, the institution is invited to document the quality enhancements adopted and implemented during the reporting period and describe concisely the impact of these across a selected range of activities. Part B should also be used to demonstrate how plans set out in the previous AQR were progressed during the reporting period. These plans may be linked to strategic objectives, to QQI reengagement advice, or to Cinnte 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. The institution is encouraged to reflect on what worked well and what did not, and to consider impact measures, using both quantitative and qualitative evidence (metrics, benchmarks and feedback/judgement) and detail how they led to specific improvements of and enhancement in QA activities.

Part B provides evidence of quality improvement and enhancement and impact³ of QA activities within the totality of the institution's QA system.

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

Section 2 considers the institutional analysis of IQA enhancements and their impact on a range of activities including academic integrity.

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

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

Institutions are invited 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 and concise concluding paragraph with an overview of the 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.

³ 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

International Collaboration

The Arqus Alliance

The Arqus European University Alliance brings together the University of Granada (ES, as Coordinator), University of Graz (AU), University of Leipzig (DE), Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1 (FR), Maynooth University (IE), University of Minho (PT), University of Padua (IT), Vilnius University (LT) and University of Wroclaw (PL). National University of Kyiv, Mohyla Academy, Ukraine and Durham University in the United Kingdom are associated partners. These are all longstanding comprehensive research universities who share extensive experience in joint projects and a common profile as internationalized institutions with deep regional engagement in medium-sized cities. Arqus aspires to build on the member universities' sound prior experience in cooperation in order to achieve a high level of integration in its members' policies and action plans in order to:

- Enhance the education of critically engaged European and global citizens who are able and willing to contribute to a multicultural, multilingual and inclusive Europe which is open to the world;
- Increase and improve the joint research capacity of the partner universities;
- Better respond to the grand societal challenges of the 21st century in Europe and beyond.

The principal driving ambition of the Arqus Alliance is the design, testing and gradual implementation of an innovative model for deep inter-university cooperation, which will serve as the basis for a truly European campus fulfilling all the missions of a university for the twenty-first century.

Role of Maynooth University in the Alliance

Maynooth University (MU) was formally approved to join the Arqus Alliance in January 2023, with the view to enhance efforts to build a forward-looking, open, integrated and research-driven European University. MU became the ninth full member (full beneficiary) of the Alliance, completing the Arqus enlargement strategy initiated in 2021. Maynooth University's leadership in the field of digital transformation and data, climate change and sustainability, and European integration, were identified by the Alliance as priority research areas. Additionally, as a University with a strong EDI and access agenda and as host to Scholars at Risk Europe, as well as in driving Ireland's sectoral response to helping Ukrainian students and researchers access the Irish higher education system, Maynooth University has demonstrated its commitment to widening participation and inclusivity.

Purpose of the Alliance

The purpose of the Alliance is to transform European higher education, research and innovation through deep cooperation and progressive integration, in pursuit of an equitable and sustainable future by together:

- Creating a forward-looking, open, integrated and research-driven European University, building transformative excellence with and for all.
- Educating critical and socially engaged European citizens, equipped for lifelong learning, leaving no-one behind.
- Generating excellent, open, challenge-driven, innovative, and reflective knowledge.
- Acting as a committed multi-level societal and global player.
- Bringing down barriers to effective cooperation.

To attain these goals, the Alliance has determined a series of key identifying features, in keeping with the strategic plans and aims of the member universities, alongside the overall goals of the European Universities Initiative, the European Strategy for Universities, the objectives of the European Education Area, the European Research Area, and the European Higher Education Area. Thus, the Alliance defines itself as: community-centred; inclusive; pursuing excellence; sustainable; research-based; interdisciplinary and challenge-based; entrepreneurial and regionally engaged; globally engaged; digital; plurilingual and intercultural.

MU & Arqus Alliance Governance Structures

The Arqus European University Alliance has a structured governance framework that includes a Rectors' (President's) Council, Executive Council, Arqus Boards (Education/ Research & Innovation/ Societal Engagement), Institutional Coordinators, a Student Council and a Management Team. This structure ensures participation and decision-making across all levels of the alliance and its member universities.

Internally, Maynooth University has developed its own structures to govern activities of the European University Alliance. The Arqus Alliance is overseen by the Vice President International. Responsibility for the successful implementation of the Alliance's initiatives and their integration into the university lies with the Arqus Alliance Manager. To ensure strong governance, an internal reporting and governance structure has been established. A Maynooth University Arqus Alliance Steering Committee, chaired by the Vice President International and comprising key senior stakeholders, including members of the University Executive, meets twice a year. This committee receives regular reports and updates on the Alliance's progress, its strategic impact on the university community, and Maynooth University's contributions to the wider Arqus Alliance.

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	Development of an Implementation Plan for MU's Strategic Plan 2023-2028.	In line with the overarching enablers identified in the University Strategic Plan, and the key strategic objectives set out against each enabler, key units across the University prepared implementation plans that set out the actions and plans that would serve in achieving objectives that were relevant to their unit, in addition to identifying KPIs that would show achievement of commitments made. Plans were evaluated and finalised in conjunction with the President and the University Executive.
2	Revision of quality review materials.	This work is ongoing with consultation with key stakeholders. A new framework for quality assurance and enhancement is near completion set out as a policy, a matrix of QAQE practice, and a manual in addition to ancillary supports and resources. The focus on enhancement and on student engagement (see below) is being strengthened as part of the revision process.
3	Enhancement of student engagement within the quality review process.	The new framework for quality assurance and enhancement will see a greater role for students in the quality review process. In addition to student input through feedback processes and their engagement with review panels more opportunities for units to have students involved with their quality review are provided such as involvement in the preparation of the self-assessment report, having a student serve as a reviewer on a review panel, or seeking students to engage in the production of a units' quality improvement plan. This is in addition to the usual engagement or input of students in reviews through surveys, focus groups, meeting with review panels, etc. Having a greater range of opportunities for students to engage in unit reviews will serve to raise the student voice within the review process.

		The Quality Assurance & Enhancement Office (QAQE) is also facilitating the sharing of information across units within the university as to how they elicit student feedback and input on an ongoing basis and how the unit acts on feedback received. So far, the focus has been on professional and support units with an annual event held that enables units to showcase and share their different approaches. The QAQE Office is also looking to organise a similar event for academic units but in this case working closely with other relevant offices so as to avoid duplication of effort.
4	Promotion of the Student Complaints Procedure.	A dedicated <u>student complaints website</u> is now in place to guide students through the student complaints process, including providing links to other key processes for students to use if they wish to raise issues that fall outside the student complaints procedure. Links to student supports and resources are also provided as are support materials for students and staff to ensure they can successfully engage with the student complaints process. The Student Complaints Officer attended faculty committee meetings to outline the process to faculty members. They also engaged with professional and support units outlining the process and addressing queries. Engagement with Maynooth Student Union is key and each year a presentation on the student complaints process is given at the Unions' Academic Representative training forum.
5	Develop a suite of data dashboards for monitoring, planning and decision-making purposes.	Building on the success of the development of data dashboards for StudentSurvey.ie which provides access to survey results on a more granular level and enables the sharing of data to a broader range of stakeholders, the Institutional Research & Data Insights Office continues with its programme of development for other dashboards to aid institutional monitoring, planning and decision-making.

		All dashboards developed or under development provide composite information as opposed to student specific details. Dashboards developed include one that enables the profiling of exam results across a number of key criteria; and one that provides profiles of the student body related to the type and category of the qualification undertaken. Another one being explored will provide details such as student type, mode of study, nature of study (ISCED), entrance pathways and progression
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1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Governing Authority	21 September 2023 19 October 2023 9 November 2023 13 December 2023 1 February 2024 21 March 2024 6 June 2024
Academic Council	01 September 2023 11 September 2023 23 October 2023 11 December 2023 19 January 2024 29 January 2024 11 March 2024 27 May 2024
Quality Committee	02 October 2023 29 May 2024

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

The following senior level positions were put in place during the academic year 2023/2024:

Deputy President

Vice President Academic & Registrar

Vice President Students & Learning

Chief Financial Officer

Director of Human Resources

Director of Graduate Research Academy

Director of Hamilton Institute

Head of School of Nursing

Director of Arts & Humanities Institute

1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review

1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

Unit of review for which report has been published during reporting period	Date of completion/reason for conducting review (if not planned) or non-completion (if planned but not conducted)	Links to relevant publications
No reviews were undertaken in this reporting year.		

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels⁴ 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					18**		
<i>of those:</i>							
On-site processes							
Desk reviews							
Virtual processes							
Average panel size for each process type*					2***		

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

** This figure includes 9 micro-credential programmes.

*** This reflects the average panel size for programmes other than micro-credential programmes that are not reviewed externally. This also does not take account of the 21 internal review committee members who review all programmes.

⁴ QQI acknowledges that the terminology used to describe the groups of individuals that conduct peer review/evaluation varies from institution to institution.

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

	Total	Gender			Internal	National	International			Institution Type	
Type of Expert/ Role on Panel		Male	Female	Other, or unspecified			UK, incl. NI	Other European	Outside of Europe	Similar	Different
Chair											
Secretary											
Academic/Discipline Specific	20	10	10		0	5	12	1	2	20	
Student Representative											
QA											
Teaching & Learning											
External Industry /Third Mission											

The table above does not take account of the 21 committee members who effectively serve as internal reviewers as part of the review process for all programmes as part of the Programme Approval Committee work. These internal members provide a variety of expertise ranging from academic, QA, and teaching & learning with the student member bringing the student perspective and experience to bear.

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Office of the Vice-President for Equality and Diversity initiatives

Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

The Preparing for Academic Advancement initiative was run from June – September 2022. The aim of this sectoral modular programme funded by the HEA Gender Equality Enhancement Fund is to support Associate Professor level academic women to submit a successful application to Professor B level.

In March 2024, Maynooth University, a recognised EU Gender Equality Champion, convened an event in Brussels focused on advancing gender equality in higher education leadership to mark International Women's Day 2024.

Integration of UN sustainable development goals (SDG)

Maynooth University Social Justice Week was held between the 4th and 8th of March, 2024. The week's theme was Solidarity. Events covered a wide range of global issues and inequalities, including poverty, education, health, climate action and strong institutions.

Maynooth University was featured in the Times Higher Education Impact Ranking 2023. This ranking assesses the performance of universities against the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Maynooth University was ranked in the top 200 universities globally (out of 1,081 institutions) for its research on the study of gender equality, policies on gender equality and commitment to recruiting and promoting women (SDG5 Gender Equality). MU's research on social inequalities, policies on discrimination and commitment to recruiting staff and students from under-represented groups was reflected in MU being ranked 84th globally (out of 1108 institutions #101-200) for our work on SDG 10 - Reducing Inequalities.

Information and Data Management

Data collection from staff and students is critical 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.

In September 2023, MU set up the EDI/Access Data Advisory Group. The purpose of the EDI/Access Data Advisory Group is to advise and support the enhancement of Maynooth University's commitment to EDI and widening participation by ensuring the most effective and efficient data collection, analysis and reporting and visualisation. The advisory group role includes:

1. The review and analysis of existing data related to EDI/Access within the University.
2. Assessment of the quality, availability, and reliability of data related to EDI/Access, widening participation, and propose strategies for improvement.

3. Identification of gaps in data collection and the development of approaches to enhance data collection methods.
4. Collaboration with relevant stakeholders to streamline data related processes and improve accessibility of the data for their use, including University departments, administration units, staff and student groups.
5. Raising awareness and educating the University community about the importance of data-driven decision-making in advancing EDI/Access and widening participation.

The advisory group is chaired by the Director of Quality and membership consists of representatives from key University departments and units including: Office of the VP for Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, and Interculturalism; Access Office; Quality Assurance and Enhancement Office; Institutional Research and Insights Office; IT Services; Registry; Graduate Studies Office; Research and Development Office; Human Resources; Student Services; and AIRO.

Third-mission activities, societal and community engagement

Excellence in Exile (Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees)

Scholars at Risk (SAR)

Maynooth University offers a *MU SAR Fellowship* for Scholars who have had to flee their home country. This has been identified by SAR Ireland as a model for other HEIs to use, as it includes both an Academic Mentor and an Admin Mentor. MU's SAR Fellow for this period was jointly supported by TCD and IIE-SRF and is originally from Afghanistan. Maynooth University also hosts the SAR Europe Office on campus, and is a member of The New Universities in Exile Consortium internationally.

University of Sanctuary

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 2023/24, seven students were awarded University of Sanctuary Scholarships.

Gender Equality Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Maynooth University runs an EDI Assurance process which requires the institution and departments to check in with their people and culture every five years. This involves quantitative and qualitative data collection and where issues are identified, they are included in an action plan with a time-bound proposal for addressing them. This is internally assessed by the EDI Office, and externally validated by *Athena Swan Ireland*.

Maynooth University's 2018 Athena Swan Ireland Bronze Award represented a key milestone and recognition of our University community's commitment to advancing gender equality. Maynooth University was the first Irish institution to apply under the expanded version of the Charter that includes Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences disciplines and Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine. It also incorporates intersectionality, considering the numerous factors that can overlap with gender inequality, including the intersections between gender, race and ethnicity.

Maynooth University was the first institution in Ireland to apply for and achieve a renewal of its Athena Swan Ireland Bronze Institution award under the new Athena Swan Ireland Charter processes, which were

introduced in October 2021. To qualify for a renewal of an Athena Swan Ireland Award, Institutions are required to demonstrate progress achieved against previously identified priorities and actions to address gender inequality. As part of the renewal a thorough self-assessment must be carried out including examination of qualitative and quantitative data across the institution.

The cornerstone of Maynooth University's 2023 Athena Swan Ireland Bronze application was its comprehensive Gender Equality Action Plan which is underpinned by the University's Equality and Diversity Policy. The plan incorporates recommendations made at national level by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and addresses the requirements for Horizon Europe, the European Commission's research and innovation framework programme.

The Athena Swan Ireland Bronze application outlined the progress that has been made since the initial Bronze Award including: the appointment of our Vice-President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion(EDI), Dr Gemma Irvine and the establishment of the EDI Office; the development of a Gender Identity and Expression Policy encompassing transgender and gender diverse staff and students; and the development of the National Gender Equality Dashboard for Higher Education Institutions by AIRO, which Maynooth University hosts and which is an important resource for the sector.

Through the Gender Equality Action Plan, the University will build on this progress and continue to advance gender equality at Maynooth University and other equality grounds enshrined in Irish employment legislation. The 54 actions in the plan include:

- Ensure that key decision-making bodies comprise at least 40% women and 40% men, and there is gender balance across chairs.
- Prepare for an Athena Swan Silver Institutional Award application in November 2026 round, in line with HEA timelines.
- Implement the recommendations and actions for HEIs in the HEA's Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Higher Education Institutions Implementation Plan.
- Advance race equality at MU through the development of a MU Race Equality Plan.

Sixteen Maynooth University Departments/Schools have now achieved Athena Swan Ireland Bronze: in addition to the six departments and two schools in the Faculty of Arts & Humanities, the School of Business, departments of Chemistry, Experimental Physics, Geography, Law and Criminology, Maths & Statistics and Psychology each hold Bronze Department Awards and many more have started their critical reflective analysis and are progressing their applications. The department of Biology is the first at Maynooth to achieve an Athena Swan Ireland Silver Award, in recognition of the impact of work undertaken to advance gender equality for staff and students in Higher Education.

In 2022, for the first time, Irish Higher Education Institutions were required to report on their gender pay gap as per the Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021. Maynooth continues to report on this every year. It is important to note that the gender pay gap does not indicate pay discrimination (i.e. an absence of equal pay for the same work, which was outlawed in the Republic of Ireland by equal pay legislation in 1975), rather it is the gap between what is earned on average by all female employees in the organisation compared to all male employees in the organisation. While not constituting pay discrimination, a gap may indicate that there are

differences in the roles that women are represented in compared to men. It is important to identify any barriers or biases that may lead to a gender pay gap, and through the work outlined above and our Maynooth University Gender Equality Action Plan, we are actively working to address this.

Internationalisation

Other Parties Involved in Education and Training

In the reporting period, significant enhancements were made to the International Office's quality assurance systems, particularly in the area of international collaboration and academic mobility with partner HEIs. A new partnership proposal evaluation and triage procedure was introduced. This structured framework has strengthened governance and ensures that all prospective international partnerships undergo rigorous academic, strategic, and risk-based evaluation prior to approval by the Vice-President International. The procedure has already demonstrated effectiveness, with early-stage data indicating improved alignment between institutional goals and selected partners, as well as enhanced due diligence in academic equivalency and student support systems.

In addition, a review of the existing partnerships has been undertaken to evaluate their performance. This data driven exercise analysed mobility flows and other criteria to identify the partnerships that should be further developed, enhancing our international reputation and cultivating additional opportunities for mobility, international student recruitment, teaching and learning, and research. Some underperforming partnerships were also identified, and appropriate actions have been undertaken to address the issues or in some cases to terminate the relationships.

These developments reflect a proactive response to quality assurance in relation to partner universities that are involved in education and training for Maynooth's programmes.

Maynooth University has formally prepared and submitted an application for the *TrustEd Ireland* quality mark, thereby affirming the university's commitment to continue to welcome international students domiciled outside the EU/EEA from December 2026 onwards.

Programmes of Education and Training / Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Further enhancement of quality assurance for student exchanges was achieved through the approval of partner university destinations for integrated mobilities by the Academic Programmes Committee. This initiative supports the strategic goal of internationalisation and enhances the student learning experience by embedding mobility opportunities within programme design. The approval process is underpinned by robust academic and quality criteria, ensuring that exchange destinations meet the institution's standards for curriculum alignment, assessment integrity, and learner support. This reinforced quality assurance has ensured that students' international academic experience is further integrated within their programme structures.

FOI/Data Protection

In 2023/2024 Maynooth University continued to strengthen transparency around some key governance structures. The first annual report on Freedom of Information, for the calendar year 2023, was published (available here: [FOI Annual Report 2023.pdf](#)). This annual report provides a summary of the University's performance in meeting the obligations contained in the Freedom of Information Act (2014). Similarly, the University's Data Protection Office also published its first Annual Report on its performance in relation to meetings its requirements under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The report, relating to 2023, is available here: [DP Annual Report 2023.pdf](#)

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 academic misconduct 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 Academic Conduct and Academic Integrity](#) deals with the broader aspect of academic misconduct, including plagiarism, collusion, unauthorized use of GenAI, and processes on how to deal with it. The MU Library provides a range of support related to academic integrity dealing with 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 Feedback Studio software to promote academic integrity and deter plagiarism, and the potential for students to be called to an interview following submission of assessments or examinations.

A module entitled, *Digital Technologies in Higher Education Teaching and Learning* (10 ECTS) was introduced as part of the University's Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Assessment. 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, promoting academic integrity, and exploring opportunities and challenges related to AI and academic integrity.

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) chatbots such as ChatGPT and potential use of same in higher education, has led to concerns around implications the technology's availability may have for academic integrity and/or academic misconduct. The University is addressing these developments and concerns in a number of ways including:

- Introduction of a verification Assessment via Marks and Standards.
- Update of the University Plagiarism Policy to encompass other breaches of Academic Integrity.
- Ongoing collaboration with other institutions through the National Academic Integrity Network to share experiences and practices in addressing academic integrity issues.
- Development of new '[Academic Integrity and Artificial Intelligence](#)' resource space as part of the Assessment & Feedback Hub, which includes staff and student facing resources on academic integrity and a range of resources on artificial intelligence, particularly around ChatGPT and similar technologies.
- Development of new staff and student GenAI Guidelines which we created collaboratively, engaged a wide range of academics and students, and have been published online.
- Facilitation of a Staff Forum on '**Exploring ChatGPT – challenges and opportunities**' to provide staff with the opportunity to learn more about ChatGPT and similar technologies, discuss ChatGPT with reference to current teaching, learning and assessment practice, contribute to the articulation of

practical steps we can take as a university community to address the challenges and embrace the opportunities around this technology, suggest 'where to next' on this important topic.

- The University already has academic integrity software (Turnitin) that is designed to promote academic integrity and support detection of plagiarism. This software now includes an AI writing indicator.
- As part of the CTL Teaching and Learning fellowships the university has 3 Fellowships awarded on Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Teaching, Learning and Assessment.

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/CINTE 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	Submit application for International Education Mark (IEM) /TrustEd Ireland.	Maynooth University plans to apply, as part of the first call for submissions, to use the IEM/TrustEd Ireland Mark using it as an opportunity to externally validate its approach to international education. A steering group will be set up to coordinate the production of the MU application.
2	Pilot of programme level student feedback	Work has commenced on piloting a programme level student feedback process in the Faculty of Arts & Humanities, and the Faculty of Science & Engineering with the current focus on the omnibus programmes of the Bachelor of Arts and the Bachelor of Science. The first iteration of the survey is completed as is an analysis of findings. The pilot stage of the work is continuing with the survey to be run again which will also enable comparative analysis to be undertaken.
3	School of Nursing: Complete preparations for launching of School and first intake of students in September 2025.	Since it first announced, in June 2023, its intentions to establish a school of nursing with a commencement programme of a four-year, level 8, undergraduate general nursing course, work has progressed rapidly. The University has appointed a head of the school of nursing and other key staff, has put in place the resources required to deliver the programme, and has engaged with key stakeholders, including the Nursing and Midwifery Board (NMBI) and MU's primary partner of the HSE Dublin-Midland Health Authority, in rolling out a curriculum that reflects the policy and ethos of SláinteCare. The focus in the year ahead is to have the programme

		accredited by NMBI and to prepare for the first intake of students planned for September 2025.
4	Re-evaluation of programme review process with pilot framework developed and tested.	Work will commence on developing a framework for re-evaluation of programmes. This will include wide consultation with key stakeholder and input into the production of a pilot framework that can then be tested with a number of programmes. Based on the results of the pilot the framework will be reevaluated and updated as needed before integration into the ongoing quality assurance processes of the university.
5	Establish a National Centre of Excellence for Inclusive Higher Education.	Maynooth University committed in its strategic plan 2023-2028 to establishing a national centre for inclusive higher education. This would see a gap filled in Ireland's higher education landscape by creating a hub where the equity and inclusion work taking place across Irish universities and colleges could be shared and strengthened. Work on establishing the Centre has been in train and the University, over the coming academic year, plans to begin the process of creating the Centre with preparations for staffing with a Director and other support staff. It is expected that the Centre will be operational in early 2025/2026.
6	Creation of an MU-DKIT Regional Graduate Academy.	In 2024 MU and DkIT, following a period of engagement, signed a letter of intent to collaborate strategically but in particular in relation to postgraduate research programmes. Since signing, both institutions have worked closely together in developing the infrastructure and processes to support the creation of a Regional Graduate Academy that will offer structured PHD programmes, supervised by DkIT staff, with students registered in both institutions and receiving their degree from MU. Work will continue over the next academic year in finalising processes and procedures to support the operations of an academy with an expectation that it will be operational for the academic year 2025/2026.

3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

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

3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

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

3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

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

4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

CASE STUDY 1

Title: Enhancing Strategic Oversight: Implementation of a Partnership Triage and Evaluation Procedure for International Collaborations.

Theme: Internationalisation and Strategic Quality Assurance.

Keywords (2-3 words): International partnerships, quality assurance, strategic alignment, risk management, governance, review, triage, evaluation, due diligence.

Abstract: This case study outlines the development and implementation of a new triage and evaluation procedure for international higher education partnerships. In addition, a review of the existing partnerships has been undertaken to evaluate their performance. Introduced in response to strategic priorities, these initiatives aim to strengthen institutional oversight, ensure academic integrity, and align partnerships with long-term educational goals.

Introduction and Context

In the reporting period, the International Office introduced a new *Partnership proposal evaluation and triage procedure* as part of a broader quality enhancement initiative. Additionally, the existing partnerships were reviewed based on their performance to date. These developments came about after the need for a more structured and transparent approach to evaluating international collaborations was identified. The procedures were designed to ensure that all existing and proposed partnerships are assessed for academic integrity, strategic alignment, and operational feasibility before approval or renewal.

Challenges and Developmental Approach

Prior to this initiative, partnership proposals were reviewed inconsistently, often lacking a unified evaluative framework. This led to challenges in ensuring alignment with institutional strategy and managing associated risks. The key challenge was to develop a system that could accommodate a wide range of partnership types while maintaining consistency and quality assurance.

A cross-functional working group was established, including representatives from governance, the international office, legal and data protection services, as well as the International Education Committee. The group developed a triage model that categorises proposals based on risk level, strategic value, and academic compatibility. Each category determines the appropriate evaluation pathway, ranging from streamlined review for low-risk proposals to comprehensive scrutiny by the Academic Programmes Committee for high-impact or complex proposals.

The review of existing partnerships was a data driven exercise that analysed mobility flows and other criteria to identify the partnerships that should be further developed, modified, or wound down.

Impact and Outcomes

The procedure for new partnerships has already demonstrated measurable impact. Since its adoption:

- 9 proposals were submitted for triage.
- 6 proposals proceeded to full evaluation and approval.
- 3 proposals were redirected or declined due to misalignment with institutional priorities.

This represents a marked improvement in the quality and consistency of decision-making. The process has also enhanced institutional risk management by enabling early identification of legal, academic, or reputational concerns.

Qualitative feedback from stakeholders has been overwhelmingly positive, but some improvements to the procedure are being planned. Academic staff have reported increased confidence in the integrity of partnership decisions, while international office staff have noted improved clarity and support in preparing proposals. The procedure has also fostered a culture of strategic thinking and accountability in international engagement.

The review of existing partnerships, which link us with more than 200 partner universities, has identified two dozen partnerships that need further consideration to ensure that they are enhancing our international reputation and cultivating additional opportunities for mobility, international student recruitment, teaching and learning, and research. These underperforming partnerships will either be addressed with appropriate corrective actions or in some cases the relationships will be terminated.

Conclusion and Key Learnings

The introduction of the partnership triage and evaluation procedure, and the associated review of existing partnerships has significantly strengthened the institution's internal QA system in relation to internationalisation. It has provided a structured, data-informed approach to decision-making, improved stakeholder confidence, and aligned partnership development with strategic objectives. Key learning includes the importance of cross-functional collaboration, the value of clear evaluative criteria, and the need for ongoing review to ensure responsiveness to emerging risks and opportunities.

This initiative offers a replicable model for other institutions seeking to enhance the governance and quality assurance of international collaborations.

CASE STUDY 2

Title: Maynooth University PATH 3 College Connect: Using Community Needs Analysis to Support Equity of Access

Theme: Implementing National Access Plan Strategic Objectives

Keywords (2-3 words): Access, Research, Evidence

Short Abstract: This case study presents Maynooth University's use of the Community Needs Analysis (CNA) methodology to identify and address barriers to higher education for underrepresented groups. Developed through PATH 3 College Connect, the CNA approach involves co-designed research with communities including people with convictions, refugees and asylum seekers, further education students and Traveller and Roma. The study outlines the CNA process, lists completed analyses and uses the CNA with people with convictions as an example of impact, highlighting how community-informed, evidence-based strategies can enhance access and shape national policy.

Context

College Connect is a PATH 3 HEA funded initiative led by Maynooth University on behalf of the MEND Cluster (Maynooth University, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Technological University of the Shannon Athlone Campus, and DCU). It aims to increase participation in higher education by students from groups traditionally underrepresented in the sector, through evidence-based outreach and community partnership. Central to College Connect's approach is the development and application of a Community Needs Analysis (CNA) methodology — a participatory model of research and engagement that ensures HEI strategies respond to real and perceived barriers in diverse communities.

The CNA model has been used across multiple cohorts and regions to shape access pathways, influence national policy, and strengthen trust between communities and institutions. This case study outlines the CNA methodology, lists CNAs completed to date, and highlights the CNA with people with convictions as a model of impactful, collaborative, and scalable practice aligned to the ambitions of the National Access Plan.

Community Needs Analysis (CNA) Methodology

The Community Needs Analysis (CNA) model was developed by College Connect to create a structured and authentic process for listening to and co-analysing the experiences of underrepresented learners. The model is grounded in community development principles and the belief that meaningful access work must be led by the voices of those most affected by educational exclusion. The methodology involves the following key stages:

- Desk research and data mapping to identify access gaps
- Stakeholder engagement and outreach to build trust with local organisations
- Listening events, interviews, and focus groups conducted with community members
- Collaborative analysis and feedback loops with participants
- Publication of findings and joint action planning with institutions and stakeholders

These peer-led research projects centred on HEI students with lived experience of the target group, recruited and trained by the College Connect Research Manager in partnership with community organisations. Peer-researchers co-designed and conducted the research while also acting as mentors, creating space for meaningful dialogue on barriers to higher education. Ethical approval was secured through the lead College Connect institution; Maynooth University. Each CNA culminated in a formal report and an arts-based public engagement output, reflecting College Connect's commitment to accessible dissemination.

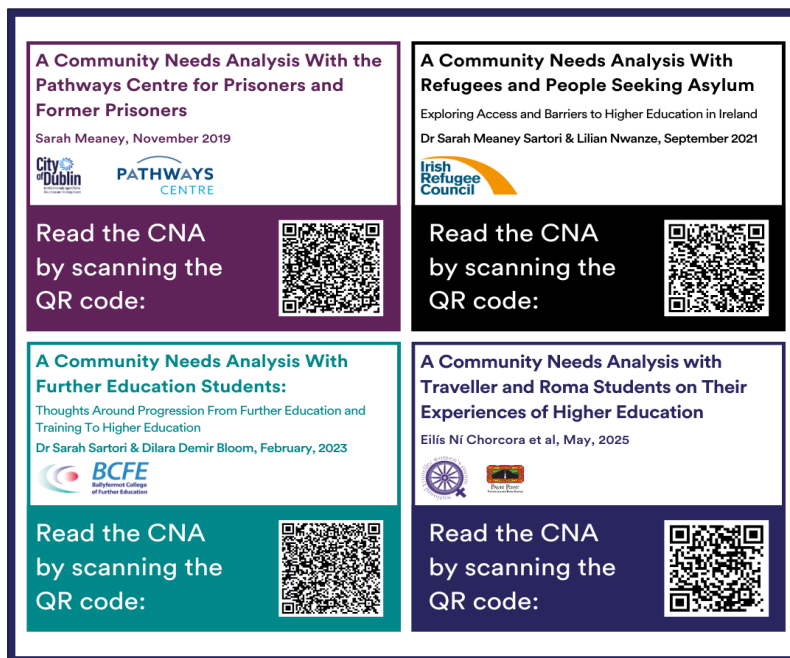
Key community partners co-created each CNA. Collaborations included: the Pathways Centre for research on people with convictions; the Irish Refugee Council for refugees and protection applicants; FET institutions for FE to HE transitions; and the National Traveller Women's Forum and Pavee Point for Traveller and Roma students. These partners were instrumental in recommending peer-researchers and shaping the research approach. A Research Oversight Group of stakeholders further guided and informed each project, helping build trust, ensure inclusivity, and foster strong HEI-community links.

Each CNA includes a published report, recommendations, and follow-on activities. The approach goes beyond consultation to embed long-term relationships between HEIs and communities. CNAs have become a powerful tool for targeting funding, refining outreach, and ensuring that institutional access strategies respond directly to structural barriers.

The CNA methodology is aligned with the NAP 2022–2028 goals around proactive outreach, voice of the learner, and inclusive design, and contributes to the system-wide ambition to ‘narrow the gap’ for priority groups.

CNAs Completed

Between 2019 and 2024, College Connect has completed four CNAs focused on different underrepresented or marginalised groups:



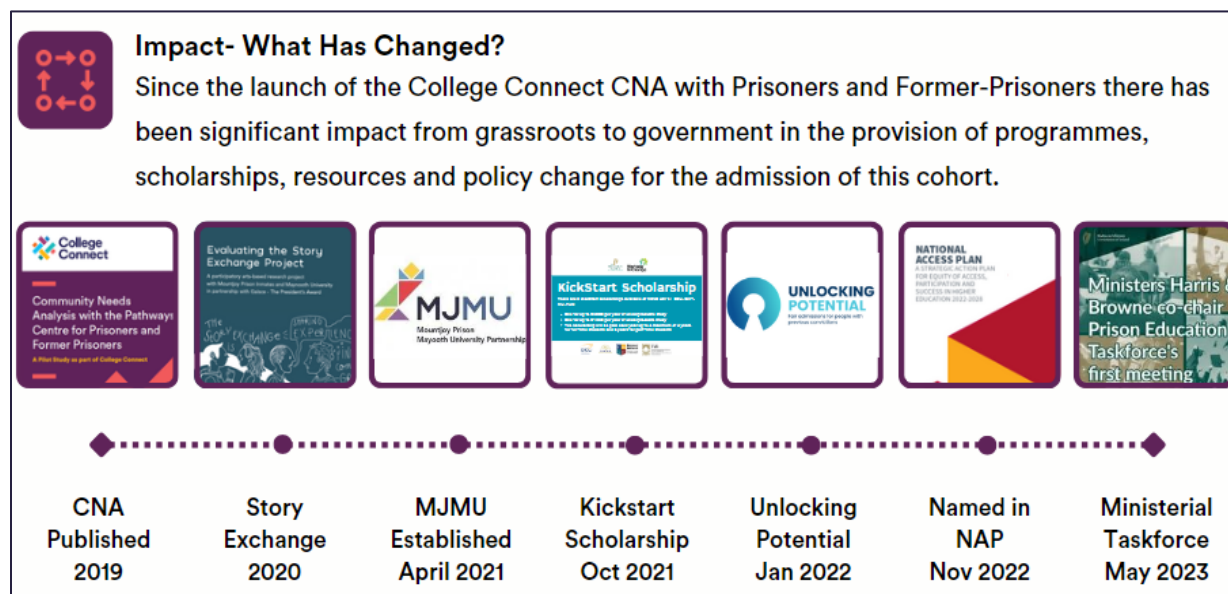
These reports include both national and regional perspectives and provide insight into barriers such as stigma, access to technology, low confidence, transition points, systemic exclusion, and lack of culturally responsive supports. The findings have influenced practice and policy at both institutional and national levels and were cited in submissions to the National Access Plan consultation.

Example of Impact: CNA with People with Convictions

The CNA with people with convictions (2023) was carried out in collaboration with the Irish Prison Service, Gaisce, the City of Dublin ETB Prison Education Service, and Mountjoy Prison. The analysis drew on lived experience, focus groups with people in custody and post-release, and interviews with staff from HEIs and community partners.

Barriers identified included:

- Limited access to digital tools and information while in prison
- Uncertainty about progression routes and eligibility
- Stigma and lack of confidence about returning to education
- Institutional policies and application processes that unintentionally exclude

Impact to date:

- A new Prison to HE Partnership Framework co-developed between Maynooth University and Mountjoy Prison, with plans for replication
- Development of prison-specific outreach materials and application guidance
- Introduction of post-release mentoring and advisory supports
- A detailed submission to the DFHERIS-led Ministerial Taskforce on Prison Education
- Influence on institutional policy regarding admissions and support for people with convictions

This CNA has become a model for engagement with excluded adult learners and has prompted a sector-wide dialogue on inclusive admissions and flexible progression.

Learning and Future Development

The CNA methodology offers a replicable model of best practice that supports the strategic goals of the NAP, particularly in deepening engagement with priority groups. It ensures that access work is not only data-informed but community-led and context-specific. The process has shown the importance of (i) long-term partnerships between HEIs and local stakeholders, (ii) shared ownership of research and follow-on action and (iii) embedding community expertise into institutional planning

Going forward, MU will continue to apply the CNA model to new groups and contexts and will support other HEIs to adopt participatory approaches through training, toolkits, and cross-sectoral learning. The next phase will also focus on institutional accountability in responding to findings and co-developing more flexible, trauma-informed access routes.